

# THE WORKING CLASS

(THE PROLETARIAT)

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By KARL KAUTSKY

Translated from the German and Adapted to America

By DANIEL DE LEON

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## PREFACE.

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"The Working Class" is one of the four "Kautsky pamphlets," "The Capitalist Class," "The Class Struggle," and "The Socialist Republic" completing the series. Each of the pamphlets is virtually a chapter from Kautsky's valuable work, "Das Erfurter Program" (The Erfurt Program)". "Das Erfurter Program" is a treatise on the platform or program adopted at Erfurt in 1891 by the Socialist Party of Germany—the Social Democratic Party. It takes up the various subdivisions or planks of the platform, and in explaining them gives a comprehensive and systematic exposition of Socialist economic and sociologic theory.

In working this exposition into English for the American public, substantial alteration, not in the essence, but in the manner of presentation, became necessary. Some chapters had to be omitted as wholly inapplicable here, and the others were recast into four pamphlets, each of which stands on its own feet. While they are connected with each other by the subject, and, together, present a fairly connected exposition of Socialism, they can be read independently in any sequence and be perfectly intelligible.

A word as to terms used. In the "Communist Manifesto" Engels explains the meaning of the terms "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat" as follows: "By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of means of social production and employers of wage-labor. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live." In Europe the word "bourgeoisie" is universally used to designate the class known in the United States as the "capitalist class." In Europe, also, the word "proletariat" is used to designate the class known in the United States as the "working class." The term working class has served so long in America to designate the wage-earning class, as distinguished from the profit-receiving class, that in this adaptation the term working class has been used quite largely for that purpose. But it has been impossible rigidly to adhere to one term in every connection. Let it be observed, therefore, that the terms "proletariat," "working class," "wage-earning class," "wage-earners," "wage-slaves," "workingmen," and "workmen," are used synonymously to indicate the "class of modern wage-

laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live."

For information relative to the effect on the working class of the introduction of the capitalist system of production, the reader is referred to Frederick Engels' "The Condition of the Working Class in England." In this volume Engels traces with a masterly hand the development of English capitalism from 1800 down to 1844. By citations from factory reports, newspapers, and magazines, and from his own observation, he reveals the lamentable condition of the English working class, and then analyzes that condition with a desire to determine the cause. The book is a mine of information that should be quarried by every workingman.

For the effect on the working class of the later development of the capitalist system of production, reference should be made to Marx's "Capital." In the last three parts of this work Marx traces the condition of the English working class from 1845 to 1870, and uses that condition as an exemplification of the principles advanced in the first part. These two books ("The Condition of the Working Class in England" and "Capital") give a complete history of the struggles of the English proletariat with the capitalist system of production from its early days down to recent times.

For foot-notes throwing additional light on the text, recourse has been had to "The Condition of the Working Class in England," "Woman in the Past, Present, and Future," by August Bebel, and "The Socialist Almanac," by Lucien Sanial. The student will do well to have "The Socialist Almanac" always at hand. For statistical articles and facts relative to capitalism in the United States, machinery, woman and child labor, trusts, bankruptcy, etc., it contains accurate information that can be obtained in no other book. Its historical monographs, giving a complete history of the development of Socialism in the several countries of Europe, will also be of great aid to the student.

THE PUBLISHERS.

# REMOTE STORAGE

## THE WORKING CLASS.

(The Proletariat.)

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### CHAPTER I.

#### EFFECT OF MACHINERY.

In all countries in which the capitalist system of production prevails, especially in such countries as the United States, where capitalism has reached the point of production on a large scale, we find the population divided mainly into two classes: first, the capitalists, who possess the means of production—tools, machinery, land, etc.—but who take no part in production itself; and, secondly, the wage-workers, the proletariat, who possess nothing but their labor-power on the sale of which they live, and whose labor alone brings forth the whole wealth of the land.

Capitalists need a large supply of proletarians; originally, in other countries and in ages gone by, forcible methods were resorted to, to furnish this requisite supply. To-day, however, in the United States especially, such methods are no longer needed. The superior power of capitalist production on a large scale over small production is sufficient, without doing open violence to the law or to private property, but, on the contrary, with the very assistance of these, year in and year out to strip of all property a sufficient number of small farmers and industrialists, who are then thrown upon the streets, who merge with the mass of the proletariat, and who thereby satisfy the ever-increasing capitalist demand for more human flesh.

#### CAPITALIST PRODUCTION INCREASES THE NUMBER OF THE PROLETARIAT.

That the number of the proletariat is steadily on the increase in the United States is such a palpable fact that it is even no longer denied by those who would make us believe that society to-day rests upon the same basis that it did a hundred years ago, and who try to paint in rosy colors the picture of the small producer. Indeed, a revolution has taken place in the make-up of society, the same as it has in the system of production. The capitalist form of production has overthrown all others and become the dominant one in the field of industry. Similarly, wage-labor is to-day the dominant form of labor. A hundred years ago the farming peasantry took the first place; later, the small city industrialists; to-day it is the wage-earners, or proletariat.

In all civilized countries the proletarians are to-day the largest class; it is their condition and modes of thought that control those

of all the other subdivisions of labor<sup>1</sup>. This state of things implies a complete revolution in the condition and thought of the bulk of the population. The conditions of the proletariat differ radically from those of all other former categories of labor. The small farmer, the artisan, the small producers generally, were the owners of the product of their own labor by reason of their ownership of the means of production; contrariwise, the product of the labor of the proletarian does not belong to him, it belongs to the capitalist, to the purchaser of his labor-power, to the owner of the requisite instruments of production. True enough, the proletarian is paid therefor by the capitalist, but the value of his wages is far below that of his product.

#### PROLETARIAN LABOR THE SOURCE OF CAPITALIST PROFIT.

When in industry (and let it be here said, once for all, that, at the present stage of economic development, agriculture is as much an industry as any other branch of production) the capitalist purchases the only commodity which the proletarian can offer for sale, to wit, his labor-power, he does so only for the purpose of utilizing it in a profitable way. The more the workman produces, the larger the value of his total product. If the capitalist were to work his employees only long enough to produce the worth of the wages he pays them, he would clear no profits. But, however willing the capitalist is to pose as the "benefactor of suffering humanity," his capital cries for "profits," and finds in him a willing listener. The longer the time is extended during which the workmen labor in the service of the capitalists over and above the time needed to cover their wages, the larger is the value of their product, the larger is the surplus over and above the capitalist outlay in wages, and the larger is the quantity of exploitation to which these workmen are subjected. This exploitation or fleecing of labor finds a limit only in the powers of endurance of the working people, and in the resistance which they may be able to offer to their exploiters.

In capitalist production, the capitalist and the wage-worker are

<sup>1</sup>Regarding the relative numerical strength of the classes, according to the census of 1890, the following figures taken from "The Socialist Almanac" are interesting:

Plutocratic [capitalist] Class.....	177,478
Middle Class.....	6,548,862
Professional Class.....	944,333
Working Class.....	15,064,988

It should be observed that in the above figures the persons in occupation are alone included, and no account is taken of their immediate family dependents who are not reported by the census as engaged in any pursuit—such as wives at home, children at school or at home, aged parents, etc. When these dependents are included the result is as follows:

Plutocratic [capitalist] Class.....	887,390
Middle Class.....	22,517,472
Professional Class.....	3,777,332
Working Class.....	34,440,046

For a scientific analysis of the classes in the United States, their relative strength, relative quantity of wealth owned, and relative importance in society, the student should refer to "The Socialist Almanac," pages 97 to 112.

not active together as the employer and the employed were in previous industrial epochs. The capitalist soon develops into, and remains essentially, a merchant. His activity, in so far as he may be at all active, limits itself, like that of the merchant, to the operations of the market. His labors consist in purchasing as cheaply as possible the raw material, labor-power, and other essentials, and to turn around and sell the finished products as dearly as possible. Upon the field of production itself, he does nothing except to secure the largest quantity of labor from the workmen for the least possible amount of wages, and thereby to squeeze out of them the largest possible quantity of surplus values. With regard to his workmen, he is not a *fellow-worker*, he is only a *driver*, an *exploiter*. The longer they work, the better off he is; he is not tired out if the hours of labor are unduly extended; he does not perish if the method of production becomes a murderous one. Of all ruling classes the capitalist is the most reckless of the life and safety of his operatives. Extension of the hours of work, abolition of holidays, introduction of night labor, damp or overheated factories, filled with poisonous gases, such are the "improvements which the capitalist mode of production has introduced for the benefit of the working class.

#### HOW MACHINERY LOWERS THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS.

The introduction of machinery increases still further the danger to life and limb for the workingman. The machine system fetters him to a monster that moves perpetually with a gigantic power and with insane speed. Only the closest, never-flagging attention can protect the workingman attached to such a machine from being seized and broken by it. Protective measures cost money; the capitalist does not introduce them unless he is forced thereto. Economy being the much vaunted virtue of the capitalist, he is constrained by it to save room and to squeeze as much machinery as possible into the workshop. What cares he that the limbs of his workmen are thereby endangered? Workingmen are cheap, but large airy workshops are dear.

There is still another respect in which the capitalist application of machinery lowers the condition of the working class. It is this: The tool of the former mechanic was cheap; it was subject to few changes that would render it useless. Otherwise with the machine; in the first place, it costs money, much money; in the second place, if, through improvements in the system, it becomes useless, or if it is not used to its full capacity, it will bring loss instead of profit to the capitalist. Again, the machine is worn out not only through use, but also through idleness. Furthermore, the introduction of science into production, the result of which is the machine itself, causes constant new discoveries and inventions to take the place of older ones, and renders constantly, now this, then that sort of machine, and often whole factories at once, unable to compete with the improved ones before they have been used up to their full extent; owing to these changes, every machine is in constant danger of being made useless before it is used up. This is sufficient ground for

the capitalist to utilize his machine as quickly as possible from the moment he puts it in operation. In other words, the capitalist application of the system of machinery is a particular spur that drives the capitalist to extend the hours of labor as much as possible, to carry on production without interruption, to introduce the system of night and day shifts, and, accordingly, to rear the unwholesome system of night work into a permanent system.

At the time the system of machinery began to develop, some ideologists declared the Golden Age was at hand: the machine was to release the workingman and render him a free man. In the hands of the capitalist, however, the machine has become the most powerful lever towards making heavier the load of labor borne by the proletariat, and to aggravate his servitude into an unbearable condition.

But it is not only with regard to the *hours of work* that the condition of the wage-worker has suffered with the introduction of machinery. It has suffered also with regard to his *wages*. The proletarian, the workman of to-day, does not eat at the table of the capitalist; he does not live in the same house. However wretched his home may be; however miserable his food, nay, even though he may famish, the wellbeing of the capitalist is not disturbed by the sickening sight. The words *Wages* and *Starvation* used to be opposites; the free workingman could formerly starve only when he had no work; whoever worked earned *Wages*, he had enough to eat, *Starvation* was not his lot. The unenviable distinction was reserved for the capitalist system of production to reconcile these two opposites—*Wages* and *Starvation*—and to raise *Starvation-Wages* into a permanent institution, into a prop of the present social system.<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER II.

### WAGES.

Wages can never rise so high as to make it impossible for the capitalist to carry on his business and live; under such circumstances it would be more profitable for the capitalist to give up his business. Consequently, the wages of the workingman can never rise high enough to equal the value of his product. They must always be below that, so as to leave a surplus; it is only the prospect of a

<sup>1</sup>Machinery itself is of course a part of the surplus value created by the workers and appropriated by the capitalists. How large a portion of this surplus value is embodied in that mighty weapon it were at least interesting to know. According to figures taken from the last census the total money value of the machinery, tools, and implements used in manufacturing and mechanical industries was \$1,584,000,000, or about 24 per cent. of the total capital employed in those industries. On the other hand, the net profits of manufacturing capitalists, all legitimate reductions having been made for taxes, repairs, etc., amounted to about \$1,930,000,000. *Therefore the manufacturing and mechanical workers produced in one year over and above their own sustenance a net value, factory price, exceeding by three hundred and forty-six million dollars the whole cost of the machinery by means of which they were exploited and through which they and their posterity will keep enslaved until Capitalism is abolished.—Socialist Almanac, p. 183.*



surplus that moves the capitalist to purchase labor-power. It is, therefore, evident that in the capitalist social system the wages of the workmen can never rise high enough to put an end to the exploitation of labor.

#### SIZE OF THE SURPLUS APPROPRIATED BY THE CAPITALIST CLASS.

This surplus, which the capitalist class appropriates, is larger than is usually imagined.<sup>1</sup> It covers, not only the "profits" of the manufacturer, but many other items that are usually credited to the costs of production and exchange. It covers, for instance, rent, interest on loans, salaries, merchant's profits, taxes, etc. All these have to be covered with the surplus, or the excess of the value of the product over the wages of the workingman. It is evident that this surplus must be a considerable one if a concern is to "pay;" the exploitation of the workingman must be great, even where the wages are high. It is clear that the wages of the workingman cannot rise high enough to be even approximately equal to the value of his product. The capitalist wages system means, under all circumstances, the thorough exploitation of the working class. It is impossible to abolish this exploitation without abolishing the system itself.<sup>2</sup>

#### INFLUENCES THAT TEND TO RAISE AND LOWER WAGES.

But wages rarely reach the highest point which they might, even under these circumstances; more often they are found to be nearer to the lowest possible point. This point is reached when the

<sup>1</sup>In each of the three census years here considered [1870, 1880, and 1890] the Plutocratic [capitalist] Class, including all its family dependents—men, women, and children—constituted an insignificant fraction of the total population. Whether such a fraction be a little less or a little more than one per cent. is of course immaterial. \* \* \* Of its stupendous growth in wealth there can, of course, be no question. With the exception of a comparatively few shares and bonds held by people of middle and professional classes, it owns the railroads, telegraphs, shipping, banks, mines, and all the great industries which are generally conducted by corporations; it owns all the warehouses and the vast stocks of merchandise stored therein, waiting for the hand to mouth demands of the retail trade; all the most valuable business real estate in cities, besides palatial residences, immense tracts of land held on speculation and farms cultivated by tenants; also art treasures, sumptuous furniture, costly apparel, etc. Lastly, it is the chief creditor of municipalities and States and of many private persons—farmers, traders, real estate owners, etc.—belonging to the middle class.—Socialist Almanac, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>It therefore appears from the foregoing table:

That in 1890 the Plutocratic [capitalist] Class, representing less than 1½ per cent. of the population, held more than 64 per cent. (and with its allies, the foreign investors, about 67½ per cent.) of the total wealth produced by American labor.

That the Middle Class represented 37½ per cent. of the total population and 24½ per cent. of the total wealth.

That the Professional Class, representing 6 per cent. of the population, had a little less than 4 per cent. of the total wealth.

That the Working Class, representing 55 per cent. of the population, had a little more than 4 per cent. of the total wealth.—Socialist Almanac, p. 113.

It is further pointed out in the "Almanac" that this 4 per cent. of wealth held by the working class consists chiefly of wealth in the "perishable form of tools, instruments, household goods, and wearing apparel, having a use value, but no exchange value."

wages do not even supply the workingman with his barest necessities; when the workingman not only starves but starves rapidly, all work is at an end.

The wages swing between these two extremes; they are found to be lower, the lower the necessities of the workingman, the larger the supply of labor in the labor market, and the slighter the capacity of the workingman for resistance.

In general, wages must be high enough to keep the workingman in a condition to work, or, to speak more accurately, they must be high enough to secure to the capitalist the measure of labor-power which he needs. In other words, wages must be high enough, not only to keep the workingman in a condition to work, but also in a condition to produce children, who may be able to replace him. It follows that the industrial development has a tendency that is most pleasing to the capitalist, to wit, to lower *the necessities of the workingman in order that his wages may be lower in proportion.*

#### MACHINERY ENABLES CAPITALIST CLASS TO EXPLOIT WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

There was a time when skill and strength were requisites for a workingman. The period of apprenticeship was then long, the cost of his training considerable. Now, however, the progress made in the division of labor and the system of machinery render skill and strength in production more and more superfluous; they make it possible to substitute unskilled and cheap workmen for skilled ones; and, consequently, to substitute weak women and even children in the place of men. In the early stages of manufacture this tendency is perceptible; but not until machinery is introduced into production does the wholesale exploitation commence of women and children of tender age—an exploitation of the most helpless among the helpless—who are made a prey of shocking maltreatment and abuse. Thus machinery develops a new and wonderful quality in the hands of the capitalist.

Originally, the wage-worker had to earn wages high enough to defray not only his own expenses, but those of his family, in order to enable him to propagate himself and to bequeath his labor-power to others. Without this process on his part, the heirs of the capitalists would find no proletarians ready made for exploitation.

When, however, the wife, and, from early infancy, the children of the workingmen are able to take care of themselves, then the wages of the workingman can be safely reduced to the level of his own personal needs without the risk of stopping the supply of fresh labor-power.

Over and above this, the labor of women and children affords the additional advantage that they offer less resistance than men; and their introduction into the ranks of the workers increases wonderfully the quantity of labor that is offered for sale in the market.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The grand total of women in occupations in 1870 was 1,645,188. In 1890 the number had risen to 3,712,144—an increase in twenty years of 2,066,956.—Socialist Almanac, p. 141.

Accordingly, the labor of women and children does not only lower the necessities of the workingman, but it also diminishes his capacity for resistance in that it overstocks the labor market; owing to both these circumstances, it lowers the wages of the workingman.<sup>1</sup>

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### CHAPTER III.

#### DISSOLUTION OF THE PROLETARIAN FAMILY.

##### WOMAN-LABOR IN INDUSTRY DESTROYS FAMILY LIFE OF THE WORKINGMAN.

The labor of woman in productive pursuits betokens the total destruction of the family life of the workingman, without substituting for it a higher form of family relationship. The capitalist system of production does not yet generally destroy the single household of the workingman, but robs it of all its bright sides, and leaves only its dark ones. The activity of woman to-day in industrial pursuits does not mean to her freedom from household duties; it means to her an increase of her former burdens by a new one. But we cannot serve two masters. The household of the workingman suffers whenever his wife must help to earn the daily bread. What present society puts in the place of the individual household and family, which it destroys, are miserable substitutes: *souphouses* and *day-nurseries*, where the offals of the physical and mental sustenance of the rich are cast to the lower classes.

##### CAPITALIST CLASS ENDEAVORING TO ABOLISH THE FAMILY.

Socialists are charged with an intent to abolish the family. We do know that every system of production has had a special form of household, to which corresponds a special system of family relationship. We do not consider the existing form of the family the highest possible nor the last utterance upon the subject; and we do expect that a new and improved social system may yet develop a new and higher form of family relationship. But to hold this view is a very different thing from striving to dissolve all family bonds. They who *do* destroy the family bonds—who not only mean to but who in fact *do* destroy them right under our own eyes—they are, not the Socialists, but the *capitalists* themselves. Many a slave-holder has before this torn husband from wife, and parents from grown-up children; but the capitalists have improved upon the abominations of slavery: they tear the suckling from the breast of its mother,

<sup>1</sup>In the article in "The Socialist Almanac" on "Child Labor," the author shows that the figures of the census department relative to employment of children in industry are "grossly inaccurate," and then adds:

"But there stands glaring above all this statistical darkness the portentous and undeniable fact that, with a total school population between 5 and 18 years numbering 20,865,000 in 1896, the average school attendance was only 9,747,000, or 46.7 per cent., and that the average school term for the whole country was only 140 days. From which it may be safely asserted that ignorance is growing apace throughout the United States and that the number of children and youths between the said ages actually employed for a more or less extended portion of the year in mean, hard, and brain-stunting labor cannot be less and is probably more than 5,000,000."

and compel her to intrust it to strangers' hands. And yet a society in which hundreds of thousands of such instances are of daily occurrence, a society whose luminaries promote "benevolent" institutions for the purpose of making easy the separation of the mothers from their babes, such a society has the effrontery to accuse the Socialists of contemplating the abolition of the family simply because they, basing their opinion upon the fact that the "family" has ever been one of the reflexes of the system of production, foresee that further changes in that system must also result in a more perfect system of family relationship.

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## CHAPTER IV. PROSTITUTION.

### CAPITALIST SYSTEM OF PRODUCTION PROMOTES PROSTITUTION.

Hand in hand with the accusation on the subject of the family bonds goes the accusation that Socialists aim at a community of wives. This charge is as false as the other. Socialists, on the contrary, maintain that just the reverse of a community in wives, and of all sexual oppression and license, to wit, ideal love, will be the foundation of matrimonial connections in a Socialist Commonwealth, and that pure love can only prevail in such a social system. What, on the other hand, do we see to-day?

The irrational system of modern production tears the sexes apart. It builds up *she*-towns in New England and *he*-towns in the mining districts of Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, and the farther West, thereby directly promoting and inciting prostitution as a natural and inevitable result. Furthermore, helpless women, forced to earn their living in the factories, shops, and mines, fall a prey to capitalist cupidity; the capitalist takes advantage of their inexperience, offers them wages too slight for their support, and hints at, or even brazenly refers them to, prostitution as a means of supplementing their income.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere the increase of female labor in industry is accompanied by an increase of prostitution. In the modern State, where Christianity is preached and piousness is at a premium, many a "thriving" branch of industry is found whose working women are paid so poorly that they would be compelled to starve unless they prostituted themselves; and, wonderful to say, in such instances the capitalist will ever be heard to protest that these small wages are indispensable to enable him to compete suc-

<sup>1</sup>We only need to consider the miserable wages earned by the greater number of workwomen, wages upon which it is impossible to exist, and which the recipients are forced to eke out by prostitution, to understand why things are as they are. Some employers are infamous enough to excuse the lowness of the salary by pointing to this means of indemnification. Such is the position of hundreds of thousands of seamstresses, dressmakers, milliners, and workwomen in all kinds of factories.—"Woman in the Past, Present, and Future," by August Bebel.

cessfully in the market, and to maintain his establishment in a "thriving" condition.<sup>1</sup>

UNDER CAPITALISM PROSTITUTION BECOMES A PILLAR OF SOCIETY.

Prostitution is as old as the contrast between rich and poor. At one time, however, prostitutes constituted a middle class between beggars and thieves; they were then an article of luxury which society indulged in, but the loss of which would in no way have endangered its existence. To-day, however, it is no longer the females of the slums alone, but *working* women who are compelled to sell their bodies for money. This latter sale is no longer simply a matter of luxury, it has become one of the foundations upon which production is carried on. Under the capitalist system of production, *prostitution becomes a pillar of society*. What the defenders of this social system falsely charge Socialists with, is the very thing they are guilty of themselves: Community of wives is a feature of capitalism. Indeed such deep roots has this system of community of wives cast in modern society that its representatives agree in declaring prostitution to be a *necessary* thing. They cannot understand that the abolition of the proletariat implies the abolition of prostitution. So deep are they sunk in intellectual stagnation that they cannot conceive a social system without community of wives.

But be it noted, community of wives has ever been an invention of the upper layers of society, never of the proletariat. The community of wives is one of the modes of exploiting the proletariat; it is not Socialism; it is the exact opposite of Socialism.

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## CHAPTER V.

### EARLY DAYS OF THE WAGE-WORKING PROLETARIAT.

CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS DURING EARLY DAYS OF CAPITALISM.

The capitalist system of production at first drew its wage-workers from the servant class, the menials, and the slums. It needed not so much *able* as *patient, resistless* workers, disposed to submit meekly to the requirements of a large mill or mine, which could run smoothly only in case each of its innumerable wheels, whether animate or inanimate, fulfilled punctually and well the movements to which it was assigned. Such being the character of the bulk of the labor upon which the large capitalists drew originally, it followed that the treatment to which these submitted established also the standard for the treatment which the capitalists meant to bestow upon their workmen in general. Labor, whose ennobling influence

<sup>1</sup>The struggle for existence, which is becoming fiercer year by year, not infrequently compels men and women to commit actions and suffer indignities that would otherwise fill them with disgust. For instance, it was ascertained in Munich, Germany, in 1877, that among the registered prostitutes under the surveillance of the police no fewer than 203 were wives of day-laborers and artisans. And how many married women are driven by hunger to carry on this disgraceful trade, without subjecting themselves to police control which so shamefully violates every feeling of decency and of personal dignity?—"Woman in the Past, Present, and Future."

capitalist moralists and economists love to descant upon, became for the whole proletariat a source not of dignity, but of further degradation. The resistlessness of the working people made it possible for the capitalists to extend the hours of work indefinitely. Unless forced to it, capital will allow to the proletariat leisure neither for rest nor for culture. Where it is not checked, it will drive the worker to death. If between the hours of sleep and work there be a short respite, it is just long enough to satisfy the most transient pleasures, to dull the sense of misery in the fumes of alcohol or in the indulgences of sexual intercourse. The working in common of men and women, adults and children, which, if carried on by happy, free, and conscientious beings, can be a source of the highest intellectual enjoyment and moral elevation for all concerned, became in the mines and mills of capital a fresh stimulant to the demoralizing and enervating influences which spread like pest among the proletariat.

#### THE WORKING PROLETARIAT ORIGINALLY IS MERGED WITH THE SLUMS.

To this circumstance is to be ascribed the fact that in the early days of large capitalist production the working proletariat was hardly to be distinguished from the slums. How low the former had sunk in crime, drunkenness, vulgarity, and filth—both physical and moral—appears graphically from the strong, yet not overdrawn, picture presented by Frederick Engels in his classic work, "The Condition of the Working Class in England" during the first decades of this century.<sup>1</sup> In the United States the working proletariat was saved the bitterness of this experience to the extent that it was forced upon its European brothers. Owing to the conditions of the country, owing to the absence in any large numbers of the slow accretions of generations of exploited classes previous to the time when capitalist large production began to unfold its wings among us, the proportion of the slums to the number of working proletarians was not here, as in Europe, large enough to degrade the latter quite to the level of the former. Nevertheless, the working proleta-

<sup>1</sup>The streets are often so narrow that a person can step from the window of one house into that of its opposite neighbor, while the houses are piled so high, story upon story, that the light can scarcely penetrate into the court or alley that lies between. In this part of the city there are neither sewers nor other drains, nor even privies belonging to the houses. In consequence, all refuse, garbage, and excrements of at least 50,000 persons are thrown into the gutters every night, so that, in spite of all street sweeping, a mass of dried filth and foul vapors are created, which not only offend the sight and smell, but endanger the health of all the inhabitants in the highest degree.

\* \* \* \* \* The houses of the poor are generally filthy, and are evidently never cleansed. They consist in most cases of a single room which, while subject to the worst ventilation, is yet usually kept cold by the broken and badly-fitting windows, and is sometimes damp, and partly below ground level, always badly furnished and thoroughly uncomfortable, a straw-bed often serving the whole family for a bed, upon which men and women, young and old, sleep in revolting conditions. Water can only be had from the public pumps, and the difficulty of obtaining it naturally fosters all possible filth.—From the chapter on "The Great Towns" in Engels' "Condition of the Working Class in England."

riat, clad with the dignity of its class, is even here a historic figure of a comparatively recent date,

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE UPLIFTING OF THE WORKING PROLETARIAT.

The word "proletariat" conveyed at one time in the history of capitalist production the idea of extreme degradation. Even to-day there are people who entertain this notion, and among them not a few who claim to be abreast of the times. This, however, arises from a woeful confusion of thought. However numerous the external marks may have been which, at one time, the working proletariat had in common with the slums, even then the two were separated by a deep chasm.

The slums have continued to be essentially the same, in whatever historic epoch and under whatever system they may have made their appearance. The slums of New York, Chicago, San Francisco, or any other large modern center of population, are hard to distinguish from those of ancient Rome. On the other hand, the modern working proletariat is a peculiar phenomenon, never before noticed in the history of mankind.

#### CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE SLUMS AND THE WORKING PROLETARIAT.

Between the slums and the working proletariat of capitalist production there is above all the immense and fundamental difference that the former always were and still continue to be parasites, whereas the latter is one of the principal roots of modern society—a root that develops, not only into leading importance, but into the *only* one from which society draws its strength and support. The working proletariat is a propertiless, but not an almstaking, element. So far from its being supported by society, it supports society with its labor. True enough, during the early days of the capitalist system, the working proletariat looked upon itself as a pauper class, and upon the capitalist who exploited it as a benefactor, as the provider of work, and, consequently, as the bread-giver. Of course, this patriarchal relation is highly pleasing to the capitalists; they still demand from their workingmen for the wages paid to them, not only the labor contracted for, but also humility and gratitude.

But the capitalist system can nowhere proceed very far without the patriarchal conditions that exist at its inception going wholly by the board. However enslaved and ignorant the workingmen may at any time be, they realize, sooner or later, that they are the bread-givers of the capitalists, and not vice versa. While they remain poor, or even become poorer, the capitalist becomes ever richer. And when they demand more bread from the capitalist, from this would-be patriarch, he gives them a stone.

The working proletarians differ from the slums and from the servant and menial classes in that they do not live upon the exploitation carried on by the exploiters; and they differ from the

workers under former systems of production in that they do not live and labor together with their exploiters, and that all the personal bonds and relations that existed between these have wholly disappeared between the modern employer and employee. They live in miserable tenements or rickety frame houses that are a libel upon the word "home," while they rear palaces for the exploiter; they famish while they spread for him a luxurious feast; they go unclad, while they prepare for him costly raiment; they toil and moil till they drop with exhaustion to furnish him and his the means whereby to kill time.

#### WHY THE WORKING CLASS HATES AND DESPISES THE RICH.

The contrast between these two elements is a very different one from that between the rich and the poor man of precapitalist days; and very different also between the capitalist and the "small man" of to-day. The latter envies the rich man, whom he looks up to with admiration, who is the example he would imitate, the ideal he holds up to himself; he wishes to be in that capitalist's place, and become an exploiter like him; he never for a moment thinks of abolishing the system of exploitation. The working proletariat, on the contrary, does not envy the modern rich man; it does not wish itself in his place; it *hates and despises* him; it hates him as the exploiter; it despises him as a drone. At first, the working proletarian hates only those capitalists with whom he is brought into direct contact, but soon he realizes the fact that all of them stand in the same posture towards him, and his hatred, which originally was personal, develops into a conscious hostility towards the whole capitalist class.

#### CLASS HATRED NOT THE RESULT OF SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA.

This hostility towards exploitation itself is one of the first distinguishing marks of the working proletariat. This class hatred is by no means a result of socialist propaganda; it was noticeable long before the influence of Socialism began to make itself felt among the working classes. Among the workers under former social systems, such a well developed class hatred as exists to-day was impossible; the intimate personal relations that existed between them and their "masters" excluded all thought of such class antipathies; hostilities might and did often break out between the master and his underlings personally, but these could never be carried beyond a certain point without forthwith stopping production itself; and, as a result, whatever lengths they went to, reconciliation always followed. Under the capitalist system, however, the workers may entertain the most bitter enmity against their employers without production being thereby interfered with, and even without the employer being at all aware of it.

This class hatred expresses itself at first only timidly and in isolated instances. If it takes some time for the working proletariat to realize that magnanimity is the last thing that moves the em-



ployer to furnish it work, it takes still longer for it to gather courage to enter into an open conflict with the "boss."<sup>1</sup>

The slums are cowardly and humble; they feel themselves superfluous and know that they lack all material standing. Similarly are the early characteristics of the working proletariat. It resented the ill-treatment to which it was subjected, but protested only silently; clenched its fist in its pockets; and as a result of this, its indignation was wont to vent itself—as it unfortunately still does, here and there, among the least informed—in deeds of thoughtless passion or secret crime.

The sense of conscious strength and the spirit of resistance develop themselves among the working proletariat only after it has awakened to the understanding of the community of interests that binds its members, and of the solidarity of its ranks. With the quickening of the feeling of solidarity begins the moral new birth of the working proletariat, and its uplifting from the swamp in which it, together with the slums, originally is immersed.<sup>2</sup>

CAPITALIST CLASS UNCONSCIOUSLY TRAINS THE WORKING CLASS IN THE METHODS REQUIRED FOR THE OVERTHROW OF CAPITALISM.

The conditions themselves under which labor is performed in the capitalist system point out to the proletariat the necessity of firmly holding together, of moving in a body, and of subordinating the individual to the whole. While, in the classic days of handicraft, each individual produced a whole article himself, capitalist industry is based upon co-operative labor. Here the individual worker can do nothing without his fellow-worker. If they start to work united and planfully, the capacity of each is doubled and trebled. Thus their labor itself brings home to them the power of union, and develops among them the sense of voluntary and gladsome discipline—both of which are the conditions precedent for socialist production, and are likewise the conditions precedent for the successful struggle of the proletariat against the system of exploitation that prevails under capitalist production. And thus it happens that

<sup>1</sup>In the patriarchal relation that hypocritically concealed the slavery of the worker, the latter must have remained an intellectual zero, totally ignorant of his own interest, a mere private individual. Only when estranged from his employer, when convinced that the sole bond between employer and employee is the bond of pecuniary profit, when the sentimental bond between them, which stood not the slightest test, had wholly fallen away, then only did the worker begin to recognize his own interests and develop independently; then only did he cease to be the slave of the bourgeoisie in his thoughts, feelings, and the expression of his will. And to this end manufacture on a grand scale and in great cities has most largely contributed.—"Condition of the Working Class in England," p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>If the centralization of population stimulates and develops the property-holding class, it forces the development of the workers yet more rapidly. The workers begin to feel as a class, as a whole; they begin to perceive that, though feeble as individuals, they form a power united; their separation from the bourgeoisie, the development of views peculiar to the workers and corresponding to their position in life, is fostered, the consciousness of oppression awakens, and the workers attain social and political importance.—"Condition of the Working Class in England," p. 122.

capitalism itself trains the proletarians in the methods requisite for its own overthrow, and educates them in the system of labor that will be required of them in socialist society.

More powerfully, perhaps, than co-operation in labor does the equality in the present conditions of work tend to awaken among the proletarians the sense of solidarity among themselves. In a modern well-developed mill there is as good as no distinction of rank, no hierarchy, among the workers. The higher posts are, as a rule, inaccessible to the proletarians; at all events, they are so few that they do not affect the masses. Slight is the number of those who can be corrupted by these favorite posts. For the large majority the conditions of labor are identical; to the individual all possibility is shut off of lifting himself up alone; he can better his condition only if the condition of all his fellow-toilers is bettered. The capitalist realizes this fact and its effects upon his men, and in not a few cases he tries to counteract both by the introduction of artificial distinctions in his mills, to the end of throwing the apple of discord among the workers; but such is the leveling influence and power of modern large production that all such schemes are unable to undermine permanently the sense of solidarity which it evokes in the ranks of the working proletariat. The longer the capitalist system of production lasts, all the more powerfully does the solidarity of the proletariat manifest itself, all the stronger does it cast its roots, and all the more prominently does it stand out as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the working proletariat.

Among the slums, among the menials, there can be no thought of solidarity. It was among the journeymen under the old feudal and guild systems that the solidarity of the exploited class against the exploiters first cropped up; but the solidarity of the modern working proletariat has taken long strides beyond that of the exploited class under the previous system of production. Neither limited itself to the confines of one and the same industry; the same as the modern working proletariat, so did its prototype of the guild days arrive slowly at the perception of the fact that the worker knocks himself everywhere against the identical adversary, and has everywhere the same interests. The journeyman's old established national organizations were necessarily limited, as the State or nation was then still a very imperfect conception. The modern working proletariat is not organized nationally only, it has widened its basis; despite all wars and hostilities between one nation and another, it has organized itself internationally; the working proletariat of all countries are united.

#### CONTRASTS IN THE SOLIDARITY OF THE WORKERS UNDER FEUDALISM AND UNDER CAPITALISM.

Already in the days of the journeymen mechanics the beginnings may be found of international organizations. The exploited classes of those days showed they were able to rise above national barriers; but there was one barrier above which they could not lift themselves—that of their own trade. The hatmaker, for instance,

of one country felt one with those of others, but the shoemakers, tailors, and other workers of his own country remained strangers to him. At that time the various trades were separated by sharp lines; the applicant for admission to any of them was held to a long apprenticeship before he became a journeyman, and he remained loyal to his trade for life. The power and prosperity of his trade were his own; although, in a certain sense, the journeyman's interests were opposed to those of his guild master, yet were they opposed to those of both master and journeyman of all other trades. The spectacle was frequent during the most flourishing period of the guilds that the journeymen of the various trades were involved in fierce strifes with one another.

The capitalist system of production, on the contrary, throws the various trades together and mixes them up inextricably. In a capitalist establishment, people of different trades are seen generally working together, and jointly operating towards a common end. Furthermore, the capitalist system has the tendency to wipe out the very idea of a trade in production: the machine shortens the time of apprenticeship, that formerly extended over years, down to weeks and days; it makes it possible for the several workmen to pass from one occupation to another without great difficulty, and it often even compels them to the change by frequently rendering them superfluous in their former lines, throwing them out of work, and compelling them to look for another job. The freedom in the choice of a pursuit which the philistines fear to lose in socialist society, is a thing that has lost all meaning to the working class under the present system.

UNDER CAPITALISM ALL SECTIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS ARE WELDED TOGETHER.

Under such circumstances, it has become an easy matter for the workingman to lift himself above the barriers before which the journeyman of old halted. The sense of solidarity among the modern working proletariat is, accordingly, not only international, it now extends over the whole working class.

Already in the Middle Ages there was a variety of forms of wage labor; neither are the conflicts between wage-workers and their exploiters something new; but it was not until the rule of the capitalist system came into force that the spectacle was presented of the rise of an embattled class of wage-workers, conscious of the oneness of their interests, and ever more ready to subordinate to the interests of their class, as a whole, not only their personal, but also their local and, in so far as these still continue to exist, their separate trade interests. It is only in our own century that the struggles of the wage-workers, the working proletariat, against exploitation assume the character of a class struggle. It is only by virtue thereof that these struggles are enabled to aim at a higher goal than that of simply removing this or that objectionable feature of the existing system, and that the Labor Movement has become a revolutionary movement.

Under these conditions, the horizon of the working class broad-

ens steadily. This holds good, in the first place, with regard to the working proletariat employed in large production; but the same as the industrial form of capital becomes more and more the standard for all capital, and even for all economic undertakings within the reach of capitalist nations, so likewise do the thoughts and sentiments of that portion of the proletariat that is engaged in large production strike the keynote for the thoughts and sentiments of the whole wage-working class. The consciousness of the unity of the interests of all takes possession of one set of workers after another, just as fast as the all-pervading influence of large production forces itself into the various classes of industries.

Next follow the workers engaged in non-productive occupations—in trade, communication and transportation, etc. Lastly, the agricultural wage proletariat will finally be drawn in by the recognition of the oneness of its interests with those of all other wage-workers, a recognition that is being hastened by the introduction of capitalist methods into the old and until now, to a great extent, patriarchally conducted system of agriculture, and, consequently, by the inevitable transformation of the farm-hands into out-and-out wage-working proletarians, wholly disconnected by any personal bonds from the family of the employer. Progress in this direction from this source is already perceptible.

Thus, by degrees, all the sections of the working class are being welded into one, animated by the spirit of the proletariat employed in large production, and which is steadily on the increase. Steadily the whole mass is being leavened by the spirit of comradeship, of discipline, and of hostility to the capitalist class that is peculiar to the workers in large production; and above all, hand in hand with this progress, the unquenchable thirst for knowledge, which is one of the leading features of the progressive proletarians, permeates all the ranks of their class.

Thus, by degrees, there rises out of the despised, maltreated, degraded proletariat a historic power before which the powers that be have begun to tremble. Thus a new class is in the process of formation that brings with it a new code of morals and new philosophy; a class that grows daily in numbers, in compactness, in consciousness of its mission, in intelligence, and into an economic necessity.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### COUNTER TENDENCIES THAT UPLIFT AND ABASE THE PROLETARIAT.

The uplifting of the proletariat from its degradation is an inevitable and natural process; but the process is neither a peaceful nor a uniform one. The tendencies of the capitalist system of production are to debase the working population. The moral new birth of the proletariat is possible only by antagonizing these tendencies and their promoters, the capitalists; and this can be done only by imparting sufficient strength to the counter tendencies that are born

of the new conditions in the camp of the proletariat itself, the conditions under which the working class toils and lives. The debasing tendencies of the capitalist system are, however, very different at different periods, in different localities, and in different industries; they depend upon the condition of the market, upon the degree of competition among the several establishments, upon the grade reached in the development of machinery in the respective branches of industry, upon the extent and measure of the clearness with which the capitalists understand their class interests, etc.<sup>1</sup> Likewise do the counter tendencies that develop in the several layers of the proletariat depend upon manifold circumstances: they depend, in turn, upon the customs and wants of the population from whose ranks the class of the proletariat has been recruited; upon the degree of skill or strength required in the respective industries; upon the extent to which woman and child labor prevails; upon the size of the industrial reserve army, which is very different in several industries; upon the clearness with which the working people perceive their class interests; and, lastly, upon the nature of the work, whether it isolates or brings the workers together.

Each of these several sets of circumstances in the several industries and subdivisions of the proletariat vary not only greatly, but they are subject to constant changes owing to the uninterrupted course of the technical and economic revolution in production. Every day capital subjects some new section of the country and some new branch of industry to its process of exploitation and reduces the respective population to the level of the proletarians; every day new branches of industry spring into life, and existing ones are revolutionized. The spectacle presented at the inception of the capitalist system of production is seen to-day. Even now, new layers of the population are thrown into the class of the working proletariat, others sink below into the slums, and others again rise above the lowest grades; among the working proletarians themselves there is a constant flux and reflux noticeable; some portions are seen to rise, others to decline, according as the uplifting or the depressing tendencies may temporarily have the upper hand.

<sup>1</sup>Competition is the completest expression of the battle of all against all which rules modern civil society. This battle, a battle for life, for existence, for everything, in case of need a battle of life and death, is fought not between the different classes of society only, but also between the individual members of these classes. Each is in the way of the other, and each seeks to crowd out all who are in his way, and to put himself in their place. The workers are in constant competition among themselves, as the members of the bourgeoisie among themselves. The power-loom weaver is in competition with the hand-loom weaver, the unemployed or ill-paid hand-loom weaver with him who has work or is better paid, each trying to supplant the other. But this competition of the workers among themselves is the worst side of the present state of things in its effect upon the worker, the sharpest weapon against the proletariat in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The proletarian is helpless; left to himself he cannot live a single day. The bourgeoisie has gained a monopoly of all means of existence in the broadest sense of the word. What the proletarian needs, he can obtain only from this bourgeoisie, which is protected in its monopoly by the power of the State. The proletarian, is, therefore, in law and in fact, the slave of the bourgeoisie, which can decree his life or death. It offers him the means of living,

Fortunately, however, for the cause of human rejuvenation, a time is reached, sooner or later, by most of the layers of the proletariat when the uplifting tendencies obtain a decided mastery, and when they are effective enough to awaken in some section or another of the proletariat a consciousness of self, a consciousness of its class distinction, a consciousness of the solidarity of all its members and of the whole working class, a consciousness of power that is born of their close union. So soon as any portion of the proletariat has reached the understanding of the fact that its class is an indispensable economic element in society; so soon as the sense of self-respect is kindled in its ranks; so soon as it arrives at the conviction that a brighter future is in store for its class and that its emancipation depends upon itself; so soon as any portion of the proletariat has risen high enough in the understanding of its situation and its mission, then is its influence bound to pervade its whole class and it becomes difficult to push it back into the level of those degraded beings, who are able to hate but not to hold out together in a prolonged struggle; who, despairing of their future, seek to forget their misery in debauch; and who have not the stamina for revolt, but are fit only for abject submission. It is next to impossible to eradicate the class-consciousness out of that portion of the proletarians where it has once taken hold. However strongly the debasing influences of the capitalist system may make themselves felt, they may be able to push down such a portion of the proletariat *economically*, but never *morally*, provided always the pressure be not crushing. With this exception, the pressure brought to bear by capitalism upon the class-conscious proletariat will have the effect of producing a counter pressure; it will not debase, but embitter; it will not degrade the proletariat to the ignominy of the slums, it will raise them to the dignity of martyrdom.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE INDUSTRIAL RESERVE ARMY.

#### ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED IS RECRUITED THROUGH IMMIGRATION.

We have seen that the introduction of female and child labor in industry is one of the most powerful means whereby the capitalists reduce the wages of workingmen. There is, however, another means, which, periodically, is just as powerful, to wit, the introduction of workingmen from neighborhoods that are backward, and whose

but only for an "equivalent" for his work. It even lets him have the appearance of acting from free choice, of making a contract with free, unrestrained consent, as a responsible agent who has attained his majority.

Fine freedom, where the proletarian has no other choice than that of either accepting the conditions which the bourgeoisie offers him, or of starving, of freezing to death, of sleeping naked among the beasts of the forest! A fine equivalent valued at pleasure by the bourgeoisie. And if one proletarian is such a fool as to starve rather than to agree to the equitable propositions of the bourgeoisie, his "natural superiors," another is easily found in his place; there are proletarians enough in the world, and not all so insane as to prefer dying to living.—"Condition of the Working Class in England."

population has slight wants, but whose labor-power has not yet been unnerved by the factory system. The development of production upon a large scale, of machinery, namely, makes possible not only the employment of such untrained workmen in the place of trained ones, but also their cheap and prompt transportation to the place where they are wanted. Hand in hand with the development of production goes the system of transportation; colossal production corresponds with colossal transportation, not of merchandise only, but of persons also. Steamships and railroads, these much-vaunted pillars of civilization, not only carry guns, liquor and syphilis to barbarians, but they also bring the barbarians to us, and with them their barbarism. The flow of agricultural laborers into the cities is becoming ever stronger; and from ever further regions are the swarms of those drawing nearer who have less wants, are more patient, and offer less resistance. Slovacs, Swedes, and Italians emigrate to Germany; Germans, Belgians, Italians emigrate to France; Slovacs, Germans, Italians, Irishmen, Swedes, emigrate to England; Slovacs, Russians, Armenians, Swedes, Italians, Irish, English, and Chinese emigrate to the United States—all of them bearing down upon wages in each place. All these foreign workingmen are partly expropriated people, small farmers and producers, whom the capitalist system of production has ruined, driven on the street, and deprived, not only of a home, but also of a country. Socialism is often charged by the philistines with a lack of patriotism. Look at those swarms of emigrants; what is it but capitalism that has expropriated these wretches, and inflicted upon them the bane of exile?

#### ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED IS RECRUITED THROUGH WOMAN AND CHILD LABOR.

Through the expropriation of the small farmers and producers, through the importation from distant lands of large masses of labor, through the development of woman and child labor, through the shortening of the time necessary to acquire a trade, through all these means the capitalist system of production is enabled to increase stupendously the quantity of labor forces that are at its disposal. And side by side with this goes a steady increase in the productivity of human labor as the result of the uninterrupted progress in technical arts.

#### ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED IS RECRUITED THROUGH INTRODUCTION OF MACHINERY.

Simultaneously with these tendencies, the machine steadily tends to displace workingmen and render them superfluous. Every machine saves labor-power; unless it did that it would be useless. In every branch of industry—and be it well remembered, agriculture is to-day an industry and is identically affected—the transition from hand to machine labor is accompanied with the greatest amount of suffering to the workingmen who are affected by it, who, whether they be mechanics or handicraftsmen, or whether they be farmhands, engaged in ploughing, reaping, or picking cotton, are made superfluous by the machine and are thrown out upon the streets and

roadsides. It was this effect of machinery that the workingmen felt first. Numerous riots during the first years of this century, and not infrequent occurrences to-day, attest the quantity of suffering which the transition from hand to machine labor, or the introduction of improved machinery, inflicts upon the working class, and the despair to which they are thereby driven. The introduction of machinery, as well as its subsequent improvement, is every time baneful to the workingmen whom it affects. True enough, under certain conditions, other workingmen may gain thereby, such workingmen, for instance, as may be employed in the manufacture of the machine itself; but, in the first place, these happy ones are to-day always much fewer than those who suffer; and, in the second place, it may well be doubted whether a consciousness of this fact could go far to console the starving ones.

Every machine causes either as much to be produced as before with fewer workmen, or a larger quantity of articles with no increase in the number of workmen. It follows that, if in a country the number of workmen employed does not decrease with the development of the system of machinery, then the market must be extended in proportion to the increased productivity of these workmen. Seeing, however, that the economic development increases the productivity of labor at the same time that it increases in a greater degree the quantity of disposable labor, it follows that, in order to prevent enforced idleness among the workmen, the market must be extended at a much more rapid pace than the pace at which the productivity of labor is increased by the machine. Such a rapid extension of the market has, however, rarely occurred under the rule of capitalist production. The "expansion" theory to-day advocated by capitalists, will be found inadequate. It follows that enforced idleness is a permanent phenomenon under the capitalist system of production, and is inseparable from it. Even in the best of times, when the market suddenly undergoes a considerable extension and business is most brisk, production is not able to furnish work to all the unemployed. During bad times, however, when business is at a standstill, their number rises to fabulous figures. In fact, the unemployed constitute quite an army—the industrial reserve army, as Marx called it; it is an army of labor forces that stands ever ready, at the disposal of the capitalist; an army out of which he can draw his reserves whenever the industrial campaign grows hot.

#### VALUE OF THE ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS.

To the capitalist, this reserve army is invaluable. It places in his hands a powerful weapon with which to curb and subject the army of the employed. After excessive work on the part of some has produced lack of work for others, then the idleness of these is used as a means to keep up and even increase the excessive work of the former.<sup>1</sup> And yet there are people who will deny that matters are to-day arranged at their best.

<sup>1</sup>Whence comes this incongruity? It lies in the nature of industrial competition and the commercial crises which arise from it. In the present unreg-



Although the size of the industrial reserve army rises and falls with the ups and downs of business, nevertheless, on the whole, it shows a steady tendency to increase. This is inevitable. The technical development moves on at an ever-increasing pace, and steadily increases its fields of operations, while, on the other hand, the extension of the markets is hemmed in by natural bounds.

What, then, is the full significance of lack of work? It signifies not only want and misery to the unemployed, not only intensified vassalage and exploitation to the employed; it signifies, furthermore, uncertainty of livelihood to the whole working class.

Whatever hardships former modes of exploitation inflicted upon the exploited, one boon they left them: the certainty of a livelihood. The sustenance of the serf and the slave was assured at least so long as the life of the master himself was assured. Only when the master perished was the existence of his dependents in peril. Whatever amount of misery and dearth broke out over the people under former systems of production, such visitations were never the result of production itself, they were the result of a disturbance of production, brought on by failures of crop, drouths, floods, irruptions of hostile armies, etc.

To-day, the existence of the exploiter and the exploited are not bound up in each other. At any moment the workman can be thrown upon the street with wife and children, and be given over to starvation, without the exploiter, whom he has made rich, being the worse for it.

To-day, the misery of enforced idleness is only in very exceptional instances the result of a disturbance in production through influences from without; enforced idleness among the workingmen is but a necessary result of the development of the present system of production. To-day, just the reverse happens of what happened under former systems of production. To-day, such disturbances in production rather improve the opportunities for work than otherwise; war, with all its devastating influences, has for its result an immediate increase in the demand for labor.

Under our former system of production on a small scale, the income of the worker was in proportion to his industry. Laziness ruined him, and finally threw him out of work. To-day, on the contrary, lack of work is greater the more and the longer the workman

ulated production and distribution of the means of subsistence, which is carried on not directly for the sake of supplying needs, but for profit, in the system under which everyone works for himself to enrich himself, disturbances inevitably arise at every moment. For example, England supplies a number of countries with most diverse goods. Now, although a manufacturer may know how much of each article is consumed in each country annually, he cannot know how much is on hand at every given moment, much less can he know how much his competitors export thither. He can only draw most uncertain inferences from the perpetual fluctuations in prices, as to the quantities on hand and the needs for the moment. He must trust to luck in exporting his goods. Everything is done blindly, as guess-work, more or less at the mercy of accident. Upon the slightest favorable report, each one exports what he can, and before long such a market is glutted, capital remains inactive, prices fall, and English manufacture has no further employment for its hands.—“Condition of the Working Class in England,” p. 82.

toils; he brings enforced idleness upon himself by his own toil. Among the many homely adages, which originated during the system of small production, and which capitalist large production has reversed, the following is one: "The industry of the laborer builds up his house." Likewise has the maxim, so often upon the lips of the philistines, that "whoever will work will find bread" been turned into a lie.

To-day the possession of strength to labor is, to the workingman, as unreliable a shield against want and misery as property itself is to the small producer. As the spectre of *bankruptcy* casts its shadow across the path of the small farmer and small industrialist, so does the spectre of "*out of work*" darken that of the wage-worker. Of all the ills that attend the present system of production, the most trying, the most aggravating, that which harrows men's souls deepest, and which pulls by the roots every instinct of conservatism, is the permanent uncertainty of a livelihood. This eternal uncertainty of one's own condition undermines one's hope in the certainty of life, and all his interest in its preservation.

Excessive work, lack of work, the dissolution of the family—these are the gifts which the capitalist system of production carries to the proletariat at the same time that it causes that class to swell from day to day, and its condition to spread perceptibly, more and more, over the whole population.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE STEADY INCREASE OF THE PROLETARIAT—MERCANTILE AND EDUCATED PROLETARIAT.

It is not only through the extension of large production that the capitalist system causes the condition of the proletariat to become more and more that of the whole population. It brings this about also through the circumstance that the condition of the wage-workers engaged in large production strikes the keynote for the condition of wage-workers in all other branches. The conditions under which the latter work and live are revolutionized; the advantages which they may have had over those employed in capitalist industry are turned into so many disadvantages under the influence of the latter. To illustrate: In those localities where mechanics still work for, and board and lodge with, the master mechanic, the poor board and lodging which the wage-worker employed in a capitalist industry can afford become a pretext for the master mechanic to reduce both the board and the comforts of lodging which his workmen enjoy. Again: Formerly the long period requisite for apprenticeship was the means to prevent the overstocking of a trade; to-day, the system of apprenticeship, conducted under the guise of benevolence in many of our large cities, and called Trades Schools, notably in New York and Pittsburg, is one of the most effective means to overrun many a trade with cheap labor, and to knock the bread from the mouths of the adult laborers. In this respect also, as in so

many others, those institutions, which, under the system of small production, were sensible and beneficent, have, under the influence of the capitalist system, become either nonsensical or hurtful.

#### EFFECT OF CAPITALISM ON SMALL STORES.

There is another, and very extensive, domain on which the capitalist system of large production exercises its influence of turning the population into proletarians—the domain of commerce. The large stores have begun to bear, and are now bearing, heavily upon the small ones. The number of small stores does not, therefore, necessarily diminish. On the contrary, it increases. The small store is the last refuge of the bankrupt small producer. Were the small stores actually crowded out, the ground would be wholly taken from under the feet of the small traders; they would then be forthwith thrust below the class of the proletariat into the slums; they would be returned into beggars, vagabonds, and candidates for the penitentiary. Such in fact is, to a great extent, the evolution of the small trader.

But it is not in the *reduction* of the number of small stores, it is in the *debasement* of their character that the influence of large production manifests itself in commerce. The small trader deals in ever worse and cheaper goods; the tribe of the haberdasher grows; and the streets and roads are overrun with peddlers, itinerant vendors, and hucksters of all manner of worthless articles; of spoiled fruit, decayed vegetables, etc., sold under false pretences with all sorts of fraudulent devices, such as deceptive measures and weights. Thus the livelihood of the independent small trader becomes ever more precarious, more proletarian-like, while, steadily and at the same time, in the large stores, the number of employees goes up—genuine proletarians, without prospect of ever becoming independent. Woman and child labor, with their accompaniment of prostitution; excessive work; lack of work; starvation wages—all the symptoms of large production appear also in increasing quantity in the domain of commerce. Steadily the condition of the employees in this department approaches that of the proletarians in the department of production. The only difference perceptible between the two is that the former preserve the *appearances* of a better living, which require sacrifices unknown to the industrial proletarians.

#### CAPITALISM TURNS EDUCATION INTO A COMMODITY.

There is still a third category of proletarianism that has gone far on the road of its complete development: the *educated proletarians*. Education has become a special trade under our present system. The measure of knowledge has increased greatly, and grows daily. Capitalist society and the capitalist State are ever more in need of men of knowledge and ability to conduct their business, in order to bring the forces of nature under their power, be it for purposes of production or of destruction, or to enable them to expend in luxurious living their increasing profits. Now, then, it is not only the hardworking small farmer, mechanic, or the proletarians in general, who have no time to devote themselves to science and art;

the merchant, the manufacturer, the banker, the stock-jobber, the landlord class—all of these are in the same fix. Their whole time is taken up either with their work, or with their "business" and pleasures, as the case may be. In modern society, it is not, as it used to be under previous social orders, the exploiters themselves, or, at least, a class of them, who nurse the arts and sciences. The present exploiters, our ruling class, leave these pursuits to a special class, whom they keep in hire. Under this system, education becomes a merchandise.

A hundred years ago or so, this commodity was rare. There were few schools; study was accompanied with considerable expense. So long as small production could support the worker, he stuck to it; only special gifts of nature or favorable circumstances would cause the sons of these to dedicate themselves to the arts and sciences. Incredible, or unlikely, as it may look at first blush, even in so new a country as the United States, the demand for physicians, teachers, artists, etc., was, for quite a long number of years, supplied almost entirely by this limited class and its descendants.

So long as this condition of things lasted, the merchandise education commanded a high price. Its possession procured, at least to those who applied it to practical ends, lawyers, for instance, physicians, professors, etc., quite comfortable livings; not infrequently it also brought fame and honor. The artist, the poet, the philosopher, were, in monarchical countries, the companions of royalty; in our republic they were persons of unquestioned distinction. The aristocracy of intellect felt itself superior to the aristocracy of birth or of money. The only care of such was the development of their intellect. Hence it happened that people of culture could be, and often were, idealists. This circumstance explains the appearance, in the forties, of that galaxy of men and women who took up in this country the idealist philosophy of Fourier, resulting in the communistic tidal wave that swept over the land at that time. These aristocrats of education and culture stood above the other classes and their material aspirations and antagonisms. Education meant power, happiness, and worthiness. The conclusion seemed inevitable, that, in order to make all men happy and worthy, in order to banish all class antagonisms, all poverty, all wickedness and meanness out of the world, nothing else was needed than to spread education and culture.

#### GREAT INCREASE OF EDUCATED PEOPLE.

Since those days the development of higher education has made immense progress. The number of institutions of learning increased wonderfully, and, in a still larger degree, the number of pupils. In the meantime, the bottom was knocked out of small production. The small property-holder knows to-day no other way of keeping his sons from sinking into the proletariat but by sending them to college; and he does this if his means will at all allow. But, furthermore, he must consider the future, not of his sons only, but of his daughters also. The rapid development in the division of labor is

steadily encroaching upon the household; it is converting one household duty after another into a special industry, and steadily diminishing household work. Weaving, sewing to a great extent, knitting, baking, and many other occupations, that at one time filled up the round of household duties, have been either wholly or substantially withdrawn from the sphere of house-keeping. More than fifty years ago, the "store close" of which Artemus Ward loved to make frequent mention, began, in this country, to compete with and supplant the homespun; and similarly, many another home-made staple was extinguished, and its production absorbed by specialized industries. As a result of all this, matrimony, where the wife is to be housekeeper only, is becoming more and more a matter of luxury. But it so happens that the small property-holder and producer is, at the same time, sinking steadily, and steadily becoming poorer; ever more and more he loses the means to indulge in luxuries. In consequence of this, the number of spinsters grows apace, and ever larger is the number of those families in which mother and daughter must work for a living. Accordingly, woman labor does not only increase in the domains of both large and small production and commerce, it also spreads in other directions, in government offices, on the telegraph, telephone, railroads, banks, in office clerkships—book-keeping, typewriting, stenography—and in the sphere of the arts and sciences. However loudly prejudices and personal interests may rebel against it, woman labor presses itself forward more and more upon the various professional pursuits. It is not vanity, nor importunity, nor pride, but the force of the economic development that drives woman to labor in these as well as in other departments of human activity. In those countries and those localities of the United States where the men have succeeded in excluding the competition of women from those branches of intellectual pursuits which are still organized upon the old guild principle, the latter press with all the greater force upon those pursuits that are not so organized, like writing, painting, music, etc.

The result of this whole development is that the number of educated people has increased enormously. Nevertheless, the beneficial results which the idealists expected from an increase of education have not followed. So long as education is a merchandise, its extension is tantamount to an increase in the quantity of that merchandise, consequently, to the falling of its price, and the decline of the condition of those who possess it. The number of educated people has grown to such an extent that it more than suffices for the wants of the capitalists and of the capitalist State. The labor market of educated labor is to-day as overstocked as that of manual labor. To-day, it is no longer the manual workers alone who have their reserve army of the unemployed, and are afflicted with lack of work; the educated workers also have their reserve army of idleness, and among them also lack of work has taken up its permanent quarters. Those who strain for a public office experience the difficulty of obtaining it by reason of the crowd; those others who seek employment elsewhere experience the extremes of idleness and excess

sive work the same as the manual workers, and just the same as these they are the victims of wage-slavery.

#### CONDITION OF EDUCATED WORKERS CONTINUALLY DETERIORATES.

The condition of the educated workers deteriorates visibly; formerly, people spoke of the "aristocracy of the intellect," to-day we speak of the "intellectual" or "educated" proletariat; the time is near when the bulk of these proletarians will be distinguishable from the others only by their *conceit*. Most of these still imagine they are something better than the manual proletarians; they fancy themselves members of the ruling class; but this attitude distinguishes itself in nothing from that of the lackeys, who, behind the backs of their masters, put on airs of lordship. These "educated proletarians" have ceased to be the intellectual leaders of the capitalist class; they are to-day, to the capitalist and to capitalist institutions, what "bruisers" and "gougers" are to low taverns. Scheming and plotting are their leading pursuits; their first thought is not the development of their intellectual goods, but the sale of these; their principal method of getting along is the prostitution of their own individuality. Thesameas with the small producers, they are dazzled by a few brilliant prizes in the lottery of life, they shut their eyes to the numberless blanks in the wheel, and barter away body and soul for the merest chance of drawing such a prize. *The barter and sale of one's convictions and a marriage for money*, these are, in the eyes of the majority of our educated proletarians, two means, as natural as they are necessary, "to make one's fortune." Into such creatures has the capitalist system of production turned our idealists, inventors, thinkers, and dreamers!

Still, the supply of this class grows so rapidly that there is little to be made out of education, even though one throw his own individuality into the bargain. The decline of the bulk of educated people into the class of the proletariat can no longer be checked.<sup>1</sup>

Whether this development will result in a movement of the educated people to join the battling proletariat in mass, and not, as hitherto, singly, is still uncertain. This, however, is certain: the fact that the educated people are being turned into proletarians has closed to the class of the proletariat the only gate that was still open, and through which its members might, by dint of their own unaided efforts, have been able to escape into the class above.

It is out of all question that the wage-worker can become a capitalist, at least not in the ordinary run of events. Sensible people do not consider the chances of earning a prize in a Louisiana Lottery, or of one's falling heir to the wealth of some unknown

<sup>1</sup>The great bulk of the professional class, the only portion of it which is now increasing in number, can no more boast of economic independence than the manual worker, although living, on an average, upon a higher plane of comfort. Books, instruments, costumes, etc., according to professions, are the necessary and only possessions of an overwhelming majority of the people of this class. It is from this poorer stratum—from this intellectual proletariat, so-called—that Socialism, in the countries where it is now strongest, has recruited some of its most active, gifted and courageous exponents.—"Socialist Almanac," p. 104.

## MERCANTILE AND EDUCATED PROLETARIAT.

ative, when they deal with the condition of the working class. Under certain particularly favorable circumstances it did formerly happen, here and there, that a workman succeeded by dint of great privations in saving up enough wherewith to start a little industry of his own, or set up a little retail shop, or give his son a chance to study and become something "better" than his father. It was always ridiculous to hold out such possibilities to the workmen as the means of improving their condition. In the ordinary course of events the workingman may thank his stars if he is at all able, during good times, to lay by enough not to remain empty handed when work becomes slack. To-day, however, to hold out such possibilities to the workman is more ridiculous than ever. The economic development does not only make saving on the part of the workingman more and more difficult, if at all possible, but it also renders it utterly impossible, even though he may be able to save up something, to therewith pull himself or his children out of the class of the proletariat. To invest his little savings in some small independent industry, were for him to jump from the frying-pan into the fire; ten to one, he will be flung back to his previous condition, with the bitter experience that the small producer can no longer keep his head above water—an experience which he will have purchased with the loss of his hard-earned savings.

Still more difficult than the transition into the class of the small producer, indeed, utterly hopeless, is the attempt on the part of the proletarian to give his son a chance to study. But let it be accepted, for the sake of argument, that such an attempt has been successful; of what use will a college education be to the son of the proletariat, who, being without funds and without influence, cannot wait for a good chance to sell his knowledge, in these days when thousands of lawyers, doctors, engineers, and all manner of professional men are going about hungry?

### SOCIALIST REPUBLIC THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.

To-day, whichever way the proletarian may turn, he finds awaiting him the same proletarian conditions of life and of toil. Those conditions pervade society more and more; in all countries the bulk of the population has sunk to the level of the proletariat; to the individual proletarian all prospect has vanished of ever being able, by his own efforts, to pull himself out of the quagmire into which the present system of production has pushed him. The forecast of James Madison, made sixty-five years ago, that, owing to our competitive social system, the bulk of our people would ere long have lost, not only all property, but *even the hope of the prospect of acquiring any*, has been verified to the letter.

The individual proletarian can accomplish his own redemption only with the redemption of his whole class. That consummation cannot, however, be reached without the collective ownership by the people of their instruments of production, namely, by the Socialist Republic.

At every previous social revolution, or be it evolution, class superseded class. Thus the theocratic class superseded the patri-

archic; the feudal superseded the theocratic; and, in our own day, the capitalist superseded the feudal. In each instance a class be-  
upset the class above, emancipated itself by subjugating others, and introduced a new form of human exploitation.

To rear, on the contrary, the Socialist Republic; to abolish class antagonisms by abolishing the last of the systems of human exploitation; to redeem itself, and, alone of all classes in the social evolution of the human species, to accomplish its own redemption together with that of the whole, not at the expense of any portion of mankind—that is the historic mission of the Proletariat; that the noble aim that swells with pride the breast, and sweetens the present bitterness of the lot of every Proletarian who is conscious of his class distinction and the obligation it imposes upon him.



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