

# LABOR ADVOCATE

A WEEKLY LABOR REFORM NEWSPAPER

Published by the Toronto Trades and Labor Council at 125 King St. E.

PRINTED BY THE TORONTO TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL AT 125 KING ST. E. TORONTO, CANADA

Subscription: Yearly \$1.50 in advance, Single Copies 5 CENTS

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TORONTO, CANADA, DECEMBER 19, 1920

## A NATIONAL DISGRACE

It would be difficult to find among Canadian politicians a man more utterly unfit for the position of Minister of Justice than the callous, cold blooded, blood thirsty creature who now occupies the position. The course of Mr. John Thompson in remaining deaf to all appeals for a commutation of the sentence of Hlanched, executed on Friday last at Sherbrooke, following so closely upon the hanging of Birchall, who was sent to his death upon purely circumstantial evidence, is calculated to disgrace Canada in the eyes of the civilized world as a country where a barbarous code, long since abandoned by all nations professing enlightenment, still survives.

We do not now take the position that under no circumstances ought the law to exact a life for a life, or claim that it would be wise or desirable in every case to substitute life imprisonment for the gallows. But we do assert and without fear of contradiction, that tendency of enlightened public opinion, and the actual practice of every civilized country today is to limit the death penalty to the most extreme cases. In order to justify the

carrying out of the death sentence it ought to be proved that the prisoner is beyond the shadow of a doubt the man who actually committed the crime and that the fatal result was premeditated. It is in the last degree improbable that either Birchall or Hlanched would have been hanged in England, the United States, or any of the countries of continental Europe, Russia and Turkey perhaps excepted. The want of direct evidence in the first case and the lack of premeditation in the second would, outside of a country where public opinion is at least fifty years behind the age on such questions, have secured a commutation in both instances.

The execution of Hlanched is a specially shameful piece of medieval barbarity. There was admittedly no premeditation about the crime, which was the result of a drunken row between two bon companions, in which one of the men in hot blood drew a pistol and inflicted a wound resulting in death. The jury who tried the case united in an appeal for clemency but in vain. Sir John Thompson is evidently a man who prides himself upon his heartless individuality, and his lawless-like ability to close his ears against all appeals for mercy and steel his gizzard—no whatever supplies the place of a heart in his anatomy—against all considerations of humanity. Hlanched died on the gallows for an offence which would have been amply expiated by a long term of imprisonment, in order that Canadians may be enabled to boast that they carry out their laws inflexibly.

There is no doubt that a great many people really take a horrible and ghastly pride in the fact that a greater percentage of murderers finally meet the gallows here than in other countries. It would be difficult to believe this were it not for the opinions brought out during the exhaustive discussions over the Birchall case, but the tone of many letters, editorials and sermons called forth by that tragedy makes it plain that we have among us persons who literally gloat over every fresh

victim sent to the halter as a sort of proof of the "true loyalty" and "sound British sentiment" prevailing in this country in contrast to the "maudlin sentimentality" of the Yanks, among whom capital punishment for murder is the exception rather than the rule. This feeling has been encouraged by the dense and deplorable ignorance of party editors—and most of them are very ignorant outside of partisan politics—who have fostered the idea that the United States is especially lax in the treatment of murderers. The truth is that the practice of the American people in this matter is strictly in accord with that of most civilized nations, and in no respect exceptional. The following taken from the Twentieth Century shows how the gallows is falling into disfavor in the leading European countries:

In England during the decade 1874-83, 145 of 299 persons condemned to death were hanged. In Italy, no executions have taken place since 1876. In Belgium, none since 1863. In Holland, none since 1860. In Portugal, none since 1813. In Germany and Austria, capital punishment is still in force, but it is restricted to the use of most instances. France might almost be placed in the same category, for of 63 persons arraigned for capital crimes in 1877 only 28 were condemned to death, and of these only six were executed.

It will be noticed that while the advocates of the gallows fancy that they are glorifying British institutions by stringing up every convict murderer without regard to extenuating circumstances, in England over one-half of the condemned have their sentences commuted. The action of the Government instead of being a subject for boastful self-congratulation as showing their superiority over our neighbors, ought to make every Canadian hang his head in shame. The "sentimentality" which the friends of the halter deprecate is simply the refined feeling of humanity and enlightenment which is making itself felt everywhere throughout civilization, is modifying the bloody vindictive code which has come down to us from barbarous ages. These ages are long past, and good-pollies sit place themselves in line, not with the intelligent and progressive ideas of Britons, Americans and the Western European nations, but with Russian brutality, Oriental despotism, and the crude and cruel vindictiveness of semi-barbarous peoples.

## SUNDAY STREET CALM

At the special meeting of the City Council held on Monday evening the principal question which came up in connection with the street railway franchise was the proposal to refer to the people the question of whether the street cars should run on Sunday. After a long and somewhat acrimonious debate—as debates involving religious issues rarely always are—the proposal was voted down by a large majority only six adherents venturing to support it.

Our own view of the matter is that while Sunday street cars would undoubtedly be a great convenience and would not necessarily involve any intrinsic hardship or injustice, no Labor Reformer ought to favor such a proposal so long as there is the slightest danger that in practice they might be the means of causing any man to be compelled to work seven days in the week. The day of rest, whether that day be Sunday, Monday or any other day, is too great a blessing to overlook and humanity to be lightly thrown aside for any prospective advantage. It may be said that there is no need for street railway employees to work seven days in the week—that every man could be secured his day off. Of course he could, but the matter is not to be dismissed in this easy off-hand manner. The question is not what might, or could, or ought to be done to place the street railway employees on the same even footing as his fellow workers in ordinary occupations, but what would be done were the road in the hands of a money-making corporation. And the verdict of all experience is that it is not safe to depend upon any corporation, no matter how fair their principles or how stringently they may be

bound by agreements, to respect the rights either of their employees or the general public when their financial interests can be advanced by disregarding them. If they saw that working their employees all the week was going to make the difference between dividends and no dividends, a strong financial monopoly, able to influence the press, the council and the judges, could drive a coach and six through any charter that could be framed which permitted Sunday labor at all.

For these reasons then we are firmly and unalterably opposed to Sunday street cars so long as it is proposed to hand the franchise over to any monopoly. But the case would assume an altogether different aspect should the city retain the road and operate it as a public enterprise. In that event, it would be easy to secure the right of every man to his seventh day rest. Public opinion would not tolerate the death of men continuously from one week's end to another by the city, under city management, therefore the strongest objection to Sunday cars would disappear, and the system might be safely inaugurated just as soon as a majority of the citizens pronounced in its favor.

As matters stand supposing that a private company gets the road it will be under a hard and fast agreement under which the running of cars on Sunday will be absolutely prohibited—an agreement which the company would not find it so easy to violate as one securing the rights of working men. Substantiated sentiment being much stronger among the industrial classes than regard for human rights, there will therefore be no hope or chance of securing Sunday cars for thirty years to come in case the scheme at present in view should be carried into effect. The need for such a service may grow more imperative with the increase of population, the mass of the people may desire the accommodation, but the agreement is strictly prohibitory. The only opportunity which the advocates of a Sunday car service have of a reconsideration of the question during the present generation, lies in the defeat of the project now before the council, and retention of the road in the hands of the city.

## HOW A LIE TRAVELS

This Canada Educational Monthly, edited by Archibald MacLachry, M.A., publishes without comment, and therefore with implied approval, an article on "The Strikes," from the Canadian Churchman, characterized by even more than the usual amount of ignorance, cant and dogmatic assumption, which badly always mark the utterances of "religious" newspapers when treating on the labor question. It would be a profitable task to endeavor to analyze the sophistries of a writer who is so ignorant that he does not know the difference between modern Socialism and Communism and so prejudiced in favor of his capitalistic masters, that while he condemns workmen for coercing others to join under unions, he has no word of censure for the blacklisting of employed by capitalists. But we simply wish to direct attention to the fact that these two publications give currency to the following statement:

"It is my view that we should call every accident that a great train from New York to Chicago was not wrecked a few days ago through the murderous malice of some of those Knights—a calamity which might have led to the slaughter and to the maiming of many human beings. This is war, and it is the war of wild beasts upon civilization."

Now, as everybody professing to be fairly informed upon current topics ought to know, this slanderous accusation, first set afloat by the New York Central authorities and their friends of the monopoly press, has been completely exploded. The accused workmen were put on trial, the prosecution completely broke down and the men were discharged. But the purpose of the railway management had been served—the lie had travelled far and wide, while the literary birdlings who heralded the arrest and prosecution in flaring announcements made it the basis

for malignant attacks on organized labor gave no such prominence to the collapse of the case.

It would be fully of course to expect the *Churchman* or any paper of its class to retract a proved falsehood or admit the possibility that its editor could be mistaken. But a periodical professing to be published in the interests of education ought, at least, to value its reputation for ordinary truthfulness as a sufficient reason to correct a gross and slanderous untruth which it has been the vehicle of propagating. And in future the *Educational Monthly* will do well to look for its information on social questions to some more reliable and conscientious source than the newspapers which today to the wealthy and well-to-do classes and accent the cry of the poor for justice, is the much abused name of religion.

## FIFTEEN SCHOOL BOOKS

So long as the parents of school children are compelled to provide them, at their own expense, with the necessary text books and every father of a family knows what a constant outlet is required for that purpose—the offer presented last that Canada provides "free education" for her children is a piece of the most rhetorical bombast. Education is not "free" and never has been. It is no light matter for the poor man, who has to exercise the closest economy in purchasing the actual necessities of life in order to make ends meet, to have to pay out a quarter this week, and half-a-dollar next, and so on "throughout the year, to provide a numerous family with the outfit required. The sums may appear trifling to the man who never knows what it is to want a dollar or needs to pinch and save, but at the end of the year when they make a very respectable aggregate. The cost of school books is felt as a serious burden even by those of moderate incomes, and in the case of the very poor it has not a little to do with the evil of tenancy, which our educationalists are trying to remedy by compulsory education. It is a fact to be wondered at that property owners are barely able to provide their families with bread and blankets and coal during the winter, should keep their children at home rather than incur the liability of having to find them text books.

It is fully to talk of compulsory education and devise plans for getting the children who are growing up in ignorance into the school houses unless the community is also prepared to furnish the pupils with all the means of instruction. Where is the use of running in the trunks and compelling them to attend school regularly, unless they are to be provided with books at the public cost? You certainly cannot compel parents to buy school books in those cases—and there are many of them—in which stress of poverty and the expense of an outfit is the cause of truancy. Without free school books compulsory education will be an absurd farce. The law may secure compulsory school attendance, but it is a no-account to call it compulsory education. The evil results of the present system are perhaps most noticeable as regards the pupils of more advanced classes. The more rapid the progress made by the scholar the greater the cost entailed for books. More text-books, and those of a more expensive character, are required in proportion to the diligence and application of the pupil, and his ambition to learn. The consequence is that poor parents, who lose without grumbling the expense of the earlier years of instruction, feel the increased outlet more keenly when the higher branches are reached, and are under the temptation to withdraw their children from school at too early an age. Many a bright, intelligent youth has a decided taste for learning but has been taken from school at the age of fourteen or fifteen and sent to work because his parents could not meet the increasing cost of the high priced books required for a continuance of his studies. Obviously it is the more active-minded and ambitious of the pupils—the very ones who ought to be kept at school until they acquire a thorough education—who will make the greatest demands

upon the family resources, and therefore render careless parents most anxious to terminate their school days.

A system which thus tends to prevent quick witted and aspiring pupils from completing their school course, or to the poverty, or the greed, or may, of their parents, ought to be tolerated no longer.

We must have free school books.

## CAPITAL AND CAPITALISM

The Montreal *Echo* moralizes as follows:—"Capital and labor should be the very best friends. Without either the other would be in a sad plight. Whether this is merely a generally admitted truism or an alaud misconception depends entirely upon what the *Echo* means by "capital." If it means material capital such as money, tools, machinery, and other things necessary to the work of production nobody will consider it worth while to dispute the assertion. But if, as is possible our contemporary sees the word as a political economists do to mean the people who own or control capital, that is the capitalist—it is altogether wrong. Capital is essential to civilized labor. Capitalism, that is the power of the individual owners of capital to tax industry for its use, is not only unnecessary but a positive injury and injustice. Labor as the creator of all wealth should control capital instead of being controlled by it, or rather by those who own it.

The distinction between "capital" and "capitalism" is one that ought always to be borne in mind by Labor Reformers. It is a very stale trick of the literary apologues for capitalism to start out with the proposition that "capital" is necessary to labor, which everybody must of course admit, and then to proceed to argue from these premises that the capitalist is a benefactor and fills a useful place in the social economy. Using the word "capital" in a double sense, sometimes as meaning the wealth used in production, and sometimes the persons who have secured it, they are able to pull off this sophistry upon the unthinking and to confound many, who while they feel that a fallacy works somewhere in the reasoning are unable to point it out.

Labor would be in a very bad plight indeed without capital, that is without implements, machinery or the means of exchange. But it could very well do without capitalism in favor of a juster system of distribution, under which the producer would receive the very large share of the product which he now contributes to the support of the wealth owning class in the form of rent, interest, and profits.

According to the statement put in by the council for Toronto in the street railway arbitration, instead of the city owning Frank Smith five and a half millions or anything, the street railway company will be doing the city \$119,120 60. This puts quite a different face on the matter. Of course the five million claim was preposterous and simply put in as a bluff. The city ought to deal liberally with Frank Smith in the matter and not exact the last cent. If he will pay the \$119,120 and get out, we think they ought, in common fairness, to throw off the 60 cents.

The *Mail* is consistently and persistently in favor of monopoly or every other game the following advice to the City Council:—"Having taken down upon the attempt to put the running of Sunday cars to a popular vote, it is now in order for the City Council to assume an ordinary position on the flattened corpse of that wasteful part of the body politic which wants the city to assume control of the street cars." Any addresser who writes enough to follow the *Mail's* advice will think they have not done a handful of carpet tacks, or a nest of borers before they are through.

What do the workmen of this city think of the following from the *Mail* of Wednesday? Speaking of