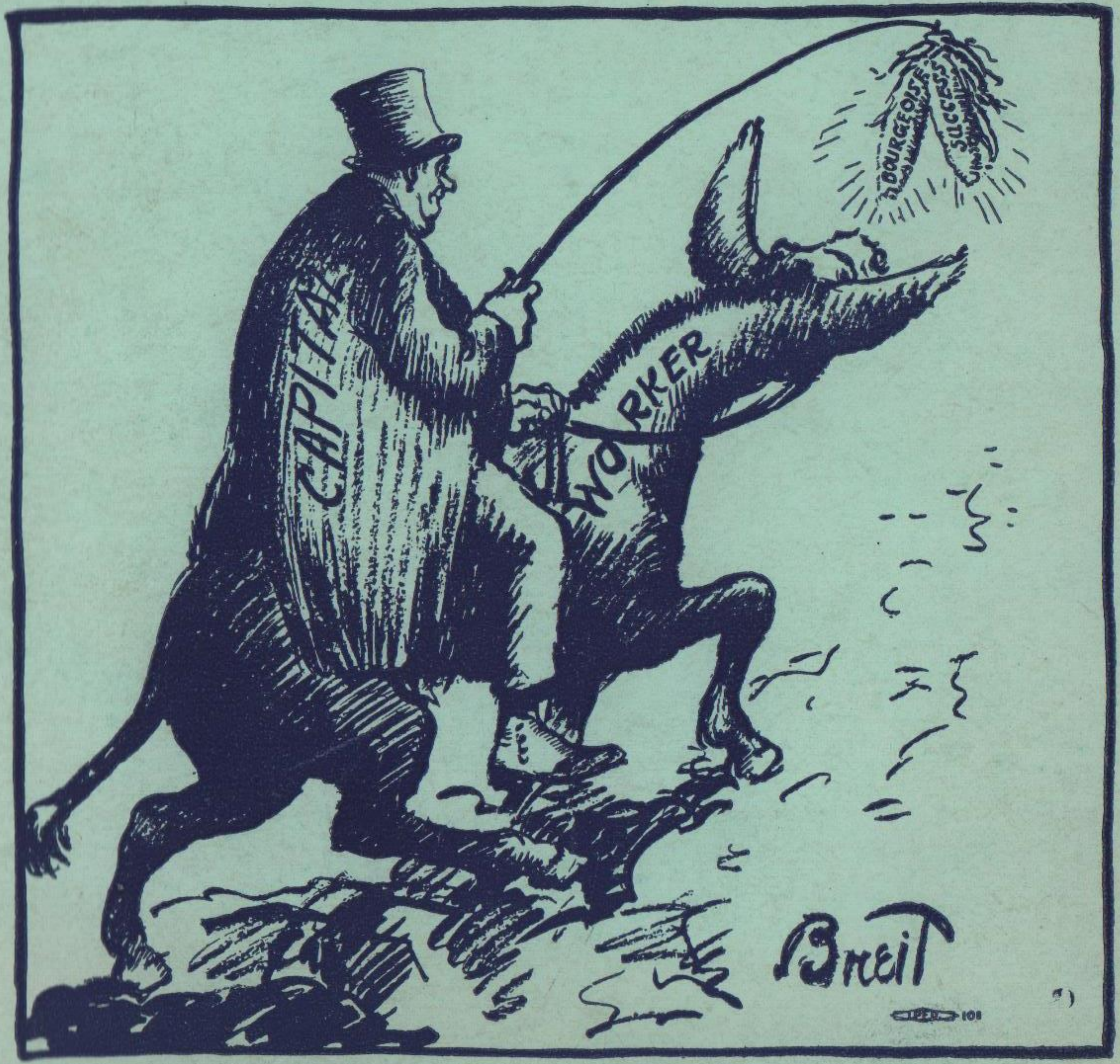
PRODUCERS AND PARASITES



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Price, 10 Cents

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CHICAGO
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY
1935

212

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

PRODUCERS AND PARASITES

In the colonial period of American development, the least numerous class was the wage-workers. There were merchants. There were slave-owners and slaves. There were frontiersmen—hardy fisher-men, trappers and hunters. And just as the small farmers were then the largest section of the population, the wage-workers were the smallest class. What few wage-workers there were worked for the merchants and small manufacturers. They also worked for other small employers of labor, such as the owners of carpenter shops, blacksmith shops, builders and so on.

Today the vast majority of the adult population are wage-workers. Yet there are few wage-workers who really understand what *wages* are. For instance, how many wage-earners understand that there are three kinds of wages; that the payment for their services, their *wages*, has a threefold character?

In working-class economics we classify wages as *nominal, real* and *relative*. It is not so difficult to understand these forms of the wage, yet those who do not grasp their significance do not understand wages.

First, the *nominal wage* is the wage in name, as for example, forty dollars wages or twenty dollars wages, that is to say, the amount of money the worker receives in the pay envelope.

Second, the *real wage* is simply those things that the money wage will buy. You do not work for money in itself but for what it will bring you. Money will not keep you warm and dry in the winter time. You can not eat it. It is food, shelter, clothing, etc., that constitutes the real wage.

Third, there is the *relative wage,* which means the real *value* which the worker receives in *relation* to the *value* he produces.

Perhaps you have never before heard of these three forms of the wage. It is a great advantage for workers to understand this important matter. One of the reasons why wages are such a *mystery* is because there is so much confusion about the function of money.

What Is Money?

Here is where you may smile and say, "Why—*money!* The idea. Everybody knows what money is! Money is money of course! It is the currency of the nation with which you can buy things." Very simple, is it not?

Money is a great mystery. Those who have the most of it usually know the least about it. Henry Ford, one of the world's richest men, has some very utopian notions about the nature and function of money. Even the bankers who handle so much of it are very much like the printers who handle type and who may know little or nothing of the sciences which their type may be explaining.

Now let us see what money really is.

Money is the medium of exchange. It is the means whereby commodity owners exchange what they have for what they require. If you are a wage-worker you have something to sell or exchange. You sell your services, or, to be more correct, your labor-power. Therefore *labor-power* is a commodity. It is *your* commodity. But when

your employer buys it from you it is no longer a commodity. He makes use of your labor-power. To him it is a *use-value.* The things that you and your fellow workers produce, be they steamships or sausages, do not belong to you producers but to the employer. They are *his* commodities.

Use-Values

All products when offered for sale are commodities. They are also use-values. Karl Marx says: "A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference." In other words, a commodity has a use. A spade or pick is used for digging, a knife or an axe for cutting, and so on.

When the consumer purchases an article it ceases to be a commodity. You may buy a hat. To you it is a *use-value* but not to the dealer. It was but a commodity with him. He bought it from another commodity owner, the manufacturer, at less than its value and sold it at its value in order to realize a profit.

Value

But let us go back to money. We said it was a medium through which one commodity owner exchanged his particular commodity with that of other commodity owners.

All commodities have *value.* So must money have value. Nobody would want to sell a commodity for something that had no value. Money is a commodity also. It is exchanged for other commodities. If you have a certain quantity of money to spend you can have your choice of an immense variety of things. That is to say, you can exchange it for things you need, but only within certain limitations. You can not buy an automobile for a dollar.

Buying and selling is, on the *average,* exchanging *value for value.* Every individual commodity, including labor-power, is exchangeable with all others. Of course the quantities vary. You can exchange lead-pencils for an automobile. That is to say, if you had enough lead-pencils and sold them you could buy an automobile with the money-commodity you received as the price of the pencils.

You would not require to exchange as many lead-pencils for a pair of shoes as you would for an automobile. The reason is very plain: There is not so much *socially-necessary* labor in a pair of shoes as in an automobile.

For commodities of all kinds, including the money-commodity, to exchange with each other, there must be something common to all of them. The thing that is common to all commodities is *labor.* They are all produced by labor, all are repositories of human labor. A table or a chair, apart from the tree and other raw materials furnished by nature, is but crystallized human labor. The *value* of commodities, therefore, is determined by the amount of labor socially necessary to produce them. By socially necessary we mean the prevailing method of applying labor. The value of a table is not determined by the old fashioned hand-made method but by the prevailing machine method.

If the *value* of shoes, tables or automobiles is determined by the average amount of socially-necessary labor, it follows that the same is true of the *value* of money—the measure of value, gold.

Some people mistake currency for money. Silver, copper and paper bills are not real money. They are but tokens. In countries like America they but represent, as a check represents, a certain quantity of gold coins. The *value* of the money-commodity, therefore, is determined by the quantity of socially-necessary labor embodied in the gold coinage. The money of modern countries is on a gold basis. Gold is the yardstick; every thing that functions in exchange is measured by gold.

Gold—The Money-Commodity

Gold as dug out of the mine has a value the same as other metals have a value and for the same reason. They are all repositories of human labor. More labor is required to get an ounce of gold than an ounce of iron. If gold were as plentiful as iron or coal, requiring the same amount of labor to produce as these two commoner minerals, gold would be just as cheap. Its value would be the same, for the simple reason that it would then be a repository of approximately the same amount of socially-necessary labor.

In the past many things have functioned as money and for the same reason. They represented so much crystallized labor. In colonial days tobacco functioned as money in the south. It was the medium for exchanging all other commodities.

Money is merely a convenience. Gold, the money-commodity is very convenient, as it takes up little room. The space taken up by $10 worth of gold is much less than that taken up by $10 worth of coal, or hay, or milk. Any of these latter commodities could be made to function as the money-commodity, that is to say, the commodity by which the values of all others are measured.

By a process of elimination all other things that in the past functioned as money have been discarded until gold, the most suitable, alone survives. As a metal it is tough in wearing qualities yet soft and suitable for coinage. All gold is not made into money. Much of it is used for commercial purposes. Bankers could have great quantities of it in their vaults, in storage for safe keeping, just as a coal dealer could have a stock of coal. Under these circumstances that quantity of gold is not functioning as the "nation's" money. International bankers can ship large quantities of that gold without in any way affecting the monetary system of the particular nation.

If a nation holds in its banking system, say a hundred million dollars in gold, and issues silver, copper and paper (token money) to the same amount, then these tokens in circulation function as money just as if the gold itself passed from hand to hand.

The paper and printing in a twenty-dollar bill may be worth but a few pennies as there is so little socially-necessary labor contained in it. That which the tokens represent, the gold coinage held in bank vaults, contains the required amount of socially-necessary labor. It is the real medium of exchange. When a ton of coal is paid for with a twenty-dollar bill, the socially-necessary labor embodied in the coal has exchanged with the socially-necessary labor embodied, not in the paper token, but in the twenty-dollar gold piece lying in reserve behind its token, the "paper money."

If, for some reason, 50 per cent of the gold reserve is disposed of and is no longer behind the currency, then

these tokens (assuming that the same amount is left in circulation) fall in purchasing power, for who would want to sell commodities at the same price as formerly but for paper currency that now has only half the gold, and consequently, half the socially-necessary labor, behind it. Prices rise because the measure of value has been shortened in relation to the value of the commodities to be measured.

While the dollar stamp is still on the face of the currency, sellers of commodities will demand, approximately, two dollars for what they used to give for one dollar.

However, this is not an arbitrary theory. It is not a rigid mechanical process. A nation may have an excess of paper over gold for some time without the resulting rise in prices. The solvency of a nation, the general conditions of business and other factors have to be taken into consideration. On the other hand, no matter how wealthy a nation may be, it can not get away from its concrete gold basis for long without depreciating the purchasing power of its currency.

Confidence has a stabilizing effect, but confidence is not a medium of exchange. Something more concrete is needed; something that contains socially-necessary labor or, in other words, something that contains real, not imaginary *value*.

In the world market, on the average, values are exchanged for values, whether they are books or bread. A change in the quantity of currency in relation to gold does not in any way affect values, only these values are measured in higher or lower money terms. The prices rise and fall.

This can be better understood if we will observe the condition of many countries today. Too much "money" has been made on the printing press and not enough at the mint. The quantity of currency in circulation in ratio to the gold reserve is enormous. The *gold* mark of Germany did not depreciate during its period of excessive currency inflation. Its value stood as high relatively as that of the British *gold* sovereign or the American *gold* dollar. Values did not change in the European countries to any perceptible extent, it was only the measure of these values, the prices, that went sky-high.

The Deceptive Pay Envelope

Let us come back again to wages. Now that we understand what money is we get a better idea of the *nominal* or money wage. Your pay envelope today may contain $40 as compared with a $30 money wage of ten years ago. This increase in the *nominal* wage may in reality constitute a reduction in the *real* wage. Your $40 may purchase less of the necessities of life than the $30 did ten years ago. Therefore, in spite of appearances, your wages have been reduced.

Another reason for the increase of prices, especially over a long period, is the fall in the value of the metal, gold. As in the case of other commodities, improvements have been made in its production. Since it costs less to produce than formerly—having less socially-necessary labor in it—the value is less. Consequently it takes more of it to measure values. However, if all other commodities fell at the same time and to the same extent as the fall in the value of gold, then prices would not be affected. On the other hand, if gold became scarcer and a lot more

social labor was required to produce it, a small quantity would buy more. Prices would fall.

Money, as we have seen, is a *medium of exchange* but it is also a *measure of value and a standard of prices.*

It is a medium of exchange because it is a commodity (gold), containing crystallized social labor. In other words it has *value.* Money is the measure of that value expressed in prices. Marx says: "Price is the money-name of the labor realized in a commodity." There is no other value in a commodity.

A Standard of Prices

Money, the golden yard-stick that measures the relationship of commodities to each other, gives expression to their value in exchange through a standard of prices that vary with historic circumstances and the custom of different countries. For instance, American money, with exactly the same characteristics as the money of all other modern countries, expresses its standard of prices in dollars and cents; British money in pounds, shillings and pence; German money in marks and pfennigs, and so on.

The many different price standards do not prevent capitalists from doing business. They exchange their commodities and are able to measure their relative values accurately in spite of the great variety of price standards, because the basis of all their currencies is gold—*the universal equivalent.* And being "off the gold standard" does not alter this fact, as gold is still the measure of value. It simply means that nations "off the gold standard" do not guarantee to give gold at face value in exchange for their own currency.

There is still the last aspect of the wage to be considered—the *relative* wage. The workers of certain countries could be getting small *money* wages and big *real* wages and, at the same time, exceedingly small *relative* wages. Where machinery is highly developed and each worker is, on an average, turning out a large amount of products, the *relative* wage is small. The *relative* wage, therefore, is the actual *value* the worker gets in relation to the *value* he produces. There are cases of big money wages with big purchasing power, while at the same time the wage-earner in question might be the worst exploited slave in history.

What Do We Mean by Exploitation?

When we speak of the exploitation of labor we mean the taking away from the producing class all that it produces except the amount necessary for maintaining its existence. The worker must receive enough to subsist upon or else his usefulness to the exploiter would come to an end.

During the history of civilization the producing class has been exploited in three distinct ways. There have been variations within those modes of exploitation but there are three great branches in the historical plundering of the subject classes—*slavery*—*serfdom*—*wage-labor*. Let us briefly explain these three methods.

Slavery

The slave was owned outright. He was the property of the master. All the ancient civilizations were based on slavery. Babylon, Egypt, Carthage, Greece and Rome were some of the civilizations that rested, so to speak, on the backs of a multitude of slaves.

The slave was given food and clothing, also a place to relax and rest for further toil. There were variations from this rule. A few were given privileges for special services which they had rendered or for their great skill in some particular direction, but they were still slaves. They understood that their life's energy was at the disposal and for the benefit of the masters. They were under no illusion as to their social status. They did not think they were free.

When the ancient empires perished, *feudalism* arose with a new form of exploitation—a new slavery—*serfdom.*

The Serf

The serf was a land slave, a part of the estate as it were. He went with the land, the buildings and live stock, whenever the estate changed hands. He was different from the chattel slave of old; he was not given food and clothing. He could not be bought and sold. He was not paid for his services with money as the modern wage-slave is paid. He was given the use of a piece of land upon which he and his family by laborious efforts maintained their existence.

This land—a part of the estate—which he was allowed to work upon three or four days of each week—has been called the serf-soil. The other days of the week the serf was compelled to serve on the other part of the estate along with his fellow serfs. They all toiled free. They served the feudal lord, cultivating his soil and herding his cattle, sheep, goats, swine and other live stock.

This mode of exploitation made it quite clear to the serf that he was not a free man. He realized that his working time was given for nothing. But the modern slave, the "free" wage-worker, who is exploited to a greater extent than his predecessors, the chattel slave and the serf, is usually under the illusion that he is a free man.

The Wage-Worker

In modern countries, where machine production holds the field, the wage-worker creates values equal to the value of his week's wage during a period of time equal to the first day or two of the week. During the rest of the time he is producing for the employer for nothing and usually does not know it. Under the cloak of the pay envelope the "free" worker is robbed to a greater extent than the slave or serf of old.

Surplus-Value

The wage-worker is exploited in the manner we have already described, but the form which this exploitation takes was first laid bare by Karl Marx and named by him *surplus-value.*

Individual commodities are sold sometimes above and sometimes below their value, but there is an average of these fluctuations. The sum total of commodities, therefore, sell, or exchange, at their value. That is why we say, for simplicity, "commodities exchange at their value."

Many people think that profits are made by buying cheap and selling dear. They think that by charging more than commodities are worth the merchants make their profits. That is only the appearance of things and appearances are often deceptive.

If we were to follow the circulation of a five-dollar bill we would soon realize that no profits are made in the circulation of commodities. They may be realized, or collected there, but it is not there that profits are made, since circulation, or exchange, as it is sometimes called, adds no value whatever.

We will assume that a dealer, whom we will call number one—a hatter—sells a hat for five dollars. Now he can not eat this five dollars but he can eat what the money will buy. He goes to the grocer, whom we will call number two, and he buys supplies to the extent of the purchasing value of the five dollars. All that has happened, in effect, in these two transactions is that the hat dealer has exchanged his commodity, hat, for the grocer's commodities, sugar, bread, coffee, etc. Five dollars worth for five dollars worth—*value* for *value.*

The grocer, no more than the hatter, can eat the five dollar bill or gold piece, nor can he wear it. He needs shoes, we will say, so he goes to dealer number three—the shoe dealer—who exchanges a pair of shoes for the five dollars. Now supposing number three needs to have some carpenter work done, he goes to number four, who owns a carpenter shop. Number four supplies him with five dollars' worth of carpenter work.

The owner of the carpenter shop has now exchanged his woodwork commodity for the same five dollars. But we will assume that he, the proprietor of the carpenter shop, decides to buy an entirely different commodity, one that is not put up in cans, bottles or paper bags, one that is not weighed on the scales or measured by the yard. He buys a commodity that is wrapped up in a human skin and dressed in overalls. One that is measured by the clock or, if it is piecework, by the amount of product—the commodity of the worker—*labor-power.*

After investing the five dollars in the commodity of a working carpenter, at the end of a certain time agreed upon and covered by the five dollars' wages, let us say a day's work, the carpenter has added to the raw materials so much more value than the product of the day's work now brings, say, thirty dollars.

We will assume that the lumber and all other necessary expenses total ten dollars. That amount is called constant capital and the five dollars invested in wages is variable capital. These two investments bring the outlay of the boss carpenter up to a total of fifteen dollars. But thirty dollars was rceeived for the carpenter work. Thus fifteen dollars is *surplus-value.*

It is only the labor (variable capital) that adds value. The materials and wear and tear on the means of production (constant capital) only transfer to the finished commodity their own value—in this case ten dollars' worth of materials, etc. It is the five dollars spent on wages that produces the other fifteen dollars—the *surplus-value.*

This was the great discovery made by Karl Marx in the field of economics. It was his genius that laid bare the secret of capitalist profits. In *Value, Price and Profit* (page 70, Kerr edition) he says:

"To explain, therefore, the general nature of profits, you must start from the theorem that, on an average, commodities are sold at their real values, and that profits are derived from selling them at their values, that is, in proportion to the quantity of labor realized in them. If you can not explain profit from this supposition, you cannot explain it at all." Marx continues: "This seems paradox and contrary to every-day observation. It is also paradox that the earth moves round the sun, and that water consists of two highly inflammable gases. Scientific truth is always paradox, if judged by every-day experience, which catches only the delusive appearance of things."

We have seen above that the first four commodity sellers exchanged their commodities evenly—value for value. Nothing was made in the way of profit and nothing lost on the exchange. "But," you will say, "the hatter, the shoe dealer, the grocer and the boss carpenter are not in business for their health." They certainly make a profit, but not upon each other as buyers. We have shown that they simply exchanged value for value. Now where does the profit come from? How is it made?

In the case of the hatter his commodity, the hat, contained its full value when it reached his store. (On many commodities, transportation is often necessary and in this case this transportation expense adds value in proportion to the necessary labor involved in it. When we speak of production in a general sense we also include transportation.) It was the producers in the hat factory who gave the hat its value. The dealer could add no value to the already finished commodity. The hat manufacturer does not sell to the consumer direct. It is usually more economical to have the wholesale and retail dealers handle small quantities and single sales. He, therefore, sells to the wholesaler quantities of hats quite a bit below their value and still makes a profit, the surplus-value being so large. The wholesale dealer receives a higher price than he paid but still sells it to the retailer—the storekeeper—at less than its value. The latter, under normal circumstances, sells it at its actual value.

We will say, for example, that the material in the hat cost the manufacturer altogether fifty cents, including other costs. The wages of the worker we will say amount to fifty cents more. That makes a total cost of one dollar. However, it is a five-dollar hat—thus the surplus-value is four dollars. Of this four dollars the manufacturer, the wholesaler and the retailer each get a share.

The hat which cost a dollar to produce we will say sells for three dollars in quantities to the wholesaler, leaving two dollars of the surplus-value in the hands of the manufacturer. In smaller quantities the wholesaler sells to the retailer, say for three and a half dollars, retaining fifty cents of the surplus-value, and the storekeeper finally selling the hat for five dollars keeps a dollar and fifty cents of the surplus.

Let us repeat again, surplus-value is the difference between what it costs to produce a commodity and what it sells for. It is out of the social labors of the workers in industry that all surplus-values are obtained. The worker is not exploited when he buys things, as some people think, but as a producer where he sells something—labor-power.

Who Pays the Taxes?

Now we know how surplus-value is produced—by buying labor-power at its value, and selling the product of labor at its value—a much greater value. We will next see what becomes of the surplus-value.

If the capitalists could retain all the surplus produced by labor they would be overwhelmed with joy. But no such luck. The poor capitalist has to give up part of the

plunder. The preacher and the policeman have both to be provided for, and many other retainers besides.

As we have already pointed out, the largest payment out of surplus-value is for taxes. The State, or government as it is more familiarly termed, exists for the purpose of maintaining the authority of the capitalist. True, it is represented as serving the interests of the people as a whole, but this is an obvious impossibility, and those who try to defend such a contention are either fools or frauds.

It costs money to run a government. The workers *have not the necessary money.* If they had, the capitalists would find a way to make them pay the expenses of government. Owing to the competition for jobs the workers' wages are always at a minimum. On the average they are just sufficient to maintain the existence of the slave. Some, it is true, get more than the average necessary wage, but for one who does there are large numbers who are getting less, and there is a permanent section of the population that gets no wage at all—the unemployed.

The modern State with all of its ramifications requires so much cold cash for its upkeep that it almost amounts to the annual wage bill of the whole producing class. In this country and other modern nations there is a great fluctuation of wages. The annual income of the producers varies. Sometimes it amounts to eight or ten billion dollars for all the producers of the United States. The total tax bill at the same time runs to six or seven billions. Thus it will be seen that the annual tax bill amounts to almost as much as the whole producing class receives annually. If the workers could live for a year without eating, paying rent, buying clothes, etc., then they would be able to do little more than pay the taxes of the nation.

The working class could pay the taxes if wages were just about double what they are at present. The capitalists know these facts. They know that the workers do not earn enough, so they do the only thing possible, that is, pay the taxes themselves.

A few workers who get large salaries are obliged to pay an income tax. That is one way the capitalists can shift the burden a little. For these few workers it amounts to a reduction of their wages for the benefit of the capitalist class as a whole and, at the same time, it has the effect of making the white-collar slave think that he has a stake in the nation—that he is a "sovereign" American citizen.

But taxes—that bugaboo of political campaigns—are paid by the capitalist class. The tax question is *not a working class question.* As an issue, it is often used as a political red herring to be drawn across the nose of the workingman who is made to believe he is a taxpayer. The agitation over taxes also helps to obscure the fact that the worker is robbed as a producer in the industries.

The capitalists do not like to pay taxes, but they must surround themselves and their property holdings with an extensive and expensive machinery of repression. The army, navy, police, jailers, judiciary and a whole host of strong men and intellectual retainers must be kept to do their bidding. In by-gone days a brutal chieftain would surround himself with a bodyguard of strong men to protect his person and smash and suppress all who threatened his privileges. Such is now the function of the State, carried out on a civilized plane, under that cloak of respectability—law and order.

The surplus-values which are exploited from the workers do not flow to the capitalists in even quantities. There are different grades of capitalists. The real big fellows try hard, and often successfully, to pay the smallest percentage of taxes. They shift as much as possible on to the shoulders of the small capitalists, and a little of it, as we have already pointed out, on to the shoulders of the higher paid workers and in times of stress they resort to petty pilferings, such as sales taxes, which slightly reduce the workers' real wages.

A worker who has been robbed is like a cow that has been milked. The poor dumb brute is incapable of worrying about what becomes of the milk, but the so-called "intelligent" worker takes sides in the quarrel which goes on over that which has been taken from him.

Two sections of the capitalists who exploit the working-class cow—perhaps we had better say calf—fight almost continuously over this tax burden levied on their share of the surplus-value. When working men line up and takes sides in this quarrel they are in the same position as the worker who has had part of his earnings taken from him by pickpockets who later on fight over the division of the booty. It would be humorous if it were not so tragic to see the worker take sides, as he often does, with one group that has plundered him as against the other.

How necessary it is to understand the economics of capitalism. Not the capitalist explanation of economics, but the Marxian or working class explanation. How necessary to understand that taxes in general must come from some other source than the worker's pay envelope —that they are paid by the capitalist out of the surplus wrung from the toil of the workers.

Profits

Although taxes are one of the largest items of business expenses there are others as well. The legal profession, insurance, advertising, and a host of other parasitic enterprises cling to the body of the real parasite—capitalism. All these force the capitalist to disgorge a part of the plunder. It is out of the surplus-value that they get their incomes. The capitalists don't like to give it up. They would like to keep it all but they must maintain their supporters. What is left over in the hands of the capitalists—plenty, of course—is *profit.*

Re-Investment—the Extension of Industry

What do the capitalists do with their profits? A few live riotously and use them all up. A great many, especially among the larger ones, live sumptuously and then have more than they can use, as they are often the exploiters of thousands of slaves. Again there are a few who live niggardly and have that much more to reinvest. With the class as a whole their accumulation from the exploitation of labor is so great that they are able to extend their holdings by opening new factories and extending industry in general. This reinvestment increases their field of profit making and thus gives them a still larger surplus to reinvest.

That crude old saying "Money makes money" is but another way of expressing the fact that capitalist accumulation goes on by leaps and bounds in spite of the capitalists themselves. They can be as brainless as a mud turtle and still accumulate vast wealth.

Industry today is carried on socially. It is the collective labor of the workers that produces the vast volumes of wealth. In modern industry all functions, from the floor sweeper to the manager, are carried on by hired employees. Hired "hands" and hired "heads" are together engaged in carrying on production. The capitalist is no longer necessary. The future of civilization is in the hands of the proletariat.

Your Job

During the war period a patriotic worker—too old to fight—told the writer that he was ready to die for "his" country. When asked how much of the country he owned he laughingly admitted that he owned no railroads; no steamships nor factories. He more reluctantly admitted that he had no cash to speak of and no home of his own, but was a renter in a cheap neighborhood. When pressed still further with the specific question "What have you really got to fight for" he replied half defiantly, half sheepishly, "I've got a job."

Apart from the question as to whether it is worth while to fight and die for a *job,* the old worker was mistaken when he made the assertion "I've got a job." Many other workers talk about "my job." It is partly habit and partly belief that in some way or other it is their job. The job is regarded as a sort of fundamental right, but the truth of the matter is that the worker has *not got a job.* It is the other fellow's *job.*

The capitalist owns the means of wealth production, therefore, *he owns the job.* When the capitalist tells the worker to "get out" he is obeyed. The worker has to pack and go. He is obliged to leave "his job" behind.

The worker under capitalism is a "free" man. He is free to go where he likes. He does not have to work for any one boss. If he does not like an employer he can quit, *but* if he does not like the employing class *he can not quit,* unless he is prepared to starve. He is a slave to a class. His freedom amounts to having a longer chain than his predecessors—the serf or the chattel slave. It is true that he is not bought and sold and that he has liberties unknown to former generations of workers. It is also true that he takes greater risks than former workers and that while he is not sold he is obliged to sell himself.

The worker sells his labor-power and as he cannot deliver that without delivering himself he is as much a slave as any worker that ever responded to the crack of the master's whip. The modern whip is an economic one. The lash of hunger, or the fear of it for himself and those depending upon him, keeps him ever on the jump.

The slave of old knew little of occupational diseases. He knew nothing of that scourge that drives the modern worker on—*unemployment.* The industrial scrap-heap was unknown to the serf. The escaped slave was hunted down. It was a cruel system, but no less cruel is the present system in which the slave has to hunt the master. The worker today sometimes finds himself in the position described by the poet Burns:

"See yonder poor, o'er-labor'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil,
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn."

Dependence upon a job and the wages which it will bring haunts the worker like his own shadow. The invisible chain that binds him to the machine cuts him to the quick. And struggle the worker must. There is no escaping the struggle. The workers do and must struggle to keep up their wages and to better their standard of living. In this struggle the odds are all against them and on the side of the capitalists.

The competition for jobs keeps wages down to a minimum. If for a time there is a brief industrial boom it is always followed by a panic and a jobless (and wageless) army. Every improvement, every invention that increases production is a further economic fetter on the limbs of labor.

What Is to Be Done?

Many workers know their condition while others have an instinctive feeling that they are getting the worst of it. The question these workers may ask is "What are we going to do about it?"

Some prefer to take what they *think* is the easiest way and slide along and make the "best" of a bad job. When asked to organize in the struggle of their class they want to know why they should pay to keep labor leaders and union headquarters. They prefer to "spend their own money." They are individualists and tell us that they are capable of fighting their own battles. That is just exactly the way the employing class want them to think. The employer has no fear of an individual worker. He has him where he wants him so long as he is unorganized.

The Individual Worker and the Boss

Some individual workers get ahead by allowing themselves to be used as tools against the others. The individual worker, however, who becomes militant and goes to the boss with his demands, if he is able to reach the boss at all, usually gets turned down and sometimes fired from the job altogether. When the workers go individually to the employer, hat in hand, they are met with the sharp interrogation "What do you want?" A tongue-lashing is often their reward for their individual efforts.

When the workers go collectively to demand an increase or better working conditions, they go by proxy. Their representatives are not in the employ of the masters but in the employ of the workers themselves. They do not have to fear the loss of a job or a tongue-lashing. It is more often the other way about when the workers bargain collectively.

When the representatives of the workers enter the inner office of the capitalist they are not met with "What do you want?" The employers understand the power of organization; that is why they fight the unions so hard. That is why they hire stool pigeons and struggle to obtain or maintain the open shop.

When the representatives of the workers approach, the capitalists, aware of the thousands standing behind the leaders in the unions, use different tactics. Their attitude is "Well, what can I do for you?" "Have a cigar." "Sit down, let's talk it over."

Negotiate—temporize—arbitrate—compromise; these are the weapons the capitalists are obliged to resort to. They know that the workers have *one thing* that they can not take away from them. That is their *numbers.*

Organization is the greatest weapon that the workers have at their disposal. All that the workers have ever gained has been through the power of organization.

The Power of Knowledge

The organized power of the workers, of course, presupposes a certain amount of understanding. The power of numbers alone will not solve the mighty problem that confronts the workers. The power of knowledge must be back of their organized might. The question now arises, "What kind of knowledge?"

In this little book we have endeavored to impart some knowledge—not about the spots on the sun or the conditions prevailing at the bottom of the ocean, but about the conditions prevailing on the job; about the conditions the worker must face in the daily struggle.

The Struggle and Its Outcome

The struggle between capital and labor at first sight appears as a struggle for more pay and better working conditions. That is all that the average worker sees in the struggle. Many of the capitalists see no more than that. They merely struggle to keep down wages, as part of their production expenses, while they try for the same reason to get as much work out of the individual as possible. Other capitalists, however, know that this is only a surface matter and that back of it is the question of the ownership of the tools—the machinery of production.

This larger aspect of the struggle does not always come to the top, but it is ever present and most capitalists know it. The exploiters instinctively or consciously try to hide or sidestep this issue, but an ever increasing number of workers are becoming aware of it and are consciously directing their efforts in the class struggle toward that end —the conquest of political power and taking possession of the industries.

The only useful people today are those engaged in producing the wealth. It is they alone who must eliminate the parasites and usher in a new social order. The future of civilization is in the hands of the producing class.

History of
The Supreme Court of the United States

By Gustavus Myers

For over a century the Supreme Court of the United States has towered aloft in omnipotent sway over all other institutions. Absolute and final, its decrees have gone deep into the history of the nation and have had their mighty effect upon the wars of the classes. This book is a comprehensive history of the development of capitalist resources, power and tactics, and of the great and continuing conflict of classes. It reveals the true sources of the primitive accumulation of wealth which, beginning with the appropriation of land and the dispossession of the workers, has extended to the elaborate forms of capitalistic power existing today.

Palpably, a dominant class must have some supreme institution through which it can express its consecutive demands and enforce its will. In the United States the one all-potent institution automatically responding to these demands and enforcing them has been the Supreme Court. Vested with absolute and unappealable power, it has been able, with a marvelously adaptable flexibility, to transmute that will not merely into law but into action. This History of the Supreme Court, being a narrative of the deeds of the chief bulwark of capitalism, constitutes at the same time the best history of the United States that has yet appeared. One large volume, 823 pages. $2.50.

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