

naturally the *Colonist* acquits the Government of any responsibility for the unsatisfactory result of the meeting between the Provincial ministers and the labor delegates; of course the *Times* sees much in the Government to condemn, and assures the public that the duly authorized representatives of organized labor were without fault. The writer of this column, not being under special obligation to either the Government or the labor element, can afford to express an unprejudiced opinion concerning the meeting.

To begin with, I am on record as having opposed the appointment of Mr. Gray, for the good reason that by no stretch of imagination can one conceive a capitalist becoming acceptable to organized labor. While I did not go so far as to accuse Mr. Gray of being ignorant of the fact that the Foresters are not an organized labor body, yet subsequent developments appear to confirm the conclusion that his imperfect knowledge of the question led him into this error. The deputy commissioner was a business man, and as such could not be expected to devote much attention to labor matters; while he was sitting in his counting-house, burning the midnight oil over the latest foreign market quotations, the laborer was studying the great social problems of the day. Consequently it was unjust to Mr. Gray to appoint him to a position in which he would meet every hour men who had a theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject which concerned them.

As to the appointment of delegates to meet the Government, I believe that the workingmen were very much to blame in some of their selections. For instance, what could be expected from a man like Keith, of Nanaimo, whose dense ignorance is a reproach to our free school system. His repeated references to "conciliation" disgusted more than

one of the intelligent delegates present. Another ill-advised selection was that of one Howell, who is an employer of labor; of course, not on so large a scale as the Dunsmuirs, but nevertheless an employer of labor, and as such disqualified to represent the workmen. The greatest care should have been observed in selecting delegates to the meeting. Sincere workers in the ranks of labor should have been chosen—solid, intelligent men, of the Arthur Dutton stamp.

Under the circumstances, there is nothing surprising in the failure of the delegates to come to satisfactory terms with the Government. The latter started in too late to confer with the men who are most interested in labor statistics, and the delegates unreasonably demanded more than Messrs. Davie and Baker could at this stage of the deliberations give them, without striking at the root of "that freedom which is, and should be, the pride of all *Anglo-Saxon speaking people*." The appointment of officials for any position within its gift rightfully belongs to the government, as under our form of government the official is responsible to the head of his department, who in turn is responsible to the people. This principle, however, does not throw any obstacle in the way of appointing duly qualified persons to fill positions.

With regard to the seventh clause, I am firmly convinced that organized labor was quite within its right in demanding "the government to insert a clause in all contracts let by them to the effect that all the trade rules in the locality in which the contracts are let be observed." The adoption of this principle would often bring order out of chaos.

I have not the time requisite to discuss the various demands made upon the government and the replies thereto; but in conclusion I

would offer it as a suggestion to Mr. Davie that he instruct Col. Baker before attempting further legislation bearing upon the condition of the down-trodden son of toil to consult someone conversant with the aspirations and requirements of the laboring man.

It is apparent to all that the stage is in a very unsettled state, and it is hard to tell whether when it settles down it will be on a higher or a lower plane than it has occupied before. It has passed through a fever of mechanical realism, from which it is hardly yet convalescent, and now shows all the symptoms of a severe attack of social realism. There is no doubt that it will recover from the former unimpaired in strength and vigor, and will be able to purge its system of tanks, saw-mills, pile-drivers, fire-engines and all similar cystic evils; but if it becomes thoroughly impregnated with the poison of modern French realism, will it then ever be able to recover its normal, healthy tone? Improper relations between men and women ought not to furnish the only dramatic theme for play-rights, but if plays like "The Fringe of Society" succeed and are given to only crowded houses, it argues a demand on the part of the public for that style of drama, and to what subjects can the writers turn then, for writers have to suit the public taste or else fail? No thoughtful mother would want her young daughter to see "The Fringe of Society," and it would be certainly wrong in her if she did; just as wrong as to present her with the latest erotic publications which come from, or are inspired by, the same trans-Atlantic source.

Vice, and especially social vice, is made hideous enough in real life, and when its face is made attractive, as it is in the modern plays of the realistic school, it is easy for the young to forget what misery lurks behind its smiling and seductive exterior. The