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Paul Lafargue

Hobnail Press

The Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man

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**The Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man
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Publishing with radical intent

"I make you free," so speak the Rights of Man to the laborer, "free" to earn a wretched living and turn your employer into a millionaire; free to sell him your liberty for a mouthful of bread. He will imprison you ten hours or twelve hours in his workshops; he will not let you go till you are wearied to the marrow of your bones, till you have just enough strength left to gulp down pour soup and sink into a heavy sleep. You have but one of your rights that you may not sell, and that is the right to pay taxes.

Progress and Civilisation may be hard on wage-working humanity but they have all a mother's tenderness for the animals which stupid bipeds call "lower."

Civilization has especially favored the equine race: it would be too great a task to go through the long lists of its benefactions; I will name but a few, of general notoriety, that I may awaken and inflame the passionate desires of the workers, now torpid in their misery.

Horses are divided into distinct classes. The equine aristocracy
In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act

The Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man

Capitalist Civilization has endowed the wage-worker with the metaphysical Rights of Man, but this is only to rivet him more closely and more firmly to his economic duty.

"I make you free," so speak the Rights of Man to the laborer, "free" to earn a wretched living and turn your employer into a millionaire; free to sell him your liberty for a mouthful of bread. He will imprison you ten hours or twelve hours in his workshops; he will not let you go till you are wearied to the marrow of your bones, till you have just enough strength left to gulp down pour soup and sink into a heavy sleep. You have but one of your rights that you may not sell, and that is the right to pay taxes.

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Horses are divided into distinct classes. The equine aristocracy enjoys so many and so oppressive privileges, that if the human-

faced brutes which serve them as jockeys, trainers, stable valets and grooms were not morally degraded to the point of not feeling their shame, they would have rebelled against their lords and masters, whom they rub down, groom, brush and comb, also making their beds, cleaning up their excrements and receiving bites and kicks by way of thanks.

Aristocratic horses, like capitalists, do not work; and when they exercise themselves in the fields they look disdainfully, with a contempt, upon the human animals which plow and seed the lands, mow and rake the meadows, to provide them with oats, clover, timothy and other succulent plants.

These four-footed favorites of Civilization command such social influence that they impose their wills upon the capitalists, their brothers in privilege; they force the loftiest of them to come with their beautiful ladies and take tea in the stables, inhaling the acrid perfumes of their solid and liquid evacuations. And when these lords consent to parade in public, they require from ten to twenty thousand men and women to stack themselves up on uncomfortable seats, under the broiling sun, to admire their exquisitely chiselled forms and their feats of running and leaping. They respect none of the social dignities before which the votaries of the Rights of Man bow in reverence. At Chantilly not long ago one of the favorites for the grand prize launched a kick at the king of Belgium, because it did not like the looks of his head. His royal majesty, who adores horses, murmured an apology and withdrew.

It is fortunate that these horses, who can count more authentic ancestors than the houses of Orleans and Hohenzollern, have not been corrupted by their high social station; had they taken it into their heads to rival the capitalists in aesthetic pretensions, profligate luxury and depraved tastes, such as wearing lace and diamonds, and drinking champagne and Chateau-Margaux, a blacker misery and more overwhelming drudgery would be impending over the class of wage-workers.

Thrice happy is it for proletarian humanity that these equine aristocrats have not taken the fancy of feeding upon human flesh, like the old Bengal tigers which rove around the villages of India to carry off women and children; if unhappily the horses had been man-eaters, the capitalists, who can refuse them nothing, would have built slaughter-houses for wages-workers, where they could carve out and dress boy sirloins, woman hams and girl roasts to satisfy their anthropophagic tastes.

The proletarian horses, not so well endowed, have to work for their peck of oats, but the capitalist class, through deference for the aristocrats of the equine race, concedes to the working horses rights that are far more solid and real than those inscribed in the "Rights of Man." The first of rights, the right to existence, which no civilised society will recognize for laborers, is possessed by horses.

straw: to think of the unhappy horses having such poor litters! The more delicate souls of the bourgeoisie have in every capitalist country organized societies for the protection of animals, in order to prove that they can not be excited by the fate of the small victims of industry. Schopenhauer, the bourgeois philosopher, in whom was incarnated so perfectly the gross egoism of the philistine, could not hear the cracking of a whip without his heart being torn by it.

This same omnibus company, which works its laborers from fourteen to sixteen hours a day, requires from its dear horses only five to seven hours. It has bought green meadows in which they may recuperate from fatigue or indisposition. Its policy is to expend more for the entertainment of a quadruped than for paying the wages of a biped. It has never occurred to any legislator nor to any fanatical advocate of the "Rights of Man" to reduce the horse's daily pittance in order to assure him a retreat that would be of service to him only after his death.

The Rights of Horses have not been posted up; they are "unwritten rights", as Socrates called the laws implanted by Nature in the consciousness of all men.

The horse has shown in contenting himself with these rights, with no thought of demanding those of the citizen; he has judged that he would have been as stupid as man if he had sacrificed his mess of lentils for the metaphysical banquet of Rights to Revolt, to Equality, to Liberty, and to other trivialities

The colt, even before his birth, while still in the fetus state, begins to enjoy the right to existence; his mother, when her pregnancy has scarcely begun, is discharged from all work and sent into the country to fashion the new being in peace and comfort; she remains near him to suckle him and teach him to choose the delicious grasses of the meadow, in which he gambols until he is grown.

The moralists and politicians of the "Rights of Man" think it would be monstrous to grant such rights to the laborers; I raised a tempest in the Chamber of Deputies when I asked that women, two months before and two months after confinement, should have the right and the means to absent themselves from the factory. My proposition upset the ethics of civilisation and shook the capitalist order. What an abominable abomination - to demand for babies the rights of colts.

As for the young proletarians, they can scarcely trot on their little toes before they are condemned to hard labour in the prisons of capitalism, while the colts develop freely under kindly nature; care is taken that they be completely formed before they are set to work, and their tasks are proportioned to their strength with tender care.

This care on the part of the capitalists follows them all through their lives. We may still recall the noble indignation of the bourgeois press when it learned that the omnibus company was using peat and tannery waste in its stalls as a substitute for

which to the proletariat are about as useful as a cautery on a wooden leg.

Civilisation, though partial to the equine race, has not shown herself indifferent to the fate of other animals. Sheep, like canons, pass their days in pleasant and plentiful idleness; they are fed in the stable on barley, lucerne, rutabagas and other roots, raised by wage-workers; shepherds conduct them to feed in fat pastures, and when the sun parches the plain, they are carried to where they can browse on the tender grass of the mountains.

The Church, which has burned her heretics, and regrets that she can not again bring up her faithful sons in the love of "mutton", represents Jesus, under the form of a kind shepherd, bearing upon his shoulders a weary lamb.

True, the love for the ram and the ewe is in the last analysis only the love for the leg of mutton and the cutlet, just as the Liberty of the Rights of Man is nothing but the slavery of the wage-worker, since our jesuitical Civilisation always disguises capitalist exploitation in eternal principles and bourgeois egoism in noble sentiments; yet at least the bourgeois tends and fattens the sheep up to the day of sacrifice, while he seizes the laborer still warm from the workshop and lean from toil to send him to the shambles of Tonquin or Madagascar.

Laborers of all crafts, you who toil so hard to create your

poverty in producing the wealth of the capitalists, arise, arise! Since the buffoons of parliament unfurl the Rights of Man, do you boldly demand for yourselves, your wives and your children the Rights of the Horse.

most famous work was *The Right to be Lazy*. Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man in 1900; perhaps his pamphlets and essays, including the somewhat whimsical *The bourgeois and radical press*, as well as writing many influential Paul Lafargue was the author of many articles, in both the theorists in the French Workers' Party, the Parti Ouvrier until his death in 1911, he became one of the most respected Between 1873 and 1882 he lived in London. From 1882, perspective.

In 1871, following the severe political repression that followed the fall of the Paris Commune, he fled to Spain. In 1889 he continued to work in the International, attempting to influence the majority anarchist tendency with a more Marxist perspective.

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Paul Lafargue

Paul Lafargue was a French revolutionary socialist, born in 1842 in Santiago de Cuba. The son of Franco-Caribbean coffee plantation owners. The family moved to France in 1851. Eventually studying medicine in Paris, where with he immersed himself in the revolutionary politics of the day.

He initially was influenced by the work of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and joined the Proudhonian anarchist wing of the International Workingmen's Association. After meeting Karl Marx and Auguste Blanqui he developed Marxian tendencies; which moved him to marry Marx's second daughter Laura, in 1868.

In 1871, following the severe political repression that followed the fall of the Paris Commune, he fled to Spain. In Spain he continued to work in the International, attempting to influence the majority anarchist tendency with a more Marxist perspective.

Between 1873 and 1882 he lived in London. From 1882, until his death in 1911, he became one of the most respected theorists in the French Workers' Party, the *Parti Ouvrier Français*.

Paul Lafargue was the author of many articles, in both the bourgeois and radical press, as well as writing many influential pamphlets and essays, including the somewhat whimsical *The Rights of the Horse and the Rights of Man* in 1900; perhaps his most famous work was *The Right to be Lazy*.

At the age of 69, Paul Lafargue died in a suicide pact with his wife Laura. For the occasion, he wrote:

Healthy of body and spirit, I give me death before the implacable old age, that has stealed me one after the other all pleasures and joys of existence, and has exoiled me from my physical and intellectual strength, paralyzes my energy and ends with my willpower, making me a burden for myself and others.

Since years ago I have promised myself not to surpass the age of seventy; I have fixed the season for my departure from this life and prepared the means to execute this decision: a hypodermic injection of cyanhydric acid.

I die with the supreme happiness of having the certainty that very soon will triumph the cause to which I have given myself since 45 years ago.

Hobnail Press: Publishing with Radical Intent

Hobnail Press was founded in 2003. It is an independent, not-for-profit, radical publishing initiative. All labour is freely donated and all proceeds from sales support future publishing ventures, unless otherwise designated.

The primary focus of Hobnail Press is to publish and disseminate information pertaining to small press and alternative publishing, from an anti-authoritarian and libertarian-left perspective. An intrinsic part of this process is the publication of Hobnail Review, a regular review and listings newsletter.

In the tradition of radical pamphleteering, Hobnail Press also publishes a diverse range of low-cost, readily-available and easily-accessible pamphlets; reprinting essays and extracts from the work of 19th and early to mid 20th century freethinkers and radicals; as well as documenting events and scenarios influenced by their message of revolutionary change. A message, largely unchanged by the passage of time, which remains of historical, social, economic and political relevance to working class people today. Hobnail Press believes that reclaiming the past is the key to building the future.

All pamphlets are published in good-faith as an educational medium. As part of this evolutionary process, Hobnail Press endeavours to engender increased awareness, class-consciousness, self-esteem and empowerment. Contemporary analysis and application is at the discretion of the reader.

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