

pledges himself to vote for most planks of the platform of this Congress'. The 1887 convention dropped this last part and adopted the remainder unanimously. The 1889 convention set up a committee to consider forming an "independent political party" and recommended the organizations to nominate candidates where practicable and elsewhere to support the party which was prepared to do most for Labour. In 1892, on motion of two French-Canadian delegates, the convention resolved to "take into consideration the advisability of forming a labor party" Perhaps as part of the consideration, the 1893 convention invited its member organizations to answer four questions: (1) Are you in favor of the present industrial system? (2) Are you in favor of the so-called co-operative system of productive (sic) distribution and exchange? (3) Are you in favor of the communistic system of government? (4) Have you any other system better than the above to suggest? (Strange to say, there were almost no replies.) In 1895, by a very narrow majority, the convention voted to admit "sections of the Socialist Labor Party" (this was repealed in 1896) and resolved that "labor organizations should now unite for independent political action".

Meanwhile, some organizations had actually been taking political action. During the 1880's, the Toronto and Hamilton Trades and Labor Councils had nominated candidates for both provincial and Dominion elections, and in 1886 the Knights of Labor ran three provincial candidates in Montreal. None were elected, and for practical purposes the Congress seems to have relied for some years on what was later to become the standard practice of meeting Dominion and provincial Ministers to present its views. By 1899, however, the Ontario Executive had decided that this was useless, and that "the only way to get from the Government what is our right is to elect men in sympathy with the labor cause". In the same year, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council and the Winnipeg Labor Party nominated A. W. Puttee for the House of Commons; and the Congress, presided over by Ralph Smith, M.L.A. for Nanaimo, B.C., decided to ask its member organizations whether they favoured an independent Labour party and would back its candidates. The vote was 1,424 in favour to 167 against, with only three organizations out of 44 voting "no" The 1900 convention decided this was enough to justify the Congress in "taking such steps as it deemed advisable to further the progress of such action". It also asked the Nanaimo miners to nominate President Smith for the House of Commons. They did; and both Smith and Puttee were elected, with another Labour candidate in Manitoba barely defeated. In 1903 a new Congress President, John Flett, was declaring that the meetings with the Dominion Government were useless, and that Canadian Labour should follow the British example and elect Labour men to Parliament. In 1904 he reiterated this, and for three years the annual interview was dropped and a parliamentary counsel was substituted to look after Congress interests full-time during the session. In 1903, 1904 and 1905 the conventions passed resolutions favouring independent Labour candidates wherever possible. In 1906, Alphonse Verville, President of the Congress, was elected to the House of Commons for Maisonneuve (Montreal), and declared he hoped for "at least a dozen" Labour members in the next Parliament. The convention responded by adopting what became the political action policy of the Trades and Labor Congress for the rest of its life. The Congress was to endorse sending Labour representatives to Parliament and the Legislatures; its provincial Executives were to summon provincial conventions of trade unionists and sympathizers to set up "the necessary associations"; and the Congress was then to step out of the picture, having "recommended" its own Platform of Principles as the platform for "this independent effort". The result of this was the foundation of a Canadian Labour Party in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia. Though launched with considerable fanfare, especially in Ontario, for the most part this did not amount to much. Its only substantial success was in Ontario in 1919, when eleven Labour candidates were elected and two Labour Ministers entered the Farmer-Labour coalition. A few surviving sections entered the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1932 and 1933, along with the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba, which had elected two members to the House of Commons.