

Labour Day

The dawn of Labour's National Holiday will be welcomed by the toiling masses of our vast Dominion. Labour Day marks a new epoch in the history of the industrial classes, for till the end of time, once each year they will rest from toil and in countless thousands celebrate the progress of their industrial emancipation.

That Parliament has made Labour Day a national holiday is a tardy recognition of those noble beings who in the past, through vituperation and calumny, suffered persecution for defending the rights and liberties of men, and who claimed that the Trade Union was destined to develop the highest types of manhood in the march of civilization, and as feudalism allowed barbarism, so education and enlightenment would tend slowly but successfully bring about the freedom of thought and action which asserts the equality of rights before the law.

Trades unionism is not a visionary theory, to be spoken of contemptuously as an "ism." It is a fact, founded on principles of justice, law, and truth. It is cosmopolite in tenet rather than dogmatic, and regards the interest of mankind, rather than of this own class or kind. It is open to the world, regardless of sex, colour, nationality or political affiliation. In its organization it is as lawfully and holy as the church. It takes no private road; it seeks to guard the interests of the weak and helpless. It is not a secret oath-bound cabal, its councils being private only in the sense which is proper in conducting the affairs of a firm or corporation. The trades union typifies the fullest and broadest sense of the brotherhood of man.

Preamble

In order to better protect the workers, artisans and labourers in the struggle now going on in the civilized world between the oppressor and the oppressed, between the capitalist and the labourer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to the toilers if they are not combined for mutual protection and benefit.

It therefore behoves the representatives of the Trades and Labour Unions of this city in Council assembled to adopt such principles among the mechanics and labourers as will permanently unite them to secure the recognition of the rights to which they are justly entitled.

We therefore declare ourselves in favour of the formation of a central body embracing every Trade and Labour Organization in the city organized under the trades union system to be known as the Trades and Labour Council of Hamilton. Its work should be to bring all trades together in closer unity for the better protection of our interests as workmen and for the wider extension of the principles of trade unionism, so that all organized bodies of labour may take common cause, and that none may suffer for want of that practical and pecuniary assistance which isolated and detached, we cannot secure, and which united and consolidated, we are the more likely to obtain. It is most natural and assimilative form of bringing the trade and labour unions together, at the same time preserving the industrial autonomy and distinctive character of each trade and labour union, and without doing violence to their respective constitution or traditions, blends them all in one harmonious whole – a federation of labour.

With such a body we should look to the organization of the unorganized working people in our city. Isolated labour in conflict with consolidated capital in many cases has been driven to the wall, and defeated for a time, until thoroughly and permanently organized. A systematic propaganda can be inaugurated that would strengthen and enliven all the unions, by the distribution of trade union literature and creating a public demand for union goods and union labels, a reduction of the hours of labour so that the toiler may participate in the benefits of labour-saving machinery.

Declaration of Principles

1. While opposed to entering any political party as a body, we declare it to be our duty to use our influence with the lawmaking powers to secure the following objects: The adoption of proper laws regulating the hours constituting a day's work; reforms in prison labour so as to prevent the product of convict labour coming into competition with honest industry; and such other laws as may be beneficial.

2. We declare it the duty of every workingman to use his utmost endeavours to secure the amelioration of the condition of the labouring classes generally, and to accomplish this we believe that a central organization should exist, whereby all branches of labour may form allies to any particular one that may be oppressed.

3. We hereby pledge ourselves to assist each other in securing fair wages by honourable means, and we shall withdraw and use our influence to have others withdraw all patronage from any unfair employer, let his calling be what it may.

4. We declare that all existing beneficial labour laws should be rigidly enforced, and we pledge ourselves to take such measures as will secure their enforcement.

5. We are in favour of arbitration whenever differences exist between employers and employed.

6. We favour productive and distributive co-operation and the self-employment of labour, as only complete independence can be obtained when the labourer is no longer dependent on other individuals for the right to work; and especially do we recommend that whenever trades strike for the accomplishment of any just purpose, if the funds of the organization will allow it, the resistance, instead of being passive, should become active and aggressive, by using the funds productively instead of unproductively.

7. That we favour day labour in preference to contracts on all works of a public character.

8. We favour the ownership and operation by municipalities or by the provincial or national governments of all natural monopolies such as electric light works, street railways, the postal, the telephone and telegraph systems, steam and electric railways, etc.