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## THE WEEK:

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### CURRENT TOPICS.

The fundamental cause of the quarrel between capital and labour is the alleged unjust distribution of the products of labour. It has always seemed to us that the most satisfactory settlement of the question must one day be found in a more or less universal system of profit-sharing. We, therefore, always turn with great interest to the record of successful experiments in this direction by liberal-minded individuals and firms. The following, which we take from the *Christian World*, is the latest instance of successful profit-sharing which has come to our notice. It is certainly, as the Duke of Devonshire said in a speech on the occasion of the recent annual announcement, a most admirable and ingenious way of combining the interests of labour and capital, and also of consumers.

"Profit-sharing" was adopted in June, 1889, by the South Metropolitan Gas Company. In five years £51,778 has been distributed amongst the workmen in bonuses. Of this £44,845 has been invested, mostly in the company itself, by the men. The men receive a bonus of 1 per cent. for every penny reduction in the price of the gas. Under a sliding scale fixed by Parliament, the company is empowered to increase its dividend in proportion as it lowers its prices. So satisfied are the directors with the profit-sharing scheme, that they now propose to increase the bonus to 1½ per cent., on condition that one-half of it is left by way of investment in their hands.

A vigorous discussion and one which may bear practical fruit is now being carried on in the Ontario press touching the law's delays, uncertainties, and unfathomable costs, and the possibility of simplifying its processes. There seems to be a very general agreement that there are at present altogether too many doors open for appeal, and that a great saving of time and expense might be effected by lessening the number of these, without any sacrifice of the rights of litigants or their prospects of obtaining justice in the end. Common sense certainly seems to favour this view. Of course any change of this kind would lessen the chances that a defeated litigant, in a given case, might obtain a reversal of judgment; for it is the fact probably—we have no statistics before us and are subject to correction—that the chances of obtaining such reversal in the next court are usually about even in appealed cases. But the same remark holds good with respect to the prospects of the litigant thus defeated on appeal. There is usually room for another appeal to a still higher court, with the same uncertainty as to the result. Cases are by no means uncommon, as we all know, in which the first court of appeal has reversed the judgment of the lower court only to have its own finding in like manner reversed by a still higher tribunal. By what logic can any one assure himself that there is any guarantee of absolute justice being done at the last? So long as there is a still higher court, is it not reasonable to infer that the otherwise final decision would be just as likely to be reversed once more as to be sustained.

The preparation of a satisfactory list of citizens entitled to vote in Dominion elections is undoubtedly a very difficult matter, but its difficulty cannot justify the Government in continuing to use the present cumbersome and expensive system. In view of

the well-known disapproval of this method by many of their own supporters, as well as by the Opposition, the Government put the loyalty of their party friends to a pretty severe test when they decided to drop the measure which they had introduced for the utilization of the Provincial lists, and to fall back upon a revision of the lists on the old plan. When to all the strong objections to the principle of the present Act are added its enormous cost, in time and money, the wonder is how, in these hard times, the Government could impose upon the people the burden of even one more revision, unless they have in view at least a serious possibility of a dissolution before another meeting of Parliament takes place. We have never felt sure of the correctness of the view, in which both parties, we believe, concur, that it is the obvious prerogative of the central Parliament to determine the qualifications of its members. A strong argument might, we think, be framed in favour of the view that under a federal system the federating provinces should have the right to determine, each for itself, the qualifications of those who shall elect its representatives in the Federal Parliament. But accepting what seems to be the general opinion, that it is the prerogative of the Federal House to select its own electorate, it is still impossible to justify the course of the Government and their supporters in continuing to impose this enormously costly system upon the country in a time of depression, when, either by adopting, as it at one time proposed to do, the Provincial lists, or, perhaps, better by a simple method of registration, it might have spared the electorate the greater part of all the labour and expense of the pending revision.

When, a year or two since, an inoffensive French Protestant was fined, and on refusing to pay the fine, imprisoned, in a Quebec town, as the cause of a disturbance which he had done nothing to provoke, but which was stirred up, wholly, as shown by evidence in court, by compatriots who resented his change of views in religious matters, the people of other parts of the Dominion looked on with wonder, not unmixed with indignation, at this strange reversal of the usual maxims of a court of justice. It was, they perceived, the old fable of the wolf and the lamb illustrated. When, two or three weeks since, in the old city of Quebec, the places of worship of two or three assemblies of Protestants were