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Saskatchewan Labor's Realm

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Justice, Truth, Fraternity. "Labor Omnia Vincit."

HUGH PEAT - EDITOR.

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Address all communications to the Manager.

JAS. D. SIMSON, Box 838,
Regina, Sask.

The Eight Hour Day.

In our last issue we tried to show the economic necessity for the introduction of an eight-hour day. We showed how the reduction of the work day would result in furnishing employment for many thousands of the workless, and how the reduction of hours in the past from 16 to 10 had not retarded prosperity or checked the onward march of nations. But there is another side to this question which cries aloud for consideration in a world of humans, and that is the

HUMANITARIAN SIDE

The progress of our beloved Canada has been almost phenomenal. She has advanced by leaps and bounds, until to-day she is amongst the foremost of the civilised nations of the earth, and bids fair to outstrip all competitors for industrial supremacy and power. Canada is making her millionaires and multi-millionaires, but what is she doing for her great army of toilers who constitute the nation's greatest strength. Wages have increased at least twenty per cent. during the last ten years, but so also has the cost of living increased, and it is safe to say that the worker is in no better position to-day than he was ten years ago when the conditions of work were less favorable than they are now.

This is a young country, and the struggle for a foothold on the ladder of prosperity is great indeed; and the man who has no sympathy for the struggle for existence of his employer, but who takes advantage of him at every turn, has no right to be here. We are all workers. Employers and men are alike struggling for prosperity, and he is a poor man indeed who will not bear the burdens of hard times along with those masters who are providing him with wages with which to purchase the necessities of life. At the same time, when the initial struggle is past, when the employer is safely started on the high road to prosperity and opulence, how often does he forget the men who helped him on the way, and how seldom does he reward him for those faithful services rendered in the past.

Increased prosperity brings increased capital. Large corporations and gigantic business concerns come into being, and the relations between employer and employee are no longer those of mutual intercourse, but take new shape. The employer becomes a master moving in another sphere, and the worker degenerates into a hand, a simple mechanical thing, an automaton, with no possible hope of advancement and no opportunity for change until the Master Workman stretches forth his hand and the toiler is gathered to his well earned rest.

Did ever any of you work in a factory town? Did you ever see that worker, pale and wan, an almost nervous wreck, by being compelled to work long hours operating that nerveless, pulseless, unceasing, unfeeling piece of perfected machinery? A one-time man made in the image of God. Not only shattered with nervous exhaustion, but with mind embittered by the knowledge that his wife, ay, and even his children too, are also compelled to work in the factory to help keep up the home. Where is the homesweet home we sometimes dream of? Where can the children of poverty learn the lessons that only a mother can teach when she is at the factory from morn till night, and where are our ideals

of womanhood? Shattered and gone. The flower of our womanhood sapped and broken. The almost inarticulate moan of the outraged children of toil drowned in the thud of the machinery which is grinding out the lives of little children to build up, what? Our national greatness?—no—to make our millionaires and multi-millionaires.

Well might Goldsmith exclaim:

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

The whole fabric of modern commercialism is heartless and debased. The great bond of brotherhood which should exist between man and man is buried in the graveyard of selfishness. The God of modern life is Mammon, and it is almost enough to make one think that the mission of the great Master Worker had been in vain. That the tragedy of Calvary, where the Redeemer of the world was slain, was not enough. But we still have hope. We men of the labor movement think that somehow good will be the final goal of ill, for God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, and out of the darkest night, out of Dead Sea fruit and seething chaos, there will at last dawn the light of a real humanity, when man and master will no longer strive for so-called rights, but will unite and work in harmony for mutual benefit and a truer nobility.

In conclusion then, we maintain that the eight-hour day is warranted, that the working man should have the eight-hour day not merely because he asks for it, but because he is entitled to it. In the words of William Jennings Bryan, he is not a beast of burden, nor a serf, but he is a human being. He has a wife and children, and he loves his wife and children just as the rich do, and if he is driven from his work to his bed and back again from his bed to work, what chance has he to enjoy the hallowing influences of home life, or to assist in the education of his children.

He helps to make the wealth of the nation in times of peace, and is the first to offer his life for his country's weal if the occasion arises, and that life is demanded of him on the field of battle.

Free or Convict Labor

Government does not intend to employ Convict Labor on public work to the detriment of free men.

A deputation representing the Saskatchewan Executive of the Trades Congress of Canada and the Regina Trades and Labor Council waited upon the Government on Thursday last in connection with the rumour that it was the intention of the Government to build the Broad Street Bridge by prison labor, and also with regard to a fair wage clause in all Government contracts.

Mr. J. F. Bole, M.L.A., the local member, kindly introduced the deputation.

In reply to the question regarding the accuracy of the statement that convict labor was to be used, the Premier stated that it was the intention to employ the convicts only on the work of removing earth, and that they would have nothing to do with the real work of constructing the bridge. He further stated that in the event of there being numbers of unemployed men in the City as represented by the deputation, then they would be given the work in preference to employing the convicts.

With regard to the fair wage clause, the Government stated that such a clause existed in the existing Government contracts, and that it was the intention to have it inserted in all future contracts of the Government.

The deputation thanked the Premier for his courtesy and consideration, and retired, well satisfied with the attitude of the Government with regard to these two matters.

It will come as a surprise to many, however, that there could be any persons in the City who were unaware of the conditions of labor in the City at the present time. There are considerably over two hundred laborers out of work in Germantown alone, some of whom have been unemployed since last fall, and who are now reduced to the lowest ebb. Families have been living for some time past on fifteen cents a day, and frequent meetings are being held to review the situation, and adopt some course of action. Under such conditions as these, the employment of convict labor in opposition to free, though starving men, would invite a calamity which every good citizen desires to avert. No doubt the Government considered the employment of the convicts on that work would mean a considerable saving of expense to the public, but there is hardly an instance where use has ever been made of prisoners for public works, that the cost entailed has not been greater than it would have been had free labor been employed. In many instances convicts have been taken off the work and free men employed so that contractors could finish their work in the stipulated time. The employment of the convicts in this instance would be palpably false economy, as there are hundreds of free men in the City and Province who must have work or starve, for whom work must be furnished, or else the safety of property will be jeopardised. Thou shalt not steal has no significance to a starving man.

Many bitter complaints have been made by the carpenters of the City in connection with the construction of the Albert Street Bridge. It is alleged that men doing carpenters' work on that bridge are receiving twenty cents an hour, in spite of the existence of a fair wage clause in the contract. Until there is a fair wage officer appointed in the City, the fair wage clause is liable to be violated. In spite of all the clauses that were ever inserted, there is nothing to hinder those controlling the contract to class skilled men as laborers, and pay

Continued on page 2

Co-operation in Canada

The growth of the co-operative movement in Canada is being watched with intense interest by thousands of persons in every part of the Dominion, many of whom have had opportunities of studying the system for themselves before they crossed the Atlantic in search of a new home. This great movement, equalled only by the trade union movement, is destined to be a lasting benefit to the working man and those dependent upon him, for by co-operating with his brothers he is enabled to buy the necessities, and sometimes luxuries of life at a price well within the reach of his moderate income. Not only so, but co-operation encourages thrift, preaches independence, and insists upon all transactions being strictly cash, thereby teaching the workman to live within his income and not to become extravagant on expectations. The patrons of a store, too, have the satisfaction of knowing that the profits will eventually return to them instead of going to aid a merchant to build a large house or invest in a new automobile.

That the merchants of Canada have an idea that co-operation will eat into their profits is proved by the fact that a deputation from the Retail Merchants' Association of Canada recently appeared before a committee of the Senate to protest against the enactment of the proposed Co-operative Societies Act. Representations as to the constitutionality of the measure were also made on behalf of the provinces of Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

But however much the retailers protest, and notwithstanding attempts made to stop the wheels of progress, co-operation must and will become an essential factor in the everyday life of the Canadian workman. It's coming was slow, but its growth is sure, and the more opposition it meets, the greater will be its victories. The following report, taken from the May issue of the Labor Gazette, is indicative of the spread of this movement:

CO-OPERATIVE DISTRIBUTION

The Workmen's Store Company, Limited, (co-operative) of Dominion N.S., which was organized with thirty-six

Continued on page 3

SALE OF WHITE SHIRTS SATURDAY

Fifteen dozen White Shirts of Tooke's make, long or short bosoms, white cuffs attached or detached, sizes 14½ to 18.

Regular value \$1.00 and \$1.25 each.

For Saturday only, each **75c**

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