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EDITORIAL

## GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

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**T**HE Rev. D.F. O'Sullivan of the Boston Church of the Immaculate Conception delivered, on February the 19th, an address to the delegates of the Boston Central Labor Union. Father O'Sullivan's theme was against Socialism. Speaking, as he declared, "in the capacity of a member of the Catholic Church and as one of her priests," he pronounced Socialism to be "destructive of the family and, consequently, of society itself," he condemned Socialism as being "against the rights of the workingman," and he concluded that his Church, on the contrary, "is ever watchful in the interests of the laboring man." In demonstration of his last proposition, the father quoted from the encyclical of Leo the XIII. as follows:

"The sixth principle of the eight principles in the encyclical of Leo XIII. is that the wages or pay of the wage-earner should be such as to support him honorably and in frugal comfort. The wage-earner must live and the only way he can live is by the wages of his labor."

All of us, friends and honest foes alike, are to be congratulated upon the circumstance that Father O'Sullivan did not limit himself to the making of assertions, but also quoted a fact—the fact concerning the purport of the sixth of the eight principles in the encyclical of Leo XIII. This frees us from the necessity of chasing the Father's unsubstantiated assertions regarding Socialism, and enables us to judge of his own claim with regard to his own Church's attitude towards the workingman. Whatever we may think of the Father's lack of mental equipment to enable him to pass judgment upon Socialism, we think it safe to trust him as an accurate quoter of a fact, especially if that fact is taken from the archives of his own Church organization. Accordingly, without troubling ourselves to verify the correctness of the Father's citation from Leo XIII.'s encyclical, we assume it to be correctly quoted. Taking it as quoted by Father O'Sullivan it is proof conclusive that

the Catholic Hierarchy has only chains for the Working Class.

What are “wages”—the only thing that, according to the sixth of the eight principles in the encyclical of Leo XIII. the workingman is assigned to? Wages are that part of the product of the Working Class which the workingman is allowed to retain. Wages are the price of the merchandise labor-power, obtainable in the Labor-Market. Wages are the expression of the exchange value of the workingman, aggravated by the law of supply and demand which lowers his exchange value below the normal point. The exchange value of stockings is determined by the amount of labor-power crystallized in stockings and socially necessary for their reproduction. So is the exchange value of labor-power determined by the cost of living—the amount of labor-power crystallized in the goods that the workingman needs to exist. But, as with stockings, so with labor-power: the exchange value of an article of merchandise is not its price. Its price is affected by external circumstances that cause the amount to rise and fall above and below its exchange value. The supply of and the demand for the article is the final factor that determines prices. A supply of stockings in excess of the demand lowers the price of stockings. So with labor-power: a supply of labor-power in excess of the demand therefore lowers wages, the price of labor. Improved machinery steadily displaces labor, this is tantamount to increasing the supply. Hence the earnings of the workingman decline and must decline, and do decline: the plunder upon the worker is thus ever larger and larger. Finally, it is obvious that none will work for wages who is not compelled to work for a plundering master. Wages, in short, are the wage-slave’s chain; the size of his wages is the length of his chain; the best of wages is but a longer chain—and that is what the sixth principle of the eight principles of the encyclical of Leo XIII. would condemn the working class to. That is all it has for them—“wages,” that is the wage slave’s chain.

Thanks are due to Father O’Sullivan for emphasizing the fact before an audience of workingmen.

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

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