

Ontario Workman.

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

VOL. II.—No. 45.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1874.

No. 97.

THE TRADES' UNION CONGRESS, SHEFFIELD.

THIRD DAY—WEDNESDAY.

The delegates resumed their sittings at the Temperance Hall this morning, under the presidency of Mr. William Rolley.

THE COMMUNICATION FROM GENEVA.

Mr. McDonald moved:—

"That this Congress receives with great pleasure the expressions of goodwill contained in the papers read from the consul at Geneva, and as a mark of their interest in the welfare of their continental brother workers, would advise a prudent, an intelligent, and, above all things, a peaceable continuance of their efforts, on behalf of the cause of labour, a cause on which, to a great extent, depends the peace and welfare of society generally, and that this Congress without hesitation pledges itself that the trades unionists of England will, whenever practicable, give such counsel to their brother trades unionists on the continent as their best experience can furnish, as they believe the cause of labour to be the same everywhere, and its success tends everywhere to a peaceable and equitable adjustment of the present and conflicting interests of labour and capital."

Mr. Owen (Hanley), seconded the resolution.

Mr. Mottershead (London) moved:—
"That the question stand adjourned to the next Congress, and that the Congress further instruct its Parliamentary Committee to ascertain all information possible prior to the next Congress."

Mr. Allen (London), seconded the motion. He said it would be very wrong of them to pass a resolution without making any inquiries into the facts of the case. He thought if they identified themselves by resolution with the trades on the Continent they would make a great mistake. His constituents would find fault with him if he voted in favor of the resolution.

Mr. Frederic Harrison (London) supported the amendment. He considered it would be extremely unwise if the Congress were to put themselves into anything like formal and direct communication with a body of which they knew so little as they did of this society. It was one of the distinguished features of the trades unionism of this kingdom that it applied itself strictly to trade matters, and that it has never favored any general theories of social regeneration apart from their trade organizations, and the improvement of industry in a business-like way. Whilst he agreed with those who thought that friendly feeling ought to be extended to every body of workers in this country and in other countries, and that a real sense of brotherhood amongst working men should grow more and more clear over the whole extent of Western Europe, and whilst there was an amount of friendly feeling and friendly cooperation amongst them, he thought it would be most unwise to step out of the attribute of quiet reserve which had been hitherto maintained by the unionists in this country, and not to mix themselves up in generally ill-understood and very little known European confederations.

Mr. Lloyd Jones observed that as considerable difference of opinion prevailed he should refrain from saying one word whatever by way of recommending to the Congress any given course of action. He, however, did not think that by the resolution they were committed to the men or a policy in any part of the world. It simply expressed approval of their own action, advised it to be pursued in peace, and declared that if it were they were prepared to give any advice they could to help those who were carrying it on. He saw no danger in that. It mattered not to them who sent it. He saw no danger in it, and he thought they might adopt the resolution.

Mr. Mundella, M.P., said he thought the decision which they were about to come to was one of some importance. He had read with a great deal of care the resolution which had been submitted by Mr. McDonald. Certainly no resolution could be submitted of a more harmless character than the one Mr. McDonald had submitted. While he agreed with every word of it, he was bound to say he loaned to Mr. Mottershead's amendment. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Odger (London), said he should be very glad if they could co-operate with their continental brethren upon a solid foundation. The federation was one of a fantastical character, and not one with which they could safely amalgamate. He did not think they would be justified in taking that course, as hundreds of thousands of workmen would refuse to sanction this arrangement.

A show of hands was then taken. The amendment was carried by a large majority.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT.

Mr. G. Potter (London) said the delegates who were instructed to prepare a resolution on this subject had agreed to the following:—"That this Congress expresses its satisfaction with the progress made during the past year in evoking public opinion in the country, and the great increase in the number of members of Parliament, who had promised to vote for the entire repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act; and that every delegate present pledges himself to assist in holding public meetings, arranging demonstrations, and making such other efforts as are in his power to remove this obnoxious piece of class legislation. If the Act is not repealed during the ensuing session of Parliament, it shall be the duty of working men to oppose all candidates at the next general election who uphold the Act. That the Parliamentary Committee be empowered to press the Government to undertake the repeal of the Act; and in the event of them declining to do so, to get Mr. Mundella to move for its repeal on the first night of the session."

Mr. George Odger seconded the resolution.

Mr. Cornish (Wigars) said the only way of carrying out this resolution was for the whole of the trades now represented to be in federation with trades councils throughout the country. If they were to carry out the resolution they must be united, and be in entire sympathy with the whole of the trades now represented.

The resolution was then put, and carried unanimously.

THE CONSPIRACY ACT.

Mr. Broadhurst (London), moved a resolution on this subject, which had been prepared by the Standing Orders Committee. To discuss these Acts, he said would be a waste of time. They were all agreed that the Act required amendment. The prosecution of the London gasmen, and the Barnsley miners dispute, some of the leaders in which were now under notice of prosecution under this Act, were instances to show that amendment was need. In this latter instance, the matter could have been met by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or the Masters and Servants Act. The resolution was—

"That the existing law of conspiracy was vague in its character and excessive in its penalties, and that it requires amendment in the sense of the bill introduced into Parliament by the Solicitor-General during the last session; and this Congress pledges itself to use every effort to ensure an amendment of the law."

Mr. Guile (London), seconded the resolution, which was then put and carried.

THE MASTERS AND SERVANTS ACT.

Mr. Shipton (London) moved a resolution prepared by the Standing Orders Committee on this subject. Trades unionists he said, objected to the criminal clauses of this Act, because they were invidious and inflicted an injustice on working men. They wanted to be put on the same footing as employers—that the penalties should be the same for master as for man; in other words, that breaches of contract being civil offences, they should be met by a pecuniary penalty instead of by imprisonment. They intended to make it known that they did not mean to put up any longer with being criminally punished for a civil offence. The resolution was—

"That the Congress condemns and demands the criminal clauses of the Masters and Servants Act, 1867, for the following reasons:—That the Act does not adequately define the offences which it creates, that it institutes an unusual procedure, and that

it attaches a criminal punishment to a purely civil breach of agreement."

Mr. Bailey (Leicester) seconded the motion, and hoped working men would never rest until they had stood equal before the law with all other classes of their fellow men.

Mr. Halliday (Bolton) rose to support the proposition. Their could be no doubt that the working men of this country suffered great hardship in consequence of the criminal clauses of the Masters and Servants Act, it was high time the trades unionists of the country bestirred themselves to have those clauses repealed. A portion of the Act was being brought into operation in a very arbitrary manner on a body of men in Birmingham. A strike and lock-out having occurred there, a number of non-unionists men were brought from a distance by the employers, and summonses were issued against eleven persons for conspiracy. It would, therefore, be necessary for the trades unionists of the country to keep themselves wide-awake, for what applied to one body of men applied to another. The executive of the Amalgamated Society of Miners were determined to follow the case in which he had alluded to every nook and corner into which it could go. (Hear, hear.) He pointed out the injustice of a law which applied to one person and not to another. If, for instance, a merchant contracted with another merchant for the supply of a quantity of goods at a given time, and the goods were not supplied—if the contract were violated—the enactment had only a civil remedy; but in the case of a master who bought the labour, and the labourer who sold it, if the labourer happened not to fulfil his contract, the master could go before the magistrates, and not only obtain damages, but imprison the servant. They should adopt every constitutional means in their power to repeal these criminal clauses, and do all they could to get candidates at the forthcoming election to say whether they would or would not vote for their repeal.

Mr. Taylor (Peterborough) said he represented a number of agricultural labourers in the rural districts, and upon them much more tyranny was practised by the Masters and Servants Act than by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or by the Conspiracy Laws. They were seldom prosecuted under the latter Acts, but they were frequently prosecuted under the former. The gentleman who constructed that Act were in many cases themselves farmers. He himself had had to defend labourers who had been charged under this Act for where two or three of the magistrates on the bench were farmers, they could easily imagine what sort of a decision they might expect. In the rural districts they were unlike those in large towns. Their unpaid magistrates were totally irresponsible. They had full power to construe the Act as they pleased, and they cared nothing about law, justice, equity or anything else. They had their own views on the subject, their only object was to sit on the bench and punish labourers; and that they did most effectually under this Act of Parliament. He could mention many hard and oppressive cases. In one case a member of the Labourers' Association had engaged himself for a year. He was about 17 or 18 years of age, and one morning he was most grossly assaulted by his master. He took him by the throat and shook him, knicked his head against a post, and then shoved him into a pond. When this occurred, the boy went home to his mother and father, and he afterwards came to see him (Mr. Taylor) who advised him to summons his master for an assault. A summons was taken out and a solicitor engaged; but before the case came on the boy received a summons for breach of contract. The magistrates decided that there was no assault, but found that the boy had committed a breach of contract. The boy was obliged to pay damages and go back to work or else go to prison. (Shame.) In the other case two young men were working for a farmer near to Wadsworth. They wanted to go to a village feast, and asked permis-

sion to do so of the foreman, who in that district had the same power as a master. They were employed at the rate of 15s. a week, and they went to the feast and returned the day following. They then found that two other men had been engaged in their places, and shortly afterwards were summoned for breach of contract. They went before the magistrates, and both swore that they had obtained permission to go away; but the master did not produce the foreman as a witness. The master's evidence to the effect that the men had no leave to go away was accepted sooner than the evidence of the two men before the employer of labour, who were sitting as magistrates. The men were convicted, and under the Masters and Servants Act, sentenced to pay a considerable penalty, and nearly £2 costs, or else go to prison. He (the speaker) was there at the time, and the men were not allowed to leave the court for the purpose of getting the money. He (Mr. Taylor) paid it for them, and if he had not done so, they would certainly have been imprisoned.

Mr. McDonald (Glasgow) drew special attention to the 9th clause of the Act, and suggested that an instruction should be given to the Parliamentary Committee to endeavor to obtain an alteration in it. That clause now gave the power to the magistrates to inflict a penalty of £20, or to assess the amount of damages. He knew a man who was employed under a week's contract, and whose wages did not amount to 20s. He was summoned for a breach of contract; and by virtue of the power conferred under this clause, the magistrates assessed damages to the amount of £10. (Shame.)

The resolution was carried.

SUBPENA versus UNPAID MAGISTRATES.

Mr. Taylor (Peterborough) moved the following motion:—

"That whilst this Congress considers stipendiary are preferable to unpaid magistrates, it still thinks it desirable that where proceedings are taken for breach of contract under the Master and Servants Act, either party shall have the option of removing the proceedings into the civil courts."

Mr. Lowry (Liverpool) seconded the resolution.

Mr. Richardson (Bolton) did not rise to oppose the resolution, but he looked upon it as being as only a very slight step in the right direction. But he did not like trusting matters of deep importance in the hands of a lawyer. Workingmen should have a better chance of protecting their interests by means of personal efforts.

Mr. Owen (Hanley) said the only remedy for the evils complained of by the previous speaker was the adoption of courts of arbitration, by which means the men could be placed on the same footing as the masters.

Mr. Crompton (London) said, with respect to the law of arbitration, where a contract had been entered into, there was a power of compulsion to bring the matter before the magistrates, and compel the employers to submit to arbitration.

Mr. Juggens (Darlington) thought the less they trusted to county court legislation the better for them. At least his experience taught him this.

The resolution was put and carried, with only two dissentients.

THE NINE HOURS BILL.

Mr. George Howell read a paper in support of the Nine Hours Bill. Having adverted to the justice of the measure and the inability of Mr. Mundella hitherto to carry the bill through Parliament, the paper went on to state that although there was no doubt as to the equitable character of the Bill, unless they could have the assistance of the various trades organizations throughout the country it will be a long time before such a measure became the law of the land. It was, therefore to be hoped, that the delegates would endeavor by every possible means to assist in this work, by petition to both Houses of Parliament, and also by the deputations to their representatives soliciting their support for this sanitary and humane measure.

Mr. D. Guile (London) then moved

"That in the opinion of the members of

the Congress, the demand of the textile factory workers of the United Kingdom for a nine hours bill for the protection of women, young persons, and children, as introduced by Mr. Mundella, M. P., during the last session of Parliament is based upon reason and justice, therefore, we pledge ourselves, and on returning to our several constituencies to promote the advocacy of the factory reform in question, by all legitimate means within our power, and that the address just read be adopted, and issued by this congress through the means of the Parliamentary Committee."

Mr. Prior (Manchester) seconded the resolution, which was carried.

PROFESSOR FAWCETT AND THE NINE HOURS BILL.

Mr. Mottershead (London) strongly complained of a letter which had appeared in the Times from the pen of Mrs. Fawcett, condemning the nine hours bill as an injustice to the women. He warmly contradicted this, and he severely censured Mr. Fawcett for stating in the House of Commons what was utterly groundless with the respect of the bill. Mr. Mottershead moved the following resolution:—

"That this Congress considers the letter in the Times, of June 8, 1873, signed Millicent Fawcett, and the speech of Professor Fawcett in the House of Commons on the 11th June, on Mr. Mundella's Factory Acts Amendment Bill, averring that the movement proceeded from the inherent jealousies of trades unionists, originating in a desire to degrade women and destroy their opportunities of earning their own livelihood—this congress utterly repudiates such an allegation, and indignantly protests against the vilification thrown upon them by such erroneous statements."

The Vice-President seconded the resolution.

Mr. Lishman (Leeds) said they had imagined Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett were good friends of the working men, but on this question, at all events, they had done their best to oppose them. He warmly denied the theory that the Nine Hours Bill was designed to prejudice the interests of the women.

Mr. Townley (Manchester) vigorously denied a statement made by Mr. Hugh Mason, the president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, to the effect that at the last Congress at Leeds, they legislated for themselves, and not for the women and children.

Mr. Mundella said the question was one in which he took the utmost interest, because he felt positive that he was right in his action concerning it. (Cheers.) He very much regretted that two such old friends of his as Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett should come under the lash at this Congress, but he would say this, that he could not help honouring Mr. Fawcett, for always standing up for what he believed to be right in spite of all opposition. He (Mr. Mundella) took up this question from the fact that he had had an intimate knowledge of factory working from his childhood. Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett, he believed, opposed this Bill in utter ignorance of practical results.

Mr. Lloyd Jones (of London) also spoke in favour of the Bill; after which Mr. Mottershead's resolution was carried, without dissent, and with loud cheers.

FOURTH DAY—THURSDAY.

This morning the delegates were entertained at breakfast, at the Victoria Hotel, by the principal employers of labour in the town; the mayor, J. Hallam, Esq., presided.

The chairman, in opening the proceedings, heartily welcomed the Congress to the town, and counselled moderation on the part of the delegates.

The Master Cutler, after referring to the great interest which the Sheffield employers took in their workmen, and the result of the deliberations of the Congress would be that the whole question of capital and labour would become better understood, and masters and men would thereby be enabled to work more amicably together. He expressed his gratification that rattening had become extinct, and said if any rat-traps were needed in any other parts of the country they could be had cheap.

Mr. Briggs (Brazilian consul), as an employer of labor, advised and begged

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