

BUILDERS EXPLAIN REFUSAL TO GIVE MEN WAGE BOOST

Assert Most of Union Members
Are Austrians and
Germans

Claiming that a large percentage of the building laborers' union is composed of alien enemies, Austrians and Germans, "who only escape internment by regularly reporting themselves to the alien enemy registrar," the Winnipeg Builders' Exchange, in a statement issued today, justifies its recent refusal to treat with them in the matter of increased wages. The statement follows:

"The officers and members of the Winnipeg Builders' exchange feel that in view of the present labor troubles some statement is due the public as to our attitude.

"The Winnipeg Builders' exchange has always endeavored to deal fairly with the employes of its members. We have always met and arranged wages and working agreements with responsible unions and have had very little trouble in the past with them.

Give Carpenters' Raise

"In August, 1916, the carpenters' union came to us and stated that they felt that they were fully organized, had a large membership of good and honorable mechanics who were residents of Winnipeg and felt that the exchange should give them—as they had given to the other responsible unions—an agreement setting out their standard of wages and their hours of working. This was done and an agreement made to remain in full effect until August, 1918.

"The bricklayers, stonemasons, stonecutters, hoisting engineers, and practically all of the mechanical trades have the last few months been granted an increase of from 5 to 10 per cent. Without request made an increase has been granted the building laborers of 20 to 25 per cent, since the beginning of the war to meet the increased cost of living. All arrangements seemed to be satisfactory for the season 1917.

"Some few weeks ago we were asked by an association known as the Federation of Building Trades to meet and discuss wages and working conditions with the building laborers' union. It was not generally known that there was such a union in existence. Upon inquiry we were creditably informed that a majority of the members of this union were alien enemies, carrying registration cards and reporting daily or weekly as the case might be, to the internment officer or chief of police. The

members did not feel that the exchange should give any recognition to a union composed of this class of people at this time.

Laborers' Ultimatum

"Several weeks ago we were notified by this federation of building trades that unless we granted this union, composed principally of Austrians and Germans, a wage of 40 cents an hour, a nine-hour day, time and one-half for overtime and double time for Sundays and holidays, they would lay down their tools and refuse to work after Tuesday, June 26, at 10 o'clock.

"At the appointed hour they laid down their tools and quit work. Following this the mechanical tradesmen, who were satisfied with their wages and working conditions, quit work in sympathy with the members of the building laborers' union, without notice.

"We feel that the deplorable cir-

cumstance is that the mechanical trades have been brought into this—we know for a fact against the wishes of the best members of these unions—and forced to lend their aid to the support of men who are clamoring for more pay so that they can send more money home to help carry on the war against our country.

“We are sorry if any owners or the public are in the least inconvenienced in this matter, but we feel that what we are doing is in the best interests of our clients and the general public and that we should have the support and confidence of the people.”