

## CAPITAL AND LABOUR

During the late war, and even up to the present time, wages have been higher than ever before in the history of industry. In spite of the general prevalence of strikes, and, by the way, these go to show that there is something wrong, Labour has received and is still receiving a greater remuneration from Capital than ever before. This was a necessity, and Capital could not escape it.

Those who, during the war, were boasting of four-fifty for an eight hour day, and who thought in their folly that wages had been standardized for all time, will soon be dissilusioned, if their views have not already suffered alteration. In most industries there has been no appreciable decrease in wages, but it must be accepted as a truth, that the maintenance of the present wage scale is nothing more or less than a disagreeable necessity in the eyes of Capitalists. The eight-hour day is another question. Those who know conditions are not in any fear regarding this, however; it is clear that where it has been established it will remain, and that it will be adopted in the near future by all industries.

The number of hours that an employee must stand at his task is important; it does not, however, appear to be the real difficulty, and I shall not consider it here. What constitutes the difficulty, and the only difficulty, between Capital and Labour is the manner in which the one views the other. One does not have to adopt the badge of Socialism in order to condemn Capital; the person who offers us radical socialism as a solution of this problem cannot see the trouble in the right light. Neither does one have to become a Capitalist to condemn Labour. That both come in for a good share of just condemnation ought to be evident to any person who has had experience, or who has been in the least observant during the past few years. But generally there is one party to a dispute that deserves

more blame than does the other. We shall see if this applies in the case we are considering.

It has been stated above that the question of Capital and Labour is one of respective view points. The capitalist regards every dollar paid out to labourers as a necessary expense, and the fewer dollars that he has to pay, the better. On the other hand, the employee is interested in taking home each week a well-filled pay envelope such as will sustain himself and his family, besides providing him the means of enjoying a few of the pleasures of life. Without wasting words, this is the relative position of the two. Labour demands more from Capital than Capital is willing to pay, and naturally there has been much said and done on both sides which was vain and useless. Are the demands of Labour just? A study of the question will show that some of them are and some of them are not. When we hear of employees demanding a four or a five day week, and a five or six hour day then it does not take much deliberation to see the absurdity of such a demand. But when a labourer asks for a wage that is necessary to the maintenance of himself and his dependents in a decent manner, who can deny that this is just?

When we say that labour is not receiving just treatment from Capital, some one will surely hail us as Socialists; Socialism advances no cure for the world's unrest, and it is essentially an unsound system, nevertheless we are quite right when we say that Capital is not giving Labour its due. The workings of supply and demand are the only factors that Capitalists are anxious about; the human element is thought of only as a machine, as a necessary expense on the corporation. There is something besides the question of dollars and cents to be considered, if we are to solve, or rather offer a solution for the grievances. We must turn to the virtues of justice and charity, and in the light of these solve our problems. Let us consider this briefly.

To begin with, we may say that antagonism between Capital and Labour is not a normal condition. The Socialist claims that it is a necessary condition, and that as long as there exists a dollar of Capital it is unavoidable. Surely there is a more sane statement of the case. If, for instance, we should say that, just so long as Capitalists persist in regarding labourers as mere instruments for the production of wealth, so long shall discord exist between them. In other words, we would say that, at present there is no just proportion between the work of labourers and the remuneration that they receive. We can scarcely see the justice of a mere wage of sixteen or even twenty or more dollars a week, when an employee really gives more than his labour, when he really becomes part of the industrial corporation.

So the question after all is an ethical one; being ethical it imposes duties and obligations on both parties. Their difficulty can be remedied by a co-operative system of production. Now this co-operative or co-partnership system in industry is something that probably every person who chances to read this article knows something about. The word itself is suggestive of almost all the details that might be considered, had we the time or space.

But it must be strictly understood that no half-hearted acceptance of this method on the part of Capital can be expected to bring forth fruit. The employees are partners in the profits. If the corporation undertakes to put in effect the co-operative system, with the bona fide intention of turning over a new leaf, and ceasing to drag the very life out of men for a miserable wage, there is no reason that the great problem of Capital and Labour should not cease to be a cause of disturbance in the community. A corporation would certainly not continue to operate without a living return to Capital; it should give the same to Labour.

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