(December 7, 1914.)

The Ideals of Trade Unionism and the Attitude of Trade Unionism on the War

By Mr. James M. Lynch.*

AT a regular luncheon of the Canadian Club, held on the 7th December, Mr. James M. Lynch said:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I regret very much that I am late to-day, but it was entirely unavoidable on my part. I think that in the past sixteen years I have traveled nearly one million miles throughout the North American continent, but I never experienced such difficulty in getting to a place as I have had in reaching Toronto. (Laughter.) I was misinformed as to the time my train left Buffalo this morning, and the train I came on was late. If I had known my good friend Jimmy Simpson was here to speak I should have had no worriment at all, because I am sure that if I had not reached here till 4 o'clock he could have entertained you. (Laughter.)

I very seldom in all my career have prepared a speech, and of course have very seldom read a speech, but formerly I was in a position where if I was misquoted it did not matter, I could have denied it. (Laughter.) But being now in a political position, it makes a difference, and I prefer that what I say should be very correct, especially on the subject assigned me.

A year ago, I was asked to speak to you on the subject of trade unionism, and when your Secretary, Mr. Brown, was writing in renewal of that invitation recently, he asked me to add a touch of the war. Now, you know, there is not much of the war spirit about me (laughter), so I can not add much of a touch of the war. I am sure my friends, the publishers here, will agree that I am a peaceable man. (Laughter.)

*Mr. James M. Lynch was President of the International Typographical Union for many years, discharging the duties of that position with great ability and diplomacy. He recently accepted the position of Labor Commissioner of the State of New York, and is recognized all over the continent as one of the ablest leaders in the ranks of organized labor.

Unorganized wage earners, except as they may individually express themselves, cannot make known their views on any subject. No employer can speak for his employees. He may express his opinion of what they think, but it is only his opinion. The one reliable means of expression for the toiler is that which is free and unrestrained. The trade union meeting is his freest forum. There views and opinions are crystallized which later find concrete expression in State and international conventions of great trade unions, and in turn these convention expressions on subjects of international trade union concern are given final form and promulgation at the conventions of the American Federation of Labor. It is fair to assume that the ideals and aspirations of more than two million organized toilers, as given expression by their chosen representatives in these conventions, are also the ideals and aspirations of their unorganized fellows, except that the opportunity for conference and counsel may beget more conservative and seasoned conclusions than are engendered by unexpressed emotions and unredressed wrongs.

Therefore, in what I have to say to-day, when I mention trades unionism I am expressing opinions which I believe from my experience are held by the great majority of toilers, organized and unorganized.

As the expounder of this faith, I wish to acknowledge my personal adherence to the doctrine and my affirmative bias in relation thereto, at the same time asserting that I hold no brief for the labor unions. It is true that for nearly twenty years I was connected with the labor movement in an official way, and that I am still an active member of a typographical union, but in what I have to say to-day I trust that so far as it may be possible for one who acknowledges his bias in advance, I may strip myself of the imagery of an advocate, and set forth plain and unadorned facts. That some of the trade unions and some members of these unions at times are unwise and intolerant is freely admitted, but it is asserted that when the strength and membership of the unions are also given consideration there is less tyranny and injustice chargeable to trades unionism than to any organized effort of our time.

Trade unions have been with us in an active way, pressing for consideration and attention, for more than half a century. The movement is as yet little understood by the great mass of the citizenship of this continent. If I were to define in a sentence the ideal of the trade unionist, I should say that it was best expressed by his determination to secure a higher

standard of living for himself and a brighter future for his children.

Three features of the policy of the North American Trade Union movement are the objects of especial criticism and much misrepresentation: the closed shop, the boycott and the limitation of apprentices. It is well understood that as a rule we must pay for what we get in this world, and so the trade unionists contribute of their earnings in order that they may secure better wages and better conditions. Their position is that it is not to be expected that they will look with consideration and love on men who are entirely willing, nay eager, to accept the benefits that flow from organized effort without in any way assuming its financial burdens and other responsibilities. I am aware that in behalf of these so-called independents, their rights and liberties are ofttimes pleaded, but in a somewhat extensive experience it has been my observation that selfishness rather than a desire to conserve independence has been at the bottom of the refusal to affiliate with the unions. Aside from this, there is the greater and sounder reason why the Unions in this day of collective bargaining insist on the so-called closed, but in the union lexicon, union shop. Contracts provide certain obligations for the employer and the union. If the union controls all of the employees in a contract office then the union is in a position to live up to the contract fully and completely, and it may with certainty guarantee to do this only in a union office. I know this, for the International Typographical Union renews thousands of contracts each year and negotiates hundreds of new contracts. This organization does not recognize non-union or open offices. It learned from bitter and costly experience that if it was to negotiate and maintain contracts, if it was to continue its system of collective bargaining, then it could do so only in those instances in which all of the composing room employees were members of the Typographical Union and all of the mailers members of the mailers' union. I know that the system under which this union operates is satisfactory to the bulk of the employers with whom it has contracts. There are disagreements as to hours and wages, but these are adjusted by arbitration. This great union, with seventy thousand members, has business relations with fifteen thousand union offices. Certainly no one can claim that the union office policy has in any way disastrously affected the printing industry, for it is one of the leading and most prosperous on the continent. When you hear the cry for individual liberty coupled with the demand for the open shop, you will find if you dig deep enough that behind it all is the determination that the employees shall

not organize and that union labor shall not be employed. I assert that candor and honesty recognize only two kinds of industrial union policy, absolute and complete opposition, or the union shop.

Has the trade unionist the right to refuse to patronize a certain merchant? Has he the right to ask his friends to refuse to patronize that merchant? That is the boycott. If the answer is in the negative, he maintains that it is also illegal to ask him to patronize that merchant. He asserts that the right to bestow his patronage, to spend his money where he will, is without limitation, so long as the object is moral, and he proclaims that he not only has the right to withhold, but that he has the right to persuade others to withhold. He maintains that it is a fact that the labor union boycott is the only movement of the kind that has been made the object of court action, for the religious boycott, the social boycott and the racial boycott have all been practiced for hundreds of years, and are to-day in operation, inspired by malice, conceived in hate, practiced in secret, not one of them with justification, while the trade union boycott is at least humanitarian in that its object is to secure a higher standard of living for the men and women who in the sweat of their brows earn their bread.

In recent years industry has undergone a tremendous change. Rules that were necessary a decade ago are archaic to-day. Trades are no longer exclusive to the shop in their mastery by the apprentice. More and more the technical schools are assuming this function. This transfer of industrial training to the schools will continue until the students will be graduated not only mentally trained, but manually trained, fit to enter the industries, and there as skilled artisans gain a livelihood. And in this development the children of the toilers will be the greatest gainers, for they are the most numerous and their necessities will harmonize with the opportunities. Limitation of the number of apprentices was and still is necessary in order that the trades may not be overcrowded, but that limitation must go before the march of progress. In the end the unions will welcome it, for it will mean shorter and still shorter days of labor. There can be no justification for the ten, twelve, or even the eight hour day, if it is not scientifically correct, for the day of toil should be only of sufficient length to meet the needs of industry, and must surely if slowly give way to the day of physical relaxation and mental recreation. Work, yes, but not all the hours in the bondage of the wage. If the schools are to turn out carpenters, printers, cigar-makers, metal workers, without limitation as to number or present necessity, and they will, then society must demand that sustaining employment shall be found for the recruits to the skilled vocations, and this opportunity will come only with the new division of the calendar day into periods of toil, recreation, education and rest.

In what I have to say as to the future of industrial training, I do not want to be understood as in any way indorsing the attempts that have been made at the industrial exploitation of our boys and girls. I am against the training of specialists for industry, the tying of a worker to a machine, teaching the student only one operation in the process of manufacture of any article or any trade, and making him entirely dependent for a livelihood on his limited manual training.

I may interject here, that since I have held the position I now occupy, I have visited the city of Chicago, and in going over that city's factories, seeing thousands of workers tied to special machines, performing one thing over and over again, day in and day out, I have been more than ever convinced that the specialization of workers in that way must be done away with. I can't understand how any individual with brain power or power of fitting himself for any work in life at all, can continue to press a little piece of steel into a machine; there is no relaxation, and no energy needed, in that work.

The schools must teach the student as much as they can teach, and couple that training with actual shop practice, so that when the boy or girl is ready for industry, he or she will in fact have a trade, all that can be taught of that trade, so that the finishing touches will be given by actual shop experience. It is a wicked thing to make of any human being a part of a machine, compelled to do one simple thing from morn until night, atrophied in motion and paralyzed in intellect, as much a part of a machine as though made of its component steel, tied to one employer, worse than a common laborer. (Applause.)

It is true that the fundamental objects for which the trade unions are organized are the increase of wages, the shortening of hours, improvement of the conditions of labor, in brief, to secure a higher standard of living. The industrial conflicts which at times are severe and attract local, State and even national attention centre around these fundamental demands of the workers for a larger share of the product of their toil. That the workers have secured greater benefits in these directions through their organizations is undeniable. Furthermore, general recognition has been won not only of the right but of the desirability of such organization. The principle of collective bargaining no longer encounters effec-

tive opposition. The increasing recognition which labor organizations have secured has been due in large part to the campaign of education by which they have convinced the general public of the rightfulness of their demands. Coincident with this education of the general public, there has been wrought out a saner leadership, the adoption of sounder policies and more rational methods of procedure on the part of the workers themselves.

But of this class of benefits which have been procured, it is not my sole purpose to speak, but also of what may perhaps be called a by-product of labor organization, namely, beneficiary features which have been developed as a protection against loss of earning power by death, disability, and the vicissitudes of unemployment.

The death benefit is the most general of all benefits. All national unions which pay benefits of any kind pay death benefits. The absence of death benefits in such national unions as do not pay them is generally due to the fact that the local of such unions have well established local death benefits, and even in some unions which have a national benefit this is supplemented by the locals. The reasons for the more general adoption of the death benefit than any other are obvious. It is most needed in order to sustain the dependents who are left, and at a time when money is a dire necessity; it is also least open to fraud, since the fact of death is generally easily established, and the administration is comparatively simple.

In some of the unions, the benefit fund is separately organized and an insurance policy issued, as for example the Mutual Life and Accident Association of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, which is separately organized and carries the death and permanent disability benefits of the Brotherhood. In unions which operate the insurance policy system, participation is in most cases compulsory, but in others the insurance feature is optional with the members. In the majority of cases, however, membership in the union entitles members to the benefits automatically, usually after a minimum period of membership varying from six months to a year. In some cases participation in the full benefit is allowed only to those who are below a fixed age and pass a medical examination. Provision may be made for partial participation by those who are debarred by the age limit or the medical examination. The practice of some unions of paying an increased amount of benefit according to the length of continuous membership has been found of value in attracting and holding members, entirely aside from the added insurance in its commercial aspect. Provision is usually made for forfeiture of

the benefit if death is caused by intemperance or immoral conduct. In addition to the benefit paid on the death of a member, a number of unions also pay a death benefit on the death of a member's wife.

Next in importance to the death benefits as measured by the amounts reported come the sickness and temporary disability benefits. Although considerable opposition manifested itself to the introduction of this form of benefit by the national unions, it has proved to be a source of strength where adopted, and has become popular with the unions. Many locals pay sick benefits even where their national organization does not have such a feature. The need for assistance during sickness or temporary disability is as obvious as in the case of death, but in practice such assistance is more difficult to administer. The administration of sick benefits is far more generally in the hands of the locals than in the national organizations. The relief needed is immediate and the delay entailed by correspondence with a central organization is a consideration. Accordingly, even in organizations which have adopted national sick benefits the locals have a large share in their administration. The local union by means of its visiting committee can determine the genuineness of the application and prevent imposition upon the treasury. As in the case of death, payment is usually denied when the illness is caused by intemperance or immorality. A single example may be given to illustrate this form of benefit. The Cigar Makers' Union was the first American National Trade Union to grant sick relief. This was in the year 1881. At present any one who has been a member for one year is entitled to five dollars per week for not to exceed thirteen weeks in one year.

I have called attention to the penalties attaching to intemperance and immorality. All international and national unions take this position, and all of them are potent factors in the crusade for a higher code of ethics and morals. (Applause.) In proportion to their numerical strength and influence they are doing as great a work in this connection as is the church.

The unemployment problem, one of the most pressing social problems at the present time, has not lacked attention at the hands of labor organizations, but the very difficulty and complexity of the problem, which have hitherto delayed any general attempt on this continent at its solution, have also affected labor organizations. The almost total lack of reliable estimates of the probable annual cost of such a system is the chief hindrance to its development. Besides, the difficulties of administration are great. Nevertheless, a beginning has

been made. The Cigarmakers' Union has since 1890 paid regularly a weekly benefit to its members who are out of work. The administration has been carefully conducted. The locals pay out the money directly, but are regulated and supervised by the national organization.

The International Typographical Union in 1907 instituted an old age pension of four dollars per week to members who are sixty years of age and are incapacitated for further duty, and later increased the pension to five dollars a week. This union now has some twelve hundred pensioners, and a balance in the pension fund of $700,000. I have come in personal contact with many of these pensioners, and I know the great good that the pension system has accomplished. Then there is the Union Printers' Home at Colorado Springs, erected and maintained by the International Typographical Union, and now housing 180 residents, half of whom are patients in the tuberculosis sanitarium. Every necessity is furnished free of charge to those domiciled at the Home, including clothing, food and medical attention. And the best of it all is, that the pension and the Homes are not charities. The members pay for them in their years of earning power, and enjoy them as a right in their years of declining health or earning capacity.

I assume that in any assembly of business men, one of the things that attracts attention the quickest would be the enumeration of sums of money, especially large sums of money. So in order to show that in striving to obtain the fruit of his toil, the trade unionist is seeking a higher standard of citizenship and a brighter future for his children, and that it is not all a question of strikes and lockouts and riots in trade unions. I have included some figures, which I think will make an impression.

In 1913, the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor paid out $1,958,892.83 for death benefits, $816,336.41 in sick benefits, and $3,357,222.80 in strike benefits. The foregoing totals are exclusive of $242,650 spent for old age pensions and $100,767 for the Union Printers' Home by the International Typographical Union, and $3,200 by the Wood Carvers and $2,843 by the Pattern Makers for tool insurance.

The unions not in affiliation with the American Federation, such as the conductors, engineers, firemen, letter carriers, etc., paid $8,818,931.68 in death benefits, $1,787,004.38 in sick and disability benefits, and $3,474,209.51 in strike benefits. Insurance is one of the principal functions of the railway brotherhoods mentioned, because the members cannot get insurance except at prohibitive rates.

In connection with the foregoing, let me show what a few of the larger international unions are doing:

The conductors paid $1,074,000 in death benefits, and $61,000 in sick and disability benefits, the engineers $1,932,272.34 and $152,406.90, the firemen $802,862.25 and $217,750, and the trainmen $2,410,985.10 in death benefits alone. The bricklayers and masons paid $242,967.80 in death benefits and $24,000 in sick benefits, the letter carriers $340,000 in death benefits, the Brotherhood of Carpenters $307,069.11 for the same purpose, the Cigarmakers $273,852.04 in death benefits and $204,775.61 in sick benefits, the hatters $65,000 in death benefits, the hotel and restaurant employees $68,662.40 in death benefits and $58,911.06 in sick benefits, the painters $113,125 in death benefits, the street railway employees $132,300 in death benefits, the switchmen $181,125 in death benefits, the tailors $11,883 in death benefits and $22,099.80 in sick benefits, and the Typographical Union $234,457.69 in death benefits. These are only a few examples, but they are sufficient to show that the benefit record of the unions is as creditable as is their record in advancing wages and establishing the eight-hour day. It is not all strikes and lockouts, riots and bloodshed, as generally accepted by those who do not investigate and therefore cannot know. (Applause.)

In legislative effort, the record of the unions is one of which they may justly be proud. They have been behind every humanitarian measure, every proposal for the advancement of social justice and every movement the object of which was the diffusion of prosperity and happiness. The labor laws and compensation laws, now on many statute books, are bright particular examples. No longer will the man or woman injured in industry suffer in penury and want. No longer will hard wrung verdicts for money damages find both lawyer and victim the recipients. The Compensation Law of New York State is also one of the greatest humanitarian measures of our time. The confusion and misrepresentation by which it was designedly surrounded by its opponents are nearly dispelled, and with the passage of each day its value stands forth with greater clearness and its equity with more pronounced emphasis.

Safe and sanitary mills, mines and mercantile establishments form the keynote of our labor laws, which are in turn meeting with a great measure of public approval as they become better understood. The labor laws and the compensation law will find their greatest usefulness in the prevention of accidents, which after all is the finer thing and of the deepest concern to society. Industry should not be permitted its

annual toll of thousands killed and more thousands and thousands injured.

And now, the toilers and war. (Hear, hear.) I presume that just at this time the greatest interest is felt by this audience in the attitude of the trade unionist toward war. In numbers of the conventions of representative trade unions and in many of the conventions of the American Federation of Labor resolutions have been adopted protesting against war, against mighty standing armies and tremendous navies, and for the disarmament of nations (hear, hear); but at the same time, to my knowledge, there has been no demand that any particular nation should disarm or without like co-operation from other nations weaken its military power, for the trade unionist realizes that national defense and national preparedness are among a nation's first duties, and that universal disarmament and permanent peace are matters for world agreement and not the affairs of individual nations, except as they may be considered at the parliament of nations. So far as the trade unionist is concerned, I might best illustrate this view by pointing to the enrolment of thousands of trade unionists in Great Britain. Officers of the British trade movement recently in the United States told me that the ranks of their unions had been greatly decimated through enlistment. This is also true in France and in Germany, and I cite it to show that whenever his nation's life and existence are at stake the trade unionist is a patriot in common with his fellow man. (Hear, hear.) He may not be the less opposed to war and to mighty armies and mighty navies, but he can reserve his protest until his nation emerges from the clouds of peril and attack, and then once more through his trade unions and his conventions plead for universal peace coupled with universal disarmament. I am of the opinion, therefore, that the trades unionist's attitude toward war is akin to that of his fellow citizens. He is against wars of oppression and conquest. He is for his country when its national integrity and continued well-being are threatened. His prayer is that God may speed the day when universal peace may be a permanent, sound and stable reality. (Applause.)

My friends, a nation's life, its prosperity and its future are largely bound up with the welfare of its industrial and agricultural population. We may profit much by studying the organized movements, aspirations and ideals of each of these classes, and I trust that so far as the industrial unions of the wage earners are concerned, I have said enough in the few moments at my disposal to stimulate your interest and spur

your zeal to further investigation, in order that hereafter your criticism of the trades unions may be based on a thorough understanding of their efforts, their achievements and their policies, so that it may be helpful in lifting to a higher plane those who are struggling for a wider field of usefulness and a greater breadth of life, and in doing this help in making a greater citizenship and a greater nation. (Applause.)