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## The Slave of The Farm

It has been said knowledge is power, knowledge is the key to happiness, the step-ladder to peace and pleasant living. Humanity through long ages of blind groping, has accumulated a vast store of useful knowledge, which has greatly helped to make things easier for a small proportion of the earth's population. Science, bond slave of capitalism, has searched the heavens, tunneled the earth, linked continent to continent, bound humanity closer together so that men may speak to each other across a thousand miles of ocean, has performed what fifty years ago would be deemed impossible—to what end?

One would think that all these wonderful discoveries would tend to make life easier for all humanity. Alas, it is not so! Science has so improved our methods of production that the working section of mankind are enabled to produce so vast a mountain of wealth, has given them such power over natural resources, that the master class, to whom the wealth belongs, is certainly the richest body of slave owners this old earth has ever seen. The modern captain of industry is by comparison with any of the great Roman nobles as the Bank of Montreal is to a child's money-box. Millionaires are as common today as were barons

in mediaeval England and a hundred times more wealthy. And the class who produces all this—the working class—what of them? Ah! that is another story. Theirs is the meagre life, the starving diet, the wretched hovel, pauperism and an early grave. On them as a class is showered a poverty as great, a misery as wretched, by comparison, as is the wealth of the masters.

It is often asked, why should this be? Pleasant ideas are put forward ever and anon by well intentioned people (usually of the non-producing class), by which the problem of poverty is to be solved and humanity live happily ever after. Government bread factories, elevators, stores, etc., single tax, local option, and a hundred other absurdities. They ask that the state shall look after babies, shall establish depots for the distribution of free breakfasts, etc., forgetful or ignorant of the fact that the state, hard, unyielding, merciless, exists for one purpose only, to dupe and exploit the working class.

The solution of the poverty problem is to be found in none of these; its solution is dependent upon the working class gaining one thing, that thing is knowledge. For the working class must work out its own salvation, must be its own leader, must, if the future is to be better than the past or present, take upon its own shoulders the burden of emancipating itself.

Science has done great things. Upon all fields of research save one, it has pursued sane and reasoning methods, rolling back, step by step, the powers of reaction and ignorance arrayed against it, until at last opposition has broken down before its triumphant march and forward it goes to yet more wonderful results. Save one? Yes, one branch of science has been steadily suppressed. That branch is economics, an examination into the methods by which the world's wealth is produced. Every now and then someone has taken a peep into this subject and apparently alarmed by what they found, slammed tight the doors of knowledge,

shut out for ever from their minds, reason and logic, bandaged their mental vision and devoted the rest of their lives to the art of scientific misstatement and obscurity. There has been however, a few men brave enough to tell the truth, and foremost amongst these stand Marx and Engels, whose message of hope is already the inspiration of a gigantic army of workers, an army whose ranks are swelling every day, for Marx' message is for the working class alone. To understand Marx is to be a revolutionist, to have done with petty reform and palliation, to cease pruning rotten fruit from off a tree that can produce none other, and to work to the end that the tree may be cut down and the roots burnt, in a word, to abolish for ever this system under which we now live, and establish a better one.

It is for the spreading of the necessary knowledge amongst our own class that the Socialist Party of the World exists, the S. P. of C., therefore, place this pamphlet in your hands with the hope that the subject matter will help to place your feet upon the first rungs of the ladder of economic truth, a ladder we all must climb as high as we can.

In this great West, prosperity, like a guardian angel, is supposed to dwell. Here is great wealth in grain, in fat herds of beeves, in chubby, short faced, "lean singers," in fruit, vegetables and all manner of lesser farm produce. Truly a fat land and of course its inhabitants are well off; jolly, contented farmers. At least so say the immigration pamphlets and capitalist newspapers.

The farmer knows, however, that things are not always what they seem, and that the much talked of prosperity is for someone else, certainly not for him, and so, as if in direct contradiction to the lurid stories of real estate sharks, burst out every now and then spasmodic attempts at organization for self-protection. These organizations come and go like sun and rain in April, and of course accomplish nothing. Farmers' alliances,

equity societies, sons of equity, and, last child of misinformation, the Grain Growers' Association, of which more anon. Suffice it to say here that these efforts are certainly not the outcome of prosperity, rather of poverty. Organizations of the above sort are the effects of economic pressure, traceable to a direct cause, and the results which the G. G. A. and others of its kind seek to obtain can only be reached in one way, and that way is not theirs, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that just exactly what they do seek to gain—a rise in wages—they are ignorant of, and up-to-date seem likely to remain so.

Perhaps it would at this point be advisable to reassure the farm-slave organizations that there is no danger of the S. P. of C. trying to amalgamate with any one of them; the S. P. of C. deals with and seeks to abolish the cause of poverty and refuses to fritter away valuable time and money skirmishing with poverty-effects. From which it would appear that we are so far from seeking an amalgamation with any farm-slave organization as to absolutely refuse to discuss the subject with them. Capitalism has so far advanced as to render trade unions in farm or factory, powerless, and the time is now at hand when you must choose between industrial slavery a hundred times worse than it is today, or Socialism. Yes, repulsive as Socialism is to some of you slaves today, tomorrow you will accept it. Not because you think it is alright, not because "you don't mind if you do, just to oblige," not because it is a noble idea and a righteous thing, but simply because you must. Remember that it is the aching void in the stomach of the slave, it is the pinch of winter upon his skinny frame, that is the propelling force of this movement, and thus as conditions grow, as they must, steadily worse, so will the Socialist movement, the political expression of the slaves' discontent, grow stronger until one day, not far distant, victory shall be ours, and once and for all shall the slaves abolish slavery.

To speak of slaves will sound odd to the unthinking, yet a little reflection will easily prove that the worst form of slavery is with us today—aye, even in this twentieth century.

One of the most deeply rooted ideas amongst us today is the strange notion that the farmer is the foremost man in modern production, and as such is entitled to special favors; that but for him all the world would perish, etc., etc., and, as nearly all the farm-slave organizations are built upon this notion, it behooves us to see just how much truth there is in this claim.

There was a time many years ago when farming was the foremost occupation, and it is because of this habit common to humanity of "thinking," if we may put it that way, in the past and living in the present, that old ideas linger on amongst us.

The cultivation of the soil is, after hunting and herding, perhaps the oldest of human pursuits. With its coming slavery was born, for, look you, hunting is a very precarious job at the best, and the hunter, were he dependent upon his gun alone, would oftimes go hungry; game will become scarce and no skill upon the hunter's part can make it otherwise. In these primitive times it must have been very unstable indeed, and starvation was no doubt often the lot of a people dependent upon the spoils of the chase, varied with roots and nuts.

Hence only sufficient food for the tribe was obtainable, and that by the exertions of "all hands." And, again, a captive of war would hardly be the man to send out hunting, for obvious reasons. The village herdsman would also of necessity be of the tribe, and trustworthy. But when some wiseacre scratched the soil and found that certain grasses flourished exceedingly thereon, it was not long before prisoners of war were discovered to have a use value, and so they were set to work instead of being killed as heretofore; for it was possible,

by this new method of getting the social living, for one man to produce enough for himself and some over.

In those bad old times the passion for toil which disgraces modern man, could not have been very strongly developed, and the prisoners, used to a free life, naturally resented being presented with the primitive hoe and compelled to wield it. A bolt was therefore always likely, and the captors were compelled to place armed guards to watch the workers and keep them busy. They were in consequence slaves, for mark this carefully—he who must work at the command of another is a slave. He who must go to another and beg for permission to live is a slave. He who must deliver up the fruits of his toil to another is also a slave; and the modern farm worker is according to his own lights a free man.

We shall not dally with primitive life, however, it is sufficient for our purpose that the cultivation of the soil produced slavery. Later on in the classic period slavery and farming were still hand in hand and the historian Gibbon tells of the immense wealth produced upon the fertile plains of the Roman provinces for the use of the then master class.

Another turn in the wheel of social evolution and the slave has changed his name; he is now a serf, bound to the soil. Now he labors three days for himself and three for his master, resting upon the numerous holy days. It seems, owing to primitive methods then in vogue, to have taken that time for him to produce enough to keep himself alive, hence the apparently generous conduct upon the master's part. For observe, the slave's portion has always been just enough of his product to keep him in working order. Why should it be otherwise?

Social evolution proceeds slowly but is very sure. While yet the established order of things seem strong as ever, another form of society is in the making and will presently burst through and

overturn the old order, just as a moth or butterfly burst the walls of its chrysalis, or a chicken the shell which imprisons it, usually with a struggle, you remark. So we find from chattel slavery through serfdom to wage slavery has been the lot of the working class, and ever they have done the work and the masters reaped the produce.

Now up to the age of feudalism the cultivation of the soil certainly held prime place in world's work. Great lords counted their wealth in hides, in cattle and in corn, and the trades such as they were, sheltered under the lee of farming and were tributary to it. But the new form was forming inside the old, and soon the tradesmen gathered into towns and became, as commerce grew, very strong; presently reaching out for political power. And so we find them today masters above all—the capitalists.

It is not our purpose to follow the development of capitalism closely; all we need remark is that as soon as the manufacturing interests gained enough power they freed the serfs from the land and called them into the towns, to compete with each other as wage slaves. Now a period of frantic expansion set in, the towns grew in wealth and power as the rural nobility grew poorer. All interest was centered upon manufacturing pursuits, and the farm was steadily thrust into the background. The feudal lords holding political power were enabled to hold things in check for a time, but the young and vigorous capitalism soon became paramount and won in the end.

So backward were things upon the land that as late as 1750 the old three-field system of farming was in vogue, and it was not until the discovery by Jethro Tull and Lord "Turnip" Townshend of intensive farming that agriculture came under the heel of capitalism. In Europe the feudal lords still hold their ground, but here upon this continent capitalism has free play and none to say it nay. Cyrus McCormick, Appleby and others, by their improvement of farm machinery, have

made the modern farm slave a 100 times more productive than the old serf or chattel slave; yet since they cannot farm without their fellows' help it follows that they are entitled to no more consideration than the rest of their class. All are dependent upon each other, and to treat farmers as a class is rubbish.

Thus farming from being the foremost pursuit of the workers, has been brought by the power of capitalism upon an equal footing with the rest of production, and, because capitalism is a slave system, all the workers under its sway are slaves, for they are forced to give up the fruit of their toil under pressure. Yes, even our independent farmers. Modern production is social production, and, as a matter of fact, when you, good homesteader, are digging out willow roots with a mattock, it really is society doing it, although it must be admitted the pain in the back is all yours. Social production we have today; let us take a brief look into its workings.

We have seen that modern methods of production seem to have forced agriculture into the background and given more prominence to the industrial or manufacturing pursuits, and, indeed, it would seem that capitalism thrives at the expense of farming. Be that as it may, in order to understand the farmer's position exactly, we must take a short survey of modern production.

Old-time methods of production were of an individualistic nature. One man or a number made goods, say, boots, armour, or clothing, in order to exchange them for other things they needed. Thus the shoemaker would exchange with the miller or tailor, shoes for flour or clothing. This of course was many years ago, before money or a medium of exchange was generally used. Gradually this changed until we find ourselves living in the age of absolute social production. Each and every member of the working class (and no other) adds his quota to the general stock, incorporates his labour-power into the stream of production as it



passes him; not producing anything in particular but helping to produce all things that are produced. There is no man today who can say, I have produced this wheat, these boots, this binder, these potatoes, for society alone is capable of producing them.

It is this all important fact that the farmer finds hardest to understand, owing, no doubt, to the isolated life he leads. The factory hand working alongside many mates sees that many others assist in producing the particular commodity they are working on, but the farmer very often works alone upon the land and so imagines that it is by his own efforts that wheat is produced.

Glance for a minute at your binder; in good working condition it is capable of cutting and binding grain, but take out the "bull wheel" or pitman rod and start them out to cut grain alone. Can it be done? No. Each part supplements the other and together, "bull wheel," pitman, knotter, tables and the thousand lesser parts make up the binder. So it is with society; take out any unit, say, just for example, the farmers; deprive them of any aid from the rest of humanity by removing their clothes, machinery and stopping their food supply, and start them out upon wild land to raise grain. They would be as hopeless as a plow without a share. Fancy them, stark naked and grubbing up the soil with their hands. Great success they would have, would they not? A fine time for them, living on wild berries and gophers and sleeping under trees or in caves. This would be a return to savage times, a thing impossible in a capitalist society and altogether undesirable. In order that wheat may be produced, binders, mowers, plows, harrows, in fact, all the machinery of agriculture must first be made, the farmer must be clothed, fed and housed, the railway men must transport them to the place where they are wanted. Before all this machinery can come into being the miners and loggers must dig the ore and cut down the lumber, and, since all these must be

fed, the farmer must produce grain for bread, this being unfortunately the staff of life for the working class. Once again, if the reader will excuse the painful repetition of this all-important fact, society produces a number of commodities, any individual man or woman, nothing.

Now let us see just what all other wage workers get for their share in production. Labour-power is a commodity, that is, a thing useful or ornamental, socially produced for the purpose of exchange, and labor-power is furthermore a man's vital energy. It is the active factor in production, but another factor is needed before anything can be produced, that is the passive factor, machinery and land. The passive factor is in the possession of the master class, hence the working class who own the other, active factor, must in order to live, gain permission to use this machinery of production. How is this brought about? Upon what terms do the masters allow the slaves access to the passive factor? Briefly these, that the working man sell his labor-power (the active factor) at the market price, and by so doing disclaim any interest in the resulting product.

We have said labor-power is a commodity and therefore falls under the law of value. There is a great deal of confusion in the lay mind as to how the value of a commodity is determined. Most people seem to think (when they think upon the matter at all) that it is the law of supply and demand which makes value in an article. Now to correctly understand value is to be enlightened as to the cause of present day distress amongst the workers. Farmers in particular should study this question, and they would soon quit fooling with labor unions.

Let us then suppose that two things are to be exchanged, a bushel of grain and a bale of binder twine. Placed together there would seem no way of determining their value. How to know what length of twine to give for 10 lbs. of wheat looks like a puzzle. No use to measure the twine and

then place grains of wheat end to end until you have them of equal length, or to try and measure their value in any manner but one. These two things have in them one common factor, and it is labor--human labor. Upon this basis then can they alone be measured, and so they are. Thus it comes about that the value of a commodity is determined by the labor time fixed therein. But as we have seen that no individual's labor-power makes a commodity entirely, and we are forced to admit that society as a whole is alone capable of doing so, therefore we must measure the value of a commodity by the socially necessary labor-time incorporated therein. If society can, next year, reduce the labor-time in the production of wheat, then its value will go down and no power on earth can stop it. Value however does not always tally with price; sometimes it is above, sometimes below value. Why is this? Price is determined in the first place by value, but is swayed by supply and demand; thus when supply is good, price falls; when, on the other hand, a commodity is scarce and demand brisk, the price rises. The process is very like a swing balance. The fluctuations of the market set the scales swinging, but they will always return to the horizontal--value. Thus it is that prices always hover around value and compensate each other.

We have said that the labor-power of the factory, mill or mine hand is a commodity and is therefore subject to the above laws of value and of the market, supply and demand, and that, furthermore, labor-power is all he has to sell. And once again (forgive the painful repetition), a commodity exchanges on the average at the socially essary labor required to produce it, therefore when the wage-slave sells his commodity he gets back just enough of this world's goods to sustain life and reproduce more labor-power.

This happens to all the social workers save the farmer, is what we usually hear from our friends; but does it? Is there any reason to suppose that

the farm-slave adding his quota of labor-power to the mass of production (and nothing else) gets any more than its value? We think not, but it is also objected that the farmer holds property and has an interest in the wheat he raises, and both these statements are true, as we shall see, although some Socialist propagandists are inclined to deny this.

First, then, let us look into the question of the farmer's property in this country. A few years ago when this West was opened up for settlement, the government loudly proclaimed that they were giving away free land upon which the overcrowded people of Europe might settle and live happy, contented lives. This looked like benevolence, but was simply business; for land has no value, despite the real estate boosters, and in order to get wealth out of this golden West one thing must be applied—human labor. The free homestead idea, then, was a ruse to coax this very necessary factor away from the older lands out upon the new. That it succeeded well the reader can see for himself. The government then gave, after three years' residence and work upon this land, a title to the homesteader in fee simple to 160 acres of land, and he became in theory an independent man. We have already seen that no person is independent, the farmer less than any, and we shall find that the title deed business is a rank bluff.

Who were these people who came in to settle the West? For the most part they were very poor men of the artisan class and the poorer peasantry of Europe. To start homesteading, money is needed, and this is obtained by selling one's labor-power for six months of the year and retiring to one's homestead for the remaining portion. At the end of three years this type of homesteader is ready to start farming, for he is then in possession of his deeds upon which he can raise the money to buy horses and machinery by handing them over to a mortgage company. Thus his

farm departs from him and he becomes a renter, goaded on to heroic exertions by the hope of getting the title back, which as a rule he never does.

So much for the very poor type; now for those who are able to go right ahead and break up a claim, retaining the title deeds and making a living. This type is very often pointed out as a refutation of the Socialist contention; he is referred to as an independent man. Now the writer readily grants that some farmers own their farms but would submit the following questions in all humility. Is it any benefit to a hungry man that he owns a pot in which a pudding has been boiled if someone else has stolen the duff? And is it not wisdom upon the thief's part if he is able to persuade the hungry one that the ownership of the pot and not the contents thereof is a most desirable thing, to do so? Certainly, and that is just why the farmer is so backward upon this very important point; he thinks the title deeds to a little land, which in reality are spurs to urge him to greater efforts, either to pay off a mortgage or keep it from creeping on, separate him from the rest of the workers; while the capitalist class calmly lift the produce of the farms, returning to the farm-slave enough to enable him to go on producing.

Which brings us to the second contention that the farm-slave has an interest in the grain he raises. This is certainly true and in this respect he is unlike his fellow slave of the city. The factory hand incorporates his labor-power in products and goes home on Saturday with his wages in his pocket. The farm-slave incorporates his labor-power in grain and then the game is to get it out again. Now it is certain that a rise in price of grain means a rise in that portion which comes back to the slave, and a fall means the opposite, hence the G. G. A. and similar organizations have some excuse for their existence, but they overestimate their power. As we have said, a rise in the price of grain means that the portion of

it coming to the slave will exchange for a larger quantity of commodities, and vice versa. But it is only price, and that law of value butts in with its usual persistence and spoils things for price hovers around value and the rise and fall thereof compensate each other. So that the grain exchanges in the long run at value—the labor-time incorporated therein, and that portion coming to the slave follows suit and exchanges at value—the cost of his subsistence. Of course he gets his portion in money and so the deal is disguised somewhat.

The farm-slave, then, has some interest in the sale of grain, although it is not his. But these grain growers are a funny bunch; can you imagine a man trying to keep a trip-hammer from coming down by putting himself under it? That is just what they are doing. Their struggle is to keep the price of grain up, and once more that unrelenting law of value bobs up. Now value is determined by the socially necessary labor-time, and these last few years have been rich in a perfect shower of labor-saving machinery for the farm, hence you see the value of grain is going down and value is a leaden plummet which must drag price down after it. It is thus perfectly clear that the masters themselves cannot keep the price from falling, let alone a slave organization who do not even own the wheat.

Look well upon the gasoline, kerosene, distillate and steam farm engines; the giant reaper, binder and thresher, for in them is written your doom as property holders. They grow too big for you to buy and manage; they are essentially social machines, and at present your masters are your masters and will exploit you to a finish until you become real wage slaves, devoid of property and working for them at first hand.

We speak of robbery; how is this robbery accomplished? How are the farmers compelled to give up the fruit of their toil? Why, it is that thing you all howl so much for, a railway which

enables them to skin you. As soon as grain is raised and a country becomes settled, in comes a railway, thrust like the arm of a bear into a bee's nest and lo! in a trice all the honey is drawn out. Yes, the farmer unloads every kernel of grain, except that required for seed, at the railway depot, at his master's command. But I hear some ore say the farmer can hold grain for a better price; which is true enough if he can borrow money or has had some to start with, but soon or late the "stand and deliver" of the real owner comes and the farm slave unloads, which is quite right and just, as things go.

Now we see that the old serf could in three days produce his own living with very clumsy tools and that we to-day have the most up-to-date machinery enabling us to produce our living in about 4 hours, which is considerably less than we work in a day. What then becomes of the product of the rest of the working day? Why, good farmer, wise headed, keen, hard, business man, it is stolen before your very eyes and you can't see it. Yet we are not certain if it is stolen seeing how readily you "part up."

Let us sum up. We have seen that farming is part and parcel of the present industrial system, interwoven and so mixed up as to render it impossible to say just where the process of raising grain begins. We have seen that the farmer has no more title to consideration than any other of his class—the working class, for in strict truth there is no such thing as a farming class—all are workers, all are slaves. Indeed the factory slave is better off than the farm worker because hail, frost or drouth may sweep the farm slaves' wages out of sight and the G.G.A. powerful as they are cannot stop that. As there is no class of farmers, is it not rank idiocy to send men to parliament as "farmers' candidates to look after the interests of a class that has no existence? Besides be they ever so honest they will do their master's work, in conserving his interests, because

not being socialists, they do not know their own.

We have seen that in struggling against the law of value the worker is like an ant butting down a brick wall. We have seen that these precious title deeds we own are simply goads to drive us to greater exertions, and altho the writer has not gone into detail answering the G.G.A. and similar organizations, space being limited, yet it must be plain that they are useless to ease the pressure we feel. We have seen, in a word, that in society—the workers produce great wealth and that it belongs to another class.

Our work is plain before us, the masters hold their place because they hold political power, they are few, we are many, we must then join hands with our brothers of the factory, mill or mine and workers all, go to the ballot and grasp political power; Send our own men to parliament to rule as we shall dictate. The Socialist Party have this aim in view, not to dally with reform but to go straight to the goal and sweep the master class from power.

Farm slaves, your case is desperate. The minutes are flashing past into hours, the hours into days, the days into years. The new form of society—Social ownership (not to be confounded with Government ownership), is ready to burst the cramping shell of the old. It awaits but the effort of a united working class. How long will you dally? Knowledge is power. Read, study, think and then act. For things will go from bad to worse until you have sense enough to call a halt.

In conclusion; the writer has made no effort to go into detail, making in places mere bald statements, for space is too limited to allow of much complication. His effort has been to place before his fellow farm slaves the main factors of their position under modern conditions. To urge them by this short disquisition into looking deeper into the matter for themselves. If in any way the writer has plagiarised any one, he here offers his apology.

A. BUDDEN.