

found they were not. British Acts freeing them of their Common Law disabilities did not extend to Canada so that Ontario unions in 1872 were in the same legal position as British unions in 1791. They promptly set to work to get Canadian legislation to match the British. Sir John A. Macdonald, delighted at the opportunity to "dish the Liberals" with two pieces of unimpeachably Gladstonian legislation, lost no time in passing through the Dominion Parliament a Trade Unions Act and a Criminal Law Amendment Act (1872) modelled on the British Acts of the previous year. This was the first big piece of successful political action by Canadian unions. The prosecution was dropped and the strike was won.

With the adoption of the National Policy (1879) and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (1881-85), Canadian industry began to revive and grow and the unions revived and grew with it. The 1880s saw not only the organization of a host of purely local unions, most of them short-lived, but also the entry of several new international unions including, besides those already mentioned, the Order of Railway Telegraphers (1888) and the Plasterers and Cement Masons (1889). The railway running trades organizations (Engineers, Firemen, Conductors and Trainmen), which in 1880 had had only about a dozen locals, by 1890 had about 100; in 1880 they had been confined almost wholly to Ontario but by 1890 nearly half their locals were in other provinces, divided almost equally between the Maritimes, Quebec and the West. The building trades also had only about a dozen locals in 1880, again nearly all in Ontario and, by 1890, they had about 60, rather more than half of them in other provinces, more particularly the West and Quebec.

But the most spectacular feature of the 1880s was the appearance and growth of the Knights of Labor. Actually, the Knights (which started in the United States but spread to Canada, Britain, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand) had formed one Local Assembly in Canada before 1880 but this had withered on the vine and their Canadian history really began in Hamilton in the fall of 1881. Within a decade they had organized well over 300 local Assemblies in more than 100 cities, towns and villages in every province except Prince Edward Island and what is now Saskatchewan. Many of these were short-lived, few surviving the turn of the century, but in 1886 there must have been 160 and in 1887 close to 200.

What is more, the Knights were mainly responsible for the organization of the unskilled, men and women (of which there had previously been very little) and of small town workers. Nor did they neglect the skilled; their first big effort in Canada was organizing 30 Local Assemblies of telegraphers, from Winnipeg to North Sydney, as part of their "National Trade District 45, United Telegraphers of North America". This body, in the summer of 1883, conducted the one genuinely international strike in North American history, against the big telegraph companies on both sides of the border. The strike failed and the Canadian Telegraphers' Assemblies disappeared but the Knights went on to organize almost every conceivable craft, from carpenters to watch-case makers, from stonecutters to musicians. They also organized a great number of "mixed" Assemblies that took in all occupations, skilled and unskilled, and were specially adapted to the needs of small towns where there were not enough workers of any one occupation to make a sizable trade union. The cities and larger towns had their share of Assemblies (in 1887 Toronto had about 50, Montreal over 20, Quebec City perhaps a dozen, Hamilton 15) but there were also single Assemblies, usually mixed, in dozens of small places.

With the fresh burst of organizing activity came a revival of the central organizations, both local and national. Significantly, the new local central bodies almost invariably called themselves "Trades and Labor Councils"; the "trades" were making room for the unskilled. The Toronto Council was formed in 1881 and was followed by Halifax (1882), Hamilton and London (1883), Guelph (1885), Montreal, Oshawa, Brantford and St. Thomas (1886), Winnipeg (1887), and Ottawa, St. Catharines, Peterborough, Vancouver and Victoria (1889). The new national central body, known initially as the "Canadian Labor Congress" but from 1886 on as the Trades and Labor Congress (TLC), was set up in 1883 by a convention summoned by the Toronto Council and for some years was, in fact, an almost wholly Ontario body. The first convention had no delegates from any other prov-