

power thus placed in the hands of the owners enable them to exploit the workers. The average worker must toil for wages and be exploited—or quit work and starve.

Wage-Slavery.

Let us say, however, that this particular system—wage-slavery—is a more dangerous, subtle and misleading form than any other that has preceded it. The peculiarity of this system is that the modern worker is apparently not a slave. This is due to the much-vaunted freedom of contract of which we hear so much. Freedom of contract means that the modern wage-worker is not by law bound to any particular unit or section of the present owning class. However, since the whole of the means of life at the present time (natural resources, machinery, etc.), are in the hands of the capitalist class, it appears to us that this much-vaunted freedom of contract must be regarded merely as a joke—a somewhat grim and unpleasant one for the worker, indeed—and cannot be taken seriously. The modern wage worker is in substantially the same position as the slave workers which have preceded him—divorced from the means of life—with the exception of that, whereas, the chattel slave was bound to a definite master and the feudal serfs tied to a certain piece of land, we have no fixed owner, but are given the doubtful privilege of, at times, changing our masters. It may be said, in objection to this position, that the modern worker receives wages, and is therefore “free.” This, however, is beside the case. The chattel slave received wages also (using the term roughly) in the shape of his keep, and, upon analysis, we find that the money wage of to-day is merely the monetary expression of our “keep.” Indeed, the position of the modern worker is