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EDITORIAL

## THE ICE-GORGE OF CONTENTMENT.

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**W**HEN recently an ice-gorge blocked the channel of Niagara, and endangered three cities, newspaper correspondents deluged their columns with the news. A much worse ice-gorge, that threatens not three cities merely, but the whole land, lies right under their noses and is not even noticed. It is the ice-gorge of contentment.

“What ever is, is right,” is the motto of every individual ice-chunk in this gorge, and his name is legion.

The cost of living soars out of all proportion to the increase in wages. In the last ten years living expenses have risen 35.4 per cent., while wages (even if all the alleged raises are true) have increased only 19.1 per cent. Yet the ice-chunk points to this latter figure, and contentedly says: “Wages are going up.”

By the development of machinery, work is constantly being intensified, skill eliminated, and the individual and personal element removed. Still the chunk of ice echoes: “A little industry and ability will bring a man out alright.”

From police sources, jewellers’ associations, and even from professional charity and church organizations, the admission has several times strikingly been made in the last few months, that of the vast throngs on the breadlines and relief lists, only a negligible fraction are there through their own fault. Widespread industrial conditions, not personal temperament, are seen to be the cause of the several million unemployed in the land to-day. Even a Commissioner of Charities, Hebbard, dare not go to face a slave auction on Lincoln’s birthday, which was a living refutation of his slander that the men on the breadlines “were bums and would not work.” Nevertheless the chunk of ice coolly murmurs: There is work for all. They are only lazy.”

A U.S. Census report shows that families have been cut in half since 1790, the proportion of children in the population being now but 50 per cent. what it was then. The chunk of ice only closes his eyes to the fact, and dogmatizes: “People have too many children.”

Prof. L. Thorndike of Columbia University shows in a monograph that only 25 per cent. of the children who enter school remain long enough to master the rudiments of the three R's, and that only one in ten ever is graduated from a high school—the falling off in both cases being caused by the necessity of going to work to help out the family. Like a clam in his shell the chunk of ice opines: “If people were better educated they wouldn't be so poor.”

A Walker of New Britain, secretary of the Sunday School funds, elopes with the cash box and is captured in Mexico. A.J.B. Rhinehart, banker and Methodist Sunday School teacher, wrecks his Pennsylvania bank and is indicted for forgery. A William K. Williamson, “model citizen,” “reformer,” pew holder in the Presbyterian Church of Ocean Grove, skips the town leaving thousands of dollars' {in} debts. Only the other day, a John Sykes, of Trenton, N.J., lay preacher and lawyer, is arrested and charged with embezzlement and forgery. No little Connecticut town but has its pastor who is the hero of a family scandal. All impervious to this mountain of evidence, the chunk of ice declares: “The people only need religion.”

A recent ingenious statistician calculates that it would take the entire wages of a locomotive crew for twenty years to purchase the locomotive they daily operate; and other industries in proportion. To all of which the chunk of ice replies: “Let people go in business for themselves.”

It is the unanimous verdict of physicians, dentists, nurses, and others who deal similarly with a working class clientele, that the intensified work, the increased over-crowding, the continuously less sufficient food, the excessive nervous strain of present life, are constantly undermining the physique of the nation. Calmly and smugly the chunk of ice theorizes: “The world is getting better every day.”

It is such contentment, preached by mistaken creeds and bred of an economic status now half a century in the rear, that freezes and holds together the ice-gorge which blocks the waters of progress and threatens to inundate the land with another barbarism. May the sun of Socialist propoganda melt it away before it be too late.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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