

CHAPTER IV.

INCREASING THE LENGTH OF THE WORK DAY A BAD ECONOMIC MOVE.

So patent is it that if the employers in Detroit of machinists succeed in adding an hour to the day's work and again establishing a ten-hour workday, it will be a step backwards in social and industrial progress, that it becomes the duty of all good citizens to publicly protest against it. In this age of mechanical inventions the only way the wage-worker can get some of the advantages attached thereto is to work less hours per day. As a wage-worker he can get no more than will support him in the manner customary in his class. He cannot work for less and keep up his rate of life. So there is nothing left for him to do, while the wages system continues, but to seek by every legitimate means to shorten the workday. If the attempt to go back to a ten-hour day succeeds, it will be a blot on the fair fame of Detroit as an industrial center.

Machinery compels the mechanic to work at a higher pressure than he otherwise would. To keep pace with arms of steel that never tire is a tax on the vital energies of the average workman that his ancestors never had to undergo. This intensification of exertion can be met in no other way than in the reduction of the hours making a day's work. It cannot be compensated for in money, for, as is well known, competition between workers keeps wages always hovering around the cost of living. It is true that at first more pay may be offered for the extra hour's work, but it will not be long, especially when the "hard times" comes, before wages will fall back to, and even below the old notch.

The machine also intensifies work in another way.

Time was when the tailor, for example, made the whole suit. Part of his time was taken up in fitting, or basting, or stitching. Now one person does the cutting, another the fitting, and still others different parts, each one part only, so there is a sameness that comes with the increased skill, but a sameness that makes a draft on the vital forces much larger than by the old method. To shorten the hours of labor is the only way to successfully meet this changed condition of affairs. It is a fact that the tailor of today works no such hours as did the tailor of a few years ago.

Whether you work by the week or work by the day,
Reducing the hours increases the pay,

is a song sung by workingmen for many years. And if the artisans of Detroit do not successfully protest against any attempt to go back to a ten-hour workday, they will find that

Whether they work by the week or work by the day,
Increasing the hours reduces the pay.

From the manufacturer's standpoint there are some arguments that have weight. He has put into his plant a certain amount of capital. He is subjected to fierce competition. The tax collector comes around, and whether his machines are running and producing wealth or lying idle and rusting away, he must pay whatever is charged. To get his money out, it looks to him, it is necessary to keep things humping that extra hour each day. That is where the profit comes in. The other nine hours have just met expenses. Yet is it not evident that if all employing machinists work the extra hour, competition will be just as fierce, and that some one will sacrifice the hour's profit for the contract? Then the gain of the hour will certainly disappear, and no manufacturer will be the better off for the extra hour.

To be sure, a nine-hour custom in one branch of an

establishment is a continual incentive for other departments to demand the same privilege, but it would seem to be wisdom on the part of the manufacturer to come to an agreement with other employers of labor to make it nine hours—or even eight hours—all around, rather than to continually fight the inevitable, even though the agony can be prolonged. The necessity for a shorter workday is so fixed in the minds of the more intelligent workingmen that even if an attempt here and there to go back to a long day may for a time be successful, it will be accompanied with so much friction as to be practically valueless as a money-making scheme.

Instead of trying how low wages may be kept—which, if universally successfully followed would certainly curtail the market for goods and immediately bring on a panic—it is the part of wisdom for all captains of industry to see if the trouble with their profits does not lie in the direction of too high prices for the raw material, and interference with freedom of trade. The manufacturer has troubles of his own unknown to the wage-worker. If he could eliminate “royalties,” freight rate extortions, and be freed from the exactions of patent right owners for many things on which the government should never have allowed a monopoly, he might find that wages would not cut any such figure as they do today.

If in these prosperous times, as times go, a skilled trade is not able to hold the advantage of a nine-hour day gained through much struggle, in what position will it be when the next panic sweeps over this country? And if the machinists fail, what hope is there for other occupations? Even the eight-hour day gained by the building trades will be imperiled.

This fighting against the inevitable by some manufacturers is to be expected as well as regretted. But after all, the wheels of progress are not going to turn backward even if a few of them are in a position to demand more work for less pay. The masses, steeped

as they are in ignorance and superstition, and consumed with anxiety as are the more intelligent of them for the material welfare of their families, though this anxiety does not extend further than the hope of being able, through continuous toil, to feed, clothe and shelter their loved ones, have or are getting hold of certain fundamentals in the labor problem, and they are determined, come what will, to have more leisure through a shorter workday. And though many are mistakingly thinking that this does nothing but restrict competition through compelling employers to hire a larger number of workers, yet others see that leisure will make them less mentally embruted, through having a chance to think of something else than their daily grind. Give the brains of the wage-working class the opportunity to expand, and there will be found more men and women of genius in the world than the world ever imagined.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

If happiness itself cannot be cut up and distributed equally, and if equal division of the material aids to happiness would not produce the greatest happiness, what is the thing to be thus apportioned? There seems but a single possibility. There remains to be equally distributed nothing but the conditions under which each may pursue happiness. The limitations to action—the degrees of freedom and restraint—should be alike to all. Each shall have as much liberty to pursue his ends as consists with maintaining like liberties to pursue their ends by others; and one as much as another shall have the enjoyment of that which his efforts, carried on within these limits, obtain.—*Herbert Spencer in "The Data of Ethics."*

LONG HOURS, LOW WAGES.

If one individual works more hours than the average, he will increase his wages; but the wages of all cannot be increased in this way. The longer the working day, the more helpless does the laborer become.—*Henry George.*