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## Wages in Relation to the High Cost of Living

The first of a series of articles written by Mrs. Geo. Hambleton, M.A., late Fellow of the Department of Political Economy, University of Toronto, exclusively for the Canadian Labor Press.

Only an animated microscope or a kind of gigantic microscope, with wheel, with ever varying shades of light and here and there a dark streak could record for us the daily fluctuations of the cost of living. The scale ever increases, and the speed with which each purchase the other has effect on the observer. The poor workman, the poorer salaried man, and the national budget, and the way counting to appreciate the strange effect they make.

Take the national budget. When examined piece-meal it gives one a curious feeling. Strange discoveries are revealed in the financial burden of the first year of peace as compared with the last year of actual war. The Finance Department's statement covering the period, April 1 to December 31, 1919, shows:

(1) That the ordinary expenditure for that period in 1919 was almost double that for the same period in 1918. Expenditure for April 1 to December 31, 1919, approximately, \$227,000,000; for April 1 to December 31, 1918, approximately \$124,500,000.

(2) The total expenditure including that on capital account from April 1 to Dec. 31, 1919 was about \$75 million dollars over and above the total revenue. Total expenditure, Apr. 1 to Dec. 31, 1919, approximately, \$510,000,000; total revenue \$224,000,000.

(3) The total expenditure for the same period in 1918 was \$360,000,000. Deficit April 1 to Dec. 31, 1918, approximately \$138,000,000; Deficit April 1 to Dec. 31, 1919, approximately, \$155,000,000.

We are slipping over more rapidly into debt.

The British Treasury White Paper for corresponding periods shows a similar state of affairs. The expenditure for Great Britain and Ireland for the nine months ending Dec. 31, 1919, was about five and a half billion dollars while the revenue was only about three and a half billion dollars. The nine months' deficit is over two billion dollars.

The delicate problem of taxation is this—who will bear the burden? A very ingenious instrument has been devised to measure muscular efficiency. It is a dynamometer. How many watt meters Tom Tyler makes in laying tiles, and measures the degree of fatigue in Dan Smith's work as he beats the iron into shape. This machine has been tested in England at an educational conference. "Diabolical contrivance," one commentator calls it, but it justifies some such thing we need to measure the exact degree of taxation, the retailer, the wholesaler, the workman, the manufacturer, the stand without registering fatal fatigue. But perhaps the world is not safe yet for this sort of instrument and we must content ourselves with government or other statistics.

This bringing down of a budget showing the actual financial position of the country will be an exciting reading some courage. The French have just had a national stock-taking, and M. Klotz, the Finance Minister at the beginning of this year started Britain by showing her stupendous debt compared with her slender sources of revenue. But the country smiled as of old, and is submitting to a very rigid system of taxes—embracing the prospect of paying off part of her war debt.

Our programme must be as courageous. It should include the payment of a portion of the war debt, a realization of the democratic ideals of the war in improving rather than depressing the standard of life of the people—and a measure of relief to the stricken peoples of Europe.

For this we require a full record of the rise in the cost of living, the rise in wages in the more important industries and a survey of war fortunes whether private or of corporations.

The following is necessarily only a partial survey.

The cost of living is estimated by the Labor Department to be at present about 100 per cent. higher than it was in July 1914. The general rise in wages is stated to be about 80 per cent.

Those classes of workers engaged in trades or pursuits which were most affected by the war and in which profits were the greatest, have had the greatest increases in wages.

Thus the workers in the metal trades have secured an increase in wages averaging about 150 per cent. Agricultural workers employed in the western provinces are receiving wages 100 to 145 per cent. higher than they received in 1914.

The average wages of miners in District 13 of Alberta—which is a fair standard—have increased from \$4 to \$9 per week. The average of inside miners in 1914 was \$2.51 per day; in 1919, \$4.45, an increase of 60 per cent. The average wage of outside miners has increased from \$1.15 per day in 1914 to \$4.75 in 1919, or 56 per cent.

Reports from seventeen cities of Canada with a population of over 10,000 persons show that the average wages of stenographers have increased 40 per cent. since the war, and those of plumbers in the same proportion. Returns from the cities of Halifax, St. John, Quebec and Montreal show that the average wage of

## GOT A MATCH!

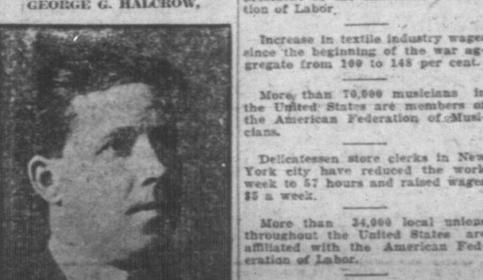


—After Ding in Tribune.

## LABOR MEMBERS WILL PROCEED WITH MEASURES

Representatives of Labor Wing Decide at Toronto Meeting to Take Action.

HAMILTON, Jan. 21.—Intimation that the Drury Cabinet did not intend bringing on any legislation of a controversial nature and a quiet tip that Hartley Dewar was preparing to introduce the eight-hour day amendment at the first session of the house, necessitated "action" on the part of the labor wing at the conference held at the Walker House, Toronto, yesterday afternoon.



The Labor member of Ontario Legislature for East Hamilton.

"We decided it was up to us to stand behind the Labor party platform and bring on those measures which we have pledged our support to," said Mr. Halcrow, this morning. "The activity of Dewar looks like a trick to us. If he brings on the eight-hour day, gets it through he will get the credit for something we started. If we vote against his measure we will be criticized. So we've decided to do our own introducing."

Besides the eight-hour day legislation the labor wing proposed to introduce legislation covering old age pensions, mothers' pensions, public ownership of all utilities and a rearrangement of the civil service, the member for east Hamilton declared.

"It isn't too late yet for a man of the stamp of Beck to be placed at the head of the Government," he added. "What is sorely needed is a leader who can lead."

Mr. Halcrow said that Hon. Walter Rolfo, Minister of Labor, and Hon. Mr. Mills, Minister of Mines, would be invited to the conference next Tuesday, but nobody was doing any worrying about whether or not they would attend. Prohibition legislation was not discussed at the conference, the Hamilton member declared, but his own opinion was that the present act was one of the worst ever put on the statute books. "It has made bar-rooms of the homes," he asserted.

The smile of adversity is rather lively.

Pools brag—where wise men only admit.

Industrial democracy is the order of the day.

Habit is strong—think either judgment or passion.

Nearly 200,000 factory workers in Detroit, Mich., were thrown out of work owing to the coal conservation measure.

Many cotton mills in the Lancashire, England, district have been compelled to either close down entirely or cease to operate as many looms, owing to the acute labor shortage which prevails in that part of England.

The trade unions are growing in strength and economic power as never before, and yet there are those who would jeopardize this growth of organized labor by meddling in politics on the one hand or into a destructive dictatorship on the other. Never was there a better time for legal trade unions to get right on building up the economic power of labor.

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