

Ten Minutes' Talk With the Workers

(From the Glasgow "Socialist.")

Wage Slavery and Real Progress.

IT is quite common nowadays to talk about our class as wage-slaves. But for some reason or other our present day masters or employers don't like to hear it. They are evidently afraid lest it should bring home to you just exactly what your status or place in society really is. Yet there probably could not be found in the English language two words capable of expressing our social standing in such an apt and concrete manner.

Why the Term Wage-slave?

There was a time, indeed, when we could leave one employer and go to another—although even that privilege is curtailed now with the week's notice—but never since we became dependent on an employer could we leave the whole employing class without risking starvation. It is this state of affairs due to our class privileged arrangement of things which has given rise to the term wage-slave. But do not on that account feel ashamed of yourself. It is only shallow-pated snobs who decorate themselves in tinsel and try to deceive their fellows that they are not wage-slaves. Such pretentiousness, however, doesn't carry them very far, since nearly every worker is a walking hall-mark of the occupation he or she follows, as witness, for instance, the gait of a miner or the twisted shoulders of a dressmaker, etc.

Chattel-slavery and Wage-slavery.

Were you to compare the status of our class today with the position of our fellows in other periods of history, you would find we had not very much to brag about. Of course, we could not with accuracy be classed as chattel-slaves or, say, serfs as the terms are used in historical works. But while it is true that we are distinguished from these by the badge of citizenship—at least a majority of our class are; while it is also true that we are permitted to combine and possess a big margin of freedom to express our views in the press or in the public market place,

it is now common knowledge that there is not so much an absolute or unquestioned right about such things as a tactical toleration by the ruling class. This is evident in all periods of crisis, and was very pronounced during the recent war.

But from the point of view of economic freedom the slave and the serf had advantages which we—the modern wage-slaves—might very well envy. They were not haunted by the bugbear of unemployment such as you and I. If they fell sick they were not left to the soulless mercy of a panel doctor. Nor had they to spend three-fourths of their life struggling to maintain large insurance companies that they might ride to their graves in a well-polished carriage and pair as we do today.

How Differences Are Obscured.

All the comparative differences between us—the wage-slaves—and the chattel-slaves are obscured by the wages system. Whereas the relation of the chattel-slave to his master or the serf to his lord was as clear as daylight, the relation of the modern wage-slave to his employer is hidden, thanks to his means of subsistence being compounded and expressed in money.

It may not have struck you before that in the last analysis and from the standpoint of our class relationship the wages system covers up a multitude of sins. It transfers, for instance, the responsibility for maintaining the wage-slaves from the shoulders of the master on to the slave himself. By cunning, trickery and deceit, backed up by the power which their control over the means of wealth production gives them, the employing class always make it their business to ensure that the wage-slaves—that is, you and I—only get as much as keeps us going on from day to day as workers. That is why you witness such apparent pig-headedness on the part of your employers when you strike, even for a farthing an hour.

How Real Wages Are Determined.

It is well, therefore, that you should have no

doubts in your mind as to what your wages represent. There is, as you are aware, a difference between nominal, or the money form of your wages, and your real wages, i.e., what you can get for your money. Your real wage is akin to the cost of production of all other commodities. Just as the value of all the elements contained, say, in this paper go to make up the cost of its production, and may be expressed in its natural price as distinguished from its market price, so in the same way the cost of food, clothing, housing, education, recreation, etc., not only for the worker, but for his wife and family, may be reckoned up and expressed in a figure—his real wage—as distinguished from the number of coins which he actually gets. This latter difference is continually varying, but you would do well to keep your eyes steadily fixed not so much upon the coins you get as on their purchasing power, which may be taken as a definition of real wages.

Towards Real Progress.

While it is true that our social conveniences, and, therefore, outlook, are greater and wider than they were to our fore-fathers a century ago; admitted that with sanitary equipment, facilities for travel, education and sport our present day life is fuller than the life of our village forbears, but contrasted with the possibilities that are at hand for improvement even on these, it is more than ever necessary to make a bid for change.

The social appetites of our forefathers had to be adjusted to the possibilities of the age they lived in. That is why progress has been made. We should not be worthy of their inheritance if instead of aspiring to the possibilities of our age, we were to do nothing because, forsooth, we believed we were better off than they.

It is in the determination to satisfy our wants, and not in their suppression, lies the way towards real progress. Hence the need for paying attention to real wages pending the abolition of the wages system.

T. B.

EUGENE V. DEBS.

(Liberator)

Eugene Debs was transferred from the West Virginia prison to which he was sentenced, and sent to the Atlanta penitentiary. It happened just as the hot weather of summer began to make the Atlanta penitentiary unbearable. In the West Virginia prison Debs had been given light work and comparatively decent quarters. His health was defended, and his age and the elevation of his motives were respected by those delegated to hold him in confinement. In the Atlanta penitentiary Debs is treated as a common criminal. He goes to work in the clothing department at 8 o'clock in the morning and works until noon. One hour is allowed for dinner, and at one o'clock he returns to the shop and works until 3.45. Twenty minutes is then allowed for outdoor recreation. Supper follows, and at 5 o'clock he is locked in his cell, and stays there until seven o'clock the next morning—fourteen consecutive hours.

This is the reward which our American republic gives to her most noble citizen—the man of whom a renowned scientist, Alfred Wallace, said, "Eugene V. Debs is a great man;" of whom a renowned poet, James Whitcomb Riley, said "God was feeling mighty good when he created Gene Debs;" the man whom the convention of the western railroad unions last winter applauded as the representative of American freedom. His lot under our government is to die in penal servitude.

The motive of the ruling class in transferring Debs to this place of more effectual torture, may be inferred from a laconic remark of Attorney-general Palmer to a newspaper reporter who had spoken of Debs' refusal to accept a pardon which did not include general amnesty for all political

prisoners: "He may change his mind."

Debs will not change his mind, and there is only one way to save his life and bring him back to the ranks of his fellow-citizens who love him. We must compel a general amnesty for all. That is the task which his true revolutionary attitude has placed upon the workers. It is the rallying point of the social-revolution.

WAR BY STARVATION.

The Blockade and American Exports to Russia.

(From "Soviet Russia," August 9.)

The latest issue of the Monthly Summary of Foreign Commerce of the United States contains very significant figures bearing upon the effect of the blockade of Russia on the American export trade. The exports from the United States to Russia in Europe for the eleven months ending May 31, 1917, 1918, 1919 respectively, compared as follows:

Year	Value
1917	\$397,568,911
1918	116,705,346
1919	7,150,994

Although Siberia was not included in the blockade, nevertheless the blockade of European Russia and the operations of Kolchak and his allies and associates have had the same effect upon exports from the United States to Russia in Asia as that disclosed by the preceding figures. The exports from the United States to Russia in Asia for the eleven months ending May 31, 1917, 1918, 1919 respectively, compare as follows:

Year	Value
1917	\$126,744,173
1918	34,718,541
1919	30,217,166

LABOR FEDERATION COUNCIL MEETINGS.

WASHINGTON, District of Columbia.—Among leaders of organized Labor in Washington to attend meetings of the executive council of the American Federation of Labor, which will begin this morning at 10 o'clock and continue for a week or more, the opinion is expressed generally that the decisions to be reached will be the most momentous in the history of the movement in the United States.

The Plumb plan for the nationalization of the railroads will be another major subject before the executive council of the federation. It is believed that by the time the council finishes its sessions a definite program for organized Labor will be formulated, as regards not only the railroads, but the steel and iron and other industries. Frank Morrison, secretary of the federation, said yesterday that all questions affecting organized Labor would come before the council.

HE MEANT CAPITALIST CONQUEST.

An "Insult To Muslims."

The Muslim congregation in London, assembled for Friday prayers at 111 Campden Hill road, unanimously passed a resolution indignantly protesting against the Prime Minister's description of General Allenby's campaign in Palestine as a crusade for Christian conquest of territories which have long been Muslim. That description they consider as an insult to our Muslim soldiers who assisted in that conquest and the Muslim allies whose adherence made it possible.

Newsagents in Vancouver for the Red Flag.—W. Love, Hastings street, next to Royal Theatre. Columbia News Agency, corner Hastings and Columbia. John Green, Carrall street, near Water street.