

LABOR NEWS FROM COAST TO COAST

The Associated Federal Employees of Ottawa.

Federal Union No. 66.

A MINIMUM WAGE.

There are several viewpoints from which the question of a minimum wage may be considered. The very meaning of the expression is not settled; frequently a minimum wage on the fact that two different classes are using the term in entirely different senses.

Considering first from the employer's standpoint, the term minimum wage means the lowest rate of pay for which he can secure necessary work, having regard to the safety and comfort of his help. Employees are worked to the limit of endurance, must use up what resources of vitality they originally possessed to keep up, and are then thrown aside for new hands. Such a system, frequently called the sweatshop, can only be used to its right advantage when the work is so simple as to require little or no training, when labor supply is more than ample, and where such labor is of the lowest type—it is unskilled or unspecialized, reduced by bitter poverty to fighting for the barest existence, frequently of foreign origin, and, above all, unorganized. Among such, the minimum wage is found at its lowest ebb, in short a modern form of slavery, worse than that of former days.

In occupations requiring a certain amount of training, where labor supply is to a certain extent limited, employers, in order to reduce their labor turnover and keep up the quality and quantity of their product, are forced to accept a wage which is higher than the minimum wage. Any sensible employer knows that his horses must have a certain minimum of feed and attention if their strength for work is to be kept up to standard; this is their minimum wage. As applied to human labor, this conception of the term may be defined as the least amount which will serve to keep up the productive power of the employee.

At first glance it might appear that an employer of the second class had a somewhat fairer view of the relation of the wage earner to his employer, but such is not the case. The relation between the two classes of employer is a very close one, and there is a constant shifting from one to the other, should manufacturing methods be so simplified as to permit of comparatively untrained help being employed, or should available labor supply become greater, wages tend to fall below the level indicated in Class 2. Under reversed circumstances they tend to rise until an employer in Class 1 is forced to accept Class 2.

The feature common to the two is that least cost of production at the expense of the employee is the chief aim, and the latter normally does not enter into the problem. In Class 1 the employee is of infinitely less value than the machine, in the second, of no greater value.

The third class of employer comprises those who recognize, in varying degrees, the fact that their employes are human like themselves, and equally deserving of something more than bare subsistence. They also recognize that a wage permit- ting them to obtain the necessities of life:

1. A fair share of his comforts;
2. Education for his children, to be useful citizens;
3. Provision for illness, accident, and old age is well placed in actual cash value, but the greater willingness and loyalty, keener concentration on work, and better health of the employee. This, then, is the third class, and the only true minimum wage.

It is seldom indeed that an employer of this class slips back into either of the two previously mentioned. As a matter of fact, the tendency is in the other direction. One provision for the employee of something above the minimum return for his efforts has been found to give such good results in higher production, and vastly more important, in the feeling of fellowship and friendliness between employer and employee, that the impulse to go farther in improvement of working conditions is almost irresistible. It is not that the worker, for trades unionism, the third class of employer would ever have existed except in isolated instances, would make a good subject for debate. It must be agreed, however, that had it not been for the trades union, with its organized and directed power and efforts, the worker would be much farther from the goal than he is today. The trades union, in some form, has been a necessity since man entered into the relation of employer and employee; it must continue to be a necessity until the basis of such relation is perfected upon a plan of justice and equity to all concerned. When such a plan is realized in fact, then, and then only, may it be said that the trades union has fulfilled its purpose.

Governments of civilized countries have recognized their responsibility in this matter by legislation controlling employment conditions, by establishing Departments of Labor, by keeping records of living costs, by establishing Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration, and by labor is being heard more and more clearly in Houses of Parliament. The Government of Canada has not been behind in this matter. Only a few days ago our Prime Minister addressed a convention of Labor delegates at Windsor; our Minister of Labor has declared that the trades unions have been the great bulwark against the spread of radicalism of the worst type, throughout the country.

One would naturally expect, therefore, that our Government, if not already a model employer, would be making every effort to become one, that full advantage would have been taken of the recent reclassification to do away with the salary scales of past years, so progressive under present conditions; that the greatest care would have been taken to see that the Government, as an employer, led the van of progress in the treatment of its employees, confident that its efforts would be repaid the country a thousand-fold in the greater devotion of public servants to their duties, and that this great opportunity has so far been neglected.

We do not intend, in this brief article, to confuse the main issue by including in this discussion salaries in the higher grades of the service. A deputy minister receives a higher salary than a messenger because his training, duties and responsibilities are greater; he is also entitled to a proportionately higher maintenance, above the bare necessities for services owing to his position involving greater personal and family expenditures.

The point we wish to bring out

here, however, involves no nice considerations of relative social position, but simply states the fact: it needs no proof; it is within the knowledge of thousands of the service and the fact is this:

There are today in the Civil Service of Canada whole classes of employees, and hundreds of other cases outside those classes where the salaries paid are either below or just upon the minimum wage as defined in the above paragraphs.

As stated, we in the service all know that the public has only to glance through the pages of reclassification to assure itself of the truth of our statement.

What follows? Simply that the Government, thankful to labor for upholding constituted authority, so busy conciliating in labor difficulties, studying living conditions and attempting to reduce the grossly negligent of the lower-paid classes of its own workers. It is, in fact, a class 1 employer in some cases, and a class 2 employer in the remainder.

What whole-hearted service can be expected, when the spectre of want is ever present, when constant watchfulness of every penny is necessary? When children must be condemned to a future of unskilled labor for lack of funds to educate them? When illness is a financial disaster and approaching old age and compulsory retirement a constant dread? When the obtaining of the daily food, shelter and clothing takes every cent of earnings?

The Government incurs a still heavier responsibility in this matter, it is due only to the high character of the woman civil servant that it is not necessary to a crime. Has the Government, in its desire to save means, or may mean, to ask a girl to live on \$600 a year, plus bonus in these times?

In the near future, the Government of Canada will be given an opportunity to take the first step in righting these wrongs. Their final adjustment will take time, and in its later stages, mature consideration. But what the service asks at present takes neither time nor consideration. We ask simply for a percentage of salary increase as will enable the members of the service, especially those in the lower grades, to live decently without constant fear of financial disaster. Adequate remuneration for services rendered may be studied in full later, but it is axiomatic that the least any faithful servant, no matter how humble, deserves is a minimum wage allowing decent, comfortable living.

MANY APPLICATIONS FOR MOTHERS' PENSIONS.

The number of applicants in Ottawa under the Mothers' Allowance Act, popularly known as mothers' pensions, provided for by the local board, who have to resort to late sittings in order to cope with them. According to A. Cameron, honorary secretary of the local Mothers' Allowance Board, already there are about 210 bona fide applications to go forward to the board.

Quite a number of applications are being made, however, at the City Hall from mothers outside the board's jurisdiction. The delay is caused thereby. According to bulletin No. 1, issued by the Toronto Commission, every city, separate town and corporation which has a local board, but the fact is many places have not yet elected their local board and applications for mothers' pensions are being made in Ottawa, which the Ottawa board cannot handle under the act.

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On Wednesday evening, October 27, the Millers' Union will hold a dance in the Venetian Studios.

Under the auspices of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, a euchre will be held in St. Anne's Hall on Wednesday evening, October 27, commencing at 8 o'clock. The proceeds of the evening will be for the benefit of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

A series of euchres will be held by the local fire fighters in the near future. The first one will be held at St. Anne's Hall, on October 23. The second one in St. Anne's Hall on November 24, and the third on November 24, at a date to be announced later.

OUR ELECTIONS.

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Address all nominations to Chairman Elections Committee, P. E. O. Rooms 49 - 50, Carleton Chambers, Sparks street, Ottawa.

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GREAT AMELIORATIONS TO STE. ANNE'S HALL.

The board of directors of the Le Cercle Social, Ste. Anne's, administration, involving several thousand dollars, is glad to announce to its members, the general public and the numerous organizations patronizing Ste. Anne's Hall, that hereafter they will enjoy more comfort than ever.

The new heating system, under the supervision of Messrs. J. A. Seguin and Trade Architects, is completed, and all visitors will be glad to give full information concerning the new system.

We herewith enumerate in detail what this popular hall on St. Patrick street comprises:

Basement—Restaurant with luncheon counter, storage room, pool room with tables, two bowling alleys, shoe shine, shower bath room, shop for carrying and electrician, quarters of the Laurier Athletic Club, caretaker's room and the new heating plant.

First floor—Rooms occupied by Le Cercle Social, reception bureau for the mutual societies such as Les Artisans, L'Union St. Joseph and the Catholic Pressers, check room and ticket office, theatre with balcony and dressing rooms, also used for conventions, with all necessary committee rooms, social and political meetings, etc.; and also used for banquets, with a capacity of 500.

Second floor—Rooms for the Ste. Anne's parish choir, office of the Le Cercle Social, and the parish mutual societies, and also labor union meetings, two class rooms for boys and girls, with recreation room, draughts and card playing room.

Third floor—Rooms for the education of the young men of the Le Cercle Social, and the Le Cercle Social, with a capacity of 20, 40, 200, 400 and 1,500 each, and the following labor unions are already holding their regular meetings in these rooms, namely: Dominion Public Workers Association, the Grange, Carpenters' International Association of America, International Union of Steam Engineers, Local No. 471, United Labor Workers International, Local No. 199, the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers and Pipe Fitters, Local No. 258, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers, Local No. 93 and 496, Whisk and Broom Makers, Lathers, etc., and all the different organizations of the parish already mentioned.

A fact worthy of mention is that, although accommodating all the above organizations, Le Cercle So-

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cial does not in any way interfere with its parochial work, as every mutual, charitable or social organization of the parish is being taken care of gratuitously. The bowling alleys and pool tables are also passing through the repairing process and the members of Le Cercle Social and their visiting friends will certainly have reason to praise the able management committee of the hall, as everything seems to be kept in an up-to-date and satisfactory manner and is, surely a success as a parochial undertaking.

P.E.I. TEACHERS' STRIKE OVER MOTHERS' PENSIONS.

The teachers' strike, which has held up the studies of two hundred and forty students at Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown, P. E. I., has been settled, and the faculty, headed by Dr. Robertson, returned to work on Tuesday. The teachers struck for a minimum wage of \$30 per week.

POLITICS AND LABOR WONT GET ALONG.

It was announced last week by Fred Young, who was refused as a delegate from the Musicians' Labor Council, that the union will secede from the council. Mr. Young added that he is taking the matter up directly with Tom Moore, President of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. He declared that the local trades council is in a state of confusion, and that the I.L.P. and for that reason is refused to sit in the London Trades Council.

MONTREAL TRADES COUNCIL.

The recent dismissal of school teachers was discussed at the last regular meeting of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council, and the Barbers' Union suggested that a school committee be formed to propose a resolution of moral support of the teachers' strike, which was passed. A resolution of moral support of the teachers' strike, which was passed. A resolution of moral support of the teachers' strike, which was passed.

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The consensus of opinion among the members of the union, it is believed, should be to organize a provincial board in Ontario to advance in accord with other international trades unions in Ontario. At the next meeting of local No. 205, besides four initiatives, one re-statement took place, and at the next meeting in the Labor Hall, the candidates will be initiated, so far the membership is quite satisfied with the work of recently appointed Business Agent Matt Price, who has already been responsible for a number of new propositions. Furthermore, he is having a steady influence among the rank and file.

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