

WAGE-LABOR AND CAPITAL

WHAT ARE WAGES, AND HOW ARE THEY DETERMINED?

If we were to ask the laborers "How much wages do you get?" one would reply, "I get a couple of shillings a day from my employer"; another, "I get half-a-crown" and so on. According to the different trades to which they belong they would name different sums of money which they receive from their particular employers, either for working for a certain length of time or for performing a certain piece of work; for example, either for weaving a yard of cloth, or for setting up a certain amount of type. But in spite of this difference in their statements there is one point in which they would all agree; their wages are the amount of money which their employer pays them, either for working a certain length of time or for a certain amount of work done.

note Thus their employer, it would seem, buys their labor for money. For money they *sell* their labor to him. But this is mere appearance. What they really sell to the employer for money is their labor-power. This labor-power the employer buys for a day, week, month, etc. And having bought it, he uses it by making the laborer work during a stipulated period of time. With the same sum