

TRADES AND LABOUR CONGRESS

SERIOUS and outspoken criticism of the Borden government, and especially of the Minister of Labour, was a feature of the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, held at St. John, N. B., September 21 to 26.

On the second day of the convention, Hon. Mr. Crothers, who was present, heard a scathing denunciation of his administration from Toronto delegates and others who during the course of a general discussion, declared that heads of the Labour Department had no sympathy with labour and were not in any way interested in the doings of organized labour. "The Government's fair wage schedule is a fizzle and a farce" was the statement from Delegate Bruce of Toronto which brought hearty applause from the gress. Mr. Crothers sat through this session without speaking.

On Thursday, September 24, Mr. Crothers heard much more of the same tenor, particularly with regard to his actions in connection with the recent Vancouver Island coal strike. Robert Foster of Cumberland, B. C., in a lengthy statement in which he gave chapter and verse, charged bluntly and vigorously that the men had not been fairly dealt with by the Minister and his department. Further charges by another delegate drew a reply from Mr. Crothers in the course of which he made the confession that he had "forgotten" to write to the miners at a time when his offices toward a settlement of the trouble were looked for. A press report quotes the minister verbatim as saying: "I did write them that I would look into the matter and I didn't simply because I forgot all about it".

Condemn Minister of Labour

The upshot of this discussion on the Vancouver Island strike was a resolution, unanimously adopted on Friday, September 25, which condemned the Minister of Labour in the following terms:

"Whereas, the convention has heard the Vancouver Island strike situation presented by Brothers Robert Foster, president of the Vancouver Island miners, and Frank Farrington, representing the International Union, United Mine Workers of America, and have heard the Minister of Labor Crothers defend the position of the department in connection therewith, therefore be it resolved that the members of the Labor Congress of Canada, as represented by its delegates assembled at the St. John convention, approve in the strongest terms the efforts of the Vancouver Island miners to improve their conditions of labor, first by arbitration and then by striking, and be it further resolved that we commend the miners for having affiliated with the United Mine Workers of America and urge them to continue their affiliation; and be it further resolved, that we condemn the minister of

labor for having failed to perform his duty and failing to use impartially the great power of his office to bring about an equitable settlement of the Vancouver Island strike."

Unemployment Problem

In the report of the executive council the following passages occur:

"The effect of the emigration policies of the federal and provincial governments has been apparent for a long time, and an unemployment problem of appalling magnitude would have faced Canada, even if there had been no war. With the confusion due to the war, the unemployed problem stalks abroad in such fashion, that even those who desire not to notice it, are faced with it in all its bareness. Canada is on the threshold of a winter which will contain suffering, the records of which will live in Canadian history, unless the provincial and federal governments rise to the occasion."

"Unemployment and the cost of the necessities of life, are two of the greatest problems Canada has to face at the present time. The interests of the common people of this country ought to be the primary consideration of all the legislatures in this dominion."

On the last day of the Congress, a resolution was unanimously passed calling on the Dominion Government to convene a conference of Municipal authorities, boards of trade and labour to consider the question of unemployment.

Criticize Immigration Policy

The immigration policy of the Borden Government, and especially the attitude of officials and employees of the department toward all who dare to criticize this policy, was also caustically dealt with in the report of the Committee on Immigration, submitted by Delegate W. R. Trotter of Vancouver. It was charged that immigrants are attracted to Canada by deliberately misleading statements regarding conditions here, and that much of the unemployment felt in Canada long before the War was directly attributable to the policy of the Government. A resolution was adopted condemning the course of the Government in "setting the seal of the Government" on wild and inaccurate statements made in special advertising issued through the newspapers of the older countries.

The congress voted against the repeal of the Lemieux act as proposed by a Manitoba delegate.

Regret was expressed that the government had as yet done nothing of a tangible character towards the introduction of technical education, and the minister of militia, Hon. Sam Hughes was condemned for his attitude in opposing the introduction of a system tending to its establishment.