

# *Tried to Start Riot By Phoning False Messages*

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*Ill-Disposed Persons Attempted to Bring About Repetition  
of Winnipeg Affair Here by Stirring up Trouble  
Between Returned Soldiers and Labor Men  
—Citizens Warned of Impending Raids*

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## *Mayor's Meeting Clears Air*

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*Representatives of Military, Labor and Commercial Bodies  
Get Together at City Hall and Find That No  
Threats Have Ever Been Made—Rumor-  
mongers to be Hunted Out*

That some small group of ill-disposed persons tried to set the returned soldiers and the labor organizations by the ears last week with a view of provoking a repetition of the Winnipeg riots in Vancouver became evident from the revelations made at a meeting of representatives of labor, military and commercial organizations held in the mayor's office Tuesday afternoon.

The work had been done with a malevolence and thoroughness that were quite Teutonic. Mysterious telephone messages had warned the soldiers of impending raids by "Bolsheviki." The labor men and Socialists had heard stories that their meetings were to be wrecked.

There were also threats of damage to property. Mr. George Kidd, general manager of the B. C. E. R. Company, had received four warnings over the telephone that if the Sunday meetings were not held his plant would be wrecked.

And the propoganda came very near being successful. It did, indeed, result in several theatres being closed to the labor men and in serious proposals on the part of the labor organizations to settle the question of their right of free speech and free assembly by appeal to the ordeal of the general strike. Even now it seems to have left behind an uneasy feeling in the minds of the labor leaders that the "interests" are trying to drive a wedge between them and the returning soldiers.

The meeting, however, cleared the air. It left no doubt in the minds of the labor men that the soldiers had at no time conspired against them and it gave the soldiers assurance that whatever political and social changes the Socialists and the Federated Labor Party were working for, they had no intention of accomplishing their ends by violent means.



It was a thoroughly representative gathering which assembled at the mayor's invitation. There were present Messrs. Chris. Spencer, of the Canadian Club; Mr. Wooster, of the Employers' Association; Capt. C. W. Whittaker, president of the Great War Veterans; Mr. Mabbett, of the Army and Navy Veterans; S. J. Gothard, of the Comrades of the Great War; David Rees, vice-president of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada; A. S. Wells, of the B. C. Federation of Labor; Messrs. W. R. Trotter and Bert Showler, of the Federated Labor Party; and Messrs. Bennett and Ewert, of the Socialist Party of Canada.

### Had Nothing to do With It.

At the outset of the meeting the representatives of the War Veterans, Comrades and Army and Navy Veterans disclaimed all knowledge of and responsibility for the starting of the reports, which had reached them in common with others, that the Sunday night meeting were to be attacked.

Mr. V. W. Midgley, Trades and Labor Council, said it was part of an attempt to drive a wedge between the returned men and the labor men. The labor organizations had offered to discuss matters with the returned men, but had not been offered an opportunity. He did not believe the returned men were responsible for the trouble, but interested parties who were bitterly opposed to labor were trying to stop these meetings.

If the meetings on Sunday night were stopped they knew that the meetings on other nights would be stopped also. The mayor had suggested that the Sunday night meetings be called off to avoid trouble, saying he had been told that the returned men would make trouble. The mayor had been informed that the labor party insisted on the right of free speech. Organized labor naturally took a hand at this stage. The matter struck such a blow at their existence that the organizations had decided to ask their members if they were prepared to strike to secure the right of free speech and free assembly.

Mr. Midgley said that in the matter of labor disturbances Vancouver's record was one of the best, and equaled to Seattle, Belfast, Glasgow and London in terms of his words. The organized labor movement in this city had been vilified. A sample of the lies in circulation was a report that the labor union had decided that the returned men must take up their battle when he entered union meetings. The way is planned to be



Organized labor, he contended, had done more than any other agency to find employment for the returned men. He hoped the people who had started the trouble would be discovered!

In answer to questions from the mayor Mr. Midgley said that the committee that had seen the mayor about the Avenue theatre meeting had reported that the mayor would not withhold a permit. He had not heard anything to indicate that the mayor had facilitated the meeting, merely that he had interposed no obstacle.

### Must Find Fomenters.

"We want to find out who is at the bottom of this trouble," said Captain C. W. Whitaker of the Great War Veterans. The resolution of the War Veterans as published in the press was quite correct, but it must be remembered that while it looked like a very serious and even threatening statement it carried the proviso, "If sedition were being preached." The committee which had been appointed to interview the employers had had solely to do with seeing about the employment of returned men and the discharge of aliens gradually, not in large numbers at once. It had no mandate about sedition and would not have known where to go to carry one out. There was machinery to deal with sedition. It was the business of the police. The veterans had used no threats. They had not said they would be there with guns. They had never met and discussed such means of action. They had never asked the mayor to close up the meetings. Nobody among them had suggested breaking up the meetings. He was out Sunday night and there were not six War Veterans on the street. The soldiers had not been worked up. Labor had not been worked up. Then who had been?

Mr. W. R. Trotter, secretary of the Federated Labor Party, said theirs was the first ox to be gored. They had learned that the Rex Theatre would not be opened. The same ban was placed on Broadway Theatre. The owner of the latter had said he had heard rumors and did not want to have trouble. He had been advised to cut out these meetings. The meetings of the Federated Labor Party had been going on since April last and there had never been any trouble. The party was working for change by constitutional methods, but had to educate people who were at present voting for their own enemies. They knew the people they wanted to supersede would not be delighted, but they were using constitutional methods while their opponents were using other methods. He had almost offered to buy the Pantages. He found they were blocked somewhere. Then they had tried to get the Avenue. They had been told the mayor was out of town and therefore they could not get a permit. They had consequently advertised the Dominion Hall. Mr. Leithoff had told him that members of four organizations had warned him that if he did not close these meetings they would. Anarchists in high places believed that by wiping out the leaders they could wipe out the movement. Employers' associations believed that. The Great War Veterans were not mixed up with this thing. Gentlemen in the west end had been informed that there was to be a Bolsheviki outbreak on Saturday evening. Then the Sunday evening meetings were to be blamed for inciting Bolshevism. Then something was to be turned loose on the meetings. They quite understood why the soldiers should be pitched against them. They wanted to clear up who it was that started this thing. According to the mayor, some organizations in town must have proposed to carry on the riot. They wanted to know who they were.

Mayor Gale--Not organizations; individuals connected with organiza-



finite object behind this. It was recognized that once the soldiers and the workers got together the jig was up. They were going to use the ballot and change conditions in this country. There was not one labor organization that had not done its "damndest" for the returned men when they came back. In nearly every organization the initiation fees had been reduced to a minimum. The \$30 fee of the shipwrights of Victoria was made \$5 for the returned soldier, and if of ten men for a given job one was a returned soldier the soldier got the job first. Somebody was responsible for this propaganda and he set it down to the large employing interests.

Mr. S. Gothard, Comrades of the Great War, said the trouble was not with the men in that room and the Anglo-Saxons like them, whether Socialists or not, nor with the alien enemy, but with the neutral aliens who had come here from the United States to avoid conscription. He said the returned soldier was not against free speech, but he was against the alien who had crept in here and taken positions that rightfully belonged to the Anglo-Saxons. They were against the breed of military age who were protecting themselves by stiff fees for the I.W.W. and so forth, against the men coming back. He intimated that the soldiers were paying less attention to the Germans and Austrians than to the Swedes and Russian Finns.

Mr. Kavanagh advised cutting out the references to aliens and getting down to the question of what was the cause of this thing, which they had been invited there to discover.

### Mayor Not Stamped.

"You came here," said the Mayor, "to get a better understanding of each other." He had had serious troubles to contend with since he had taken office, but he had never been stamped and he was not stamped now, he continued. Taking cognizance of the reports that had reached him, he had done what it was his duty to do, to safeguard law and order. The reports had reached him not from irresponsible people only, and when he sized up the situation fairly well he had found the same reports had reached the Socialists, the war veterans, the comrades and other organizations. Prominent citizens had constantly called him up from the Wednesday to the Sunday. They were men who were not carried away by irresponsible rumor.

Mr. Kidd, of the B. C. E. R. Company, had told him that he had received four telephone messages that his plant would be wrecked if the meetings were not held. Rev. E. Thomas had received several messages of similar import.

If trouble had occurred and it had been known that he had done nothing he would be under the guns very severely. He was sure that now they understood each other more thoroughly they would turn a deaf ear to irresponsible rumors.

Organized labor must admit that he had never lent himself to any propaganda against it. He was not against labor or any other organization. The Great War Veterans said they had played no part in this matter. Mr. Gothard, for the Comrades of the Great War, said they had played no part as an organization. So did Mr. Mabbott for the Army and Navy Veterans. If the Labor and Socialist organizations had had any feeling to the contrary that had now been done away with. They had started on the right road and he hoped that that meeting would be followed by many similar meetings. Many people believed that the theatre meetings preached sedition. If the press were responsible for that impression then they must go to the press about it.

If Winnipeg had not happened they might have allowed the rumors to go by, but in view of what had taken place there an ounce of precaution had been deemed worth ten thousand pounds of cure.

### What the Chief Said.

His worship again asserted that the theatre managers had not closed their doors in response to official warnings. He had told the officials to make no suggestion officially or as private persons. Chief McRae had told one manager who rang him up to do as he pleased.

"What would you do?" the manager asked.

"I can't say what I would do as I am not a theatre manager," the chief had replied. Trades' Licence Inspector Jones had similarly refused to express himself.

His worship concluded by saying that he was not opposed to free speech.

Mr. David Ross, vice-president of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, said the mayor was the best man to clean up the situation. The