

From 1896 on, Canadian trade unionism had to face the problem of reconciling continental union solidarity with Canadian autonomy. The Canadian Labor Union of 1873-1877 had not had to do so because no competing American central labour organization existed. The Trades and Labor Congress at first did not have to either, partly because it confined itself almost wholly to legislative activities (most of its unions were locals of organizations chartered by the American Federation of Labor or local assemblies of the Knights of Labor) and partly because it seems to have had, till 1896, no formal contact with the American Federation of Labor. In that year, the Congress complained to the Federation about the application of the American Alien Contract Labor Law to Canadian workers. The Federation replied by suggesting that the Congress send a fraternal delegate to its convention. This it did not do, but in 1898 the Federation was invited to send a fraternal delegate to the Congress convention, and in 1899 the two began an exchange that lasted as long as the Congress itself.

By expelling the Knights of Labor and purely Canadian 'dual' organizations in 1902, the Congress ranged itself definitely on the side of international unionism as against national. It did not, however, by any means accept the subordinate role that the Federation repeatedly tried to impose upon it. From 1897 on, it kept trying to get the international unions, or the Federation on their behalf, to turn over to the Congress the dues these unions paid to the Federation on their Canadian membership. It finally solved this problem by getting the international unions to affiliate their Canadian membership direct. The Federation persisted, right down to 1955, in chartering local unions in Canada. It also made repeated unsuccessful attempts to deny the Congress the right to charter local Trades and Labor Councils, and it took the Congress 35 years (1910 to 1945) to win complete victory. The Federation was successful in forcing the Congress to expel, in 1939, a whole group of unions belonging to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), but only after a struggle. A similar attempt, in 1946, to force expulsion of the Machinists met a firm and spirited refusal, and collapsed. After this, the Congress decided to assert itself by setting up a series of departments and a full-scale organizing staff and otherwise make plain the status it felt it did, and should, enjoy as a fully autonomous Canadian trade union centre.

None of these disputes, however, really disturbed the basic harmony between the Congress and the Federation. The Congress, made up overwhelmingly of international unions whose American members were affiliated to the Federation, never faltered in its allegiance to international unionism. It knew that in most industries international unions alone had the staff, experience and money to do the job that had to be done.

Meanwhile, however, the whole Canadian Labour Movement had been "by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distrest" Nationalism, industrial as against craft unionism, revolutionary ideas, and a mixture of nationalism and denominationalism all played their part. The unions expelled by the Trades and Labor Congress in 1902 promptly formed the National Trades and Labour Congress, which in 1908 became the Canadian Federation of Labour, and in 1910 took in the Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia. In 1919, just after the Winnipeg general strike, and partly as a result of it, many western unionists, attracted by revolutionary industrial unionism, broke away from the Trades and Labor Congress and formed the One Big Union. Between 1901 and 1921, small local Roman Catholic unions (some of them former Knights of Labor Assemblies) sprang up in Quebec under the fostering care of the hierarchy and clergy, and in 1921 formed the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour. This organization, at first distrusted and denounced by the orthodox unions as a collection of thinly veiled "company unions", has in the past ten years shed the narrow denominationalism and nationalism of its early years and become one of the most militant labour organizations in the country. In 1927, the Canadian Federation of Labour and other national unions (notably the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, which had been founded in 1908, had entered the Trades and Labor Congress in 1917 and had been expelled from it in 1921) formed the All-Canadian Congress of Labour, dedicated to industrial and national unionism. By 1935, purely Canadian unions of one kind or another, including the Communist Workers'