

WESTERN LABOR DELEGATES ASK FOR GENERAL STRIKE

Want to Press Issue if Conscription is Put Into Force—Free Speech Alleged to be in Danger —War-time Election Act Hotly Condemned

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

Ottawa, Sept. 17.—Conscription already looms on the horizon as a topic for warm debate at the meeting of the Dominion Trades Congress which opened here to-day. Among the 75 or more resolutions presented for disposal is one from the Transcona (Manitoba) Trades and Labor Council. This resolution recalls Labor's opposition to conscription, cites the fact that Labor has not been consulted by the Government during the war, declares the workers of that district have been denied free speech and Labor men holding meetings have been assaulted by police and soldiers, mentions the constructive services of Labor during the war, and declares that in the event of the enforcement of conscription a general strike should be called, to continue until the Dominion Government conscripts wealth and nationalizes industries.

Executive is Law-abiding.

Debate on this long resolution is to commence to-morrow. Already the Executive of the Congress has sought to offset it by comment issued to-day in which, while admitting previous declarations against conscription, the Executive adds: "Still, under our representative form of government, it is not deemed either right, patriotic or in the interests of the Dominion or of the Labor classes to say or to do aught that might prevent the

powers that be from obtaining all the results that they anticipate from the enforcement of such law."

The Congress adopted a resolution favoring the organization in conjunction with the Great War Veterans' Association of a Workmen's and Soldiers' Council to protect the interests of soldiers and workmen in all contemplated adjustments of prevailing systems, as a result of conditions brought about by the war. The resolution was presented by John W. Bruce of the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters of Toronto.

Welcomed by Premier.

The morning and afternoon sessions were devoted principally to the cleaning up of some of the routine business and the formal welcome of the two hundred and eighty-four delegates. In the morning there was an interchange of courtesies and addresses by Sir Robt. Borden, President J. C. Watters, local President John Cameron, and other officials. Excitement was furnished at the morning session by a delegate from British Columbia, who somewhat strenuously objected to Hon. T. W. Crothers, Minister of Labor, addressing the convention, on the ground that it would be a "waste of time," and by President Watters, who received a great ovation, and who seized this opportunity of reminding the press representatives that this ovation

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Another was in a German prison camp. Several resolutions from Calgary Machinists' Lodge were adopted. One calls for a Provincial law making it illegal to employ children under sixteen in any factory or store. Another calls for equal pay for equal work regardless of sex.

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was from the men who "were to have chopped my head off."
In the first case the delegates upheld the Chairman in his action of calling upon the Minister of Labor to address the convention. Mr. Crothers was permitted to proceed without further interruption.

Hon. T. W. Crothers, in his address, said that the wage earners had played a most important part in the great struggle, about 150,000 of them being overseas fighting the great battle for right. These men were entitled to the greatest consideration—the men who had gone, the men who were going, and the men who had returned. Canada and Canada's people could only have the greatest admiration and pride for these noble sons of Canada.

Cheers for the Premier.

Sir Robert Borden's arrival was the signal for the greatest enthusiasm. Sir Robert expressed his pleasure in having the opportunity of greeting them and of wishing them all God-speed. He paid a high tribute to the great work accomplished by Labor in the crisis of the past three years, and the magnificent part that the workmen had played in the war.

Emmanuel Kovacki, delegate from the American Federation of Labor, and John Winston, delegate from Britain, were presented.

Watters in Defence.

President J. C. Watters of the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress then took over the chair, receiving a great ovation. Mr. Watters stated that in the past he had been the target for many bitter and uncalled-for attacks, attacks which might possibly have been made in the hope that the minds of organized Labor would be divided. Labor, however, did not intend to be divided. There might be little, trivial divisions and differences of opinion, but when it came down to business, real business, Labor was united, never to be divided.

"I have on more than one occasion," said Mr. Watters, "been taken severely to task because, before the war, I said that we were linked to one of the greatest and most powerful autocracies the world has ever known. I referred to Russia, which was then my despair, but is now my hope. I have more recently been indubbed with the hope that Russia, now Democratic Russia, will stay with the Western democracies. Democratic Russia, in my opinion, will help to bring to an end the world war."

Labor and the War.

"Democracy is a different thing from a war," said Mr. Watters, "and regarding the prosecution of the war, and regarding the manner in which the Government has acted upon the various questions in connection with a conscription and other matters of that nature. We must realize that conscription is a waste of human life and we must do our best to combat the catering of the Central Powers, which the Government, rather than I, have the endeavor to do. The Government, by conscription, is also the cause of the German people. The Government of Germany are treating the conscription as a war democracy. It is a war democracy, and the responsibility of the Government is to bring it to an end."

Will Continue His Work Untraded.

Referring to the matter in which he has been charged by the press of Canada, Mr. Watters, in his address, said that the press will not continue to carry on their work as usual. I am quite satisfied, in my mind, that the Government of Canada will not desert the men and women who are doing the work of the world. The Government of Canada are doing the work of the world. The Government of Canada are doing the work of the world. The Government of Canada are doing the work of the world.

Executive's Many Views.

The report of the Executive, which was referred to a special committee on their report, containing a declaration of the war, on conscription, on the purchase of the C. N. R., a conscription of the war-time election, and advocates the formation of an Independent Labor party. It read in part:

"While we are prepared to do all in our power to aid the allies, and thereby our own Canadian Dominion, in the triumph that is anticipated by all, we do not wish to lose sight of the fact that in the very near future new conditions will arise, and that we must prepare to face them."

Declaration of War Aims.

"We are of the opinion that the time has come for a clear-cut pronouncement of the exact purposes for which the war is being waged and the exact terms on which peace can be established. Let it be made clear to the German people that they themselves are the masters of the situation, and that they themselves have the power to stop the war and establish permanent peace by approving their own and the world's enemy. Let it be made clear that they have nothing to fear from any concerted action to occupy their territory, to destroy their economic life, or to arrest their development after they have destroyed their own military machine with their autonomy."

Taylor Conference.

"The no obstacle be placed in the way of reaching the German people through the medium of a Stockholm conference, or otherwise, for the purpose of carrying to them our intentions and on what basis permanent peace is likely to be established. Let there be no obstacle placed in the way of representatives of the working classes of each of the belligerent nations meeting in conference to discuss how the interests of a suffering humanity can best be conserved by terminating the war and laying the foundation for a league of nations to insure the world's peace."

"Should the people of Germany refuse to co-operate with us to 'make democracy safe,' but continue to support, as they now do, the enemy of democracy, then the issue will be clear and the fight must go on to the bitter end. If we fail to negotiate a satisfactory settlement, then let us strike to a finish, but at least let us state our demands and the reasons for making the demand, so that there will be no misunderstanding nor any misapprehension on the part of either party to the dispute."

New Labor Party.

The report strongly recommends the organization of an independent Labor party in Canada upon the same lines as the British labor party, as "the time has arrived when the workers of Canada should follow British precedent and organize a Labor party upon such a basis that trade unionists, Socialists, Fabians, co-operators and farmers can unite to promote legislation in the best interests of the wealth-producers of the nation. We

would strongly urge that the dominating working class political organization in each Province call a conference of the respective organizations entitled to partnership in such a Labor party, and proceed to co-operate for political action."

Against Franchise Act.

The wartime franchise act is condemned as being "subversive of those ideals of democracy to which the workers of this country are committed. We see in the passing of such legislation the danger of establishing in Canada a military caste, enjoying privileges not accorded the civilian citizens. Nothing could tend more to the dividing of the nation than placing the control of the nation's affairs in the hands of those whose aspirations are to enforce their decrees by the power of military authority, which has always been the bulwark of autocracy. Already the evidences of military interference with the rights granted to citizens under the civil laws have been made manifest in the cities of Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax and Sydney."

Same as Treaty.

We regard the contract made with naturalized citizens of alien enemy birth, who are disfranchised under this act, as being as sacred as the treaty obligations which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, and the action of the Government is as repugnant to a liberty loving people as Germany's disregard of its obligations under the treaty with other nations. We also regard it as a serious reflection upon the honor of the nation that the Government should violate its agreement with those citizens of certain religious convictions who were invited to Canada from other countries and given their full rights as citizens under the definite understanding that they could not serve the nation in any military capacity. "Recognizing the fact that these religious convictions were valid in a demand for exemption from military service, the Government committed itself to the conviction that military service was not a fundamental responsibility of the citizen in the enjoyment of the rights of citizenship. We, therefore, condemn those provisions of the act which deprive those citizens of those rights which were accorded to them when they left their native lands and came to Canada to apply themselves industriously to the development of its natural resources and the building up of the nation's material wealth."

Votes for Women.

This Congress has consistently demanded the enfranchisement of women, with equal rights with men in the enjoyment of citizenship, and for years the voice of labor in favor of such legislation was as the voice crying in the wilderness for a recognition of the rights of the women of the nation. We, therefore, condemn the inadequate to meet the demands of labor, the enfranchisement of a section of the female population, and the disregard of the rights of those women who are not included in the new war-time elections act. We are in full accord with legislation designed to enfranchise the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the Canadian and Imperial Expeditionary Forces and those attached to the army, but such enfranchisement should be extended to the other women of the nation."

Question of Freedom of Speech.

The afternoon a storm of argument was aroused through the question of Delegate Cassidy of Montreal, who quoted the defence of the realm act, and asked the delegates if he would be protected if he gave vent to his expressions of opinion openly—free speech, in other words. He understood that when the various resolutions were being discussed it was possible that some of the discussion might be considered treasonable, or against the defence of the realm act.

President Watters—It is quite possible that some delegates, in discussing resolutions, may make remarks that would be construed or misunderstood as treasonable. I do not know what we can do under the circumstances. Delegate Cassidy has raised an important point, but all that I can say is that we can only trust to the powers that be, and to their tender mercies, to permit us to express ourselves as we see fit.

Delegate Kerrigan—In view of the question that has been raised, would it not be advisable for this Congress to adjourn to Hall or to Quebec, where, outside of Ireland, free—

Must Not Interfere.

Delegate James Simpson (inter-ruptor)—Have we not the right to criticize this act of legislation as long as we do not interfere with enlistment or conscription of any measure?

President Watters—I suppose that is within the law, so long as a man confine himself to criticism.

Delegate Nicholson moved an amendment that the Executive of this Congress be instructed to communicate with the Minister of Justice, and to ascertain just how far the delegates may go in their expressions of opinion without breaking the laws of the defence of the realm act.

Delegate Hoop of Winnipeg stated that he did not see any reason why the delegates should not express themselves as they saw fit.

Calls It a Big Joke.

Delegate Pauline of Toronto expressed himself as considering the whole argument, and particularly the last amendment, the biggest joke he had ever heard of. "Why should we ask the Minister of Justice what we can do, particularly when we criticize his party?"

Delegate Cassidy—In one of our resolutions we are asked to declare a general strike. Now, this is in defiance of the defence of the realm act. The law is enforced entirely by sanction of the people. If the Labor men of Canada do not want conscription Borden and all his colleagues cannot put it into effect. I want you all to stand by me in this regard.

Delegate Murphy of Ottawa opposed both the resolution and the amendment.

The President stated that in his opinion both the motion and the resolution had better be withdrawn. Delegate Cassidy raised a protest, but finally both the motion and the amendment were postponed indefinitely.

President Miller's Case.

A resolution was adopted condemning the immigration officials of Montreal for trying to drive President Miller of the Fur Workers' Union of New York out of Canada, because he came here in connection with the strike of the fur workers there.

President Miller, who appeared to give his side of the case, said he was born in England and was taking out his American naturalization papers. He had had one brother killed in France, another was still there, an