

Another Vicious Circle

Increased rates for telephone service, following increased wages for employees of the telephone companies, were to have been expected, the public, which applauded the efforts of the employees to obtain better wages and better working conditions, will accept the consequences, of course. These were inevitable. Someone must pay the bill. Income does not create itself out of air. It is a plain matter of mathematics. It was so with the street railways, whose employees, finding their wages undoubtedly inadequate to meet the rising cost of living, had the sympathy of the public when they sought higher compensation. But here, too, the money could not come out of an empty sack, and we have 6-cent fares in Portland, and even higher fares in other cities, which people, more or less philosophically, have settled down to paying.

Telephones and street car fares are branded in the budget of practically every family. The former is a near-necessity; the latter is practically indispensable. More wages in a household often lines are called for to meet the added draft in income. It is conceded that every worker is entitled to fair living conditions and the right to earn their full wage on the clock finds his telephone bill and his car fare allowance mounting and he, too, demands and receives an increase calculated to meet them, and the mechanic discovers a similar necessity, then presently the added compensation won by telephone company and street railway employees vanishes and all stand where they stood before.

It is the vicious circle. Higher wages are granted, then higher rates are made to meet them. Increases are not always openly proclaimed, as in the examples mentioned. The public and the quasi-public utilities do not, however, set as much of our current cash as the myriads of private agencies. The extra nickel on the wedge of pie, the 2-cent addition to the price of a cup of coffee, these follow "better wages and working conditions" for cooks and waiters and dishwashers and delivery men and the like; better wages to which we all feel that they are entitled, but which, before we know it, resolve themselves as to purchasing power into the same inadequacies that they were before. The dollar goes right on shrinking. The carpenter receives more but cheaper dollars for his work in building a house, for which the telephone lineman and the street car conductor, out of the better pay made possible by the public's acquiescence in 6-cent fares and 23 two-party residence telephone rates, will presently pay a higher rental—or a higher gross price—if he desires in times like these to cherish ambition to own a home.

Higher wages are passed along, they appear in higher prices for every necessity of life, and these in turn justify demands for further wage increases. Which is the cause and which the effect of the other? When will it end? A good many persons would like to know the answer to these questions. Only those who unduly value their own opinions will answer offhand. Clearly it is not a simple profiteering, or to the law of supply and demand, or to the failure of people to go back to the land, or something that in the abstract seems absurdly simple but in the working out proves infinitely complex.

Perhaps it will provoke some thinking to suggest that the final measure of a people's wealth is not the dollar but the actual goods which it requires labor to produce. We shall never make ourselves richer by producing less. The eight-hour day is now the conceded standard among workers, but the eight-hour day plus curtailed hourly production only provokes embellishments which would have to work more than eight hours a day to make a living. The world will not have more wealth to divide among its people until it produces more wealth. The machinery will not have more machinery. The notion that this is an "income problem," which will be met by distributing money jobs among a greater number of workmen, instead of by producing more goods, is one of the old fallacies now revived at a moment of inopportune time. Nominally higher wages which at the same time have actually higher prices when their purchasing power is taken into account will never be with us until the same output of the worker is correspondingly increased.

The really wise prophets who have told us a year or two ago, at our capacity for unselfishness, would not be put to the test by the low wages and high costs. When our own boys were fighting in Europe, we were able to visualize the spirit of sacrifice that moved them, and to measure up to it in our own lives. It was not hard to distinguish the slacker in industry when his output was being measured to shells and pipe and the necessities of life and death in war. But on November 11, 1918, the day on which the armistice was signed, our community sense of responsibility and of sacrifice was polished and ready. The scramble for profits which then ensued was a disappointment to no one. The employee who grates every word and demand only to get the increase, and perhaps a little more, to the price of his goods, who of the disinterested friend or laborer, he sometimes pretended to be. It is doubtful if any strikes for higher wages have resulted in net gains for those involved in them.

day's work done delays by that much the completion of the task of restoring the world to normal condition.

High wages and higher prices are submerged in the question of greater efficiency and larger production. All hope that higher wages will continue, because experience has shown that higher wages incline to make better men, but we also wish that so-called higher wages might be higher wages in reality. The purchasing power, whether of workers' wages or of dealer's profits, will not be materially advanced until there is greater production by the people as a whole. The sawing of wages and prices is going to cease some time. Whether it shall end

in industrial calamity or in sane readjustment in obedience to economic laws depends upon an awakening of the mutual spirit of sacrifice and willingness to meet the needs of production by a speeding up of output all around. Edgar B. Pige, of the Portland Oregonian.

Motoring to Klamath Falls to Attend State Convention of Elk

State Senator Colon R. Eberhard, Exalted Ruler of La Grande Lodge No. 433, B. P. O. Elks, heads a party of Elk automobilists leaving here Sunday to attend the state convention of Elk's lodges to be held

at Klamath Falls. While the attendance from Union and Wallowa Counties, over which La Grande lodge has jurisdiction, will not be large, yet there will be about a dozen from here who will endeavor to make it known that La Grande lodge is present.

Among the others going by automobile are Claude Schmitt of La Grande, A. W. Schnapp and W. E. Leffel, of Joseph, and J. P. Ravencroft and family, of Wallowa. A

Andrews, W. J. Jones and Merton Kings are planning to leave in a day or two, if they find it possible to get away.

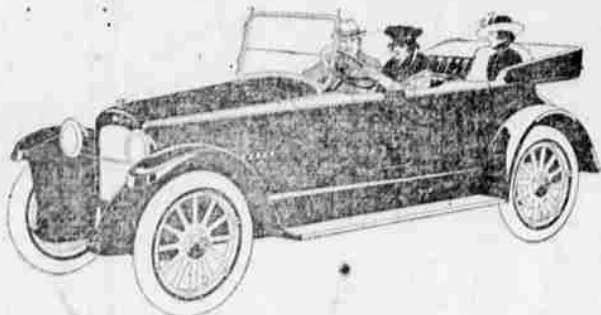
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sunday School at 9:45 a. m. Communion service at 11:00 a. m. Subject, "The First Man and the Second Man Contrasted." We cordially invite you to be present and worship with us, and if your children are not attending Sun-

day School we will gladly welcome them to ours.

The evening service will be a Union service at the city park and the Community chorus will sing. These Union meetings are very interesting and don't fail to attend. R. H. COKER, Minister. O. C. FLESHMAN, Chairman of Board. E. W. BASTMAN, Sec'y. S. C.

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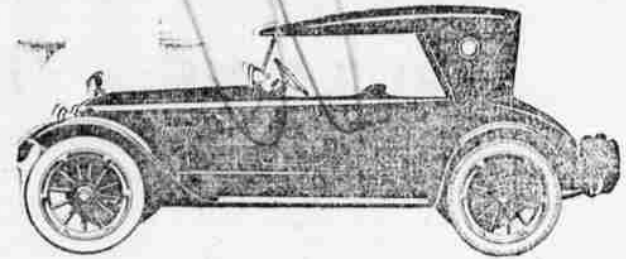
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