

Across the Line (July 5, 1902)

Spokane, Wash., July 5, 1902

A leisure moment enables me to say a few words in regard to our meetings in British Columbia. From beginning to end there was scarcely standing room at a single point, and the enthusiasm corresponded to the occasion. There was some opposition to the progressive policy adopted at the Denver convention,¹ but this was in the main overcome, and I am satisfied that the brothers there, as elsewhere, will settle down to vigorous work in promotion of the same, and in strengthening the character and efficiency of the organization. I found the members of the several unions of the Western Federation of Miners, as well as members of other unions, earnest, active, and progressive, who with but few exceptions did what they could to make my tour a success.

There is one obstacle in the way at present, and I must be candid enough to name it. The provincial Progressive Party is not the party of the working class. Hundreds of honest and conscientious men are enrolled as members, but they will realize that in supporting this party they are making a mistake, as its only purpose is to obstruct the socialist movement. In the party there are all kinds of men of antagonistic beliefs, including anarchists, single taxers, old party politicians, and everything else except socialists. If there is a clear headed socialist in the party I did not meet him. Many there are, doubtless, who believe themselves socialists, but they are mistaken, for if they understand socialism they would know that it cannot be represented by any such party. The platform is a tissue of contradictions, and is well calculated to confuse the unthinking and muddle the situation at least a time.

I was not long across the line before I discovered that the plea was made in one breath by the supporters of this party that it was leading up to socialism, and that it was intended as a progressive movement in that direction. This is what is said to placate those who favor socialism. In the next breath the man who is opposed to socialism is assured that this is his party, for it is the very party needed to head off the socialist movement.

There are, as I have said, many honest yet deluded men in the movement, and there are also the labor fakirs in the true sense of that term, who use organized labor for no other purpose than to feather their own nests, and they are opposed to the action of the Denver convention and to any progress, simply because their own petty individual interests require them to fulfill their obligations to their masters by keeping the labor movement anchored fast to the rocks of reaction.

The Socialist Party of Canada has been organized and is making excellent progress.² This is a clear-cut and uncompromising socialist party, and is bound to be a party of the future. The other will service its purpose of obstruction for a brief moment and pass away.

On the whole, the trip has been fruitful of good results, and the outlook could scarcely be more encouraging. For their kindness to me at every point the brethren have my hearty thanks.

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¹ The 10th Convention of the Western Federation of Miners was held in Denver from May 26 to June 8, 1902. The gathering notably endorsed socialism.

² The Socialist Party of British Columbia (SPBC) was established in 1901 in an effort to unify a number of several local organizations across the province which had previously split allegiances among competing larger organizations. The party produced a newspaper, *The Western Clarion*. The Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) was established as a federal party only in February 1905, with the *Western Clarion* becoming the official organ of that organization.