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EDITORIAL

NOT MORALS, BUT SYSTEMS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is so much easier to fly off at a tangent than to hit the correct path, it is so much less laborious to put forth a little impulsive effort than to submit to the restraint and discipline necessary for the carrying on of a large and effective work, that it is surprising there are not on foot more schemes than there are to convert, humanize Christianize, what-not-ize the employer—anything but abolish him.

Capitalism is all right, runs the siren song of these humanizers, etc.; it is alright for some to be wealthy and some to be poor, for some to work hard and some to do nothing; only the thing should not be carried to extremes; we should teach the employer to be a Christian, to be less hard on his men.

Precisely such a move was started in Chicago a short time ago, leveled at the head of William C. Thorne, vice-president of Montgomery Ward & Co., the big mail-order house, with exploitees running up into the thousands.

And promptly and properly comes Vice-President Thorne back with the statement:

“That men—men who have families to support and children to bring up—should be forced to work for \$12 a week is deplorable. It is impossible to do justice to one’s children, to one’s wife or to one’s self when one’s income is only that much. It is hardly possible to live decently on \$12 a week when one has no one but one’s self to take care of. But \$12 a week is a wage that thousands upon thousands work for. Hundreds of houses in this city don’t pay even that much.

“It is a universal condition and Montgomery Ward & Co. are no more free from it than are other business establishments. The condition holds us in its grip and we must yield to it. It would be suicide with the keen competition prevailing for any business firm to undertake singly to pay its employes more than other firms in the field do.”

For frankness this certainly leaves nothing to be desired; also for tellingness. It proves, from the culprit's own mouth, that it is useless to try to reform him; that he must be relentlessly excised, along with the conditions which breed him.

Try to reform the employer, and love's labor's lost; abolish the employing class, and your labor bears fruit. Attempt to change morals under the system, you are trying to sweep back the river; abolish the system, and morals change of themselves. Not morals, but systems, is the point of attack.

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