

One subject which figured prominently in the early conventions of the Trades and Labor Congress and then seems to have dropped out of sight for a whole generation is co-operation with the farmers. In 1886, the Congress appointed a committee to meet with the Dominion Grange "to secure to some extent united action" on the Factory Act. In 1893 the Congress Executive met with representatives of the Grange, the Patrons of Industry (another farm organization) and the Social Problems Conference and adopted a common "platform". In the same year, the convention set up a standing committee with the Patrons "for the purpose of . . . devising a scheme for a union of the labor forces (rural and urban)", and provided for a vote by affiliated organizations on allowing the Grange, the Patrons and Single Tax Associations to affiliate. The returns from the affiliates were considered too scattered to provide any basis for policy. None the less, in 1894, the Constitution was amended to let the Patrons affiliate and to give them three delegates. Nothing came of this and the amendment was deleted next year. But, undaunted, in 1896 the Congress agreed on the desirability of unity with the Patrons and instructed the Executive to be represented at any meeting called by the Patrons. The 1907 convention had a delegate from the Canadian Branch of the American Society of Equity, another farmers' organization, and the Alberta Executive of the Congress wanted the convention to discuss a possible amalgamation of the "Trades and Labor party" with this Society. In 1910, the Executive recommended the appointment of a special committee to arrange co-operation with the farmers.

From 1941 on, both the Trades and Labor Congress and the new Canadian Congress of Labour devoted some attention to farmer-labour co-operation. The former, in 1941, "recognized that the well-being of labor is inseparably bound up with the prosperity of the farmer" and, fearing that "many farmers" would be "driven off the land" and "forced into competition with workers thereby driving down wages", expressed its "sympathy and support for the farmers to secure adequate debt protection and parity of farm prices". In the same year, the newer Congress declared in favour of co-operating with farm associations wherever possible and of Government aid in marketing farm produce in any friendly country. The next year, the Trades and Labor Congress called on the Government to help the farmers meet the shortages of machinery and services. In 1946 both Congresses supported the Alberta farmers' strike; the older declared for "close co-operation" between the Congress and its provincial bodies and national and provincial farm organizations; the younger suggested a conference of "Labour organizations and the official spokesman of the farmers" to work towards "complete unity . . . in our demands for social security". In 1947 the Canadian Congress of Labour declared its support for the farmers "in their attempt to get a fair price for their products", and in 1948 pledged itself to do all it could to promote "farmer-Labour-teacher" co-operation for "common aims and objectives", along the lines of the Saskatchewan Occupational Group Council. In 1949 the Trades and Labor Congress listened to a speech of greeting from the President of the Alberta Farmers' Union (which was already affiliated with the Calgary Trades and Labor Council). In 1951 the Canadian Congress of Labour called on the Government to work out with farm organizations "a just farm price-structure". The next year the older Congress had another speech of greetings, this time from the President of the Interprovincial Farm Union Council, and the other Congress declared for a "National Co-ordinating Committee of Farm and Labour organizations". From 1953 to 1955 both Congresses had farm speakers each year; so did the new Canadian Labour Congress at its founding convention in 1956. In February 1954 the two Congresses and the Interprovincial Farm Union Council set up the Farmer-Labour Economic Council, which still exists.

One other subject of great importance which in some form or other has had a place in almost every national meeting of labour organizations since 1883 is political action. The Canadian Labor Congress of 1883 unanimously resolved that "the working class of this Dominion will never be properly represented in Parliament or receive justice in the legislation of the country until they are represented by men of their own class and opinions". The 1886 convention reaffirmed this and the members pledged themselves to "use their utmost endeavours, wherever practicable, to bring out candidates for the local and Dominion elections" or, where this was not "deemed advisable", to support the candidate "who