

stomachs attached. The serf was not only freed from the land, he was driven off it by the closing in of the commons and by other measures. The freeing of the serfs was no humanitarian measure. Greed and greed alone was its inspiring motive.

The New Slavery.

The conditions of the new form of slavery that has taken the place of serfdom and now is the form prevailing throughout the "civilized" world, are somewhat different from the old.

As has been pointed out before, the essence of enslavement is that one man should be compelled to work for others and surrender to them the product of his toil. Wage-slavery, the present form of servitude, fulfills this condition exactly as much as did chattel slavery or serfdom. The workers of today have not an atom of claim upon the wealth they produce, that is sufficiently self-evident to call for no proof. And while they may not be actually compelled to work for any given master, they must work for some master. They are therefore slaves in the proper sense of the word. And, indeed, the conditions of their servitude are in the main more severe than they were under the previous forms of slavery. They are exploited of more wealth, that is to say the masters obtain from their labor greater returns than did the masters under any other form of slavery. In fact were it not so the other forms would be now in existence. But no feudal serf or chattel slave can compete with the modern wage slave at slaving. Moreover, while in favored trades and in favored localities, the modern worker may lead a more or less tolerable existence, the misery and suffering prevailing in populous centres today are undeniably worse than could have been an existence under the old forms of slavery at their worst, for the reason that the masters of old were to a certain extent interested in the welfare of their slaves, having, directly or indirectly, a property interest in them. The modern master on the other hand has no such interest in his slaves. He neither purchases nor owns them. He merely buys so much labor-power, physical energy, just as he buys electric power for his plant. The worker represents to him merely a machine capable of developing a given quantity of labor power. When he does not need labor-power he simply refrains from buying any.

Wage slavery is the most satisfactory form of slavery that has ever come into existence, from the point of view of the masters. It gives them all the slaves they require, and relieves them of all responsibility in the matter of their housing, feeding and clothing.