

OPINIONS OF THE PEOPLE.

MR. PHILLIPS THOMPSON.

To the Editor of THE ECHO.

SIR,—As one of the readers of your esteemed journal in this city I was much surprised to find in your issue of last week in the correspondence from Toronto what was reported as an interview between Mr. Phillips Thompson and a World reporter on the day after the recent election in Toronto. As Mr. Thompson has not repudiated its tenor or denied its correctness, I suppose it is, on the main, correct. Now, Mr. Editor, I have taken a humble part, although doing my level best, in the labor movement for many years past in this city, and I have a fairly good knowledge of "the situation," as well as an intimate acquaintance with every single person who has been in any degree prominent in the labor movement, in this section at all events. While willing to concede and acknowledge all that Mr. Thompson is worthy of, yet I feel constrained to point out to him that he who lives in a glasshouse should not throw stones at others. While dogmatically assuming (and very impudently at that) to lecture others, he surely did not forget that he never allowed his very advanced profession of extreme socialistic views to interfere with his chances of earning a living as a journalist on any paper ready and willing to pay his price. Neither did he allow his labor views to interfere in that direction. When he worked as hard in 1875 as a protectionist and in favor of the inception of the N. P. was he then a Tory "heeler"? When he worked on the Globe, in after years, did he swallow his protectionist views for the sake of the job and was he then a Grit "heeler"? After leaving there he was again a full-fledged protectionist. Now he is employed on Grip and an out-and-out free trader. He forgot, too, that despite his vehement preaching against the iniquity of the individual owner taking the unearned increment and holding land for speculative purposes he did not hesitate to dabble in that way himself and much to his individual financial advantage. Those who have taken a more or less active part in the labor movement in Canada for a series of years past, and many of whom never heard of Mr. Thompson in that connection, will value at its full worth the ill-concealed chagrin and vindictiveness, not to say downright ingratitude, indicated in the tenor of that interview. Had the spirit of it but been known a day or two before the election Mr. Thompson would not have polled many over one-fourth of the 400 and odd which were to his credit at the close of the poll on election day. Had he been wise (and assuming that he was not the "toot" or "heeler" of a political party on the occasion) he would not have expended even \$75 in learning that while any jackanapes, for his own or for other people's purposes, may announce a platform, dub himself "a Labor Reformer" or other name, as a "blind," no man in Toronto can secure recognition as a representative of organized labor in an election contest unless he is the nominee of a convention of properly elected representatives of organized labor in this city. Apart from the few votes cast for him on the occasion, Mr. Thompson has other good and convincing reasons for realizing the truthfulness of my assertion. Practically and in reality Mr. Thompson was the candidate of the Nationalist Society of some twenty or twenty-five members. Outside of these, were it not that he succeeded in securing the President and Secretary, respectively, of the Trades and Labor Council as mover and seconder of his nomination, and in this manner intentionally trying to mislead, few indeed, would have been the number, all circumstances taken into account, who would have acknowledged Mr. Thompson as a Labor candidate, no matter how high his own estimate of himself. Organized labor in this city can afford to smile at the threat of coercion and prospective satisfaction by Mr. Thompson ("We" as he put it) in telling the public and the Trades and Labor Council in particular that "We (Phillips Thompson) are in the field to stay and intend that the Labor Reform Committee shall be the nucleus of an organization for political work in the future," whether organized labor likes it or not. "We now know who are our friends," etc. Rats! Organized labor, despite such twaddle, even though it be on the part of Mr. Thompson, will continue on the even tenor of its way just as usual. It has long ago been realized that conceited, indiscreet and self-sufficient people, no matter how well-meaning, are very often much more a curse than an advantage to the sound and practical every-day interests of those who work for wages in the Dominion or elsewhere. He flippantly delivers a lecture to better men in the labor cause than he himself ever was or is at all likely to be, because of their being, in the past, identified with one or other of the existing political parties, and that this prevented harmony in the ranks, etc. Yet there was harmony in the ranks of organized labor in this city to score a vote of 4,080 for a can-

didate when organized labor had a regular candidate seeking the suffrages of the electorate. The man who ran here recently as a self-styled Labor Reformer says that his campaign the other day was remarkably free from anything of that kind—i. e., lack of harmony. Yet he polled only some 400 votes. He needed not have taken the time and trouble to tell organized labor in Toronto that "the day when men usually and habitually acting with the Grit or Tory parties can dictate the labor political movement are passed." They know that the Dominion T. & L. Congress, which meets annually does that for Canada, and that any man of the class he mentions (and if he knows of any person of that character, other than himself he should have courage enough to name the party) has not (nor could he have) dictated the labor political movement in Toronto since the organization of our T. & L. Council in 1881. Does he feel complimented in the result of his own effort in that direction? What justified him in the attempt? Certainly not long, active, unremitting and gratuitous work for any number of years in the ranks of organized labor either in Toronto or out of it. Neither was it because of many and continued financial sacrifices in the assistance of those who, from time to time, fight the good fight either on their own behalf or on behalf of their fellow-workingmen. If another example, in addition to some of the past, were wanting as to the necessity of selecting labor candidates from out the ranks of the workingmen themselves, the tenor of Mr. Thompson's interview furnishes that example. He tells us that "every workingman isn't a Labor Reformer by long odds." While this may be true literally, yet I have no hesitation in asserting, and Mr. Thompson will hardly deny, that every member of a labor organization is a Labor Reformer in some degree. I may retort that experience has taught working men that outside of their own ranks those who preach—simply preach the isms of one or other of those societies professing such friendship for and interest in the fate of working people are not all "Labor Reformers" by long odds. I thank the Jew for the language. Mr. Thompson tells the interviewer that "some people think the term 'labor reform' unfortunate; it is difficult to find a phrase that comprehends the idea without at the same time conveying a wrong impression." Aye, there is the rub! If Mr. Thompson came out boldly and firmly as a Nationalist—as a Socialist pure and simple—he would, at least, have been respected for his firmness and his devotion to principles that deemed right in themselves. He grafted the wrong impression, and got over his little scruples. He ran as a "Labor Reformer" apparently to catch the votes of working people who, rightly or otherwise, do not approve of the extreme socialism of Mr. Thompson. A gentleman visiting a lunatic on one occasion met a patient inmate who appeared to be quite rational, and the visitor asked Why are you here—you are sensible enough? The instant reply was "You see, sir, I thought the world was mad, and the world thought just the same about me, and that is how I am here." Mr. Phillips Thompson and organized labor in this city do not think alike on more subjects than one—and well, Mr. Thompson thinks, etc. Draw your own inference, Mr. Editor.

A TRADE UNIONIST.  
Toronto, May 23, 1892.

ACROBATIC ECONOMICS.

After long acquaintance with the American system which calls itself protection, I confess to a new conception of its greatness. The recent discussion in the press and on the stump have revealed undreamed of beauties and adaptations. It is automatically perfect. Like the Bowery coat it stretches for a large man and shrinks for a little one. It is wide or narrow, tall or short, local or universal. It is hot or cold, fast or loose, it runs with the hare or hunts with the hounds. Its changes are protean and when assailed in one shape invariably it repels the attack in another. Charge it with narrowing markets, and it points you to the great beauties of reciprocity. Dwell on the desirability of foreign commerce and it grows eloquent over the home market. Say that it raises prices, and you learn that its chief object is to put them down. Declare for freedom of exchange, and you are asked how our manufacturers can live and sell at the low prices at which foreign goods are offered. In Faneuil Hall cheapness is a protective virtue, while in Worcester dearness is the blessing that has built up its thriving manufactures. And as for wages, the tariff raises them, of course. By putting down the price of manufactured goods, the employer can afford to pay his workmen more. Do you see? But Mr. McKinley cannot find a man in his vast audiences who has received a dollar in improved wages since his famous bill became a law. However, we are told that the workman now buys his goods cheaper and carpets can now be had for hovel! The Boston Journal cannot find an article enhanced in price, so its shame and sorrow be it said, for it knows cheapness is a curse, and that a cheap carpet or a cheap coat is the sure indication of a cheap man.—William Lloyd Garrison.

THE SOCIALIST CATECHISM.

MACHINES AND THEIR USE.

Q. What is the use of machinery?  
A. Labor saving machinery is used, as its name indicates, to reduce the cost of production.

Q. What do you mean by the cost of production?  
A. The amount of human labor necessary to produce useful things.

Q. How ought this reduction of the necessary hours of labor to affect the laboring class?  
A. It ought to benefit them in every way by increasing their wealth as well as their opportunities of leisure.

Q. Has it done so?  
A. Certainly not.

Q. Why not?  
A. Because the capitalist class has appropriated to itself nearly all the benefit.

Q. What, then, has been the result?  
A. The available surplus value has largely increased, and the idle classes have become more numerous and more idle.

Q. Support your opinion by that of an economist?  
A. "It is questionable," says John Stuart Mill, "if all the improvements in machinery have lightened the day's toil of a single man."

Q. In what aspect of the case is this correct?  
A. In respect of the whole laboring class as a body.

Q. What is the effect upon individuals of the introduction of a labor saving machine?  
A. It lightens the day's toil to a certain number of laborers most effectually, by taking away their employment altogether and throwing them helpless on the streets.

Q. Is such a lamentable event frequent?  
A. It is a matter of every day occurrence.

Q. What is the result to their employer?  
A. He "saves their labor" in the sense of getting the same work done by the machine without having to pay their wages.

Q. Is this a permanent advantage to him individually?  
A. As long as he has a monopoly of the machine it is a great advantage to him, but other capitalists soon introduce it also, and compel him to share the spoil with them.

Q. In what way is this result obtained?  
A. By competition. The owners of the machines try to undersell each other, with a view to keeping the production in their own hands.

Q. How far does competition beat down prices?  
A. Until the normal level of capitalist profits is reached, below which they all decline to go.

Q. What inference do the economists draw from the result of competition?  
A. That the whole nation shares equally in the advantage of the machine, since prices are everywhere reduced.

Q. What fallacy underlies this argument?  
A. The same fallacy which vitiates every argument of the economists, and that is the assumption that the laborers have no right to complain so long as the employers are content with taking only the normal rate of profits as their share of the surplus value.

Q. What other consideration is omitted by the economists?  
A. The fact that society is divided into two classes of idlers and workers. They assume again that the workers have no right to complain, so long as they seem to obtain an equal share with the idlers in the advantage gained by the saving of their own toil.

Q. How do they seem to share this advantage?  
A. By the reduction in cost of articles which they buy.

Q. Is not cheapness of production a benefit to the workers?  
A. It is only an apparent, not a real benefit.

Q. How could it be rendered real?  
A. It would be real if all who consumed were also workers. As it is the working class get all the disadvantage of the low wages, and of the adulteration, which has been described as a form of competition.

Q. What makes the reduction of cost appear advantageous to the wage earners?  
A. The fact that their wages are paid in money.

Q. How is this?  
A. The money price of all articles has risen enormously during the last three centuries owing to the increased abundance of gold. The money wages have risen also, but not in anything like the same proportion.

Q. What has prevented them from rising in the same proportion?  
A. The cheapening of the labor cost of the necessities of life, which has thus been rendered an empty boon to the wage earners.

Q. Give an instance of the misapprehension of these facts.  
A. The regular boast of the free traders, recently reiterated by John Bright, is that the Liberals have given the laborers two

loaves, whereas the Tories wished them to be content with only one.

Q. What is this boast based upon?  
A. The undeniable fact that bread is cheaper in England under Free Trade than under Protection.

Q. Then how can you tell that the laborer does not get twice as much bread as he would otherwise enjoy?  
A. Simply because it has been proved again and again on the highest authority that the laborers as a body at present, obtain so bare a subsistence that it does not suffice to keep them in health; therefore they could not at any time have lived on half the amount.

Q. What would be the effect if bread became twice as dear?  
A. Wages would necessarily rise. A Wiltshire farm laborer could not maintain his family on half their present food; and though capital cares nothing about individuals, it takes good care that the laborers shall not starve in a body.

Q. What, then, is the general result of the cheapness which is caused by the introduction of labor saving machinery?  
A. The advantage of the cheapening of luxuries is obviously reaped direct by the idlers, since the workers cannot afford to purchase them. In the case of necessities the advantage seems at first sight to be shared between idlers and workers; but ultimately the idlers secure the whole advantage, because money wages are proportioned to what money will buy, and the iron law keeps them down to the price of a bare subsistence.

Q. Do the laborers suffer any direct disadvantage from machinery?  
A. Certainly they do. Numbers of them are thrown out of employment at each fresh invention; their position is rendered precarious in the extreme; and there is a constant tendency to replace skilled labor by unskilled, and men by women.

Q. If this is so, would not the workers be wise to destroy the machinery?  
A. To destroy what they have themselves produced merely because it is at present stolen from them would be absurd.

Q. What course should they pursue?  
A. Organize their ranks; demand restitution of their property; keep it under their control; and work it for their own benefit.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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