

LABOR DEPUTATION AT THE CAPITAL.

Claims of Workingmen Before the Ministers.

NEW ALIEN LABOR LAW.

To Prevent Men Being Brought in Under Contract.

Resolution Against Increasing the Tariff—Conciliation Act Amend- ments—Sir William Mulock's Re- ply.

(Special Despatches to The Globe.)

Ottawa, April 6.—Representatives of the Dominion Trades and Labor Congress paid their annual visit to the Government this morning, and presented a number of demands for legislative reforms. They were received by the Prime Minister, Sir Wm. Mulock and Hon. A. G. Blair.

Those who comprised the deputation were Messrs. John A. Flett, President, Hamilton; A. W. Puttee, M.P., Winnipeg; Ralph Smith, M.P., ex-President, Nanaimo; John G. O'Donoghue, legal adviser, Toronto; James B. Mack, Vice-President, Montreal; P. M. Draper, Secretary-Treasurer, and A. E. Spinard, Ottawa; Samuel Moore, Charles March, A. W. Holmes, W. V. Todd, D. J. O'Donoghue, Wm. Henderson, Robt. Glockling, and W. A. Douglass, Toronto; A. Garipey, J. A. Rodier, A. Mathieu and Wm. Gilmour, Montreal; P. C. Sharkey, St. John; J. McDonald, Halifax; John Collings, Charlottetown, and Nathan B. Leeman, Moncton, Mr. Emmer-son, M.P., was also present.

New Anti-contract Labor Bill.

Mr. J. G. O'Donoghue first submitted the draft of a proposed new anti-contract labor bill containing the following provisions:—"From and after the passing of this act it shall be unlawful for any person, company, partnership or corporation in any manner to prepay the transportation or in any way to assist or encourage the importation or immigration into Canada of any person who resides out of Canada, under contract or agreement, parole or special, express or implied, made previous to the importation or immigration of such person to perform labor or service in Canada.

"All contracts or agreements, express or implied, parole or special, hereafter made by and between any person, company, partnership or corporation and any person who resides out of Canada to perform labor or service or having reference to the performance of labor or service by any person in Canada previous to the importation or immigration of the person whose labor or service is contracted for shall be void and of no effect.

"It shall be deemed a violation of this act for any person, partnership, company or corporation to assist or encourage the importation or immigration into Canada of any person who resides out of Canada by promise of employment through advertisements printed or published out of Canada, and any such person coming to Canada in consequence of such an advertisement shall be treated as coming under contract as contemplated by this act, and the penalties by this act imposed shall be applicable in such case, provided that this section shall not apply to skilled labor not obtainable in Canada, as provided for by section 6 of this act."

Certain exceptions from the act were proposed, including skilled mechanics for new industries, domestics and immigrants.

Mr. O'Donoghue said that the present act was sought in place of the alien labor law, which was a dead letter. The proposed law applied not merely to aliens, but to persons residing out of Canada who were brought in under contract.

Sir Wilfrid—British subjects?

Mr. O'Donoghue—British subjects as well as foreigners.

A Serious Misstatement.

Mr. O'Donoghue charged that at Sydney several hundred negroes and Italians had been brought in under contract, and a Government officer was sent to act as interpreter.

Sir Wm. Mulock asked if the charge was actually made that a Government officer was sent to aid in the importation of these men. If so who was the officer?

Mr. Sharkey said that it was an interpreter in connection with the Immigration Office at St. John, N.B.

Hon. Mr. Blair said that when the interpreters were not engaged in Government work they were free to do any thing else they chose.

Sir Wm. Mulock to Mr. O'Donoghue—In view of this statement, do you consider the statement you made a fair presentation of the facts?

Mr. O'Donoghue—It certainly was not. He spoke, however, of the importation of men from Scotland by the Kingston Locomotive Works as affording ground for complaint.

The Conciliation Act.

Mr. A. W. Puttee, M.P., suggested a number of amendments to the conciliation act. These proposed that in case of a dispute it should be compulsory for the Minister of Labor to appoint a board of conciliation. Instead of arbitration being grounded only on the application of both parties, it should be conceded a demand of either party, and evidence should be taken under oath. Mr. Puttee also made the request that me-

chanics and laborers employed by the Government should be paid weekly.

Mr. Ralph Smith touched upon the complaint that the lands of Indians of Cowichan, B.C., had been encroached upon by white settlers.

Against Tariff Increases.

Mr. W. A. Douglass of Toronto moved a resolution condemning any increase in the tariff. He controverted statements made by the Manufacturers' Association of Canada. It was not true that trade injured trade. What injured trade were monopoly and extortion. The tariff might stand at 35 per cent., but it amounted to 50 per cent. if the goods had passed through the hands of the wholesaler and retailer. Whatever the wealthy manufacturer had to buy was on the free list. The things bought by the workingman were not on the free list, but what he had to sell, viz., his labor, always was. By reason of the immigration policy the workingman was exposed to the competition of the cheapest labor in the world.

Intercolonial Wages.

Mr. P. M. Draper brought up the case of the truckers and checkers on the Intercolonial. He asked that the wages of the former be advanced to the minimum of \$1.50, and of the latter to the minimum of \$40 per month. He said these men had been unable to obtain a hearing from the general manager until lately. When they did receive the deputation, Mr. Pottinger said they were getting more wages than they deserved. Mr. Blair ought to meet a committee of the congress in his office. "It is best to call a spade a spade," said the speaker. "I say that you as Minister of Railways have not given the consideration to these men that you should have given." Did Mr. Blair consider \$1.20 a day sufficiently high pay?

Ready to Hear Appeals.

Mr. Blair replied that some men might not be worth that; others might be worth it. Mechanics or laborers who worked for a limited period in the year ought, perhaps, to get more than those who had steady employment all the year round. He was willing that the intercolonial men should meet Mr. Pottinger, and if the result was not satisfactory, he was quite ready to hear their appeal.

Mr. Draper said there was a good deal of feeling in the Maritime Provinces on account of the way in which the intercolonial men had been treated.

Mr. Blair—I entirely contradict that. I know to the contrary.

Mr. Gilmour of Montreal asked that all Government employees be paid for holidays when the departments were closed down by order of the Government.

Another Misstatement Corrected.

Mr. Flett submitted a resolution alleging that the strike of machinists on the Kingston Locomotive Works had been brought about by the unfair attitude of the company in promoting handy men to positions that should be filled by machinists, and since the inauguration of the strike the company had imported machinists to the detriment of Canadian workingmen. It was also alleged that Government agents had been used to induce men to come to Canada to fill places of the strikers, and that the company had refused all offers of an amicable settlement, notwithstanding that the latter received from the Government large orders for goods at prices practically of their own making and much higher than they would receive elsewhere.

Hon. Mr. Blair corrected a misstatement in the resolution. The Kingston Locomotive Works, he said, was the only place where locomotives were manufactured in this country. Before giving them contracts for the locomotives inquiry was made as to the prices at which they could be obtained in the United States, and the Kingston company agreed to manufacture them for an even lower price.

Sir William Mulock and Sir Wilfrid Laurier asked if the labor men wanted the Government to give contracts to the United States.

Mr. Flett said not if the wages paid at Kingston were fair. The present resolution asked that goods needed for the use of this country might be purchased from companies that give due regard to Canadian workmen.

Mr. Blair thought he might do so where no prejudicial results would be likely to follow.

Mr. Flett—That's not satisfactory.

Mr. Blair—I am not going to make any promise unless I am fully aware of all the facts.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier to Mr. Flett—The Minister's statement ought to be satisfactory to you.

Mr. Sharkey (St. John) complained that the Longshoremens' International Union, composed of bona fide citizens of St. John, N. B., were being discriminated against in the loading and unloading of subsidized steamers.

Mr. Henderson of Toronto presented a petition, asking for more pay for the letter carriers.

Mr. D. J. O'Donoghue brought forward the last subject, which was in favor of having all union labels legally registered by the Dominion Government. He explained what was desired, and, walking forward to the Premier, placed in his hand a cigar with a union label on it, observing as he did: "Sir Wilfrid, you will know the union label after this." Mr. O'Donoghue also submitted a sample of the Tailors' Union label.

Sir William Mulock's Reply.

Sir William Mulock, Minister of Labor, replied at considerable length. He said the Government recognized how much the welfare of the country depended upon having a contented and thriving industrial class, and also recognized the deputation as having that end in view. The proposed anti-contract labor bill introduced a new principle. The alien labor law now or the statute book was designed for the protection of our own people and to accord to American workingmen entering Canada the same treatment that was extended to our workingmen who entered the United States.

It was now proposed, with certain exceptions, to make a penalty for anyone to come to Canada under contract. Had the labor congress considered the far-reaching effect of such a law? The farmers of this country were suffering from a lack of sufficient labor to cultivate the soil. If this law passed the farmers could not import laborers to help them on their farms. Industry labor was dependent upon the success of the farming industry, and yet it was here proposed to kill the goose which laid the golden eggs. What would thousands of people who were coming here from Great Britain think of such a proposition? Would it not tend to check the tide of emigration now setting in towards Canada, and which had reached proportions never before attained? As to the proposed change in the conciliation act, it was better to bring about improvements by friendly discussion. If there was fric-

tion you could not achieve that desirable result. The Government should be left free to intervene for the settlement of labor disputes at the proper, at the psychological, moment, if he might use the term. There should be no compulsion about it. The case with respect to disputes on railways was different, for the public was one of the parties primarily interested in strikes or disputes on railways.

Registration of Industries.

"I have been thinking," continued Mr. Mulock, "whether it would not be possible to put a permissive act on the statute book allowing industries to register, and there would be a provision whereby we could interfere whenever there was a dispute, and there might be an arbitration and recommendations made. Whether that would be productive of any good remains to be seen. I throw it out as a hint which perhaps you might think worth while discussing at your next congress." The suggestion that employees in the departments be paid weekly had some merit. In the Postoffice Department salaries were now paid fortnightly. As to the matter of Chinese and Japanese immigration a law had been introduced which would practically prohibit the entrance of Chinese into Canada. "In regard to Mr. Douglass' views about the tariff," observed Sir William, "he is familiar, perhaps, with the views of the Liberal party on that question, and I need add nothing here."

Mr. Douglass—We want you to do better.

Sir William, continuing, said they might regard Mr. Blair's answer a satisfactory one as to the fair wages being adopted by the Railway Department. Regarding the complaint from St. John, N.B., it would be looked into, if complaint were made to the Department of Labor. Touching the petition from the letter carriers for increased wages, he desired to state what had already been done. Under the act of last year carriers could after four years' service attain a maximum of \$626 per annum. If their conduct was satisfactory they got a bonus of \$20, and they were supplied with uniforms costing, say, about \$30 or \$40. There must be harmony between the wages paid by the Government and the general run of wages throughout the country, and it would be difficult perhaps to find throughout Canada any class of wage-earners who were doing better than the letter carriers. Notwithstanding the attempts to show that they were badly paid, he was getting applications all the time from persons who desired to join. This did not look as if the outside public considered the service was badly paid. It had been found necessary to do away with the payment of letter carriers when they were sick, and he was not prepared to recede from that position.

As to the question of the union label the law had passed the House of Commons twice, but was thrown out by the Senate. The Senate was now much improved, and perhaps if the law were reintroduced it might stand a better chance. (Applause.)