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EDITORIAL

## AYE, 'TIS TOO MUCH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**“I**S the 8-hour day too much for a man?”—such was the question discussed, with Labor Members, Lords and reverend Senators ranged on either side, for a full four hours in the Canada Parliament on April 26 last.

Of course it is too much. Eight hours out of twenty-four is far too much for a man to put in, in this day and generation, grubbing to get just the barest necessities of a livelihood. That is all the average workman gets out of his daily toil. Its back-breaking qualities, the poisonous conditions which surround it, the constant menace to life and limb which accompany practically every exertion of his labor-power, all go for naught. Unconsidered are his skill, his speed, his painfully acquired knowledge of his trade. Whatever risks the workman runs, whatever capacity he displays, whatever the value of his output may be, his wages remain the same—just what he can be replaced for on the labor market. And the continuous growth of the unemployed, the relentless march of simplification of work through the machine, tend to make that sum sag ever more toward its theoretic limit: the lowest figure that will enable him to crawl through life and remain an “efficient,” that is, a profit-producing working unit.

Eight hours—it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that even twenty-five hours—out of the twenty-four, would not be “too much” for a man to labor to supply himself with the needs of existence, under certain conditions. Those conditions would be that at the stage of civilization then reached, so much drudgery requisite to wring from nature the basis of subsistence. But to-day, when the best machinery available, properly utilized, with no waste of labor, would produce bountifulness for all in half the time, eight hours becomes bond-serfdom; to demand it is an industrial crime.

With the Iron Horse and the Iron Man to do the work, why should man himself

have still, in the 20th century, to use his every ounce of available energy in putting a roof over his head and filling into his bread-basket? Since it can be done, why not reduce man's necessary drudgery to four hours, to three, to one, or even half-a-one a day? There are enough things in art, in literature, in education, that better claim his time as the pinnacle of creation, than the mere pursuit of food, clothing and shelter.

While our masters wrangle over "Are 8 hours too much," the workers are organizing for Socialism, where a man for the first time will be liberated from his stomach, and set free to feed intellect.

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