

## =The Echo=

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MONTREAL, February 21, 1891.

## WE WANT AN ANSWER.

Our Government proposes to establish laws for the benefit of the whole people; and such laws, if justly administered, should secure to every individual a fair equivalent for his labor, yet probably half the wealth of the nation is accumulated in the possession of about two and a half per cent. of the population, who, to say the most, have not done more labor toward the production of the wealth than the average of the ninety-seven and a half per cent., among whom is distributed the other half of the wealth. Let those who doubt whether two and a half per cent. of the population own half the property of the nation select in their own neighborhood, or in a village containing, say, four thousand inhabitants, the twenty most wealthy men, and see if the twenty are not worth as much as all the rest. Allowing five persons to a family, they would amount to one hundred individuals—just two and one-half per cent. of the population. If it be found that the twenty men and their families own one-half of the property, then see if they have contributed more labor, physically, intellectually, or morally, for the general benefit than the rest of the villagers. We do not now speak of what their wealth may have done in hiring others to make improvements, but of the improvements that the twenty men and their families have effected by their personal labor. If they have not accomplished as much as all the rest of their townsmen, and yet own half the wealth of the town, some wrong to the majority of the people has been done. Not that these men have not acted in as good faith, or with as upright intentions as other citizens, or that others would not be equally glad to accumulate wealth in the same manner; but we ask how it occurs the comparatively few have such a large proportion? They have not earned it, for they could not have performed the labor of building half the town, nor of providing half the inhabitants with food and clothing; nor could they have given half the instruction in the various trades and in the school education of the villagers. And if they have not done one-half the labor, why is it they possess one-half the property?

## THE END OF THE RAILWAY STRIKE.

The great railway strike in Scotland has ended, both the Caledonian and North British Railway Companies agreeing to reinstate the men as far as possible and to withdraw all actions taken against the men for breach of contract, etc. In the reinstatement preference was given to such of the men as had wives and families depending on them, and it is stated the younger men willingly acquiesced in

this. Considering that about nine thousand men actually took part in the strike, the number that will eventually be out of work is expected to be comparatively small, as large numbers of the blacklegs are returning to their homes. The companies have also agreed to consider the grievances of the men and to remedy them as far as possible. It is believed that the day of long hours for railway men is past, and if the strike has done nothing more than this, that it has drawn the attention of Parliament to the matter, it has done a great deal. The good results may not be felt for some time, but ultimately all classes in the service will reap the benefits. Though the men have been beaten, they do not return to duty hopeless and discontented as substantial advantages have been gained, besides drawing forth the sympathy of almost the entire nation. It is certain that, had the men been better organized, better results would have been obtained or perhaps the strike would not have been permitted to occur, and from this a lesson may be learned, namely, that a good cause without organization is not of itself sufficient to command success. As to the railway companies, their dearly bought experience must have taught them that it would have been better to have given an ear to the repeated complaints of their workers. They should be able to see by this time that the nearer an approximation to a ten-hour working is made the more economical it will prove. To continue the present system of long hours is simply to foment discontent and breed disturbance.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN WORKERS.

Looking at the vast number of women now engaged in our factories and workshops it is surprising to find that there has never been any serious attempt made to organize them into a body to work in conjunction with men for the purpose of securing a just compensation to them for their labor. At present advantage is taken of their weakness and helplessness to draw them into competition with men at a much less wage, although in many cases and in many employments their earning capacity is equal to man. Not only is this an injustice to women themselves, but it is proving a serious injury to the male worker. Until women have been helped to place themselves in a position to command equal pay for equal work by combination this injurious effect upon male labor will continue to grow, and what is now a menace to the structure of society, if not remedied, will result in a reversal of the established order of things. There is an old Scandinavian legend which tells of a powerful Queen who set her hand-maidens to grind out gold. Through long years they toiled on, and at last, weary of their endless drudge, they cried out in despair: "Give us rest, Oh Queen." But the Queen replied: "Grind on; rest ye not; sleep ye not longer than the cuckoo is silent." And the wearied slaves ground on, singing as they ground the song of vengeance and revolt. Inspired by the song of the maidens a band of armed men rushed upon and slew the Queen amid her gold. From a modern point of view this action was hasty, and, as the legend goes on to show they only exchanged one form of slavery for another. Had the maidens been wise they would have formed a trades union, demanded shorter hours and a fair share of the product of their toil, or struck work and stuck together to the end, in which case they might have come to terms and lived happily afterwards. The necessity of combination amongst women workers has been clearly pointed out by Lady Aberdeen in an admirable address to the Women's Protective League of Glasgow. The labor of educating working women to a full appreciation of the benefits of Union-

ism is a hard, but not a hopeless task, and we trust that before long decisive steps will be taken in the matter. To the philanthropist it opens up a new field of social work of the first importance, and all who have influence should take part in it. To those who feel that womanly lives are being made unwomanly or destroyed altogether in the fierce race after wealth of the capitalist, now is the time to step in and take part in the struggle. Become propagandists of the doctrine of organization; there is no danger to society in combination, but much in a weak Unionism.

## NOTES OF THE WEEK.

The political prospects of the Hon. Peter Mitchell are away down below zero, and the likelihood of their rising above that point is extremely problematical. Deserted by his former most influential friends, he is experiencing the full force of what he did his best to encourage during the Herald trouble, namely, "ratting," and we would ask, "How does the medicine agree with you?" Evidently it does not, for, from latest accounts, he was hiding under the plea of indisposition. It will be welcome news to organized labor in this city and elsewhere when the intelligence comes to hand that Peter Mitchell has been elected to stay at home.

\* \* \*

A much needed measure of reform has been introduced into the British House of Commons by Mr. Haldane. It relates to the wages of farm servants in Scotland. The bill provides, among other things, that all wage shall be made payable and shall be actually paid in money. Its chief clause enacts that in no proceedings commenced by any farm servant against his employer for the recovery of money due to such farm servant for wages under any such contract shall the defender be allowed to plead compensation, or claim any reduction of the pursuer's demand by reason or in respect of anything, not being money, had or received by the pursuer, as or on account of his wages or in reward for his labor. In the event of the bill becoming law, all contracts for the hiring of any farm servants shall be subject to these provisions.

\* \* \*

The Liberals would appear to have abandoned the idea of opposing Sir Donald Smith in the Western Division, and by this resolve they have acted wisely. From the nature of the constituency it would be extremely difficult to find a man capable of taking the field against Sir Donald, and least of all, a labor candidate would have the slightest show of success. Apart from his independent position in politics, which renders him acceptable to both parties, Sir Donald has entrenched himself too strongly in the hearts of his fellow-townsmen of all classes by his acts of generous munificence to be lightly discarded, and to have brought forward opposition after the magnificent requisition tendered him would have been factious.

\* \* \*

The Central Trades and Labor Council met on Thursday evening, but only routine business was transacted. It was expected that some action would have been taken on the candidates for Montreal Centre, but the delegates expected to move in the matter were not on hand, and the subject has been dropped in the meantime.

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THE ECHO is mailed to subscribers at a distance every Friday evening, and delivered in the city early on Saturday. Parties not receiving their paper regularly should communicate with the office.

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Subscribers, who have not already done so, will oblige by remitting at their earliest convenience.

Liberty is not a placard stuck on the wall; it is a living power which we feel within us and without us—the protecting genius of the domestic hearth, the guarantee of social rights. You have need of much patience, and of courage that never tires, for you will not conquer in a day. Liberty is the bread which nations must gain by the sweat of their brow.

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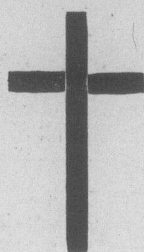
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