The First Convention of the American Federation of Labor


(Continued from October issue p. 233.)

On Wednesday morning, November 17, the convention met to "transact the real business for which they were called together—the adoption of a plan of organization and a platform of declaration of principles," (148) with President Jarrett in the chair. (149)

"The minutes of the previous day were read, corrected and approved." (150)

"The reports of Committees being called for, Mr. Brant from the Committee on Plan of Organization, reported the chairman absent." (151)

"Mr. Leffingwell, Chairman of the Committee on Platform of Principles, announced that the committee was not yet ready to report." (152)

Mr. Brant offered a resolution providing for the exchange of appropriate greetings with British unionists, which was adopted, and read another resolution from a Detroit union, which was referred to the proper committee. (153)

Mr. Daniel Rodgers moved the appointment of a committee to draft resolutions of sympathy with D. R. Jones, President-elect of the local Miners' association, which was adopted and the committee appointed. (154)

(148) Quoting Commercial Gazette, November 18, 1881.

(149) Proceedings, page 15; Evening Chronicle, November 17; omitted elsewhere.

(150) Quoting Proceedings, page 15. Fact stated in Evening Chronicle, November 17; Commercial Gazette, November 18; Freiheits Freund, November 18. Omitted in remaining three papers.

(151) Item omitted in all six papers. Proceedings, page 15, quoted.

(152) Quoting Proceedings, page 15. Item omitted in all six papers.


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“Mr. Gompers, Chairman of the Committee on Plan of Organization, announced that the committee was ready to report, and submitted the first article as follows:” (155)

“This association shall be known as “The Federation of Organized Trades Unions of the United States of America and Canada,” and shall consist of such Trades Unions as shall, after being duly admitted, conform to its rules and regulations, and pay all contributors required to carry out the objects of this Federation.” (156)

“A motion was made to adopt the article as read, and discussion ensued.” (157) This discussion which ensued was probably the liveliest and most electric of the convention and touched upon matters which might have endangered federation. It is worth giving in full.

“Mr. Weber hoped that the name of the Federation would read so as to include all laboring people.” (158)

“Mr. Kinear: I want this organization to reach all men who labor, such as the ‘longshoremen in our seaport towns. For that reason, I desire the article so amended as to read ‘Trades and Labor Unions.’” (159)

(155) Quoting Proceedings, page 15. The Evening Chronicle, November 17, says, “the following preamble”. The Telegraph, November 17, says, “a partial report”. The Commercial Gazette, November 18, says, “the first article of the plan organization”. The Freiheits Freund, November 18, says, “following report”. The Daily Post, November 18, says, “a scheme for permanent organization”. The Times, November 19, says, “the following preamble”.

(156) Found, Proceedings, pp. 4,15. Correctly given in Evening Chronicle, November 17; Daily Post, November 18, and Times, November 18. The Telegraph leaves out the words “Of America” while the Commercial Gazette, November 18, and the Freiheits Freund, November 18, says, “the federation” instead of “this federation”, both minor errors, but of the kind which has sorely tried many editors of ancient manuscripts.

(157) Quoting Proceedings, page 15. The discussion is given in detail here; in Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18; and the gist of it in the Times, November 18. The Telegraph, November 17; Commercial Gazette, November 18; and Daily Post, November 18, omitting all names, summarize the results of the debate.


(159) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Entirely omitted elsewhere. This Massachusetts suggestion struck the keynote of objection and was later moved and adopted.
“Mr. Grandeson (the colored delegate) of Pittsburgh: We have in the city of Pittsburgh many men in our organization who have no particular trade, but should not be excluded from the Federation. Our object is, as I understand it, to federate the whole laboring element of America. I speak more particularly with a knowledge of my own people, and declare to you that it would be dangerous to skilled mechanics to exclude from this organization the common laborers, who might, in an emergency, be employed in positions they could readily qualify themselves to fill.” (160)

“Mr. Pollinger: (161) We recognize neither creed, color nor nationality, but want to take into the fields of this Federation the whole labor element of the country, no matter of what calling; for that reason the name should read, ‘Trades and Labor Unions.’” (162)

“Mr. Gompers: The expressions of the section seem to me to be not thoroughly understood. We do not want to exclude any working man who believes in and belongs to organized labor.” (163)

“Mr. Jarrett said he was in favor of accepting all men who worked for a living and belonged to an organized body of workers, but did not want to include those who would not work and maintain themselves.” (164)

“Mr. Cowan: Do you want to exclude miners? We have many thousands of them, and we want them in this Federation. You will find them to be worthy your attention.” (165)

(160) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Entirely omitted elsewhere. This speech is prescient in regard to later evolution of the American Federation of Labor, and the question of negro labor in the North. Here crops up the great question of unskilled and unorganized labor.

(161) This name does not appear on the list of accredited delegates, Proceedings, pp. 7-9.

(162) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.

(163) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.

(164) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.

(165) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
"A Voice: That is a trade." (166)

"Messrs. Byrne, Tomelson, McKean and Conway gave expression in favor of amending the name to include Labor Unions." (167)

"Mr. Conway of Pennsylvania: The miners are not recognized in that preamble, although there are ten thousand miners represented on this floor." (168)

"The Chair: The miners have always been recognized as belonging to a trade." (169)

"Mr. James Lynch: I think trade organizations covers the whole matter, and will reach the objects of the Congress." (170)

"Mr. Dwyer: Am I to understand that local Unions, not attached to national or international organizations, are debarred from representation by the section reported?" (171)

"A Voice: No; we want you, also." (172)

"Mr. Dwyer: I represent a local organization, the Painters' Union of Chicago. Are they to be excluded because they do not belong to a national or international organiza-

(166) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
(167) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
(168) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Times, November 18, says, "Mr. Conway wanted to know why the miners were not recognized in the preamble." Item omitted in three remaining papers and in Proceedings, page 16, except in so far as in citation immediately preceding.
(170) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. The Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18, give the remarks of Mr. Lynch as "I contend that Trades Unionism is the one vital principle on which we should found a Federation". The Times, November 18, says, "Mr. Lynch wanted Trades Unionism as a basis of Federation". At this point in particular, but elsewhere in general, it would seem that morning papers made much use of printed material in papers of the preceding afternoon. Item here cited is omitted in the three remaining papers.
(171) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
(172) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
tion?"  (173)

"Mr. Henneberry: I am in favor of helping any body and everybody, but let all trades join their respective national organizations."  (174)

"Mr. Layton of Pennsylvania: There seems to be something singular about the manner in which we are changing base. This Congress was widely advertised as a Labor Congress and now we are talking about trades. Why not make the Knights of Labor the basis for the Federation."  (175)

"Mr. Michaels of Pennsylvania: That is my view of the case exactly. This is a Labor Congress and should remain so."  (176)

"Mr. Dewey: I would like the name of the Federation to read, 'Trades and Labor Unions.'"  (177)

"Mr. Pollner to Mr. Dewey: Amend so that it be 'Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions.'"  (178)

(173) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
(174) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers. Mr. Henneberry represented the Coopers International Union of North America. Here we have a direct clash, between simple and more complete labor organization.
(175) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17; Times, November 18, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. Layton represented the K. of L. This, of course, is what might be not improperly termed a dying gasp of the nearly defunct Knights of Labor. I have preferred to follow here the papers. The minutes have the appearance of being edited and expurgated. The omission of the next item is significant. But this may be newspaper effort to put something significant in Layton's remarks. The Proceedings, page 16, cite Layton as saying, "I am opposed to excluding from the Federation all organizations except those of skilled mechanism. The Knights of Labor wish to be with you, and they embrace all laborers".
(176) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Times, November 18, gives the last part of the statement. Omitted elsewhere. Note that Michel's name is again misspelled, if we take for granted that the names were correct on the credentials, as per list Proceedings, pp. 7-9. Mr. Michels also belonged to the Knights of Labor. In fact, 45 of the 107 delegates, all but 3 from Western Pennsylvania, belonged to the Knights of Labor. Cf. Proceedings, pp. 7-9.
(177) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Mr. Dewey belonged to the K. of L. Times, December 18, says, "Mr. Dorey".
(178) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.
"Mr. Dewey: I do make the amendment as suggested."  
(179)

"Mr. Brant: That suits me exactly. I wish this Federation broad enough to encompass all working people in its folds."  
(180)

On a vote this amendment was unanimously adopted, after some discussion on a parliamentary point, (181) and the article as amended, adopted.  
(182)

"By this time the Special Committee, to draft resolutions of sympathy with D. R. Jones, was announced, and the Chairman of the Committee on Plan of Organization gave way to the report of that committee."  
(183)

Jones was lying on a sick bed very ill from smallpox.  
(184) The resolutions (185) state that Jones was "a stalwart champion of industrial liberty and a martyr to the oppressive conspiracy law with which the statute books of Pennsylvania are disgraced," (186) an implication that he caught the smallpox in some house of detention. The reso-

(179) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. The Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18, say, "Mr. Dewey: I move that the preamble be amended by the use of the words 'organized trade and labor unions'". The Times, November 18, has the same statement in the third person. I have followed the minutes, but it should not be overlooked that Mr. Pollner mentioned above was one of the secretaries who assisted "in completing the minutes"; Proceedings, page 24.

(180) Quoting Proceedings, page 16. Item omitted in all six papers.

(181) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17. The Freiheits Freund, November 18, gives the first part of the statement. The Proceedings, page 16, give in detail the parliamentary point discussion which was about the effect of a call for the previous question the decision of Gompers (a great parliamentarian) then temporarily in the chair being sustained. On the amendment and its adoption a summary is found in varying and fairly accurate language though the German paper incorrectly uses the word "trade" instead of its plural.

(182) Quoting Proceedings, page 16.

(183) Quoting Proceedings, page 16.

(184) Commercial Gazette, November 18; Times, November 18; item omitted in Proceedings, page 16, and elsewhere.

(185) Given in full, Proceedings, pp. 16-17, and Telegraph, November 17. The resolutions are mentioned in all six papers generally under the characterization of sympathy.

(186) But for the fact that the Telegraph, November 17, gives the resolution in full, no paper mentions this allegation.
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olution "was unanimously adopted." (187)

"The Chairman of the Committee on Plan of Organization resumed his report." (188)

"Article 2, 'Objects,' and Article 3, 'Sessions,' were adopted without debate," according to the Proceedings. (189)

Avoiding the enumeration in the Proceedings, (190) and using merely the language which is accurate and identically given in five (191) of the six papers, article two was as follows: "The objects of this Federation shall be the encouragement and formation of Trades and Labor Unions; the encouragement and formation of Trades and Labor Assemblies and Councils; the encouragement and formation of National and International Trades and Labor Unions; to secure legislation favorable to the interests of the industrial classes."

Article three as reported in the Proceedings, page 4, and verbatim in five newspapers, (192) was as follows: "The sessions of the Federation shall be held annually, on the third Tuesday in November, at such place as the delegates have selected at the preceding Congress."

Mr. Lynch of New York made the following remarks concerning this article: "I believe it would be better to

(188) Quoting Proceedings, page 17. The chairman was Gompers, according to Proceedings, page 12. The Evening Chronicle, November 17, the Freiheits Freund, November 18, and the Times, November 18, say Mr. Howard submitted the matter. Since the Times had no reporter present and the Freiheits Freund apparently depends upon the Evening Chronicle at many points, it has seemed best here to follow the Proceedings.
(189) Page 17. As will be noted, they were not adopted without opposition or comment.
(190) Page 4.
(191) Evening Chronicle, November 17; Commercial Gazette, November 18; Freiheits Freund, November 18; Daily Post, November 18; Times, November 18. For some reason not apparent this matter is omitted in the Telegraph. All five papers say "objects" instead of "object". They also use the word "Trade" instead of the word "Trades" and all add the words "and Labor" in connection with National and International Trades Unions.
(192) Omitted only in the Telegraph.
hold the session in October in order that we might confer with candidates before election, as to what course they will follow. I make an amendment to that effect." (193)

"On a vote this amendment was lost, and the articles, as above, were adopted." (194)

The Proceedings, page 17, says, "This Committee not being prepared to report further, and no further business being presented, the Congress, at 11:30 A. M., adjourned until 1:00 P. M.

The newspapers, however, mention other business presented as follows:

"Mr. Somers of Joliet, Illinois, offered a resolution asking that a tariff plank be embodied in the declaration of principles, after which a recess was taken until one o'clock." (195)

The Congress was called to order at one o'clock with Vice President Gompers in the chair. (196)

"The consideration of the plan of organization was then taken up, and the fourth section as follows was read: (197a)

"Article 4. The basis of representation in the sessions of this Federation shall be, for National or International Trades and Labor Unions, one delegate for 5,000 members or major portion thereof, above the first 5,000. For local

(193) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Times, November 18, says, "Mr. Lynch moved to amend by fixing the date of the sessions in October to give an opportunity for sounding candidates as to their beliefs". Omitted in Proceedings and three remaining papers.

(194) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Times, November 18, correctly summarizes this fact. Omitted in Proceedings and remaining three papers.

(195) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, Commercial Gazette, November 18, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Times, November 18, says, "A resolution demanding a protective tariff was offered and the Congress adjourned".

(196) Proceedings, page 17; Evening Chronicle, November 17; Commercial Gazette, November 18; Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Times, November 18, omits the latter item. Item wholly omitted elsewhere.

(197a) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. In different language this fact is found in Proceedings, page 17; Telegraph, November 18; Commercial Gazette, November 18; and Times, November 18. The Daily Post is not chronological at this point.
Trades Assemblies or Councils, one delegate. No local trade or labor union shall be entitled to a representation in the sessions of this Federation where International or National Unions of said craft exist, or where there are trades assemblies or councils in the locality. (197b)

"Mr. Kinnear moved to adopt as read." (198)

"Mr. Weber objected to the article, saying that by its terms, the larger the constituency the smaller would be the proportionate representation, which he did not think would conduce to the objects desired." (199)

"Mr. Pollner spoke in favor of the article if amended so as to give one delegate for every additional 2,500 above 5,000." (200)

"Mr. Erb advocated its adoption as read." (201)

"Mr. Gompers supported the report, explaining its adaptability." (202)

"Mr. James Lynch supported the report." (203) He said, "The purpose of this Congress is to centralize labor, to combine in order to protect our rights from possible encroachments on the part of capitalists; it is for the purpose of bringing isolated unions together, to join organizations of craftsmen in different parts of the country." (204)
Mr. Rankin remarked, "We want to combine all trade and labor organizations into a National Association which shall have powers to act for all. Delegates must be elected to our Congress with power to act for their trades and sign necessary agreements. This power should belong to the highest executive body of the different organizations, and they should therefore select the delegates to the Congress." (205)

"Mr. McBride of Pennsylvania: So far as the Knights of Labor are concerned, we are not afraid; we have a national organization made up of delegates, which is divided into local assemblies, which are classified according to the different trades." (206)

"Mr. Powers of Illinois: I hold that local trades unions if they number twenty-five members can send a delegate to the Congress." (207)

"Mr. Breman of Pennsylvania: I believe it would be better to have them represented by classifying the trades, and then making representation according to the states. I do not think that a delegate representing twenty-five workingmen should have the same power as the representative of 10,000 workingmen." (208)

"Mr. Cummin objected to select bodies, like Interna-

bring isolated unions together, and to join organizations of craftsmen in different parts of the country". The italics are mine. Mr. Lynch's speech is omitted in the Proceedings, page 17, and the entire item in remaining three papers.

(205) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Commercial Gazette, November 18, says, "Mr. Rankin offered the article stating that the power of the Federation shall belong to the highest executive body of the different organizations, and they should therefore select the delegates to the Congress". The Proceedings, page 17, merely says, "Mr. Rankin wished to know how delegates were to be elected, by local or international unions."

(206) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. Item omitted in Proceedings, page 17, and elsewhere. This is a recrudescence of the spirit of the Knights of Labor.

(207) Quoting Evening Chronicle, November 17, and Freiheits Freund, November 18. The Commercial Gazette, November 18, puts the information in the third person.

tional Unions, having the choosing of delegates, and stated that they should insist on all members having a voice in electing representatives to this Congress." (209)

"Mr. Stewart took the same stand as Mr. Cummin." (210)

"The main question was called for, and ordered put. On a vote being taken, the article was rejected by 50 against 28." (211)

The consideration of this article evidently consumed about two hours. (212)

According to the Commercial Gazette, November 18, which alone reports the item, "Mr. Gompers called attention to the necessity of incorporating some basis of representation into the plan."

Mr. Brant offered a substitute for Article 4, as reported by the Committee. (213)

"Mr. Brant spoke at length in favor of the adoption of the substitute. The representation was the same as that allowed by the English Federation, and it had been successful. He thought that if there was any danger of the Congress being captured by the enemies of labor it would be greatly increased if that Congress was composed of a small

(209) Quoting Proceedings, page 17. Item omitted in all six papers.

(210) Quoting Proceedings, page 17. Item omitted in all six papers.

(211) Quoting Proceedings, page 17. The Telegraph, November 18, says, "The matter was finally referred back to the Committee to be reported to-day". The Commercial Gazette, November 18, says, "When a vote was taken the section was rejected by fifty nays to twenty-eight ayes. The Freiheits Freund also gives the vote. Omitted in remaining three papers.

(212) The Evening Chronicle, November 18, mentions three o'clock as the time when other business was taken up. The Telegraph, November 18, says, "the afternoon was spent by the Labor Congress in discussing the fourth section", though it includes a volume of other items. The Commercial Gazette say, "The debate continued until after three o'clock. Times, November 17, says, "a discussion which took up the time until four o'clock. Item omitted elsewhere.

(213) Commercial Gazette, November 18; Proceedings, page 17; Freiheits Freund, November 18. The resolution given in both places was not adopted and is therefore not quoted. It is not given in the remaining four papers. The Times, November 18, erroneously says this scheme was adopted.
number of delegates; but there was absolutely no danger if the body was large.” (214)

"Mr. Jarrett here resumed the chair." (215)

"Mr. Gompers did not think Mr. Brant's substitute a fair one, as, if it were adopted, one class of men would always be more numerously represented than the other. In fact, the substitute gave the next city in which the Congress was held absolute control of the body, as every insignificant local union, if it had not more than a half dozen members, would send delegates, while unions at a distance could not afford to do so. The Congress he thought should be representative in its character, and the entire body of workingmen should be benefited no matter where they were located.” (216)

"Mr. Crawford raised the point of order that this proposition must be referred back to the committee which was sustained.” (217)

At this juncture, a resolution of sympathy from the Confederation of Labor of Washington was read and ordered received and filed. (218)

"The report of the Committee on Plan of Organization was resumed.” (219)

"Articles 5 and 6 were adopted as read.” (220) These

(214) Quoting Commercial Gazette, November 18. Item omitted elsewhere.
(216) Quoting Commercial Gazette, November 18. The Proceedings, page 17, merely says, "Mr. Gompers opposed the proposed article as an unjust basis", a much less valuable statement, due either to poor reporting, or editing to avoid offense to the Pittsburgh delegation in this Congress which numbered 69 of the 107 present, according to Proceedings, pp. 7-9.
(217) Quoting Proceedings, page 17. The Commercial Gazette, November 18, says, "At this point the substitute was referred to the committee". Cf. Freiheits Freund, November 18; and Telegraph, November 18, already cited.
(218) Resolution in full in Proceedings, page 17, and in outline in Commercial Gazette, November 18. Omitted elsewhere. The Commercial Gazette says, "A number of delegates were in favor of tabling the communication because it was not gotten up in official style, but it was finally received".
(219) Quoting Proceedings, page 17.
(220) Quoting Proceedings, page 17. This action is mentioned in Evening Chronicle, November 18.
articles were as follows:

"Article 5, Officers. At the annual sessions of this Federation, the delegates shall elect a Legislative Committee consisting of five delegates, one of whom shall be the Federation Secretary, and who shall be elected separately."

"Article 6, Section 1—Duties. The duties of the Legislative Committee shall be to exercise a supervision over the organization, and the execution of its laws, and to carry out such instructions as may, from time to time, be given them at the sessions of this Federation. Section 2. The Legislative Committee shall choose from among themselves a chairman, first and second vice-chairman, and treasurer for the ensuing year."  

(221) Quoting Proceedings, page 4. The Evening Chronicle, November 18, gives these articles in full sense, but inaccurate copy. The Commercial Gazette has language identical with that of the Evening Chronicle. In addition, however, this journal contains some interesting comment under the caption "Applying the Gag Law", as follows: "By this time it was four o'clock, and the whole day had been consumed in the discussion of four or five subjects. President Jarrett took the chair, however, and by a little resource, succeeded in expediting business wonderfully. At a previous meeting a rule had been adopted making it imperative for a vote to be taken whenever seven members called for the 'question'. This rule had not been enforced by Mr. Cooper's, but when President Jarrett took the chair he enforced it in a manner that made it resemble a self-inflicted gag law. As soon as a question had been stated he would ask 'Are you ready for the question?' Immediately the question would be called for by a number of delegates who thought that by so doing they would place the motion in proper shape for debate. But Mr. Jarrett was not of the same mind, and the last three sections of the 'plan' were railroaded through with a speed that was highly creditable to Mr. Jarrett's conception of the rule, but not entirely satisfactory to the delegates who thought that they should be permitted to air their opinions on every question that came before the House'. This paper calls Articles V and VI "the last three sections", an error. There were more to come. The Daily Post gives the two articles in identical form with the Evening Chronicle and the Commercial Gazette, evidence probably of either triplicate copy or later editing of the minutes by the secretaries. Omitted in remaining three papers.

At a later point in sequence the Telegraph, November 18, remarks, "The disposition of the delegates to indulge in lengthy debate threatened to carry the sessions over to next week, and President Jarrett had to enforce the rule requiring a vote to be taken on the call of seven delegates. By
"This was as far as the report had been prepared, (222) and the report of the committee, to whom was referred resolutions of sympathy with Ireland, was called for." (223)

The resolutions were as follows:

"Whereas, We greatly deplore the unjust land laws that have been enforced against the Irish people in the past; and

"Whereas, Hundreds of Ireland's honest spirits now suffer an unjust imprisonment in consequence of their heroic attempts to ameliorate the condition of her oppressed people; therefore, be it

"Resolved, That we extend to these champions, battling in the cause of human liberty, our hearty sympathy, and that we also extend to the oppressed of all nations struggling for liberty and right, the same encouraging words of sympathy." (224)

The resolution as read was adopted, (225) though the Commercial Gazette (226) adds the remarks, "The substitute was railroaded through—although several delegates wished to speak on the subject, and one proposed an amendment. The action on the part of the chairman doubtless saved a hot discussion, but it did not meet with the approval of some of the members." (227)
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"Mr. Leffingwell, Chairman of the Committee on Platform, presented his report. A motion to consider the sections seriatim prevailed." (228)

A motion to reconsider the closing of debate on the call of seven members was made and lost. (229)

Since this report embodies the principles of the American Federation of Labor at its very beginning it must be given even at the risk of prolixity.

The first part of the report was a long preamble as follows:

"Whereas, A struggle is going on in the nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and the oppressed of all countries, a struggle between capital and labor, which must grow in intensity from year to year and work disastrous results to the toiling millions of all nations if not combined for mutual protection and benefit. The history of the wage-workers of all countries is but the history of constant struggle and misery engendered by ignorance and disunion; whereas the history of the non-producers of all ages proves that a minority, thoroughly organized, may work wonders for good or evil. It behooves the representatives of the workers of North America in Congress assembled, to adopt such measures and disseminate such principles among the people of our country as will unite them for all time to come, to secure the recognition of the rights to which they are justly entitled. Conforming to the old adage, "In union there is strength", the formation of a Federation embracing every trade and labor organization in North America, a union founded upon a basis as broad as the land we live in, is our only hope. The past history of Trade Unions proves that small organizations, well conducted, have accomplished great good, but their efforts have not been of that lasting character which a thorough unification of all the different branches of industrial workers is bound to secure.

(228) Quoting Proceedings, page 18. The sequence of this report is given, Evening Chronicle, November 18; Telegraph, November 18; Commercial Gazette, November 18; Freiheits Freund, November 18; Daily Post, November 18; Times, November 18.

Conforming to the spirit of the times and the necessities of the industrial classes, we make the following Platform."

On this preamble there is a significant editorial in the *Telegraph*, November 18, which may well be inserted here even with the bad effect of breaking in between the preamble and the resolutions attached thereto. It is as follows: "The Labor Congress yesterday adopted a platform of principles, having in view the encouragement of Trades Unions and Labor Assemblies, and the securing of 'legislation favorable to the interests of the industrial classes.' While it enunciates some principles which public sentiment will scarcely endorse, it contains much that is good. It bears evidence that the Congress is better versed in purely industrial matters than in the true principles of American political policy. Class legislation is unquestionably pernicious in any and every view in which it may be considered, and legislation to favor the industrial classes is equally wrong in principle with legislation to favor any other class. If we remember rightly, the efforts of industrial reformers have been long directed toward the evils of class legislation, wherein laws have been enacted favoring as they claimed, the capitalistic class. It is singular that a representative body of the best minds among these reformers should have been so shortsighted as to openly announce for their object the securing of the same species of legislation which its members have so long and justly denounced. There is no doubt that it is desirable that the condition of all those who labor should be improved, but the improvement, to be beneficial, must come through the usual channels. If we read the preamble of the platform correctly, it breathes a spirit of conflict rather than pacification, more of the principle that might makes right than that right makes might. It says, 'A struggle is going on in the nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and oppressed of all countries, a struggle between capital and labor which must grow in intensity from year

(230) The preamble is found, *Proceedings*, page 3; *Evening Chronicle*, November 18; *Telegraph*, November 18; *Commercial Gazette*, November 18. The *Freiheits Freund*, November 18, omits this preamble as does the *Daily Post*, November 18, and the *Times*, November 18.
to year and work disastrous results to the toiling millions of all nations, if not combined for mutual protection and aid.' There is no doubt that such a struggle is going on, there is no reason to doubt that if it grows in intensity from year to year it must work disastrously, not only to the toiling millions but to the nation in which the culminating point of defeat is the rights of any class at the hands of another. It does seem as if the wiser and better policy would be to devise ways and means of bringing this conflict to an end. Capital without labor must perish undoubtedly, but labor without capital if not destroyed would at least be reduced to barbarism. The best results of both or either is only obtained by acting in harmony. To unite for strength, for mutual protection and aid may be commendable, but commendable only when the design of the combination is just to all. We are anxious to see this struggle ended, and ended on the basis of the fullest justice to and recognition of the rights of manual labor, but we do not favor the levying of immense forces of one_____to continue a conflict against another_____which is, however, the first_____of this nature. Its ideas_____consist largely of the news engendered by long continued thought in one direction. We trust that by the time the next session is held the spirit of concord with capital will have assumed sway without, however, abating a jot or little of the just rights to which laboring people are entitled.”

The resolutions of the platform as reported were (quoting Proceedings, pages 3-4) as follows:

1. Resolved, That an organization of workingmen into what is known as a Trades or Labor Union should have the right to the protection of their property in like manner as the property of all other persons and societies, and to accomplish this purpose we insist upon the passage of laws in the State Legislatures and in Congress for the incorporation of Trades Unions and similar labor organizations.

2. That we are in favor of the passage of such legislative enactments as will enforce, by compulsion, the education of children; that if the State has the right to exact certain compliance with its demands, then it is also the right of the State to educate its people to the proper understanding
of such demands. (231)

3. That we are in favor of the passage of laws in the several states forbidding the employment of children under the age of fourteen years in any capacity, under penalty of fine and imprisonment.

4. That necessity demands the enactment of uniform apprentice laws throughout the country; that the apprentice to a mechanical trade may be made to serve a sufficient term of apprenticeship, from three to five years, and that he be provided by his employer, in his progress to maturity, with proper and sufficient facilities to finish him as a competent workman.

5. That the National Eight Hour Law is one intended to benefit labor and relieve it partly of its heavy burdens; that the evasion of its true spirit and intent is contrary to the best interests of the nation; we therefore demand the enforcement of said law in the spirit of its designers.

6. That it is hereby declared the sense of this Congress that convict or prison labor, as applied to the contract system in several states, is a species of slavery in its worst form; that it pauperizes labor, demoralizes the honest manufacturer and degrades the very criminal whom it employs; that, as many articles of use and consumption made in our prisons under the contract system come directly and detrimentally in competition with the products of honest labor, we demand that the laws providing for labor under the contract system herein complained of be repealed, so as to discontinue the manufacture of all articles which will compete with those of the honest mechanic or workingman. (232)

7. That what is known as the "order" or "truck" system of payment, instead of lawful currency as a value for labor performed, is one not only of gross impositions, but of downright swindle to the honest laborer and mechanic, and calls for entire abolition, and we recommend that active measures shall be enforced to eradicate the evil by the passage of laws imposing fine and imprisonment upon

(231) Advocates of education for citizenship can find early support for their ideas here.

(232) From the viewpoint of the economics of society this article is defective. Would not road-building or agriculture equally conflict with honest labor?
all individuals, firms or corporations who continue to practice the same. (233a)

8. That we favor the passage of such laws as will secure to the mechanic and workingman the first lien upon property the product of his labor, sufficient in all cases to justify his legal and just claims; that proper provisions be made for legally recovering the same.

9. That we favor the repeal and erasure from the statute books of all acts known as conspiracy laws, as applied to organizations of labor in the regulation of wages and the number of hours which shall constitute a day's work.

10. That we recognize the wholesome effects of a Bureau of Labor Statistics as created in several states, and we urge upon our friends in Congress the passage of an act establishing a National Bureau of Labor Statistics, and recommend for its management the appointment of a proper person, identified with the laboring classes of the country.

11. In view of the rapid construction of aggregated capital in the form of gigantic monopolies, we affirm it to be the duty of the Congress of the United States and State Legislature to assume, as rapidly as possible, a wholesome supervision over the railroad and telegraph companies of the country with a view that their operations, as in the postal service, may be for the benefit of the people whose franchises they have secured. (233b)

12. That railroad land grants forfeited by reason of

(233a) Forty years have passed without seeing the end of this system which is sometimes involved with the matter of credit.

(233b) This resolution was not adopted as part of the Platform. The account in the Proceedings, page 19, is as follows: "Mr. Rankin offered the following substitute: Resolved, That it is the duty of Congress to regulate inter-state commerce. All lines of communication and transportation should be brought under such legislative control as shall secure moderate, fair, and uniform rates for passenger and freight traffic. Mr. Rankin supported his substitute by a speech of some length in which he denounced in strong terms grasping monopolies who, by the power of money, almost totally shut out small shippers from the use of their lines and charged them rates of transport that were simply extortion in comparison with those paid by wealthy firms. By bribery they controlled State governments and made it impossible for justice to be voted out to those who took their bribes and voted at their bidding, and if a check were not put to their aggressions they would shortly control State Legislatures and
non-fulfillment of contract, should be immediately reclaimed by the Government, and henceforth the public domain reserved exclusively for actual settlers. (234)

13. That we recommend to the Congress of the United States the adoption of such laws as shall give to every American industry full protection from the cheap labor of foreign countries. (235)

14. That we demand the passage of law by the United States Congress to prevent the importation of foreign laborers under contract. (236)

the General Government itself and rule the people with despotic power."

"President Jarrett ruled that both resolutions were foreign to the purpose for which this Congress was convened, as stated in the call."

"The decision of the Chair was appealed from by Mr. Charles Erb. A rising vote sustained the decision of the Chair."

This discussion is omitted in three papers, while three others summarize it. The Commercial Gazette, November 18, says, "The other resolutions were adopted with very little debate, until one was read which declared in favor of all the railroads and telegraph lines being purchased and controlled by the government. This was opposed by a number of delegates on the ground that if the government obtained the control favored it would make the power of the ascendent political party perpetual by reason of the vast number of employees which would be placed at its mercy. President Jarrett ruled the resolution out of order, as having no relation to the objects of the Congress. An appeal was taken from his decision, but the Chair was sanctioned and the resolution left out". The Freiheits Freund, November 18, says the resolution "met with strong opposition and finally through President Jarrett was turned down as not properly within the scope of the Congress". The Daily Post, November 18, says, "A resolution that the Government buy and control all telegraph and railroad lines was ruled out of order".

(234) This resolution was not adopted as part of the Platform. Quoting Proceedings, page 19, "The Chair took the same view as he had taken on No. 11, and ruled this also out of order. This item is not mentioned in any of the six papers.

(235) This article by the omission of the two immediately previous became article 11 of the Platform. It caused a lively debate which will be touched upon later. The article came up for criticism again in the annual convention of 1882, and was stricken out by a vote of 17 to 1. Cf. Proceedings, 1882, pp. 11, 14.

(236) Articles 14 and 15, became articles 12 and 13 of the Platform.
15. "That we recommend all trades and labor organizations to secure proper representation in all law-making bodies by means of the ballot, and to use all honorable measures by which this result can be accomplished." (237a)

"The preamble and resolutions numbers 1 and 2 were adopted without discussion." (237b)

Number 3, having reference to the employment of children, aroused an important discussion (237c) which as bearing on child labor deserves full treatment.

(237a) Quoting *Proceedings*, pp. 3-4, and for articles 11 and 12 which were deleted, *Proceedings*, page 19. The *Evening Chronicle*, November 18, with minor differences, mainly omissions of words, gives articles 1-10. For some reason it omits article 11 of the report while including article 12, both of which were deleted. Articles 13-15 inclusive are given verbatim. It says, "Some of the resolutions excited considerable discussion, but they were all passed," an error as regards both article 11 omitted and article 12 included. The *Telegraph*, November 18, varies slightly from both *Proceedings* and *Evening Chronicle* and omits both articles 11 and 12 of the report. Its statement, "This report was discussed at considerable length and finally passed" is erroneous insofar as part of the report was not passed. The *Commercial Gazette*, November 18, while differing from *Proceedings*, *Chronicle* and *Telegraph* in minor details has as a whole the same copy as the *Evening Chronicle*. Like the *Evening Chronicle*, it omits article 11. It has already been noted that the *Commercial Gazette* refers to the debate on and deletion of article 11, but strangely it fails to notice that article 12 was likewise deleted. Its statement, "The other resolutions were adopted..." is, of course, erroneous. The *Freiheits Freund*, November 18, says, "The Chairman of the Committee on Declaration of Principles submitted at this point a long report which included the following items" and proceeds to give the articles in summarized form. It divides article 1; numbering articles 2 number 3, its comment is "Schulz-swang". By subdividing article 1 and including article 12, this paper works out fifteen articles. As noted, the *Freiheits Freund* comments on the deletion of article 12. The *Daily Post*, November 18, summarizes the articles without enumeration. It mentions separately the article on control of telegraph and railroad lines as "ruled out of order". Entirely omitted is the *Times*, November 18.


(237c) The fullest account is in the *Proceedings*, page 18, but the account in the *Commercial Gazette*, November 18, is good. The *Freiheits Freund*, November 18, devotes three lines to a general statement. Omitted elsewhere.
The discussion was opened by Mr. Brennan of Pittsburgh. According to the *Proceedings*, (237d) he took the ground that, "its enforcement would be an interference with individual rights." According to the *Commercial Gazette*, November 18, he "thought it almost too wide in its bearings." He thought it should be qualified by amending it to read, 'children under fourteen years of age shall not be employed at any mechanical labor.' (238)

This paper adds, "The majority of the delegates differed with Mr. Brennan, and spoke at length reciting the results of their own observation. None of them urged the prohibition of child labor because it might decrease their own wages, but all said that they wanted the influence of the Congress to go out against it because of its cruelty and demoralizing effects."

Of the five or more speeches made, four, by Messrs. Powers, Dwyer, Michels and Gompers, are given in part at least in the *Proceedings* and two, by Messrs. Burgman and Gompers are summarized in the *Commercial Gazette*.

Mr. Powers said, "I want this plank to go through this meeting with all the force that can be given it. With hundreds of examples under my observation in Chicago, I say that there is no crime greater under the heavens than that of employing child labor in mills, factories, and industrial establishments. Chicago is rising up an army of criminals by this very thing. Children from the tender age of ten up to fourteen are driven into factories by brutal fathers that they may earn a livelihood for them. Boys are training for criminals and girls for prostitutes. See what I have seen of the gigantic evils of this, and if you had a hundred votes you would cast them for this resolution." (289)

Mr. Dwyer said, "I want to raise my voice in favor of giving this resolution to the world as the sentiment of the Labor Congress. I, too, have seen the effects of this curse. I know of little children that support families, their drunken fathers and elder brothers, by the toil of their little hands. Before they have the chance of a rudimentary education they

(237d) Page 18.
(238) Amendment not mentioned in *Proceedings*.
are put to labor for the support of lazy, drunken fathers. I am the father of fifteen children, yet I would work till my fingers were worn to the bone before I would allow one of my little ones to go forth and toil day by day as some I have seen.” (240)

Mr. Michel remarked, “The employment of children under fourteen years of age is prohibited in many states by statute, but is not always enforced. What do the law-makers care for the children of the masses? What care they for the hordes of boys and girls at work who should be at school? John B. Gough has said that the saddest thing he ever saw was a little child with an old face. Oh, I have seen them by hundreds—seen them in mills and factories. I want these law makers, who protect the capitalist, to know, like Napoleon, that they must heed the mutterings of the masses. By all means set this resolution before the world as our sentiment—as our demand. Blazon it high up, where all may see and read what we think of the employment of children in any capacity of work. (241)

“Mr. Burgman painted a graphic picture of the child laborers of the Pacific slope, and how they were growing up in ignorance and without enjoying the brightest days of their lives.” (242)

“Mr. Gompers spoke of his investigation among the tenement cigar makers of the metropolis; how he found little children who were too young to understand any of the questions he asked of them, but yet were compelled to work from before daylight until after dark, and how he often found the little ones fast asleep beside their work being unable to hold out.” (243)

According to the Proceedings, (244) Mr. Gompers remarks were as follows: “Not long since I was on a committee appointed to visit the tenement cigar shops. I saw there on that visit scenes that sickened me. I saw little children, six and seven and eight years of age, seated in the

(242) Quoting Commercial Gazette, November 18. Omitted elsewhere.
(243) Quoting Commercial Gazette, November 18.
(244) Page 18.
middle of a room on the floor, in all the dirt and dust, strip-
ning tobacco. Little pale faced children, with a look of care
upon their faces, toiling with their tiny hands from dawn
till dark; aye, and late into the night, to help to keep the wolf
from the door. I asked them how long they worked, but they
did not, could not, understand. In the simplest way I talked
to them and learned that they began before daylight, and
worked till long after dark. Often they would be overcome
with weariness and want of sleep, and fall over upon the
tobacco heap. Shame upon such crimes; shame upon us if
we do not raise our voices against it.”

“The resolution was passed unanimously (245) and
numbers 4 to 10 were adopted as read.” (246)

“After the reading and rejection of Numbers 11 and 12,
Number 13, appearing in the Platform of Principles as Num-
ber 11, was then read.” (247) This resolution which some-
what indefinitely and indirectly involved the matter of pro-
tective tariffs caused lively debate which as illustrative of
the well-known sentiment of the Pittsburgh area on this
subject will be given in full detail, for, “It was a fight of
Pittsburgh pride against Western principles, and the debate
was warm.” (248)

“Mr. Brant of Detroit opened the ball by stating that
he did not think that the Congress would commit itself to

(245) Ibid. In the language of the Commercial Gazette, November
28, “if these stories, coming from men who know what they
are talking about, and which were pathetic enough to bring
tears to most eyes, could be published in full, they would
form a powerful argument in favor of keeping the little ones
out of the work shops and sending them to school where they
belong”.

(246) Ibid, page 19. The rejection of Numbers 11 and 12 has al-
ready been mentioned.


(248) Quoting Commercial Gazette, November 18. The Evening
Chronicle, November 18, says, on the contrary, “The tariff
resolution was opposed by several Eastern men and was
vigorously defended by the Western delegates.” The Tele-
graph, November 18, likewise says, “The tariff plank met
with some opposition from Eastern delegates who lean to-
wards free trade”. The Freiheits Freund, November 18,
merely mentions the fact of a debate. The Daily Post, No-
vember 18, says, “There was a hot fight over the tariff reso-
lation and only the arguments of President Jarrett and other
Pennsylvania delegates carried it through”. Of the papers
only the Commercial Gazette gives speeches.
the tariff as by many, the protective policy was not held to be necessary to the success of the nation." (249)

As reported in the *Proceedings*, page 19, Mr. Brant said: "If there is any one rock on which this Congress of Trades Unions will split, it is this tariff plank. I oppose its introduction because I foresee plainly that it will be the cause of trouble and will raise up two factions. The West does not look at protection as the East does. I am from the West and in favor of free trade.

According to the *Commercial Gazette*, "President Jarrett replied at length enumerating the benefits which American workingmen had derived from a high tariff, and contrasting the wages they received with those paid in Great Britain." (250)

President Jarrett, according to the *Proceedings*, page 19, said, "I want this issue settled here and now. I want the indorsement of this Congress on this tariff resolution. I tell you that I am ready now or at any time to discuss this question with any delegate. It is a matter that is of vital importance to the West, let the gentlemen say to the contrary if he choose. Do you want the wages of the workingmen dragged down? Do you want foreign cheaply-produced articles imported to compete with our manufacturers?"

According to the *Proceedings*, page 19, Mr. Burgman spoke next and said, "I fail to see the importance which some of the delegates present here attach to the tariff question. I am for free trade. Protective tariff is a party issue; it is of no importance to the country at large. Protective tariff means protection to the American manufacturer against the importation of foreign cheap goods, but it does not mean protection to the American laborer against the importation of foreign cheap laborers. (251)

"The American manufacturers want protection against foreign competition, yet will force their cheaply manufactur-
ed goods into foreign markets, and in order to have the name of selling cheap will bring the toilers of this country to the lowest notch of living. I attach no importance to protective tariff, yet as a matter of experiment and to preserve harmony, I shall vote in favor of it.” 252)

Mr. Somers of Joliet, Illinois, spoke next. He said, “As a western man I stand in opposition to the policy of the first speaker. I am a protectionist. I want to see our American workmen and manufacturers protected. Free trade does not only affect iron workers, but the miners who dig coal for us, the coke burners that furnish us our coke, the printers that give us the newspaper—all these are affected. It is protection that gives us work and wages and enables us to beautify our homes.” (253)

Mr. Cummin of Boston, Massachusetts, spoke next. He remarked: “This tariff question is foreign to the object of our meeting here. It should not be allowed to intrude itself. It is merely a political scheme for political purposes. We have no right to meddle in politics now, for we are not ready. Every political convention has a tariff plank. We are not a political convention, and we want no tariff measure introduced in our Declaration of Principles.” (254)

“Mr. Crawford thought it was a mistake to force the resolution through, as it would only cause dissension. As long
as the East and West were situated as they were they would not agree on the subject. Therefore he was in favor of not making reference to the tariff, promising that at the same time, that if the East offered no tariff resolutions, none advocating free trade would come from the West.” (255)

“Mr. Michel was sorry the question had been broached, but, now that it had been mentioned it must go through.” (256)

“Mr. Brant, seconded by Mr. Pollner, moved to table the resolution.” (257)

“The motion was lost by 38 nays to 35 yeas.” (258)

Mr. Jarrett, according to the Commercial Gazette, now made “another strong argument in favor of the resolution.” (259)

The resolution then was adopted as read. (260)

(255) Quoting the Commercial Gazette, November 18. The account in the Proceedings, pp. 19-20, is strikingly alike. It says, “Mr. Crawford thought it was a mistake to force the resolution through as it would only cause dissension. As long as the East and West are situated as they are at present they would not agree on this subject. Therefore he was in favor of not making any reference to the tariff, promising at the same time that if the East offered no tariff resolutions none advocating free trade would come from the West.” The change in the style here from first to third person in the Proceedings suggests that the secretaries lost sight of this speech, and that they later edited them from the Commercial Gazette reports, which, if so, weakens the whole value of the official minutes. Of course, the Commercial Gazette reporter may have been permitted to view the official minutes, but he mentions things not in the Proceedings and puts Cummin's remark in different sequence.

(256) Quoting Proceedings, page 20. The Commercial Gazette contains an identical statement with the exception that it says, “Mr. Michaels of Pittsburgh”------, which would seem to indicate that its reporter did not see the minutes where the name is correctly spelled Michels, but that the secretaries used the Commercial Gazette's copy.

(257) Quoting Proceedings, page 20. The Commercial Gazette says, “An attempt was then made to lay the resolution on the table.”

(258) Quoting Proceedings, page 20. The Commercial Gazette merely says, “it was voted down”.


"The remaining two sections were adopted, and the Platform was then ratified as a whole."  
Mr. Leffingwell stated that other resolutions which had been referred to the committee, and which were not germane to the Platform, would be introduced next morning.  
Adjournment followed and must have come upon a wearied body of delegates.

The editorial comments of the daily papers on these declarations of principle are worthy of notice. The Commer
cial Gazette in a paragraph editorial, November 18, remarked, "The Labor Congress shows a just appreciation of what makes good citizens in its deliverances on the question of education and the public schools, and on laws forbidding the employment of young children at an age when they had best be in school." The same paper, in an editorial of November 19, stated, "On the whole the Labor Congress is to be congratulated upon the success which attend its efforts in the formulation of the principles by which it is governed.———In the main the purposes aimed at are just and commendable———In looking over the work of the Congress, then, we find much to approve and much less to dissent from than we had anticipated." This editorial, however, proclaimed impracticable the "Eight Hour Law" and made opposition to the "Truck" system. The earlier editorial of November 18, in addition to attacking the reduction of the hours of the working day, maintained the validity of the conspiracy acts. "The Congress" it stated "should be very careful how it approaches these questions, and should set its foot down firmly upon every attempt to disturb the rights of property."

The Times, in an editorial of November 19, attacked the resolution against the "Truck" system, on the basis of freedom of barter.

The Telegraph, as noted above, in an editorial of November 18, remarked, "While it enunciates some principles which public sentiment will scarcely endure, it contains much that is good." It added, however, "It bears evidence that the Congress is better versed in purely industrial matters than in the true principles of American political policy."

ALFRED P. JAMES.

To be Continued in April Issue, 1921.