

A COMPULSORY REGISTRATION

Labor Representatives Agree
With Government as to
Its Necessity

NO LABOR CONSCRIPTION

(Staff Correspondence and Canadian
Press Despatch.)

Ottawa, Feb. 3.—The main result of the conference of the representatives of organized labor with the Government during the past week has been the securing of labor's consent to the principle of compulsory national registration of the man and woman power of Canada. To this measure, on the basis of compulsory co-ordination of all available labor supply to meet war conditions and fill the gaps made by the withdrawal of men for military service, organized labor has consented.

No Compulsion of Labor.

To any suggestion for the actual conscription of labor for agricultural work, for transportation, for munition manufacture, etc., the labor leaders are unequivocally opposed. And they are further emphatically opposed to the bringing in of Chinese or other Oriental labor for farm work, although they raise no objection to the scheme of securing additional farm help from the United States.

Labor Bureaus Agreed to.

One further tangible result of the conference is the agreement of the labor men to the Government's proposals for a system of Government labor bureaus, replacing the individual employment agencies, and insuring an adequate basis for co-ordination, supervision and direction of the labor supply to meet the nation-wide demand. The Government has a comprehensive plan for the establishment of these labor bureaus. At Ottawa, under Federal control, the Central Bureau will be established, to act as a sort of general clearing house of information, directing the work of the Provincially controlled bureaus.

Registration at Once.

The national registration scheme will be gone ahead with at once. Provision will be made along the same lines as were adopted under the National Service' registration

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scheme of a year ago, but the signing of the cards will be made compulsory.

In the case of the former registration this signing of the cards was purely voluntary, and as a result the information gathered was incomplete and inadequate. Only about eighty per cent. of the man-power was registered, and in the Province of Quebec especially the response was poor. Any really definite idea of the labor supply available for meeting all requirements of essential industries was consequently not obtainable. Under the new scheme the Government will have at its command the essential information necessary as a basis for adopting measures to meet conditions as war developments and needs arise.

Report of Results.

Ottawa, Feb. 3.—(C. P. Despatch.)—Representatives of Labor, who have been in conference with the Government for the past week, have left the Capital, and the conferences are now concluded. The points raised by the Labor men in the course of the week's discussion covered a wide field. Their attitude and suggestions, and the views expressed, are covered in an authoritative report made available yesterday by the Dominion Trades and Labor Council after consultation with members of the Government. A full, confidential statement, it is intimated, will be issued later to all local unions in the Dominion.

The Labor men asked for the nationalization of all railroads. Failing action by the Government in this direction, the Government was requested to create a Central Control Board, which would operate the roads as a unit during the war.

Shortage of Labor a Myth.

Shortage of labor for railway maintenance was regarded by the Labor men as being largely a myth. Statements were made by the Canadian Vice-President of the Maintenance of Way Employees, who represented more than 10,000 men, that the railways were themselves responsible for the shortage, as they were refusing to bring wages up to the standard on which Canadian citizens could live. Some of the roads, he claimed, refused to pay more than \$1.95 a day for this class of work. Another assertion by Western men was that the C. P. R. was reducing hours in the West for its mechanical staff owing to shortage of employment. This, it was stated, showed that the trouble lay in unequal distribution of labor.

Oppose Conscription Farm Labor.

In regard to compulsory farm labor, the Government made no suggestions to the Labor men along these lines, but the local Provincial representatives did make a suggestion of that character. The suggestion met with the unanimous and emphatic opposition of the Labor men, who claimed that conscription of farm labor was impracticable. To force one man to work for another for profit, they claimed, would mean the establishment of the days of slavery. While no official statement on this point was made by the Government, the Labor men regarded it as the consensus of opinion among Cabinet Ministers that conscription of farm labor would be impracticable.

The Labor forces argued that the actual growing of food on the land was only one factor of food production. If it was necessary, they said, to conscript labor for seeding, plowing and reaping, it might just as reasonably be considered necessary to conscript labor for the manufacture of farm machinery and the transportation of farm produce. The Labor men announced that they would wage a vigorous warfare against any such action.

Census of Man-power Desirable.

In regard to a suggested census of man-power, the Labor men agreed that some method of securing reliable statistics as to the quantity of labor available was desirable. It was understood that the Government would take this matter under consideration and issue a statement shortly.

Introduction of alien labor was strongly protested against. The Labor men argued that any worker was entitled to the full industrial freedom of a citizen, and any man not so entitled should be interned, and employed only on work while in Government detention.

No Chinese or Coolies.

The declaration of the Labor conference was that the war could, and

must, be won without the introduction of Chinese or coolie labor. If, it was held, a victory could be won only by such means, then it would be a barren one for democracy.

Food Production Campaign.

The Labor men agreed with the Provincial representatives on the necessity for a vigorous campaign to help food production. They approved the abolition of private employment agencies, and the extension of Provincial and municipal employment bureaus, with a Dominion employment exchange. They asked for special rates on the railways for laborers going to employment away from home. The Labor men went farther than the agricultural representatives by suggesting to the Government that in cases of men leaving cities for farms they should get free transportation.

No Opposition to U.S. Farm Help.

No opposition was expressed to the securing of farm labor from the United States by the Canadian authorities, and the exemption from compulsory military service of farm labor.

Question of Light Beers.

Regarding the prohibition order in Council the question of light beers was discussed. While there was a diversion of opinion in Labor circles on the temperance question, there was no dissension from the view that some men did consider light beers a necessity owing to the nature of their employment, such men for instance as moulders and steel workers. It was suggested to the Government that as light beers did not use up any food grains in their manufacture, the subject should not have been dealt with as a war measure, but left over for consideration after the war as a social measure, and that the order in Council would have the effect of causing some men to refuse employment in places to which otherwise they might be willing to move.

Under-Secretary for Labor.

A statement was made by the Government that it was intended to create a position of Under-Secretary of Labor. The Labor representatives replied that they could not officially endorse the acceptance of such a position, as it would necessitate Labor unions being associated with the political platform of the Government. It was made plain, however, that this decision did not prevent any member of organized Labor from accepting such a position as an individual. If such a position were created, Labor would give the fullest possible support.

Representation on Commissions.

The Government agreed to the representations of the Labor men that on all advisory committees and commissions having to do with the prosecution of the war or the reconstruction period after the war in which Labor was affected, organized Labor would be given fair representation.

Classification of Industries.

The Labor representatives concurred that definition of an essential or non-essential industry was a subject which could be dealt with only according to developments in the war. They requested, however, that before any industry was classed as non-essential, organized Labor should have an opportunity of placing its views before the authorities.

Rights of Women Guarded.

Protection of women employed in industries was urged. The Labor men also asked pay for women equal to that previously paid to men for the same class of work, and the right of women to protect themselves through trade unions. The Labor men further declared that the further industrial employment of women should be accompanied by political equality, and that women should be given the opportunity of expressing their opinions through the ballot.

Control and Use of Land.

The Government was asked to expropriate lands held in the West for speculative purposes, and to pass necessary legislation to enable many persons resident in cities to return to the land as owners of small farms.

Ask Registration of Wealth.

The Labor men finally expressed themselves as opposed to the closing of places of amusement, and asked the Government to register wealth if registration of man-power was undertaken.