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THE WORK CURE

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OUR GUARANTEE

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BY a close calculation, the world is in debt something like two hundred billions of dollars on account of the war. Counting men, women and children, sane people or idiots, savage or civilized, this means roughly a hundred dollars a head for every human creature of the world's population. Take it for granted that they haven't got the money and that the money does not exist that will clean up this indebtedness. How is the debt to be discharged? Shall we revert to the mean trick of "repudiating the bill" or shall we be honest and proceed at once to work it off in the only way an honest man who is strapped for the moment can face his indebtedness?

It isn't worth while debating the point. The right thing to do is as clear as any point of morals can be made clear, and the power to enforce it is in the hands of every man who may read this. The only way possible is to work it off, so let us all get down to work, concerning ourselves not so much about shorter hours as about increased production. The stern fact is that while millions of men have been busy

killing each other, the world has been marking time with regard to its food products until at the present day there is not sufficient food in sight to meet its normal requirements. For the time being at least a new normal has been created.

This "new normal", however, is turning the heads of many people and strange devices are being resorted to with the expectation that some of them will knock the bottom out of all the trouble. Perhaps the most foolish and hopeless of these is the attitude taken by certain producers that since the cost of living has increased more than the rate of pay, there shall be more money and less work, forgetting or deliberately blinding themselves to the fact that the remedy lies not in shorter hours but in increased production. And we find (not in Canada, however) certain farmers actually organizing to reduce acreage and production in order to sustain war prices, to make more in proportion, not as the world is supplied but as it is unsupplied.

The solution of the problem now facing us lies not in anything like this sort of thing. Russia has shown us that men live on bread not on wages; "that money is good only in proportion to the supply of actual commodities that can be bought with it, and that when production stops money becomes worthless and men starve and freeze regardless of the rate of wages, the amount of money in their pockets or

the length of the working day. The business of every man, whatever his "station" in life is to produce. Labor's business is essentially to produce, and in return for its product, labor is entitled not only to "decent" but first rate living conditions. Not merely the "living wage" but there is a margin of comfort and recreative leisure beyond the bare existence wage that belongs to every decent workman.

To-day the world is practically in the position of the man marooned on the fire swept prairie. His entire food product has been burned up except a little bag of seed grain which fortunately has escaped the flames. He has also a wad of dollar bills in a fire-proof safe, but he is without means of transportation to where he might exchange these dollar bills for food or clothing. These to him, for all practical purposes, do not exist, and his only alternative is to get down to work with his bag of seed, make the best of it with the rest of animated nature around him until he can once more behold the fruits of his labor smiling on him in rich abundance.

How does the "strike" method help a man in this set of circumstances? Exactly as it is "helping" the world of men and women to-day. If every man were to hang back and strike on his job how speedily there would come an end to all things. But the great majority of men—of "laboring" men—are not such idiots as some of their imported leaders would wish them to be. Labor has a mother's gift of common sense second to no endowment of capital that the world knows of, and we give the rank and file of labor credit for being able to scent out its real enemies with unflinching instinct and to deal with them in true sportsmanlike fashion.

The true panacea for every ill in sight is to get busy and go by the golden rule. No exorcism charms like hard work. We've tried it and it never failed. We have also tried all sorts of make-shifts or some easier way than work, and they all brought us back to where we started from, worse off than when we started. Nothing was ever made out of war, and there never was a strike that did not leave both striker and "struck" worse off in the long run. "There are no benefactors and beneficiaries in distinct classes." This is old-fashioned philosophy, but strange isn't it that the only thing that seems to wear and fulfil its promise is the old-fashioned thing that is measured out by the golden rule? Therefore let us get down to work—the kind of work that produces and makes satisfied and "kindly disposed people."

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