

The Proletariat

Wages.

WAGES can never rise so high as to make it impossible for the capitalist to carry on his business and to live from the profits of it; under such circumstances it would be more profitable for the capitalist to give up his business. Consequently, the wages of the working-man can never rise high enough to equal the value of his product. They must always be below that, so as to leave a surplus; it is only the prospect of a surplus that moves the capitalist to purchase labor power. It is therefore evident that under the capitalist system the wages of the workmen can never rise high enough to put an end to the exploitation of labor.

The surplus which the capitalist class appropriates is larger than is usually imagined. It covers not only the profits of the manufacturer, but many other items that are usually credited to the cost of production and exchange. It covers, for instance, rent, interest on loans, salaries, merchant's profits, taxes, etc. All these have to be subtracted from the surplus, that is, the excess of the value of the product over the wages of the working-man. It is evident that this surplus must be a considerable one if a concern is to "pay." It is clear that the wages of the working-man can not rise high enough to be even approximately equal to the value of his profit. The capitalist system means under all circumstances the exploitation of the wage-workers. It is impossible to abolish this exploitation without abolishing the system itself. And the exploitation must be great even where wages are high.

But wages rarely reach the highest point which even these circumstances would permit; more often they are found to be nearer to the lowest possible point. This point is reached when the wages do not supply the workman with even the barest necessities. When the workman not only starves, but starves rapidly, all work is at an end.

The wages swing between these two extremes. The less the necessities of the workman, the larger the supply of labor on the market, and the slighter the capacity of the working-man for resistance, the lower wages sink.

In general, wages must be high enough to keep the working-man in a condition to work, or, to speak more accurately, they must be high enough to secure to the capitalist the measure of labor-power which he needs. In other words, wages must be high enough, not only to keep the working-men in a condition to work, but also in a condition to produce children to replace them.

Now industrial development exhibits a tendency, most pleasing to the capitalist, to lower the necessities of the working-man and to decrease his wages in proportion.

There was a time when skill and strength were requisites for a working-man. The period of apprenticeship was long, the cost of training considerable. Now, however, the progress made in the division of labor and the introduction of machinery render skill and strength in production more and more superfluous; they

make it possible to substitute unskilled and cheap workmen for skilled ones; and, consequently, to put weak women and even children in the place of men. In the early stages of manufacturing this tendency is already perceptible; but not until machinery is introduced into production do we find the wholesale exploitation of women and children—the most helpless among the helpless.

Originally, the wage-earner had to earn wages high enough to defray, not only his own expenses, but also those of his family, in order to enable him to propagate himself and to bequeath his labor power to others. Without this process the heirs of the capitalists would find no proletarians ready made for exploitation.

When, however, the wife and young children of the working-man are able to take care of themselves, the wages of the male worker can safely be reduced to the level of his own personal needs without the risk of stopping the fresh supply of labor-power.

The labor of women and children, moreover, affords the additional advantage that these are less capable of resistance than men; and their introduction into the ranks of the workers increases tremendously the quantity of labor that is offered for sale in the market.

Accordingly, the labor of women and children not only lowers the necessities of the working-man, it also diminishes his capacity for resistance in that it overstocks the market; owing to both these circumstances it lowers the wages of the working-man.

Dissolution of the Proletarian Family.

The participation of women in industrial pursuits means the total destruction of the family life of the working-man without substituting for it a higher form of the family relation. The capitalist system of production does not in most cases destroy the single household of the working-man, but robs it of all but its unpleasant features. The activity of woman today in industrial pursuits does not mean to her freedom from household duties; it means an increase of her former burdens by a new one. But one can not serve two masters. The household of the working-man suffers whenever his wife must help to earn the daily bread. Present society offers, in the place of the individual household which it destroys, only miserable substitutes; soup-houses and day-nurseries, where crumbs of the physical and mental sustenance of the rich are cast to the lower classes.

Socialists are charged with an intent to abolish the family. We do know that every system of production has had a special form of household to which corresponds a special system of family relationship. We do not consider the existing form of the family the highest possible, and we do expect that a new and improved social system will develop a new and higher form of family relationship, them right under our eyes—are not. But to hold this view is a very different thing from trying to dissolve all family bonds. Those who do destroy the family bonds—who not only mean to, but actually do destroy the Socialists, but the capitalists.

Many a slave-holder has in former times torn husband from wife and parents from children, but the capitalists have improved upon the abominations of slavery; they tear the infant from the breast of its mother and compel her to entrust it to strangers' hands. And yet a society in which hundreds of thousands of such instances are a daily occurrence, a society whose upper classes promote "benevolent" institutions for the purpose of making easy the separation of the mothers from their babies, such a society has the effrontery to accuse the Socialists of trying to abolish the family, because they, basing their opinion on the fact that the family has ever been one of the reflexes of the system of production, foresee that further changes in that system must also result in a more perfect family relationship.

Prostitution.

Hand in hand with the accusation on the subject of family bonds goes the charge that Socialists aim at a community of wives. This charge is as false as the other. Socialists, on the contrary, maintain that ideal love, just the reverse of a community of wives and of all sexual oppression and license, will be the foundation of matrimonial connections in a Socialist Commonwealth, and that pure love can prevail only in such a social system. What, on the other hand, do we see today?

Helpless women, forced to earn their living in factories, shop and mines, fall a prey to capitalist cupidity. The capitalist takes advantage of their inexperience, offers them wages too slight for their support, and hints at, or even brazenly suggests, prostitution as a means of supplementing their income. Everywhere the increase of female labor in industry is accompanied by an increase in prostitution. In the modern state where Christianity is so devoutly preached, many a thriving branch of industry is found where working-women are paid so poorly that they would be compelled to starve did they not prostitute themselves. And the capitalists declare that the ability to compete, the prosperity of their industry, depend upon these low wages. Higher wages would ruin them.

Prostitution is as old as the contrast between rich and poor. At one time, however, prostitutes were a middle class between beggars and thieves; they were then an article of luxury in which society indulged but the loss of which would in no way have endangered its existence. Today, however, it is no longer the females of the slums, alone, but working-women, who are compelled to sell their bodies for money. This latter sale is no longer simply a matter of luxury; it has become one of the foundations upon which production is carried on. Under the capitalist system prostitution becomes a pillar of society. What the defenders of this social system falsely charge Socialists with is the very thing they are guilty of themselves. Community of wives is a feature of capitalism. Indeed, such a deep root has this system of community of wives taken in modern society that its representatives agree in declaring prostitution to be a necessary thing. They can not understand that the abolition of the proletariat implies the abolition of prostitution. So deep are they sunk in intellectual

IN THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

VICTORIA, Dec. 8.—Holding that unless wooden shipbuilding is resumed in Victoria in the immediate future, serious trouble may result in an outgrowth of the unemployment situation, a hurriedly summoned conference in the City Hall on Saturday authorized Mayor Porter to wire Sir Robert Borden explaining conditions.

Following is the text of the mayor's message:

"Unemployment situation very critical. Work required at once or trouble likely to occur. High cost of living making situation worse, wooden shipbuilding only thing that will relieve situation. Cost of building would likely be less than cost of preserving order would be. Sir Henry Drayton, when here, led us to believe that government would let contracts for five steamers and three schooners. Any announcement yet as to when preliminary work on drydock will commence?"

(Signed) R. J. PORTER,
Mayor.

The following by Kautsky is quoted here to point the moral to the above, not in any flaunting spirit, but to convey necessary understanding:

Technical development moves on at a constantly increasing pace and steadily extends its field of operations.

To the capitalist this reserve army is invaluable. It places in his hands a powerful weapon with which to curb the army of the employed. After excessive work on the part of some has produced lack of work for others, then the idleness of these is used as a means to keep up, and even increase, the excessive work of the former. And yet there are people who will contend that matters are today arranged in the best possible way!

Although the size of the industrial reserve army rises and falls with the ups and downs of business, nevertheless, on the whole it shows a steady tendency to increase. This is inevitable. The technical development moves on at a constantly increasing pace and steadily extends its field of operations, while, on the other hand, the extension of the markets is hemmed in by natural limits.

What, then, is the full significance of lack of work? It signifies not only want and misery to the unemployed, not only intensified servitude and exploitation to the employed; it signifies also uncertainty of livelihood for the whole working class. Whatever hardships former modes of exploitation inflicted upon the exploited, one boon was left them: the certainty of a livelihood. The sustenance of the serf and the slave was assured at least during the life of the master himself. Only when the master perished was the life of his dependents in peril. Whatever

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stagnation that they can not conceive a social system without community of wives.

Community of wives is an invention of the upper classes of society, never of the proletariat. The community of wives is one of the modes of exploiting the proletariat; it is not Socialism, it is the exact opposite of Socialism.