

ince; the second, in 1886, had one from Quebec but in 1887 and 1888 the delegates were again all from Ontario. From 1889 on, however, there was always a substantial delegation from Quebec. In 1890, the first western delegates appeared (from British Columbia), and in 1897 the first from the Maritimes (New Brunswick). Until the turn of the century, however, the Congress remained a predominantly Ontario and Quebec organization, not only because most of the unions and the Knights of Labor Assemblies were in those provinces, but because the railway running trades almost invariably held aloof, and because unions and Assemblies were usually too poor to send delegates more than a short distance from home.

From 1880 until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Canadian labour movement was comprehensive, inclusive; the Congress was prepared to accept every kind of genuine labour organization there—craft or industrial, skilled or unskilled, local, regional, national or international. Even so, its strength was not impressive. In 1901, the Secretary-Treasurer reported that of 871 organizations in the country, only 133, with a total membership of 8,381, had affiliated; and total Congress expenditures in that year were only \$809.88. It was not until the next year that the Congress engaged “the services of a stenographer and typewriter”, which “necessitated the fitting up of a small office with two desks and a chair”

In these circumstances, it might have been supposed that the policy of taking in everybody would have continued. But in 1896, Canadian trade unionism had to face, for the first time, the problem of reconciling continental solidarity with Canadian autonomy. Most of the TLC affiliates were locals of international organizations but it had confined itself almost wholly to legislative activities and seems to have had no formal contact with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). But in 1896, it complained to the AFL about the application of the American Alien Contract Labor Act to Canadian workers and the ensuing correspondence led, in 1899, to an exchange of fraternal delegates which lasted as long as the Congress.

Meanwhile, the Knights of Labor, which in the late 1880s and early 1890s had played a dominant part in the Congress (supplying the majority of the delegates at the conventions of 1887-89, 1891, 1893 and 1894 and holding the Congress presidency from 1886 to 1891, and in 1894 and 1895), had dwindled to very small proportions in Canada and to almost nothing in the United States. The AFL, on the other hand, was becoming more and more powerful and its unions in Canada more and more numerous and influential. With the turn of the century, they felt in a position to put pressure on the Congress to throw out all organizations “dual” to (rivals of) AFL unions and in 1902 the Congress complied. It lost 23 organizations; it kept nearly 200. There were over 1,000 unions in the country—more than 500 in Ontario, about 160 in British Columbia, slightly fewer in Quebec, about 140 in the Maritimes and nearly 70 on the Prairies.

By its action in 1902, the Congress ranged itself definitely on the side of international unionism. It did not, however, by any means accept the subordinate role the AFL repeatedly tried to impose on it. From 1897 on, it kept trying to get the international unions, or the AFL on their behalf, to turn over to the Congress the dues these unions paid the AFL on their Canadian membership. It finally solved this problem by getting the international unions to affiliate their Canadian membership direct, which they began to do in 1906. The AFL persisted, right down to 1955, in chartering local unions in Canada. It also made repeated unsuccessful attempts to deny the TLC the sole 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 against the Machinists met a firm and spirited refusal. 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 should enjoy as a fully autonomous Canadian trade union centre.

None of these disputes, however, really disturbed the basic harmony between the TLC and the AFL. The Congress, made up overwhelmingly of international unions