

MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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CO-OPERATION.

The Record has had forwarded to it from Glace Bay a copy of the Canadian Co-operator, with the following extract on its front page marked with red pencil:—

"The ceaseless conflicts between capital and labor arise from capital not being content with the payment of its hire. When it has received interest according to its risk, and according to agreement, there should be an end of its claims. Labor then would regard capital as an agent which it must pay; but when it has earned the wages of capital and paid them, labor ought to be done with capital. Capital can do nothing, can earn nothing, of itself; but employed by labor, the brains and industry of workmen can make it productive. Capital has no brains, and makes no exertions. When capital has its interest its claims end. It is capital taking the profits earned by labor that produces conflict. In co-operation labor does not consider profit made until capital is required for its aid.

"Capitalists hired labor, paid its market price, and took all profits. Co-operative labor proposes to hire capital, pay it its market price, and itself take all profit. It is more reasonable and better for society and progress that men should own capital than that capital should own men.—George Jacob Holyoake."

Presumably the extract was sent as a reply to some remarks on "Capital and Labor" in a previous issue of the Record. The sender evidently did not realize that the quotation cuts both ways, and that in slashing capital it also slashes co-operation, for the reason that the larger the field covered by co-operators the nearer they come to be themselves in the capitalist class. The Record has no fault, rather keen sympathy when one hundred or more men join their savings and purchase goods and sell them to their best advantage. There is no reason why a well conducted co-operative store should not be a source of profit to its shareholders. But this can only happen when the shareholders, through their directors, are willing to pay for good management or, in two words, brains and integrity. And even co-operation in the small way of distribution of the more common necessities of life has not been by any means anything like a success in the mining districts of this province, as witness the ultimate utter failure of the stores in Westville, Springhill, Stellarton and Dominion. And why these failures? Simply because the directors had not the necessary qualifications properly to direct. Co-operation, so far, has hardly faced any of the problems entering into the conflict between capital and labor. It is doubtful if

many co-operators, as we know them in the mining districts, have anything like a reasoned idea of what co-operation actually means. They have not fathomed its limitations or its scope. It will not be denied that a majority of those who join a co-operative society are constrained to do so by the thought of, and the desire for, dividends. If this is a fair statement, then it follows that co-operation is merely a novel idea of banking. Looking away from the narrow field the distributing stores occupy, can it be said that any reasonable attempts have been made at co-operative production? Scarcely, though it is true that wholesale societies in Britain are engaged in certain branches of manufacture. But be it well noted the factories are run on the firm, or joint stock company system. The factories employ individual laborers, who are paid a wage, for all the world differing on no point from that adopted by the directors of an ordinary joint stock company. Now if wholesale co-operative factories pay wages, as those are paid by non-co-operators, may it not be said that the directors are capitalists who buy labor. Some may run away with the idea that the directors of the wholesale societies pay higher than the market value of labor. But do they? We are afraid not, for we have read complaints in the British press from the workers in co-operative factories that their treatment was not a whit better than that accorded by directors of ordinary factories to their hands. The average shareholder of a co-operative society differs not at all, so far as our observation goes, from the shareholder in any other concern. He wants as big dividends as he possibly can get. In the ordinary joint stock company the shareholders do not bully the directors and demand that all the profits be distributed in dividends. We have known instances in Nova Scotia where the manager begged that a certain portion of the profits be set aside as a reserve, and for a time the request was considered preposterous. As stated, co-operation as we know it in Nova Scotia is merely a system of distribution of goods within a limited area, but what has it done towards a solution of the problem of wages and hours, not to speak of the demand of labor for all that it produces, whatever that may mean? In closing these remarks let it be said that the editor of the Co-operator was hard up for sustaining authorities when he had resort to the writings of Holyoake. The name has not a nice association.

- Rubs by Rambler. -

Social and political economists—and socialists, I mustn't forget them—tell us that the time is coming when the common laborer will be better paid than the store manager or the bookkeeper. It is told us that the more servile—not to use the term 'degrading', sometimes heard—the labor the higher it will be paid. By servile it is presumed is meant such labor as street sweepers or garbage gatherers. By and bye in order to secure this class of labor higher wages will have to be paid, than is paid the skilled mechanic or even the professional man. Possibly that time is nearer than one thinks. Many unskilled workers are at the present time earning more money than doctors and those of the learned pro-