

EDITORIAL

THE SYMPATHETIC STRIKES.

The sympathetic strikes which we have had recently in various centres in Canada cannot be considered to be remarkably successful from the standpoint of the strike promoters. They have served a useful purpose in directing attention in a forceful way to the widespread discontent caused by the high cost of living. They have at the same time demonstrated that the general public will not submit to the dictatorship of radicals who would turn government upside down if they had their way.

Strikes have their place in the industrial world. If it were not that they are so often accompanied by unnecessary violence and destruction of property we would welcome them occasionally, for they often bring discontent to the surface and lead to desirable improvements in conditions. Strikes are undoubtedly Labor's most powerful weapons and no class need ask that Labor be deprived of its weapons so long as they are used in fighting for a good cause. We would protest against the sympathetic strike because it is obviously a misuse of weapons, an attempt to gain selfish objects by imposing indiscriminate hardships on the rest of the community. We do not wonder therefore at the reception given to these strikes in Canada. The recent action of the Metal Trades Council in advising sympathetic strikers in Toronto to return to work is a sign that the strikers themselves are not overly enthusiastic.

WAGES AND HOURS.

Miners at Kirkland Lake and Cobalt are making demands on their employers for higher wages and shorter hours. These are matters that should naturally be adjusted by arbitration between employers and employees. There are two sides to the question.

The miners are doubtless aware that conditions at present in Ontario gold and silver camps are much brighter than in many mining districts in North America. They will do well to consider whether they should not do their best to hold the jobs they have. If they make unreasonable demands they may so change conditions that there will be few opportunities for profitable employment. Gold must be sold at the standard price regardless of cost of production and where the margin is small the sure result of increase in cost is obvious. Moreover, there must be a very considerable profit on operations in order merely to return capital invested and a moderate amount for the use of the money.

The profitable mine must in addition return a considerable amount to bear the cost of exploring and developing other properties, many of which prove to be "lemons." The profitable companies pay directly for only a very small part of the cost of searching for and developing the other properties; but indirectly they must pay if the industry is to grow as it has in the past. In the hope of developing a very profitable mine, men spend money in very considerable amounts on promising properties. They lose more often than they win. They would surely not continue if there were no hope of large profits. There would then be no new mines developed and the miner would be in little demand. It is obvious that the miner profits more surely than does anyone else as the industry develops. It is up to him therefore to take care that his demands be not unreasonable. He should demand a fair share in the profits of the industry; but so long as others bear the cost of all the unprofitable ventures he should not be disgruntled if a few of these venturesome ones are successful. In fact, he would have more occasion for discontent if there were no prizes to lure the adventurer into new fields.

The miner may reasonably demand good wages and an eight hour day. He should also have the Saturday half holiday if he wants it and is willing to give something for it. The actual wage must be determined by conditions that are partly local and partly general; but in our opinion general increase in wages at present would give no permanently good result. What is more needed is co-operation between employers and employees to fight the increasing cost of living. Advance in wages may be necessary to relieve the situation temporarily. In fairness to the miner the wages must keep pace with increased costs. It is not surprising that the miner desires to get a lap ahead in the race, but that is not sufficient excuse for keeping him a lap behind.

We have no sympathy with the idea that industry should not be carried on for profit; but if it were, it would be found that there is no great profit in the mining industry at present. There are notable successes which obtain much publicity, and there are countless failures in which the public takes little interest. If the miners owned all the prospects and mines and worked them on a mutual profit sharing plan, they would find that their present wages would appear much larger than when they compare them with the profits of a few successful companies.