

=The Echo=

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MONTREAL, February 6, 1892.

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.

"WE HAVE 'EM ON THE LIST."

The causes which contributed to the defeat of Ald. Kennedy and Rolland in St. Lawrence and Hochelaga Wards respectively are not for to seek; they lay upon the surface, and wherever workmen are in the majority the same causes will always have the same effect. Both gentlemen were not content with opposing the abolition of property qualification for aldermen, but actually advocated a considerable increase to the present already prohibitive conditions attached to the office; they favored legislation against a class which, in point of intelligence, honesty of purpose, morality and all the qualities which go to make a good citizen, will compare favorably with the moneyed class. This alone would have made their defeat easy and certain, but in other ways both gentlemen had shown a decided hostility to reforms promoted in the interests of the working classes, which made defeat doubly sure. Workmen are not to be fooled all the time; occasionally they manage to see through specious promises and vote the right way. The last election was one of these occasions, and no better evidence of this could be given than to point to the fact that a general wail of regret has come from the capitalistic press over the defeat of those two gentlemen. They say the finances of the city are in danger of being squandered and that the city has lost the services of the only man capable of controlling the civic expenditure. Of course this is all buncombe, and those papers which set up such a claim know this. There are still men in the Council, equally capable with ex-Ald. Rolland of controlling the expenditure of the city, and it is a poor compliment to the other aldermen to assest otherwise. On the whole the workmen can claim the credit of getting even with their opponents this time, and it is their intention to keep the game going until all those aldermen who oppose municipal reform are weeded out of the City Council. There are others on the list.

THE LABOR CANDIDATE IN MONTREAL CENTRE.

The Trades and Labor Council have shown they mean business. At the regular meeting held on Thursday evening last a motion to subscribe the sum of five hundred dollars to the election fund of their candidate in Montreal Centre was carried unanimously and with the greatest cordiality. The committee reported having received encouraging support from every quarter

of the division, and numerous workers for the campaign shortly to be opened have volunteered their assistance. The greatest unanimity appears to prevail in the ranks of organized labor over the election of Mr. Boudreau as the labor candidate, and it is believed that the great body of workmen generally will rally to his assistance. He has undoubted claims to their support which the other two candidates do not possess; a genuine workingman himself, his whole sympathies are with the ambition of those of his fellow-workmen who desire to place labor upon the plane it should occupy. While yet a young man, he has worked long and earnestly in the cause of labor reform, and from his intimate acquaintance with the needs of his class, is in a much better position to agitate for the remedy than either of his opponents, who have only a theoretical knowledge of the aspirations and longings of the great mass of wage workers. Intelligent workmen will not fail to draw this distinction and to vote accordingly. There never has been, in the political history of this province, a more opportune time to send a thoroughly honest and independent man to the Provincial Legislature; in the person of Mr. Boudreau, the labor candidate, the electors of the Centre Division have such a man, and it will be to the everlasting disgrace of the working classes if they do not accept him in preference to all others. His record as a politician is yet to make, but as a citizen and a thorough friend and worker for labor it is unexcelled. Mr. Boudreau's programme, while far-reaching enough to command the sympathy of the most radical, is yet conservative enough to suit the most ardent Tory, and having a ready and fluent address in both languages he should be acceptable to the two nationalities.

ECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION OF EARNINGS.

We have had occasion before now to notice with approval various articles on the labor problem which have appeared in the "Social Economist," a magazine, under the joint editorship of Messrs. George Gunton and Starr Hoyt Nichols, devoted to the discussion of questions which its title implies. In the number for January we find, among several other very readable and instructive papers, one from the pen of Mr. Alfred Dolge, the well-known and extensive manufacturer of piano materials, which is well worthy the consideration of all who take an interest in the settlement of industrial strife and the betterment of the working classes. Before quoting from the article itself, we cannot do better than give an extract from the comment in the "editorial crucible," which fittingly conveys our opinion:

"We call special attention to this article because Mr. Dolge is one of the few manufacturers who is really interested in a scientific solution of our industrial problems. Although probably the largest manufacturer of piano materials in the world, he has risen above the plane upon which most business men view social questions. He has endeavored to study economics from a broad social standpoint, regarding the industrial and social advancement of the masses as the foundation of our national prosperity and civilization. From his view the prosperity of individual capitalists is most surely promoted by securing the social welfare of the laboring classes. As an evidence that Mr. Dolge practices in his everyday life what he preaches, last year at the annual meeting with his employees, which he calls their re-union, he reduced the working time of his factory from ten to nine hours a day, and increased wages 12 per cent—all without being asked. This was entirely independent of his system of insurance and economic distribution of earnings."

Mr. Dolge opens out with a succinct

summary of the causes leading up to the present conditions of industrial life, which he attributes to the substitution of domestic hand labor for the steam driven machinery of the factory system, the differentiation of laborers into wage and salary receivers on the one hand and capitalists into industrial managers on the other. This separation of the functions and apparently of the interests of employers and employed, the author says, naturally brought with it a feeling of class antagonism which has developed into a deeply settled industrial conflict often amounting to actual social warfare, which has been further stimulated by the teachings of a new school of political economy which came into existence about the same time and as a part of this industrial evolution. Mr. Dolge goes on to say:

"The doctrines of the English school, especially the theory that profits rise only as wages fall, was believed to be as irrefutable as it is repulsive and inhuman. It was accepted as an inseparable part of the wages system and its evil effects could be avoided only by overthrowing the system itself. Thus, logically and historically, socialism was the product of English cheap labor political economy."

Further on he says:

"Now we know that the bulk of the wealth created in society is automatically distributed in the regular process of production in wages, salaries, taxes and other fixed costs, and we also know that there frequently is a surplus remaining after all these costs are defrayed. To whom then does this surplus belong? I answer to those who produce it, and to nobody else. How this surplus can be made to flow to those who create it then is the question, and no system of division or distribution is worth considering which is not based upon this principle. . . . If the laborer is entitled to any of that surplus, it is upon the same principle that the capitalist is entitled to his, namely: that he created it. . . . Now if this profit—economy in the cost of production—arises from the use of superior machinery, or larger investment for raw material, or any other use of capital, it clearly belongs to the capitalist; and if it is due to the special skill in management it just as clearly belongs to the manager, whether he be a capitalist or a salaried superintendent. And, on the other hand, if it is the result of superior energy or care exercised by the laborers or an improved method introduced by them, then it is manifestly theirs because they have created it."

Comparing the system of profit-sharing adopted by some with the plan which he himself has adopted, Mr. Dolge says:

"By this means the incompetent get as great a share of the surplus as the competent. The surplus earnings of the wisest capitalist may in this way go to careless laborers, and conversely the surplus earnings of the most intelligent and skilful laborers may be swallowed up by the poor investments or incompetent administration of capitalists."

The capitalist having failed to keep pace with the latest improvements is unable to produce a profit. Then in order to maintain his position he begins to withhold from the workmen the profit they may have created and finally to make up for his own deficit tries to reduce wages. Against this last straw the laborers strike and the scheme goes to pieces. This is the history of many profit-sharing experiments. Of course the failure is all charged to the ingratitude of the laborers. They should have been willing to accept lower wages in order to save the capitalist. To my mind this is all wrong, a reduction of wages is a step backward which laborers should never be expected to take. Now the system I have adopted proposes to give to each factor all the surplus of profit it creates, whether the other factors have any or not. If the laborers in any department through ex-

ceptional effort have created a surplus they should receive it without reference to whether the laborers in other departments, or whether the capital of the concern, has produced a surplus or a deficit.

I know it is usually assumed that employers have no interest in their laborers other than to hire them as cheaply as possible. This I regard as a serious error. It is one of the results of the erroneous doctrine already referred to "that profits rise as wages fall," and therefore that cheap labor is an important factor in creating large profits. This view, however, is contrary to all experience. Instead of profits being the largest where wages are the lowest, we find that where wages are the highest, capitalists are most prosperous and profits most permanent. . . . The reason for this is that high paid laborers, besides being more intelligent workers and better citizens, are larger consumers, and consequently furnish a more extensive, varied and permanent market for the product of capital, which is the very basis of industrial and social prosperity. In fact cheap labor is ultimately a greater menace to the permanent prosperity of capital than any other power in society, high wages are always permanently beneficial to the capitalist as well as to the laborer and the community. To constantly secure a high grade of labor the wear and tear or depreciation of the laborer must be provided for. . . . There is probably no force in a factory more effective in preventing the introduction of improved methods than the opposition of the old work people. They are incapable of adapting themselves to new ways of doing and are always adverse to new machinery. In fact by the time a laborer has reached the age of fifty-five or sixty years he has generally passed the point of economic efficiency. It may be said that he should then be discharged and a younger man put in his place, but this policy is neither humane nor economic. It is inhumane, because it throws the laborer upon the world at a time when he has become incapable of earning a living, making of him either a pauper or a beggar. This is socially degrading; it tends to stamp out the manhood and destroy the individuality, dignity and freedom of the citizen. On the other hand, to avoid this calamity laborers are tempted and even taught to restrict their standard of living to the narrowest limits that something may be saved for that "rainy day." To this end women desert their homes for the shop, and children are hurried into the factory when they ought to be in school. Thus in the name of false economy the highest interests of home life are neglected, ignorance is perpetuated and the social advance of the laborers is prevented."

To prevent such a calamity as this Mr. Dolge has instituted a system of industrial insurance whereby a workman is retired on a pension after a certain number of years' service, or through disablement, the plan of which is elaborated in the article.

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