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Cotton's Weekly

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CAPITALIST CLASS HOWL ABOUT "RISKS OF CAPITAL"

AND CALMLY TORTURE WORKERS BY THE THOUSAND TO A SLOW AND HORRIBLE DEATH

By a Toronto Slave.

The wholesale murder and maiming by disease of the workers by the capitalist class is fully evident by the testimony of Sir Thomas Oliver in his book, "Diseases of Occupation". Sir Thomas is a professor of physiology at Durham University, England, and has frequently sat on Royal Commissions investigating industrial conditions. He is an international authority on industrial diseases consulted by capitalists of all countries.

To those who argue that Socialism will destroy the home, I quote from page 18: "At the end of the day's work the mother calls on her way from the factory for her infant and proceeds to her home, all dark, cold, and cheerless, for the shutters have not been opened, the fire has not been lit, and no evening meal awaits them. Of home life for textile workers where both parents go to the factory there is almost none. All is subservient to the requirements of the factory, whose incessant demands eat all that is best of family life and material instinct."

As a doctor he condemns the speeding up process and warns the employers that the workers are becoming sterile and degenerate. But it is to the parasites who mouth about the risks which capitalists undertake that we are enabled to show the frightful and certain risks undertaken by the workers. That charming privilege of the proletariat women known as phosphy jaw has the useful effect of making the women subject to miscarriage. The gums become swollen and pus forms which oozes into the mouth, is swallowed, and induces acute dyspepsia. The jaw bone begins to rot and the other bones become affected and break easily. This awful disease went on for over 50 years before new machinery and the use of a new compound made the work more safe. The young women who work as dippers in the making of tobacco pouches, children's balloons, etc., suffer from the vapour which arises from the bisulphide of carbon bath. They are also subject to miscarriage. Severe headache, vomiting and vertigo are other pleasures of their daily work. Acute delirium and delusions are followed by blindness, hysteria, or paralysis of the arms and legs.

Painters who use quick drying spirits inhale the vapor. Men have frequently been removed from the interiors of ships in an unconscious condition. Sometimes they go to sleep and are found in a state of coma, or the vapor catches fire and the men get blood poisoning from the resultant burns. They are also

subject to headache, dizziness, vomiting, and bleeding at the nose.

Workers in benzine and petrol suffer in a similar way such as blindness, neuritis, mental depression and anemia.

The men who sink the foundations in rivers for bridges work in compressed air in caissons. At the St. Louis Bridge, on the Mississippi, 119 men out of 600 suffered from compressed air illness, 14 died. At the Brooklyn Bridge, 110 cases occurred with 3 deaths. The men suffer from pains in the knee, elbow and hip-joints. "Often the pains are excruciating and cause the strongest men to writhe in agony." This may last for three days accompanied by nose bleeding, severe abdominal pain and vomiting. This is followed by acute delirium and paralysis.

Chemical workers making chloride of lime, bleaching powder, sulphuric and hydrochloric acids have double the death rate of outdoor workers after 45 years. This work is very hot and they become subject to bronchitis or asthma. They can only work half an hour in the chambers and wear flannel respirators and leather goggles.

Skin diseases of the face attacks them, with swollen eyelids to keep them company. "The eyes become itchy and secrete a purulent liquid, while the whites of the eye become red." There is dyspepsia with loss of appetite, emaciation and extreme muscular and nervous debility.

Felt hat makers use a solution of nitrate of mercury in their treatment of rabbits skins. This only rots their teeth, but other workers such as mercury miners, and at one time the men who silvered mirrors, get horribly poisoned in their efforts to get a living. Headaches, giddiness, tremors of the limbs ensue. "The breath becomes foetid, the gums soft, swollen, and ulcerated, the teeth loose. The face becomes pale and the secretion of saliva is excessive. Speech is indistinct and the patients lose their power of walking and become depressed and melancholy. Females suffer from suspended menstruation and pregnant women often miscarry. Others become the subjects of convulsions, or are seized with paralysis. Their children are often ill-nourished and rickety," page 226.

Of course you will believe the politicians and priests when they tell you that the capitalist shareholders cannot sleep at nights worrying about the risks they take. The fish workers are so misguided that they let tons of rock fall on them to give them a free pass to heaven.

That method is much to be preferred to the slow lead poisoning adopted by some workers. I once had the good fortune to work in a white lead factory. After eleven days of bliss I began to pass blood and quit somewhat hastily. Yet I can remember the condition of the women workers in that industry. In addition to the chances of being poisoned, they had to resort to prostitution to enable them to live. They did work which would have given ideas to Dante for the lowest depths of his inferno. Prof. Oliver has seen young women die from acute lead poisoning within 4 months after commencing work in a white lead factory. "Naturally enough no women of the middle and upper classes are found competing for this work. The professor tells us 'white lead workers are taken from the poorest and most indigent classes.'"

Women are, unfortunately for profits, extremely prone to lead poisoning and they have been abolished from the dangerous process of white lead manufacture. "Although the recommendation was opposed at the time by almost every white lead manufacturer in the country on economic grounds."

No doubt these lovers of liberty thought it an unwarrantable interference with the right of the middle and upper classes to the cheapest possible rate. It is interesting to note that neither dogs nor cats can live in a white lead factory. So you will not be surprised when you read that 37 boys under 18 years and 91 young women were reported in one year as cases of lead poisoning. More than 10,000 cases have been reported in England alone.

Another source of slow suicide for the workers is found in the lead glazing of pottery. Despite the fact that Government Commissioners and scientific experts have declared that leadless glaze is better than lead glaze, the manufacturers will not adopt the new system owing to its slightly increased cost. Both Egyptian and Babylonian pottery were leadless and exist to this day. Apart from lead poisoning nine potters die from consumption to every two farm laborers so dying. "Pottery is the rot" and "pottery's asthma" are two other diseases popular among the proletariat.

Diamond cutters and polishers do not escape lead poisoning though they are labor aristocrats. "Nearly all the men were extremely pale," writes Sir Oliver after his visit to Amsterdam.

Hollow ware enamelling is another job in

the Paradise of the worker. At one time arsenic was used, but it caused such serious ill health among the operatives it had to be abandoned. "No young ladies under twenty are recommended for this job and 'only healthy women should be employed.' The rest would be perhaps as safe from poisoning under the white slavers. Moreover there is a lively chance for those who use the cheaper ware, (the workers again) as the warp is not timed but really leading. The lead gets into your food from the cooking utensils.

Painters, dyers, glass blowers, printers, electrical accumulator workers, etc., are all subject to lead poisoning. The effects of this poison is frightful, especially on women. The patient suffers from severe abdominal pains and vomiting. The pains are paroxysmal in character and are so severe that the patient writhes in agony. In the brain type of lead poisoning death may occur in two days after awful suffering; this is peculiar to women. Sir Oliver gives many figures to show the effects on expectant mothers. One woman had nine miscarriages in six years and no living child. Out of 123 pregnancies recorded by Paul Constantin, 64 ended in abortion, 4 were premature confinements, 5 were still births, and 20 of the infants born alive died in the first year. Blindness and paralysis are after effects, "wrist drop" paralyzes the hands and the patient is in a pitiful state. Insanity and acute mania marks some of the victims. The numerous figures relating to married women suffering from lead poisoning given by Sir Thomas Oliver show that not only is their home life destroyed, but their bodies are destroyed and their children are damned before they are born. The race suicide howling parsons are discreetly silent about these facts.

Another popular form of proletarian poisoning is arsenic. It is used in the curing of furs and also in wall papers. The wearing of furs is a crime little known among the toilers, but nearly every one sleeps in papered rooms. Scheele's green is the coloring which makes the arsenic dust in your room, which makes you have headaches, loss of appetite, mental irritability, depression and loss of flesh. The men who make this bellish green frequently have painful ulcers in their groin. It sets up eczema and creates a tendency to cancer, to say nothing of neuritis and paralysis.

Copper, zinc, and brass workers have their own evils to combat, such as "brass mouth" and "brass argue," which leads to hypochondriasis or extreme melancholy.

Blacksmiths and forgersmen suffer from "hammermen's paralysis", and heart disease is common among them. Longfellow's blacksmith with his brawny arms is a fake. Sir Oliver says "I have been struck by the feeble physique of many blacksmiths." He found them suffering from muscular hypertrophy, ruptured muscles, lumbago and anemia from the heat of the fire, and in consequence of the carbon and iron dust, blocking the pores of the skin they suffer from eczema and boils. Boilermakers are notoriously deaf.

It may seem strange but none of our bourgeois poets ever get into an ecstasy about the ineffable sweetness and delicacy of the girls who work in the tin plate industry. They carry the plates from the sulphuric acid solution bath. "The girls are literally soaked through to the skin by the acid solution, which destroys their clothes. The fumes given off by the sulphuric acid are unpleasantly strong. The workpeople suffer from inflammatory affections of the eyes, accompanied by a discharge, dryness of the throat, nausea, and giddiness; the teeth become black in consequence of the fumes, and the hair falls off." It is not uncommon to find in the tin plate works of South Wales, girls carrying iron plates from 40 to 100 lbs. in weight. Not even the worst savages treated their girls anything like this.

This enumeration does not by any means exhaust the industrial ills. A future article must reveal other methods of murder, which, though possibly slow, are not the less sure and damnable. On every hand the health of the workers has been sacrificed in the profit-hunt for wealth. Even after science has provided them with safeguards they have objected on the score of expense. Now that they are finding that healthy workers produce more profit they are beginning to move in the matter. But be assured, ye slaves of the factory, that it is only because you will produce more—as the match manufacturers found out after adopting healthy methods—and not because they care for you. We know the history of the capitalist class with its horrors of the factory system for 150 years with its slaughter of the Communists in Paris, with its rubber slaves of the Congo and Putumayo, and its assassinations in Colorado, British Columbia, and Calumet.

No appeal to reason is possible with such a horde of savages. Only a united proletarian force can tread them into oblivion. Get class conscious and tireless for the revolution. Charity poison is worse than lead poison.

MILL WORKERS' THRIFT

I have just been having a chat with Mrs. Emily Belfield, of Ashton-under-Lyne, a cotton operative, who, with her husband, managed to save nearly \$35,000 out of very small wages.

Mrs. Belfield is nearly eighty, and although she is grey-haired, is a picture of heartiness and health. She has to wear glasses, and is slightly deaf, but otherwise quite vigorous. She told me how she had been able to save the money and give \$5,000 to Ashton Infirmary.

"It has been my hope," she said, "All through life not to have to work as long as I did my mother. She worked in the mill for sixty years.

"My husband never kept money in the house and I never do. He invested it at a good interest. He would lend some to men who were hard up, and trust to their promises."

Mrs. Belfield always kept records of her income and expenditure and never spent more in any week than she got by work. The books she kept show remarkable thrift.

A table of the money from 1864 to 1870 shows that she and her husband earned jointly \$3,500 and spent \$1,320, \$2,770 being invested. From 1871 to 1883 they earned jointly \$6,725 and spent \$2,645, investing \$3,980.

The above article was sent us by a Toronto Comrade in December last. He slipped in from the Evening Telegram and wanted our opinion on it. It did not look much to us then, but upon running across it recently, there is much comment to be made thereon.

The capitalist press work insidiously. They give false news. They color it as such a manager as to aid the master class.

In reading the clipping casually one would naturally say that if a worker and his wife could save \$35,000 on small wages, there is nothing wrong with the system. This discontent of the workers is created by useless agitators. Why do they not get busy and save money and become respectable?

Let us analyse the figures given and see what results. In the last paragraph is given the amount earned and the amount saved for the period running from 1864 to 1883; a period of nineteen years. In the first part they earned \$3,500 and in the second period they earned \$6,750, a total of \$10,250. This was for the sale of their combined labor power. Both worked. This is the wages for nineteen years, an average wage of \$540 per year for the two of them together. They earned together less than eleven dollars a week. The woman got probably \$4.50 per week and the man \$5.50.

No wonder the Telegram of Toronto publishes this news item. Here are slaves working for a beggarly wage, and they save on it. They save almost two-thirds of their wages, for we are told they spent during the nineteen years \$1,330 in the first period and \$2,645 in the second period, a total of \$3,975 during nineteen years. The two stinging, money-grubbing slaves lived on \$221 per year. For their clothes, food, shelter, sickness, gifts to the church, Christmas presents, etc., they spent no more than \$4.25 per week. They lived on \$2.124 per week each.

What good slaves they were to their masters! No matter how he pinched them, they would live on what he gave and save on it. They would live on the smell of an oil-rag and be happy because they were money-grubbing.

During the period of nineteen years they saved \$6,250, and the old woman and man saved \$35,000. In nineteen years \$6,250 were saved. In thirty-eight years \$12,500 would be saved at the same rate. To save \$25,000, or double the latter amount they must have worked double the time or seventy-six years. Add another nineteen years' savings of \$6,

\$250 to the above, and we get ninety-five years worked and \$31,250 saved. So to save the \$35,000 the old man and old woman must have worked for over one hundred years on \$2.124 per week each. This is the picture of thrift, fellow slaves, that the Telegram publishes for you to admire. If you and your wife will work like gosh-ell-hemlocks for over a hundred years and starve yourselves, deny yourselves the pleasure and anxiety of children in the home—commit race suicide, dress in sackings, and live in a shack a pig would turn up his nose at, you might die worth \$35,000. No need to kick, you slave. Just emulate these slaves your masters think so highly of.

But we find the slave is dead and the woman slave is only 81 years of age. Consequently, even if she worked from the day she was born, she could not have worked the hundred years. How did she save the money then?

Ah, here it is. "My husband never kept money in the house, and I never do. He invested it at GOOD INTEREST. He would lend some to men who were hard up."

Here were slaves who wanted to live like men, not like beasts. So the money grubbing pair would lend them a little money AT GOOD INTEREST. The old Shylock game. Usury.

Altogether, this old couple are not lovely to look at. They are unlovely like the system of greed that produced them.

This couple grubbing their lives away for the sake of a few thousand dollars gathered largely out of a hapless working class are an argument to do away with the system that makes possible such horrible wasted, mis-spent lives.

ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

Economic determinism is a wonderful discovery.

The knowledge that men's actions and morality are governed by the way they get their living was a revolutionary, epoch-making event.

Formerly history was written in terms of thought, in terms of the influence of big men, of great names. Napoleon did it. Alexander did it. Grant did it.

Now we know differently. We know that the so-called great men where the product of their ages. Given a Napoleon in a community of Quakers he would not have amounted to shucks. Put Gladstone in old Sparta and he would have been looked down upon as a pestilent, talkative nuisance.

The economic conditions shape men's thoughts and actions. The type that rises under one system of production is a nuisance or a criminal under another system.

Moreover, within any given system, men's outlook are shaped by their economic standing.

The plutocrats think plutocrats and plutocrats think plutocrats. The worker thinks worker thoughts and worker morality and worker religion.

The tenant looks upon the landlord as a gradering skinkfin. The landlord looks upon the tenant as an obstreperous nuisance who wants repairs and wants to beat the landlord out of the rent.

The Socialist, knowing the influence of economic determinism upon societies and upon classes within a particular society, is trebly armed in argument. He bursts through the foolish ignorance of the anti-Socialist. He knocks the hypocritical bubbles of the conventional moralist into invisible soft soap. He is a terror to the orthodox.

May the economic determinist grow mighty in the land, for through him is the salvation of the working class assured.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

Editor Cotton's Weekly—While it would be unwise to bar all discussion of religion I think Cotton's should use better discretion than it has shown in its treatment of this subject, under the heading, "The Function of Religion," in the issue of April 2nd.

I notice that Cotton's carefully avoids the advocacy of the ideas of anarchism; yet an anarchism is simply a consistent adherence to logic that pervades the article I refer to. The anarchist argues that the function of government is to uphold the capitalist system. We must, therefore, abolish government, whereupon the capitalists will be unable to exploit us, and we shall be free to live in accordance with natural law.

Although the article alluded to is guarded and obscure one can see that the same logic is implied; and I think the resulting junk is not good enough for a Socialist paper. It is not scientific. It is not politic. It is merely junk painted to look bright. The pieces are painted to resemble logic.

The truth as it appears to the average person is that the more aggressive individuals have instinctively subdued, utilized and adapted to their service every resource of nature and every natural phenomenon that experience has found available. Religion is a natural phenomenon which makes its appearance at the apex of the human evolution. Men on the lower planes (and the aggressive are on the lower planes) when they are confronted with this phenomenon interfering with their methods of exploiting; first attack it; and when they find it expanding under the action of their attack, they instinctively change their tactics, and begin to foster and mould to their own image the outward expression of this psychological phenomenon which is threatening to subvert their source of exploitation.

Religion controlled by the exploiting class is an opiate to soothe the wounds and still the minds of the victims and dupes of capitalism, just as government controlled by the exploiters is a club to subdue and exploit those who are not amenable to the former method.

The Socialist ideal is itself the revolted expression of all that essentially belongs to religion. Its materialistic aspect is but a reaction from the corrupting influence of capitalism in the guise of a mercenary priesthood dependent upon the goodwill of the plutocracy. Socialism has, in fact, only repudiated the image of God carried by the cringing slaves of Mammon. The true God, the Source from which the universe evolved, the ideal towards which we tend the Force by which we live and think, is surely more manifest in the Socialist movement than in the temples of the Misknowa, where capitalism is supreme.

And the altruistic Socialist who sacrifices position and friends if need be, for the sake of a larger friendship, more congenial conditions, and a more secure position in the dim and distant future, is but repeating the experience of the early followers of the galilean prophet and his adherents. They suffered ostracism and persecution for the sake of their ideals. They choose to be forsaken by their former friends rather than forsake what they knew to be the Truth.

Yet in the article you quote, the apocryphal exhortation of Jesus to his followers is by implication deprecated.

You give us a wordy and then complain so few read your paper.

C'est a r're—Comrade John Campbell, Lloydminster, Sask. . . .

That is the kind of word communication Cotton's is asked to please publish. If we do not publish it, it is thought we are afraid to meet the issue.

The article criticised was part of an address delivered by Matthew Stafford before the Chase River, B.C., Socialists. Stafford showed how ecclesiastics used religion to fight Socialism and how the capitalist exploiters gave largely to the support of the religious institutions so acting.

The article finished with a quotation showing how father, mother, etc., must be forsaken for Christ's sake, and showed how the saints illuded that the relatives under the authority of this passage. We published this in order to carry the war into Africa. We have had calamity howlers in the priest's robes shouting that Socialism would destroy the home. We showed how religion had destroyed the home.

John Campbell thinks we are in error. He takes us to task. And yet he gets nowhere with his criticism.

He calls the article in question anarchistic, and Cotton's does not support anarchism. Therefore, he reasons, Cotton's should not have published the article.

The article is not anarchistic. Showing the support religious bodies have given to the capitalist system is not anarchism. Arguing that questions of economics of politics, etc., must be faced without blinders is not anarchistic. Religion has been used in the past to hammer Socialism. It is being used now. It may be a false religion, nevertheless Socialism has been fought in the name of religion.

Campbell says that the anarchist argues that the function of government is to uphold the capitalist system. We must therefore abolish government. What does he think the Socialists argue if not this? Government is the political agent of the capitalist class. Government exists only where there are governed and governed. When we introduce economic justice, government as we know it will vanish. We capture the state to abolish it. Says Engels, "All Socialists are agreed that the State with its political authority will vanish as the result of the future social revolution; that is to say, that public functions will lose their political character and will be resolved into simple administrative functions supervising the social interests."

Other words the administration of things will replace the government of persons.

The multiplicity of personal laws will be abrogated, through desuetude. The economic stress which gave rise to these laws will be removed and man will live freely together without strife.

If Campbell will study the economic determinism which creates so many of our crimes, passions, jealousies, low actions, etc., he will see how wonderful a change the overthrow of a slave society will make in men's conduct. The vision of the anarchist of a society without need of law will be realized.

If you will notice, Cotton's keeps clear of the question of ultimate materialism.

Science has not proved the future life. Science has not disproved the future life. Science has not proved the existence of God. Science has not disproved the existence of God.

If a Comrade comes to the movement knowing there is a class struggle on in society and knowing it is necessary to abolish capitalism he is welcome to the fight.

It does not make a bit of difference whether he holds with Haeckel the theory of material monism, or whether he holds with Lodge the theory of the spirit world.

It does not matter whether he is a Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or atheist. He is welcome.

There is pressure put upon Cotton's to publish materialistic articles. We turn them down. There is pressure put upon us to publish articles to show that it is God's plan that the Socialists triumph. We turn them down.

We occasionally give space to an article showing the attitude of religious organizations

JUSTICE

We want justice, working class justice. We want the wealth producers to enjoy the wealth they have produced.

Capitalist justice is something entirely different. Capitalist justice says for the workers to work like a son of a gun for the owners of capital for a bare living wage each day the workers work. And when there is more work because the workers have done all the capitalists want done for the time being, the workers are free to starve.

Capitalist justice says that all the workers will not starve peacefully, but try to steal bread, or make a row, they are criminals and must go to jail.

The capitalists are passionately fond of capitalist justice. They have made the laws they like. But the intelligent worker does not like the capitalist made laws one little bit.

The intelligent workers are teaching the workers who have not yet reasoned out the matter for themselves. And pretty soon now the workers are going to capture the political power and make the laws which will give working class justice.

We do not need to bullyrag or stamp or shout loudly. We can go about calmly at this rate which faces mankind now. We will let the fatbellyd plutocrats and the soft-handed labor skimmers wax vehement.

The revolution is at hand; let us joyously hasten it on.

WHO PAYS THE WAGES

If you are paid by an employer, have you not got to do what that employer tells you to? Sure you have. If he wants you to sing him a song, or dig a ditch you have to do it at you are told, otherwise out of the job you go.

If you are a newspaper man, you must write the stuff your employer wants written. Otherwise you join the unemployed.

If you are a preacherman, you must preach what those who anti up the spindulicks for your salary want preached.

Churches cost money. Pipe organs cost money. A religious plant known as a church is an expensive thing to run.

Consequently those who pay the salaries and expenses have the say as to what kind of religion the religion plant turns out.

If the preacher preaches what he wants to and what he wants to preach is not what the masters of bread want preached, the minister gets the sack. He has to hunt another job.

Wherefore, when we see churches housing the fat bodies of the labor skimmers; when we see the fat bills dropping from the hands of the plutons on the collection plate we may rest assured that that plant is working overtime in the interests of the labor skimmers against the working class.

Be not troubled, brothers, when ye hear of the Rev. Mr. Soundingboard thundering against Socialism and the iniquities of them who agitate the wage slaves for his windpipe and his vocal organs have been purchased by the gentlemen who feed his belly.

ions opposing Socialism using the opiate of blind belief to accomplish the trick.

We occasionally give space to an article dealing with Christianity as an historical force in some aspects in favor of the common people.

But upon the fundamental question of God and the future life, of whether the ultimate interpretation of the universe is in terms of matter or in terms of spirit, we have nothing to say.

Our work as a political, agitatorial and educational organ is to rouse the working class here and now to overthrow capitalism.

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