

LABOR ADVOCATE

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WORKINGMEN THEIR OWN WORST ENEMIES.

This way in which an ignorant and selfish class of workmen often stand in the way of their own enfranchisement has been strikingly illustrated by the agitation for the restriction of child labor in factories in Britain. In accordance with an international understanding it was proposed in the Bill now before the British Parliament to fix the age of twelve years as the minimum at which children can be employed in factories. Some of the Tory leaders, including Lord Salisbury and Mr. Matthews, were opposed to this restriction and it is asserted that their hands were strengthened in objecting to this clause by the outcry raised from the Lancashire operatives whose children, under the proposed bill, are said to earn, or rather to receive wages amounting in the aggregate to fifteen million dollars a year. Emboldened by their protest the Ministry opposed the age limit but fortunately the Liberal party managed to carry an amendment fixing the age when work can begin at eleven.

If the ignorant and besotted operatives who are anxious to live upon the earnings of their children were not very short-sighted fools they would know that child labor is one of the principal causes why their own wages are so low. They are the victims of competition with their own families. If the children and married women were kept out of the factories the head of the family would be in a position to demand increased wages, and instead of father, mother and infant all having to toil in order to earn enough upon which to exist in some semblance of decency, to the utter destruction of everything like home life and proper training of the young, the earnings of the father alone would suffice to keep them.

These victims of the competitive system and the greed of capitalism are not responsible for their ignorance, as they have had little chance to learn better. But it is none the less depressing to intelligent Labor Reformers to see those whom they wish to benefit endeavoring to thwart almost every move that is made which does not immediately appeal to their selfish, material interests. Labor's worst foes have generally been of its own household.

"WHO WOULD BE FREE, ETC."

As a consequence of the long continued agitation of the labor organizations a large class of workers employed in the city, by civic contractors, and in public services, find their condition materially bettered without any effort of their own. Labor Reformers have no selfish ends to serve, and no personal benefit to gain from the movement, here, at the sacrifice of considerable leisure time and not a little money, secured better pay for his laborers, firemen and drivers, raised the standard of wages for men employed by contractors on city jobs, reduced by several hours the daily labor of overworked street railroad employees and increased their pay, and lately secured the same benefits for the girls in the employ of the telephone monopoly.

Now while the members of labor organizations have been agitating as a pure matter of principle for all these reforms, and endeavoring through the municipal machinery to ameliorate the condition of all who can possibly be reached in this way, the various classes who have reaped the benefit have done little or nothing either to help themselves or aid the general labor movement. They have been quite willing to let others do the hard work of the struggle to remove the burden from their shoulders, and have for the most part taken no more interest than so many eyes in the contest. Even after they have had a practical experience in the shape of increased wages and leisure of the benefits conferred by the labor movement, they remain as stolidly apathetic as ever, and do not seem to care about taking steps to preserve the rights that others have won for them, still less of helping to emancipate others.

Now it would be very foolish to expect gratitude from these people. It is always foolish to expect it from anybody, because it is a quality which is for the most part confined to the brute creation and rarely manifested itself in human beings. Dogs and horses are grateful, absurdly so sometimes, but men and women very seldom display this animal virtue to any great extent. But while it may be admitted that for the workmen and women benefited by the agitation for municipal control of labor, to be influenced by a sense of gratitude for what has been done for them would be altogether contrary to the natural order of things one would suppose that they might have intelligence enough to understand that they are not likely to retain their hard-won rights unless they are ready to fight for them. The various movements we have recounted have been undertaken in the teeth of strong and influential opposition. There is a large element in the Council, and perhaps a proportionately larger element outside of it, which hates all reforms of this nature. Every capitalist, every large landowner, every thievish contractor, is against any measure of justice which results in increasing taxation, and in favor of dealing with labor on strictly business principles and buying it as cheaply as possible. They are leaving no means untried to abolish the day labor system and to cut the contracter and others can grow rich by hiring labor at the lowest possible figures. They are opposed to laws or wages put in laws agreements, because they want labor kept down on general principles.

Now knowing this, as they must know it, it might have been imagined that the corporation laborers, the firemen and drivers, the workmen for contractors, the street railway and telephone employees, would have had sense and spirit enough to organize and cooperate with the other labor bodies who are trying to maintain and extend the principle of regulating the wages of public employees. But they have not done so. They hold entirely aloof from a movement which is directly in their interest, and expect that others will keep on fighting in their cause without any sort of encouragement or support from them. In so doing they are acting very blindly, and running

the risk of losing whatever has been gained by the struggles of half a dozen years. There are limits to human endurance, and unless these classes of workers, and more especially the street car drivers and conductors, show some disposition to make common cause with their fellow workers, it is quite likely that the latter will at last grow tired of making sacrifices for men who are not only ingrates but fools, and turn their attention in some more promising direction.

NO CAUSE FOR DESPAIR.

This strike railway question has taken another turn owing to the publication of a letter from Mr. S. H. Blake, in which he gives it as his opinion that the city has no power to borrow money or to issue debentures for the purpose of changing the street railway system, extending the road or, in fact, doing anything outside of purchasing the road. The consequence is that the Kerr Block and Miller-Howard tenders are illegal and cannot, in their present shape, be considered as they both involve raising money on the credit of the city for the necessary changes in the road. It is also eagerly assumed by the newspapers which the monopolists have hired to advocate their interests, that this conclusively settles the question of civic operation. This is by no means follows. In the first place it is only Mr. S. H. Blake's opinion. Mr. Blake is an able lawyer, of course, but with all the natural and acquired bias of a corporation lawyer against the people and popular rights, and in favor of monopolies. It is just possible that his views may have been a little warped by his professional prejudices. Secondly, granting that Mr. Blake's interpretation of the law is correct, it is not so very long from now until the meeting of the Legislature when the Act could be amended so as to give the city power to raise money to operate the road. There is no important change needed at present and the receipts will furnish ample funds for experimental management for a year. We do not see that there is anything in Mr. Blake's opinion that need disturb the equanimity of those who really wish the city to continue running the street railway or cause them to change their course in any particular. It does, however, afford an excuse for weak kneed aldermen like Ald. Howitt, who perhaps has reasons of their own for shifting their ground, for sneaking out of giving a courageous and steady support to the commonsense of their constituents.

As matters now stand the tenders have received leave to amend their tenders. The disposal of the franchise is apparently as far off as ever. The boodlers and their henchmen of the Council and the daily press are all at sixes and sevens and struggling to lull each other. If our friends will only stand firm—push on the agitation for civic operation—refuse to fool away time and energy discussing which would plunderer will rob us the least, and more especially make it abundantly clear to the aldermanic mind that we are in earnest and mean to do our best to punish those who may betray us—the cause is not lost by any means.

This much is clear—the city can keep on operating the road as it now stands as long as they borrow no money. We must insist on their doing this and leave the question of loans to the courts and the legislature.

It will be time enough to talk of accepting tenders when we are beaten at every point and that is the only alternative left.

The Christian Guardian says concerning the Pope's encyclical on the labor question:—"The recommendations of his Holiness, wise and benignant as they undoubtedly were, had nothing new in them." True enough, but while the Catholic Church has at least made the attempt to find a solution of the problem, the Methodist Church does not even seem to know that there is such a problem—and cannot bring itself to treat those who wish to direct its attention to social abuses with ordinary courtesy.

The Dominion Government have done a good thing in the re-arrangement of the customs tariff in taking the import duty off raw sugar and making up the deficiency which amounts to some \$2,566,000 by additional taxes on tobacco, spirits and wines. This ought to reduce the selling price of sugar at least one cent a pound, but it remains to be seen how much of the benefit of the reduction in the price of raw material the monopolists who control the refiners will allow to go to the consumers.

It is very funny to see some people who claim to be so "liberal" and "enlightened" that they can't believe in God, and vote the Bible a pack of old wives fables, pinning their faith upon the superstitutions of political economy and the lowering down before the gods of monarchy, militarism, the metallic basis of the currency, the divine right of the landlord, and the law of supply and demand. Why not carry a little healthy scepticism into the region of politics and sociology?

AUSTRALIA is evidently bound to keep well at the head of the procession in the matter of advanced legislation. The Governor of New South Wales in opening the legislature announced that bills would be introduced embodying the principle of "One man, one vote," and conferring the right of franchise on women. By and by when Australia has tried woman suffrage without any evil effects it will be adopted in England and then after a long interval Canada will timidly follow their example—as was done in the case of the ballot—and the government making the innovation will no doubt claim credit for extraordinary liberality. Are we never to venture upon imitating reforms before they have become lack numbers everywhere else?

The Prince of Wales will make a good deal better king than Old Man Harrison makes president, although that is not saying much.—Hamilton Herald

This is strictly true from the point of view that the best sort of king is one whose actions will disgust people with the whole barbarous and stupid and fraudulent system of monarchy, and so bring it to an end. We heartily wish that Wales and the whole Guelph outfit were ten times as profligate, licentious and generally vicious as they are. The Herald knows perfectly well that monarchy is an anachronism and that its removal is by any means the foremost thing to say honestly, instead of pretence to believe in it!

We do not wonder that the Methodist Conference completely ignored the memorial on the labor question addressed to them by the various organizations. Among the resolutions that they did pass was one complimentary to Rev. William Briggs, steward of the Book Room, on his successful management of church business. Briggs is the man who, as a member of the Employing Printers' Association, has offered the most bitter and strenuous opposition to any increase in wages. Let us at least give the Methodist Conference credit for consistency in their hostility to labor reform. To have endorsed Briggs and his methods and followed it up by a hypocritical profession of sympathy with our course would have been altogether too absurd.

A DEAD SET is being made by some of the aldermen against the principle of performing city work by day labor under the supervision of the engineer. It is to be regretted that the reactionaries gained a point on Monday evening when the work on a couple of sewers which the engineer had recommended should be done by day labor were let by tender. The whole discussion seemed to turn upon the question of the comparative cheapness of the two systems, the contractors' aldermen ignoring altogether the fact that work done on a tender is likely to be scamped by hurrying the workmen and using cheap material. Ald. Gowanlock, Farquhar, Saunders, Hill and Leslie were usual pronouncers in their opposition to the day labor system. "We've got them on the list."

The Hamilton Trades and Labor Council have done a sensible and commendable thing in resolving to do away with those tradesmen who are willing to fall in with the early closing movement. If the people they represent will only live up to this resolution there will be no trouble about securing early closing. The great drawback to the way of having stores closed at a reasonable hour is that there are always a few mean-spirited, money-grabbing hogs who will keep open late for the chance of catching a few belated customers. This under the competitive system forces all others in the same neighborhood and line of business to follow their example. Such miserable skulduggies should be mercilessly boycotted, and the workmen who deal with such ought to be served the same way.

It is rather singular, is it not, that though the suggestion as to the low wages of the telephone girls was originally made in the report of the Municipal Committee of the Trades and Labor Council, the resolution of the City Council, by which a minimum wages clause was inserted in the agreement with the company was altogether ignored in the Municipal Committee's report last Friday. Owing too to objections raised in the same quarter, the vote of thanks proposed to Ald. Bell and the supporters of the resolution was whittled down to a very pointless and non-committal utterance. Was this because of a desire to shield Mayor Clarke from the implied censure which such a vote would involve? If the Trades and Labor Municipal Committee is being swayed either by personal or party considerations, it is time that the Trades Council know it.

When the question of convict labor is being considered, somebody is sure to make a strong plea for the coin system or some other way of putting the convicts in competition with free labor, on the ground that "convicts ought not to be a burden on the hard-working and industrious people." etc. It is curious that in every case the man who uses this argument belongs to the capitalist, professional or privileged labor class, while the hard-working and industrious people who are so very anxious about are not at all worried over the expense of keeping convicts in idleness. A specimen or two since there was some success for the self-styled "hard-working and industrious people." Now, adays there is none, as thanks to labor organization, workmen have their recognized exponents of opinion, and the fellow who gets up and professes to talk for the workman while uttering sentiments directly opposed to his best interests ought to be made to show up his credentials.

THE LABOR MEMORIAL

ITS RECEPTION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.
The Memorial addressed by the Toronto Trades and Labor Council, P. A. 125, K. of L., Single Tax, Nationalist and Women's Enfranchisement Association and Eight Hour League, to the churches has been variously dealt with. The Church of England Synod declared that the question was outside of their scope, the Toronto Conference of the Methodist body took no notice of it, the Congregational Union passed a sympathetic resolution which is given in the report of the Trades and Labor Council, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, on motion of Mr. John Cameron, recorded by Principal Cameron the following resolution:—"That this General Assembly in receiving and respectfully acknowledging, as it does, the Memorial of the Knights of Labor, the Single Tax Association, the Trades and Labor Council, the Women's Enfranchisement Association, the Eight-Hour League and the Nationalist Association, desires to express sympathy with every effort to develop the faculties of man, to improve the conditions of redress injustice and to effect needed reforms. The Assembly ratifies that any evils in the condition of the different classes of the community may, as far as possible, be met and removed, and the Assembly would at the same time express its conviction that the most successful status of the community may be accomplished by the principles of the Gospel of Christ."

Dr. Behrman's report of his latest transfusions of goats' blood for the cure of tuberculosis shows that out of fourteen cases two of the most advanced stages of phthisis ended in death, two who had reached the last stages of anuria were cured, and ten persons suffering from it in other forms have improved greatly.