

## GREEK ODE ON A WATER-WHEEL

"Spare the arm which turns the mill,  
O millers, and sleep peacefully.  
Let the cock warn you in vain that day is breaking.  
Demeter has imposed upon the water-nymphs the labor of the slaves.  
Behold them leaping merrily over the wheel  
And the axle tree making the heavy stone revolve.  
Let us live the life of our fathers  
Let us rejoice in idleness over the gift the goddess grant us."

So sang the poet Antiporas. Paul Lafargue, classic scholar and Cuban-born physician who married Karl Marx's daughter Laura, and who spread his revolutionary teachings and agitated for the eight hour day, wrote this pamphlet in prison, and translated Antiporas to argue that machinery should ease the life of workingmen.

For ninety years its irony and humor have delighted readers in many languages.

The present edition of this labor and socialist classic adds an introductory sketch of labor and political conditions in the France of Lafargue's time, and short notes on the persons he lampooned. It includes a brief life of this light-hearted agitator who did much to establish May First as World Labor Day, and got in prison once more for that too, and got elected from his third prison term to the Chamber of Deputies.

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# The Right To Be Lazy

(le droit à la paresse)

**By Paul Lafargue**



Karl Marx's son-in-law the doctor wrote this pamphlet in a French prison in 1883. The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences calls it "the first modern pamphlet in favor of leisure for the worker."

This edition supplements its satire and humor with a life of Lafargue and an updated look at leisure.



**CHARLES H. KERR**



Robinson 75p

# The Right To Be Lazy

By Paul Lafargue

Translated from the 1883 edition  
by Charles H. Kerr

Reprinted from the 1907 Kerr edition with  
Introduction and Notes by Fred Thompson

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

### I—About French Labor and Politics, 1830-1880

By 1880 when Lafargue ran as a serial in *L'Egalité* the material that became this pamphlet, France was in form a republic run by successful businessmen and old families. Most of them would have preferred a monarchy on the English style but they could not agree on either of the two contenders for the throne. It was the unstable outcome of a century of European struggles in which those whose hopes lay with the growth of capitalism had used the working class against their feudal predecessors only to find that the workers were no longer content with being so used.

The first Napoleon, a few months after the suppression of those who hoped for working class gains in the great revolution, dispersed a royalist mob with his famous "whiff of grapeshot." He then built an army that extended his power wherever a business class chafed at old restrictions, to be defeated by the governments of those countries where the business class either had won a secure hold or had not yet developed a will to take control. After Waterloo the European establishment returned the throne to a Bourbon, Louis XVIII, who was well aware that he must serve the business class. His brother Charles, who succeeded him in 1824, tried to restore the older order but the uprising of July 1830 replaced him with the business king Louis Philippe who ruled through the machinations of Guizot and Thiers.

In 1834 when the silk workers of Lyons struck, Thiers as Minister of Interior and in charge of police, spread the false rumor that these workers had upset the local government. Thus he precipitated a demonstration by Parisian radicals so that he could mow them down as depicted by the artist Daumier in his *Massacre in the Rue Trananain*. Any action by workers to regulate wages had been forbidden in 1793, and Napoleon had reinforced the ban on union activities in 1810 with



severe penalties. These laws remained but forbidden union practices and utopian hopes survived.

In February 1848 the business class was unhappy with this regime and the workers enthusiastically toppled Louis Philippe and Guizot. This action set off a wave of revolts across Europe. Everywhere it created the same dilemma: to let the workers do a thorough housecleaning would be to let workers instead of business rule. One need of the times was to replace a patchwork of too numerous principalities with nations large enough to accommodate a growing young capitalism. This led to conflicting national aspirations that prevented the creation of constitutional national states and substantially restored the old order. Liberated Hungarians repressed Croats and Slovaks who then helped Radetzky strangle the progressive movement in Italy and helped Windesgratz retake Vienna. Ten days after the Emperor's Slav troops, with the approval of Czech businessmen, had restored order in Prague, Cavaignac with the approval of the French business class started his massacre of the workers of Paris. Henceforth European business was to avoid asking labor to help it find a more congenial political environment and instead was to select whichever princeling seemed to business most suitable and make him head of a national federation of lesser states.

The utopian socialism that took the popular fancy in the upsurge of 1848 in Paris was that of Louis Blanc with its slogan "The Right to Work." He proposed the government set up National Workshops for producing human needs in which that right could be asserted. The plan appealed to all workers, not only to the large number of unemployed. The new republic set up these National Workshops but the politicians in charge wanted neither to assure all a shelter from loss of jobs nor to compete with their friends' enterprises in the production of goods. The shops did only work of little urgency and in effect merely provided charity. When the wave of revolt through Europe abated they decided to end this so-called socialist experiment. From June 23

to June 26 troops under General Cavaignac answered the workers' slogan of "Bread or Lead" with lead. Hundreds were executed on the Champ de Mars and thousands sent to French penal colonies. The slogan "The Right to Work" persisted; Lafargue's title *The Right To Be Lazy* (le droit à la paresse) was counterpoised to it: a century after the June massacre American politicians revived the phrase as their slogan for fighting the union shop.

From the great revolution of 1789 the business class had acquired whatever the church and aristocracy had lost except for such farm lands as that had gone into the family-size holdings on which three quarters of the population lived as peasants, the most conservative populace in Europe. In the election for president in December 1848 these peasants had their first vote and the only candidate whose name was known to them was Louis Napoleon nephew of the military adventurer who had cut three inches off the height of the average Frenchman. Louis Napoleon promised order and was elected. He was an opportunist who had joined the radical Carbonari in Italy, had tried twice previously for the throne of France, had been exiled to England and there volunteered for the special police formed to crush the Chartist demand for votes for workers. Soon the politicians felt urged to restrict the wide franchise. Napoleon saw a third chance at the throne: by promising an impotent universal suffrage on take-it-or-leave-it plebiscites, and by rallying the down-and-outs with beer and sausages into a force to shoot down any workers who resisted him, he managed to talk democracy yet establish himself as Emperor by a military take-over Dec. 2, 1851. After his victory 160 resisting workers were executed and 26,000 were transported to penal servitude in the hulks.

In return for serving the business class Napoleon demanded there be no interference with his dreams of grandeur. During the reign of Louis Philippe extensive canal and railway systems had laid a foundation for industrial growth, but far more than any other major



economy French industry was devoted to the production of luxury goods, a type of industry characterized by long hours, low pay and little mechanization. During the Second Empire (1851-1870) industrial production doubled, but "the average daily wage rose only 30 percent" says Horne in his *Fall of Paris*, "while the cost of living rose a minimum of 45 percent" in Paris. The city was remade with wide avenues that made the barricades of 1830 or 1848 impossible and with no stones ready to hurl at the forces of repression. Like modern urban renewal plans these improvements forced workers who had lived in the fleabags that they replaced to hunt up even more cramped and costly fleabags, so that by 1870 rents were reckoned as eating up a third of the typical Paris wage while food, practically meatless, used up another 60 percent. The typical work day was eleven hours. A man might earn almost four francs a day, but women only from half a franc to a franc and a quarter mostly at needlework in hopeless competition with convent labor.

Despite laws forbidding unions (except for a few weeks in 1848) union practices persisted as they had before in such disguises as mutual aid societies, or, until the railroads ended the old journeyman tour of France, as the *compagnonnages* that served as secret societies, employment systems, and boarding houses for their members. Until 1874, except in the big industries where it was pointless, there was no law limiting child labor. After 1866 Napoleon faced a series of economic and diplomatic reverses. He began to cater somewhat to labor in hopes of curbing those who threatened his grandiose dreams. With no change in law local trade groups (*syndicats*) were allowed to sprout among the more skilled occupation in Paris. By 1870 there were about 70,000 union members in Paris and about as many again in the rest of France. In 1864 in London the first international, the International Workingmen's Association had been founded with Karl Marx a leading figure, to promote solidarity of workers across boundary lines. Many of the French union

groups were loosely allied to it along with some socialist groups not engaged in bargaining about wages. Their typical outlook was a preference for a republic and a Proudhonist hope for freedom from wage servitude by way of self-employment or co-operatives, a change they hoped to achieve without any major social struggle. They made such views dominant in the early congresses of the IWMA. But some of the French IWMA were more militant, as those who struck in Le Creusot in 1870 at the works of Schneider et Cie even though that metal works was headed by the president of the Corps Legislatif himself.

In 1870 Napoleon's diplomacy got him into a disastrous war with Prussia. Some of his troops surrendered, and others, instead of remaining mobile with access to food and other supplies, shut themselves up in besieged cities and fortresses. After the surrender at Sedan, September 4, 1870, and the capture of Napoleon, the Legislative Assembly declared the throne vacant. The republican politicians headed for the Hotel de Ville as the traditional spot to declare the republic. There workers raised the red flag, a symbol at that time for democracy from the bottom up. Gambetta, eloquent spokesman for the poor, despite their protests, rallied a sufficient following to replace the red flag with the tricolor of 1792, a clear symbol of what was happening.

A Government of National Defense was formed to resist the Prussian invasion. Its right to office was based on how loud was the vocal acclaim engineered for its candidates from among the happy crowd that surrounded the Hotel de Ville that bright Sunday morning. The workers and radicals wanted to defend the city. Throughout the country the gentry felt that since they could not hope to win the war it would be best to settle it before it ate up more of their assets. The cotton masters of Rouen and Lille, according to Lafargue, were happy to see the more efficient cotton industry of Alsace, with a third of the nation's spindles, surrendered to the enemy and thus kept outside the



tariff wall they promptly erected.

Paris was besieged, its population immediately swollen by a half. Gambetta ballooned out to build up the needed resistance of a mobile military force in the provinces. In this city surrounded by Prussian troops those with money ate delicacies and those without money ate rats. But housewives donated their kettles to be made into cannon for the defense of Paris and Victor Hugo started a popular subscription to procure the manufacture of two hundred cannon for the National Guard. It was an armed population that felt it owned its arms. Balloons were sent up, designed to fall into Prussian hands, with these messages in German: "Crazy people, shall we always throttle each other for the pleasure and pride of kings?" and "Paris defies her enemy; all France is rising; death to invaders."

An armistice January 27 brought in food for those who had money, but most Parisians had neither money nor work. Yet Favre had to tell Bismarck that it would mean civil war if he tried to disarm the National Guard. Bismarck advised, "Provoke an uprising then while you have an army with which to repress it." The new National Assembly elected to make peace with the victor was largely royalist or Bonapartist. It took no action to ease the insufferable situation of the workers. Instead it enacted a Law of Maturities ending the wartime moratorium on debts, making them now payable on demand and letting landlords demand payment of all accumulated rent. This put a host of "white collar" workers into the same situation as the manual workers.

On February 26 Thiers signed the peace treaty. As he did so an apprehensive National Guard, singing the Marseillaise, seized the two hundred cannon that belonged to them and hauled them to the working class arrondissement of Montmartre for safekeeping. They were concerned especially because the peace terms provided for a humiliating victory march of German troops through their city. (During the siege, on January 18, Germany as a nation had been born.) On

March 8 Thiers ordered the regular army to remove those guns. The adjourned Assembly had moved to Versailles but most government offices remained in Paris. On March 17 Thiers assigned 3,000 gendarmes and 15,000 troops, most to cover likely foci of an uprising, and one body to steal into Montmartre at four in the morning to seize those cannon. They did so, but had no horses to haul them away. Louise Michel grasped this breathing space to spread the alarm with the result that the populace protested and the troops fraternised.

One of the popular National Guard had been wounded and Clemenceau, the local mayor, wanted to take him away for first aid. General Lecomte in charge of the attempted seizure refused the mayor's request and the populace dragged him from his horse and executed him. With Lecomte was Clement Thomas who had been hated for 23 years for his role in the slaughter of workers in 1848, and he too was killed. This was the only blood shed in the revolt of Paris until the fighting of the last few days of May.

Thus a new administration of the city was born. It adopted the name of the administration of the city in 1792, the Commune of Paris. Commune is an old French term meaning a self-governing community; it had nothing to do with communism. It invited the rest of France to create similar bases for a federation. It sought autonomy enough for Paris to assure that a conservative countryside could not deprive it of freedom of speech and assembly. On behalf of it Clemenceau and the mayors of other arrondissements tried to negotiate with Thiers, but he offered no concessions. Instead Thiers bombarded his own capital and in the last week of May sent in his troops to massacre its citizens. In this he had the backing of Bismarck who let Thiers increase his army to double that allowed by the terms of armistice, then released 400,000 prisoners of war from whom Thiers could readily recruit men to do his bidding. Bismarck stationed Prussian troops to the Commune's rear, first to cut off food, and in the days of



the final massacre to cut off escape.

The main concerns of the Commune had to be military, but it put **Elisée Reclus**, the anarchist geographer, in charge of libraries, and **Courbet**, the realist, in charge of art; he arranged the pulling down of that Bonapartist symbol the Vendome Column and so had to spend the rest of his life outside France. **Leo Frankel** was put in charge of re-opening the workshops as co-operatives, and he abolished nightwork for bakers. **Vaillant** made unused plans for free education. **Jourde** and **Varlin** kept scrupulous accounts for the Commune and borrowed enough money from the Bank of France to keep the Commune running; the Bank preferred this to seizure. Few of the Commune members were with the IWMA and fewer of these were Marxist. Their inspiration came from the jailed **Blanqui**, the dead **Proudhon**, the repeated experience—1789, 1830, and 1848—of the fruits of their blood-won victories being stolen from them by the very rich, or from the situation at hand, and the desire for a city in which men might speak their thoughts freely.

In taking Paris from its citizens, **Thiers'** forces killed between twenty and twenty-five thousand. They made an additional forty thousand march without food or water, many of them wounded, and many dying on the way, to **Camp Satory**. There **Gallifet** picked out those he chose for immediate slaughter for the edification of the elegant ladies from **Versailles** who came there to watch. After a grim winter in the hulks half of the forty thousand were acquitted. The last execution of prisoners was in 1874 and the last trial in 1875; 2,510 drew forced labor for life; 1,160 drew imprisonment in fortified places, involving latrine duty in garrisons; 3,417 were sent to overseas penal colonies, mostly in **New Caledonia**; about five thousand more drew lesser sentences. Somehow the European press managed to describe this as the brutality of the communards, not the sadism of the French upper class; British descriptions of the Commune led the British unions to withdraw from IWMA, assuring its decline.

To this day pilgrimages are made each May 28 to the **Mur des Fédérés** at **Père Lachaise** where the last defenders of the Commune were slaughtered. It is the custom to sing the **Internationale**, written by **Eugene Pottier** in one inspired sitting in a shack on the outskirts of Paris as the final shots were being fired. As a lad of 14 he had fought in the July uprising of 1830, and again in the February revolt of 1848; he had defended Paris against **Bismarck**, and again against the combination of **Bismarck** and **Thiers**, and each time he had seen workers die and bankers take the plums. Another workman **Degeyter** set it to the tune now known around the globe.

Repression reigned. No unions met. The IWMA was banned and **Thiers** tried to have it outlawed worldwide. But the massacre had so cut down the supply of skilled workers that they held a good bargaining position, much as the Black Death of the 14th century created what **E. Thorold Rogers** called the golden age of English labor. Local syndicates of a non-political, non-ideological sort arose, asserting an "ouvrierisme" akin to much American blue collar thinking today. When amnesty in July, 1880 let political refugees return, unions continued zealously to guard their independence from politically-minded intellectuals. This sense of union self-reliance, impregnated with the anarchist ideas of such men as **Pelloutier** and **Griffuelhes**, and the somewhat Gallicized Marxism of **Lafargue**, was to create the distinctive French syndicalist movement of the years preceeding World War I. But as of 1880 when this pamphlet was written the minds of most French workers were taken up with their daily routines, bitter memories, a general distrust of Germans, and some hopes for what was called the English week, with Saturday afternoons off.

## II About Paul Lafargue

In October 1865 the first International Congress of Students was held at **Liège**. Among those present was



Paul Lafargue who had received his bachelor degree at Toulouse in 1861, gone to Paris to study pharmacy, switched to the Faculté de Paris to study medicine, and had come to the Congress with some of his republican-minded fellow students. All were suspended for their individual and collective insults to church and government, Paul for two years.

At Liège he met a fellow student, Charles Longuet who was later to become his brother-in-law and who at the time was an able spokesman for the views of Proudhon. Proudhon had just ended a quarter century agitation for a decentralized, mutualist, federal, stateless, cooperative economy, and his hope of achieving it without major social struggles was the most popular of the current radicalisms in France. At Liège Paul also met August Blanqui, an iron man who had spent much of his sixty years in jail as spokesman for an alternative view, conspiratorial seizure of power. Paul was soon deep in the work in France of the International Working Men's Association. Since its founding in London in September 1864 its center of communication remained there. When Paul went to England in February 1866 to complete the studies in medicine from which he was now banned in France, he became an active IWMA officer. On March 6 he was elected to its General Council, and on March 26, because of his fluency in the Spanish of his boyhood, he was made IWMA secretary for Spain.

Paul had been born January 15, 1842 in Santiago de Cuba. He was proud of a mixed ancestry. His father, a conservative **Bordeaux** landowner, was the son of a mulatto mother who had fled to New Orleans from what is now Haiti when her husband, a French planter, was killed there. Paul's mother, Virginia, was the daughter of a Carib mother and Abraham Armagnac a "blue-eyed, fair-haired" French Jew born in what was then Santo Domingo. Paul's lineage showed in his husky frame, dusky skin and prominent eyes. His ideas he got from his times.

In England he and others who had fled the repressive regime of Louis Napoleon made up their own London French Section of the International, and as Proudhonists, quarreled with Marx and the General council. In 1847 besides producing the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx had published a bitter criticism of Proudhon's "*Philosophy of Misery*" under the title "*The Misery of Philosophy*" and the bitterness had continued to Proudhon's death in 1865. The French Section in London rebuked the General Council for supporting Polish nationalism when Poland still retained serfdom after Russia had ended it; they said nationalism was now an obsolete idea and that we should aim at the individualization of humanity. Marx ridiculed what he called "the Proudhonized Stirnerism" of Longuet and Lafargue, but his friend Engels and his daughters welcomed the expatriates more warmly. In August Paul and Laura Marx announced their engagement. It was agreed that Paul should finish his medical studies before they married, but they did so a bit ahead of schedule with Engels as witness on April 2, 1868. (Longuet married Jennie, eldest of the three daughters, in 1872 and Edward Aveling, translator of much of Marx's and Engels' writings, later married the third daughter Eleanor.)

Paul took his finals July 22, 1868 and for a while practiced medicine in London. He went to France hoping to get his degree also at **Strasbourg** and was in Paris when the Franco-Prussian war broke out, and in his family town of Bourdeaux when the Empire fell. With its fall Longuet returned to become an officer in the National Guard and defend Paris first against the Prussians and then against Thiers. Soon after the Commune was declared Paul went to Paris but was urged to return to keep up a campaign on behalf of the Commune in the provinces, an effort he had already made through *La Tribune de Bordeaux*. After the fall of the Commune he made his way to the border and was smuggled into Spain by muleteers.

In Spain on August 11, 1871 he was arrested at Huesca



and held for ten days. Had he not been released, he later wrote Engels, a secret society there was ready to paralyze the police and set him free. He busied himself in Spain, largely at Engels' direction, combatting Bakunin's anarchist influence in the IWMA, for the Marxists and Bakuninists were struggling for control. On March 11, 1872 Engels wrote Laura Lafargue: "Paul's presence in Madrid at the decisive moment was of incalculable value... Had Bakunin carried the day in Spain—and without Paul that was likely—then the split would have been complete."

Lafargue's correspondence with Engels in this period has many references to how police spies had penetrated Bakuninist organizations. He mentioned this infiltration frequently in later years even after Pelloutier had given French anarchism a working class outlook and taken it away from the bankrobbers. He fought the anarchists at the Hague Congress of the IWMA, 1872, which he attended with credentials from Spain. Franz Mehring, a close friend of the Lafargues in their later days, calls the report that Lafargue and Engels prepared on the relation between these two factions for the 1873 Geneva convention a compilation of anti-Bakunin rumor and gossip in which no Marxist should take pride. Paul's Proudhonist background, his libertarian bent, his animal spirits and spontaneity, made him in many ways akin to Bakunin. In 1883 Marx referred jokingly to his two sons-in-law, Paul as the last Bakuninist and Longuet as the last Proudhonist. The Lafargues were close friends to the daring anarchist Louise Michel, and on one occasion Paul was a fellow defendant with her. Despite Lafargue's war with anarchism, it is not surprising that the last movement printing of this pamphlet in America was by a Chicago anarchist group, (Solidarity Publications, 1969) and that this pamphlet has in recent European reprintings been considered a forerunner of the attitudes of the New Left, of Herbert Marcuse, and others who recognize that revolutionists today reject the culture alike of Puritanism and Madison Avenue as well as the

economics of Wall Street and the politics of the Pentagon. In 1882 Paul wrote Engels about his anarchist associates in Paris: "Many think like us but it is a feather they like to wear in their hats." In April 1911 he was urging that Gustav Hervé, noted then as an anti-militarist anarchist, be given an editorial position on *Humanité*. Marxist he became and his reputation is mainly that of a populariser of Marxism; party builder he became too, and insistent that the party serve immediate and long run needs of the workers and never the convenience of bourgeois politicians who might like to borrow its support, yet a champion of socialist unity; but beyond all these he aimed to build a movement in which there was scope for those of his fellow rebels with whom he disagreed.

After the 1872 Congress Lafargue returned to London. He had give up the practice of medicine. Mehring attributed this to the loss of both the children born to him and Laura. With Laura he tried to make a living from a photo-engraving and lithographic shop. But through the years in London and the years in Paris life was hard and he repeatedly had to ask Engels for money to pay his rent and buy their food. He remained in England even after the July 1880 amnesty but during these years was actively seeking a hearing for Marxist ideas in France and among French emigres. The groundless accusation of the press that Marx in London had been arranging and steering the 1871 revolt in Paris, this at last was making the name Marx somewhat known in France. *The Communist Manifesto* had appeared in French in 1847 but went unheeded with no new French edition until 1882. Marx's 1847 critique of Proudhon had appeared only in French and was written for a French audience but had received little attention. Guesde, slowly turning from Blanquism toward Marxism, launched a socialist weekly *L'Egalité* in 1877 but it ran only 31 issues. When he revived it for another 32 issues in 1880 Lafargue from London contributed the material for this pamphlet. In this same English period Lafargue's enthusiasm for a portion of Engels 1877



dispute with Duhring led to the separate publication of this material in *La Revue Socialiste* as *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. Since then in many languages this selection has proved the favorite statement of Marxist thought on the ways of history and their relation to the socialist hope.

In 1882 the Lafargues returned to Paris where Paul for a few months had a job with an insurance company writing stilted correspondence much to his distaste. A merger ended that, but during the summer it had enabled him to serve on three socialist publications without pay. He was also trying to earn something with writings on less controversial subjects. He had started his studies on American agriculture and was soon considered somewhat of an expert on that; however any American who had sat on a plow all day would, after reading the final sentence of Section III of this essay, surely wish that Lafargue had done likewise. Marx visited both sons-in-law in France that summer: Longuet had a job on Clemenceau's *Justice*. Paul's prime concern was with his convert Guesde to build a party and paper to promote the Marxist view of a working class becoming aware they had an historic mission to end capitalism. He and Guesde with that hope went in October 1882 to the St. Étienne Congress of their Parti Ouvrier Français. There they lost out to those who would **submerge** their revolutionary hope in the sort of demands it would be possible to achieve at once. This circumstance led to the winners there becoming called Possibilistes and the Marxist losers being called Impossibilistes. These Impossibilistes immediately held a congress to build the sort of party they wanted at Rouen.

Guesde and Lafargue had lectured at public meetings during both these congresses, and for this the two, along with Dormoy, a republican recently converted to their cause, were charged on the basis of their advocacy of social seizure of the industries with incitement to pillage. For several weeks Paul knew the police were planning to arrest the two of them, but kept on with his

activities. On December 12 as he was bringing home some materials for lunch, he was arrested. Guesde aware of what emergency this would create, since their few francs were in Paul's pocket, raised 40 francs to bring Laura and climbed the five flights up to the room where Laura and Paul lived on scant means. (With this situation in mind one might turn to page 293 of the *Development of Modern France* by D.W. Brogan, Professor of Political Science at the University of Cambridge and read: "In the rich Creole Paul Lafargue, Guesde had a useful ally, bitter, unscrupulous, redeeming the suspicions his wealth and luxurious habits might have aroused by marriage to one of Marx's daughters." Paul had repeatedly to borrow rent or grocery money from Engels up through 1895.)

The trial started April 27, 1883. Paul's letters show that he enjoyed it. The town theater was given free to the defendants for a public meeting on the eve of the trial. There Paul's lecture on how the productivity of American farmers menaced French agriculture was well received. The trial required three sessions, one of them at night, "and coming away from the hearing at 10:30", he wrote Engels, "we were escorted to the hotel by a large and very sympathetic crowd." There was much laughter in the court when the prosecutor read passages from Lafargue's 1872 squib *Pope Pius IX in Paradise*. But they were found guilty and each of the three given a six month sentence, with Paul in addition to pay a fine of one hundred francs.

They had until May 21 to serve sentence. Sainte-Pélagie had miserable quarters for debtors and ordinary prisoners, and a smaller part that had been used for years for dissident journalists and other politicals. They went ahead of time to inspect the place and found the jailer an admirer of Guesde from his 1878 stay there with Deville for attending international congress. They reserved the two best rooms in the politicals' section and Lafargue wrote Engels: "They are quite spacious and lit by two fine windows, but they are bare. We shall be allowed to bring in furniture. I shall take my desk



and the armchair Mrs. Engels gave us. We shall be allowed visitors from 10 till 4 each day." During their six months stay they received hampers of wine and delicacies from admirers and except when she went to London Laura brought them lunch each day. It was probably their most carefree time. Civilization today should treat its dissidents at least as well. Under these not too unhappy circumstances Lafargue re-wrote the present pamphlet and this may explain the light tone in which it makes its very serious contention. Some may note that quite a number of those lampooned in the text had died between the 1880 and 1883 editions; Girault's 1970 Paris edition annotates the differences between the two. Lafargue did much reading during this prison stay that would show up in his varied writings of later years, and also during his return to Sainte-Pélagie for another four months in summer of 1885, without companions, because he had not paid the hundred franc fine. On this occasion he feared he might be classed as a debtor, not as a political, and so not admitted to this "Pavilion des Princes", but he was back in his old quarters. A comrade printer who did not pay his fine for anticlerical material published at the same time languished in the extreme discomforts of another part of Sainte-Pélagie.

During this 1885 imprisonment, Victor Hugo died. While the nation was pantheonizing the poet, Lafargue wrote an attack on him for a labor paper and elaborated it into another jail-written pamphlet "*The Legend of Victor Hugo*". Hugo was humanist, liberal, popular; he had urged amnesty for the communards; his pen had helped destroy the Second Empire; he had initiated the popular subscriptions by which the cannon seized March 18, 1871 were the property of the National Guard, thus unwittingly triggering the Commune—and he had then gone to Belgium disowning both Paris and Versailles. Lafargue's attack expressed the general socialist attitude of the times. Two weeks earlier four demonstrators had been killed by the police and many wounded, all on the grounds that the police thought they might unfurl hidden red flags in their annual procession to the Wall of the Federals to commemorate the 1871

massacre of their comrades. Regarding the Hugo veneration, Laura wrote Engels: "All the socialist and revolutionary organizations decided to take no part in the funeral procession of this greatest of all charlatans, this reactionary humbug." That is, all except Lissagaray who wanted to join the parade with a red flag.

In these mid-eighties Lafargue widened the audience for Marxist socialism. His Paris lectures were reported in the *New York Volkzeitung*. In Bax's British journal *Today* he answered Herbert Spencer's warning that socialism was the "Coming Slavery". Molinari, editor of the *Journal des économistes* was so orthodox that during the siege of Paris he met Blanquist agitation for food rationing with the argument that "rationing by dearthness" was the effective way to handle food shortages, yet in July 1884 he published Lafargue's researches on American wheat production. When Leroy-Beaulieu came out that year with a book against Marx, Molinari let Lafargue answer with twelve pages in the September issue. Engels urged Lafargue to avoid any invective that might provide grounds for refusing publication, but Lafargue wanted to "hold up to ridicule the official economics and its most reputable spokesmen". He wrote that "Laura was astonished that my article with its insults and its frivolous tone was accepted and published without change." In the same scholarly journal he was to reply later to Maurice Block's attack on Marxism. In preparing these answers he had the assistance of Engels who was at the time hard at work on Marx's unpublished manuscripts for the unfinished portions of *Capital*. Engels wrote Laura: "Paul's reply to Block is excellent, not only in style but in subject matter. People have different ways of learning things, and if he learns political economy by fighting, it's all right so that he does learn it." In all that Paul wrote a light touch of irreverence won him ears that otherwise would have been closed to him. Between jail terms in 1884 he issued his *Course in Social Economy*.

On April 4, 1886 two newspaper reporters in-



vestigating a strike at Decazeville then somewhat over a month old were charged with having "supported... a preconcerted cessation of work with the purpose of forcing an increase in wages or impairing the free function of industry and labor." It was a strike as Laura wrote Engels that was "doing wonders in the way of healing differences between the various groups and sections." On April 17 each of the reporters was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment. On May 2 a socialist electoral congress drew lots which of the two to pick for their candidate for deputy; with 100,795 votes he almost won the election. During this agitation Lafargue and Guesde were once more charged with "inciting to pillage" along with Susini and Louise Michel. Only Louise appeared for trial but all four were sentenced. The other three appealed and thus appeared before the Assize Court Sept. 24, 1886. All made speeches about the dynamics of history and the economics of capitalism to distinguish between the incitement to pillage with which they were charged, and the socialist proposal that the workers take possession of the industries they had built and use them for the common good. All three were acquitted.

In elections at that period a jail record helped a working class candidate, especially uniting support from the left. The old and often jailed Blanqui had paved the way for the 1880 amnesty by winning his post as deputy from **Bordeaux** running from jail in 1879. Dormoy who had been jailed with Guesde and Lafargue became town councillor in 1888 and later Mayor of Montluçon. At Calais Delcluse was elected to the town council from jail, imprisoned for his action in the strike of the net-makers. And Lafargue's one electoral success was to be sent to the Chamber of Deputies from a prison cell in 1891. Meanwhile he faced the routine campaign defeats, in 1885 running as deputy from Allier, in 1887 as a municipal candidate in Paris, in 1889 as deputy from Armand. He was able to run from Armand only on the promise to repay campaign expenses to local backers from his salary as deputy if elected; in those days campaign expenses were less than the

salary of the post sought.

He and his fellow Guesdists had a paper only off and on. They did not follow the winds of popular concern. These were tense political times with widespread fear that a dictatorship might be established by Boulanger whose public image was inseparable from the magnificent horse that he rode. He drew substantial working class support from his efforts to improve the conditions of conscripted sons and brothers, and from his chauvinist talk of taking back Alsace and Lorraine. A united front urged that no labor candidates compete so that Ferry could defeat Boulanger. Lafargue's articles (May 1888) argued that the conditions necessary for a return of Bonapartism were not present, and the Guesdists on the slogan "Neither Ferry nor Boulanger" issued leaflets where they ran no candidate urging the electorate to vote instead for Boulanger's much admired horse. This attitude, out of step with the times, worried Engels. Later Lafargue was to take a similar view of the Dreyfus case that it was an upper class squabble of little concern to labor. In 1889 he was to follow this outlook through to success in his arrangements for the congress to found the Second International.

In 1887 the German Social Democrats had proposed a world congress of socialists in the following year; Lafargue convinced Liebknecht to postpone it to July 14, 1889, the centenary of the Fall of the Bastille and hold it in Paris during the Paris Exhibition. The Possibilists planned a congress at the same time for the unions; Liebknecht was anxious to attend this and so urged the Guesdists to merge theirs with it. But the Guesdists wanted the Congress to establish that world socialism was now a Marxist movement aiming by class struggle to achieve revolutionary social change, while Lafargue described the Possibilists (who had been granted city funds to hold their congress) as "carpetbaggers who use socialism to obtain political positions and municipal grants". Liebknecht feared that the Possibilist congress would be much larger, and a clash develop between the two bodies with patriot



French union members attacking the German delegates at the other congress for being German. Again Engels was worried at Lafargue's intransigence but happy with the outcome, for the Guesdist-sponsored congress was the larger. It set up the Second International and it was attended (according to Gompers by mistake) by Gompers' envoy urging it arrange for worldwide demonstrations on May First for the eight hour day. This proposal was adopted and May Day remains one enduring outcome.

The fight for the shorter workday had to be international as the employers in each country insisted they could not grant the eight hour day because of foreign competition. It created a natural opportunity for Marxians to spread their ideas about the length of the work day and its relation to the production of surplus value, or the irrepressible conflict of class interests associated with this, the working class as a world wide class with a global destiny and its victory indispensable to the survival of human values. May Day 1890 was observed in all European countries as the first world labor day, with fear expressed in almost every major newspaper, but with little violence, and that not on the part of the workers. In England the observation was on Sunday May 4, many unions joining, and Lafargue addressing the great London demonstration to prolonged and vigorous applause.

The next year in April the Guesdists held meetings where they could to make arrangements for large May Day demonstrations again. For this purpose Lafargue went to the textile town of Fourmies where the workday ran to eleven hours and held advance meetings. The May Day demonstrations were peaceful all over France except in Fourmies. There the militia fired on the demonstrators, killing ten, one of these a child of twelve, and wounding 36. More workers would have been killed but one of the two detachments refused to obey the order to shoot, and most of the other fired over the heads of the crowd, so that most of those killed and wounded must have been shot by the officers. One

private, a native of Fourmies, explained he had not shot "because his mother might be in the crowd."

None of those responsible for killing these workers were brought to trial. Lafargue and Culine, the local organizer of the Parti Ouvriere, were charged with incitement to riot in their speech arranging for the demonstration. The chief allegation was that Lafargue had advised any young man called into the army and ordered to shoot at workers to turn around and shoot the other way. Lafargue had made no such statement but another speaker, Menard, thinking he may have said something of the sort, wrote Lafargue a letter saying so and that the prosecution had arrested the wrong man. Lafargue refused to use the letter and on July 30, 1891 he went once more to Sainte-Pélagie Prison under a one year sentence and a 1200 franc fine.

On October 20, with the support of all the various radicals, he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies, and released from jail. He participated in forming a coalition of anti-establishment deputies of various parties to fight the routine blocking of all measures that they introduced. In general his behaviour was unparliamentary, and not considered effective, and he was not re-elected. The salary did for two years attend to his and Laura's needs. His medical interests showed up in unsuccessful efforts to set up something similar to the London Board of Health.

In 1892 Lafargue published *Communism and the Economic Revolution* and in 1895 an extensive debate with Jaurès on idealism and materialism in the processes of history. He declined nomination in 1896; in 1898 he did not get enough votes to qualify as a candidate and that year with Nationalism still in its ascendancy neither Jaurès nor Guesde were elected. In 1899 however the lies against Dreyfus had been exposed and Waldeck-Rousseau organized his "Cabinet of Republican Defense" inviting the socialist Millerand to be a member of the Cabinet. This precipitated a crisis in the socialist movement. Could Socialists accept as ministers to carry out the policies of a non-socialist



parliament? The question was aggravated in this instance by the presence of General Gallifet, butcher of the Communards, on this "Cabinet of Republican Defense". In his 1899 book *The Conquest of Public Power* Lafargue answered with a strong no. Later his position was confirmed by the Socialist International at its 1904 congress in Amsterdam, and this in turn led to the unification of the socialist movement in France when Jaurès' acceptance of this decision made this possible the following year. In 1906 Lafargue ran against Millerand for deputy; Millerand won, two to one. Lafargue's concern for the abatement of inter-socialist friction expressed itself in an essay he published in 1904 in Kautsky's *Neue Zeit* as *The Historical Materialism of Karl Marx*, an undogmatic exposition of economic determinism as a tool for research and definitely not a set of theorems. It was published in France in 1907 as *The Historical Method of Marx* and that year in fall issues of the *International Socialist Review* in America.

After 1895 life became easier for the Lafargues. Engels left Laura a bequest with which she bought a home in a working class suburb; Paul received a small inheritance and began to get something from his writings. Most of his writing continued to be his unpaid contributions to the socialist press. After 1905 Unity, most of this went to Jaurès' *Humanité* and seldom to Guesde's papers. There was no separation in principle between the two old jailbirds; it was socialist unity that pulled them apart, issues of Marxist strategy within a synthetic party that ultimately led to a sharp break a fortnight before Paul's suicide. He was close to 70 and found the infirmities of old age painful and doubted whether he would be of much more use to the movement. He told Laura of his intentions and she did not want to remain after him. They wrote warm notes to some close comrades and ended their lives with a hypodermic of cyanide of potassium. Their funeral brought a mass of comrades together. One of the less known of a score of orators there was a Russian emigre

who had visited them at their home, Vladimir Lenin.

### III About Labor and Leisure

The customary hours of labor stretched longest during the rapid rise in productivity of the Industrial Revolution. Since then productivity has doubled several times but only recently have the hours of labor been reduced to the customary level of antiquity. Labor is often least in the most primitive cultures. There is little if any relation between the customary hours of work and either its productivity or the need to have work done. The capacity of workers to resist exploitation, their desires for more goods or more free time, and the advantages or disadvantages of a longer workday to their employer—these have been the determinants.

Some 115 holidays were observed by both freeman and slave in old Greece and Rome. In Egypt the Nile cycle imposed a half year of little work. In the early Middle Ages some eighty saints' days plus the old Hebrew Sabbath preserved or shortened the Roman pattern. Workdays were short in winter and long in summer, but from either E. Thorold Rogers' mammoth pioneer study of labor in England or the more recent researches of Woytinsky it seems that after subtracting meals, hours averaged around nine a day, and with much less intensity than has prevailed in 20th century factories. In the later Middle Ages religious holidays came more and more to be disregarded, and the Reformation speeded up this trend with its gospel that work is prayer and the right thing for a man to be doing.

Woytinsky writes in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*: "About 1800 a workday of 14 hours was customary; one of 16 attracted little attention; but a workday of 17 or 18 hours was considered an abuse. Such excessively long hours were worked not only by men but also by women and children." These horrors come to life in the pages of the Hammonds' *The Town Laborer*. In France Kuczynski finds in situations where the worker ate and slept where he worked, an 18



hour day in Lyons, and by police regulation in Versailles in reign of Louis XVI a day of 15 hours. By 1840 through France the typical workweek was six days of 13 hours each. The 1880 audience for which Lafargue wrote this pamphlet envied their British fellow workers as there the army heads had found that the factory system was harming the supply of recruits and had pressed for the ten-hour day. British machinists had cut it to nine in 1872, and by 1880 the "English week" of 52 hours with Saturday a half-holiday was widespread.

Even before the Industrial Revolution and with such situations as that of Versailles in mind, Benjamin Franklin had written in his essay *On Luxury, Idleness and Industry*:

"What occasions so much want and misery? It is the employment of men and women in works that produce neither the necessities nor the conveniences of life, who, with those who do nothing, consume necessities raised by the laborious. Look around the world and see millions employed in doing nothing or in something that amounts to nothing...It has been computed by some political arithmetician that if every man and woman would work for four hours each day on something useful, that labor would procure all the necessities and comforts of life."

That four hour day was a Great Depression proposal of the IWW; the six hour day was adopted then by Akron rubber workers and given up in 1973, while currently the slogan "30 for 40" (30 hours work for 40 hours pay) recognizes how standard is the 8-hour day that Lafargue and his IWMA agitated for a century ago, though we can surely produce the necessities and comforts of life in a sixteenth of the time required then. In 1866 the IWMA proposed that unions should cut the workday to eight hours to protect workers' health, and to provide time for social intercourse, intellectual improvement and political activities. It demanded the abolition of nightwork for women and children. Its resolution condemning the exploitation of child labor by

factory owners however projected that in a more rational social order children should become productive by age nine, and that their technical training should be in scientific principles as well as in the practical use of tools, and that all should participate in both manual and intellectual labor.

Some may read into Lafargue's essay a contempt for work. Drudgery it holds in contempt and the labor that supports parasites, but as a Marxist Lafargue viewed work as the central fact of man's life. Adam Smith opened his *Wealth of Nations* by telling how the division of labor made men more productive but also required that they produce for a market and sustain themselves from a market. A century and a half later the Communist sociologist Bukharin opened his *Historical Materialism* with an almost lyric description of the social labor bonds that follow from this division of labor. A labor bond links the remote trapper to those who make his gun and buy his furs; it makes his seemingly isolated efforts an integral part of a social process. Such labor bonds made our ancestors human, made human societies transcend earlier biological aggregation and push the area occupied by a society past valley and shore until today our work bonds are building a global society, a bread-and-butter brotherhood of man. This social labor process is the almost metabolic interchange of matter between society and what is not society (or nature) and on the direction of this interchange depends the growth or decline of this aggregate of people, things, ideas and interactions—lately providing much worry to ecologists. "The Marxist view is that work was, is, and will be the essence of human society, irrespective of how much time is spent on it," says G.Y. Zborovsky replying to Dumazedier and other western sociologists who probe this specialized field of the Sociology of Leisure and often speak of leisure as a problem. (Sociological Abstracts 1972, item F 2396)

As prelude to the great revolution Abbé Sieyès had written: "What is the third estate? It has been nothing;



it will be everything." The vigorous socialist unionists of a century ago, like the good Abbé, felt that those who worked with neither hand nor brain were an expendable excrescence on the body social. Work at the orders of a ruling class was viewed as a damage, a degradation, a forging of chains, yet, withal they knew it was their work that enabled the human race to survive its follies; it was work that could produce an earthly paradise; it was work, not virtue or purity, that made the workingclass custodian of the hopes of mankind.

This view was reinforced by the economics of Marx that declared labor to be the source of all value. Adam Smith had expressed the everyday sense of a handicraft era when he found "toil and trouble" to be "the real price of everything". Thinking in terms of mainly self-employed people he made no sharp distinction between evaluating a thing by the labor required to produce it or by the labor one could buy with it. Malthus had turned value theory in this latter direction, but Ricardo, writing of production by wage workers, pruned away all ambiguity and spoke of the values of the sundry commodities as proportional to the amounts of labor needed to produce them. On this basis the Ricardian socialists had argued for the right of workers to the whole product and Marx had elaborated his analysis of capitalism. In that analysis the value of a commodity was considered as determined by the amount of labor socially necessary for its production, this being expended in due subordination to social needs as expressed by market demands. By the time that Lafargue was probing into economics, the new marginal utility twist had turned this latter consideration into the notion that the values of things arose not so much from the toil and trouble it took to make them, as from the intensity with which they were desired by men and women with money—a notion most welcome to those who had become embarrassed by the socialist conclusions drawn from Ricardo. At that it managed only to restate what Smith, Ricardo and Marx had said in the new form that things bore values proportional to the toil and trouble men

found it worthwhile to devote to their production.

This value-creating function of labor has a central place in the Marxian analysis of how capitalism works through a market that often hides basic processes from its participants, poor or rich. Production for a market make this value relation, which is one between people, appear as though it was a relation between things, that so much of this is worth so much of that. The worker, though neither chattel slave nor serf, still finds that to make a living he must do the bidding of others, the bidding of a master he must hunt for himself and be careful neither to offend nor lose. The worker appears to trade his labor for his wage, but he trades only the capacity to perform that labor, and this capacity to work which he trades at its approximate cost has a value in trade much less than the values he produces. The surplus value, the difference between these two values, is the source of all the easy living of the owning class, the wastes of a competitive warlike system, and the upkeep of its nonproductive hired hands. The crude and early way to increase this surplus was to lengthen the workday stretching it far past the point at which the worker had produced his keep. This cut down the worker's efficiency and lengthened the time needed to produce his wage. The surplus could be increased further by devising machinery or better methods so the worker could produce his keep in less time and thus have more time left for producing surplus values. The 37 hour week of a modern worker produces far more surplus than the 80 hour week of his predecessor.

The market distributes this surplus among its claimants in ways that further disguise its source, largely through prices that must tend to give equal earnings to equal volumes of capital whether they be invested in industries where many workers are producing a vast surplus, or in largely automated industries with little labor, or even in financial transactions that employ no productive labor whatever. Market mechanisms spread the loot to propitiate all who have the power to take by bottlenecks, by political



clout, by monopoly, by any means, and thus mask the exploitation of labor with the appearance that money and its manipulation beget profits. But the things made, including much that should not have been made, are plainly the stuff of nature altered by the labor of man using equipment previously made by other workers.

No opportunity for profit from our birth to our burial remains unused, and the bit of free time we have wangled has become the basis for some very profitable industries. *Business Week* of September 18, 1972 explained that the big conglomerates were buying up the leisure-serving industries because of their exceptional profits. Their analysts, further, had concluded that with young adults "for each one per cent rise in disposable income there is more than a two per cent rise in demand for leisure products and services." Snowmobiles and waterskis provide more pollution than snowshoes or swimming and less exercise, but yield far more profits. For young adults whether they tend a machine or work in an office the struggle for status is fought, as Riesman notes, through their use of leisure time, the sports in which they engage and the equipment that they buy. Grandparents wonder that boys and girls seem no longer able to invent out of what is at hand the fun and pastimes they knew in their own youth; the young in all cultures learn the appropriate uses of leisure, and in ours this requires things one must buy or pay to use; without them a young fellow is supposed to sit around with only time on his hands and look glumly at his girlfriend.

Like industry, leisure has become "capital intensive", with things ever more firmly in the saddle, here and in Europe west and east. Jiri Zuzanek told the 1972 meeting of the Southwest Sociological Association that in eastern Europe life style and the uses of leisure have become "an axis for social stratification" and have resulted in "status crystallization". Much of the research reported under the heading sociology of leisure in *Sociological Abstracts* is designed to guide investment in leisure-serving industries toward greater

profit. "Homo automobilis" provides the "moral equivalent of war" in expenditures, in casualties and in damage to the environment. We uneasy-payment peons "buy our chains with nothing down", work overtime or take second jobs so we can spend our reduced leisure more frantically, more expensively. It is a cultural compulsion keyed to the continuous expansion of industry and resisted only by those subversives who reckon that with a bit of organization we might enjoy the next depression. Today's unemployed know little about leisure.

Leisure is increasingly spoken of as a problem, at times from the viewpoint of boredom, at times from the viewpoint of social administrators as a threat to order. Jan Danecki of Poland is reported in those *Abstracts* (F 0652) as noting that as modern technology has extended leisure time beyond what is needed "to reproduce the biological resources of the working class....if there is no social control and regulation of leisure time, very often it can give rise to anti-social activities." Another Polish sociologist, Jan Rsoner, is reported (F 1574) as warning "Adequate opportunities for consumption of newly acquired leisure time must be provided in order to prevent social disintegration and the appearance of some sort of deviant behavior on a massive scale." This attitude is not peculiar to the soviet system. Social workers invent ways for young and old who lack money to be kept busied. Half a century ago Will Hays, industry czar for the silent movies, told his audience at Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration: "Make no mistake about the importance of amusement. Just as you serve the leisure hours of the masses, so do you rivet the girders of society." They have. TV indoctrinates as it baby-sits, involves housewives with the problems of fictitious people so that they are less likely to get involved in the problems of real people, and in the evening drowns the father's frustrations in the vicarious life of a private eye hopping out of glamorous bedroom adventures to hurl his enemy over a cliff. The psychologists reassure the sponsor that this won't



really make him violent.

The reduction in the hours of work has not resulted in a corresponding increase in leisure time. The auto and related industries have won technical, economic and cultural holds; they have made indispensable the services that they have expanded into disservices; construction, real estate, politics have arranged that we work in one place, sleep miles away in another, and seek recreation in still other places. The market makes conspiracy to achieve these results superfluous, and the process does absorb both time and products. Our culture is one in which we hunt for an employer to exploit us, pick out a politician to rule us, and experience all this re-arrangement of our lives as freedom: we are glad that we do not have to attend the after-work political meetings that our fellow workers in the soviet world are reported to endure. Thelma McCormick (*Abstracts* E 3096) reminds us that free time requires freedom for privacy and nonconformity, and thus a technologically advanced society might be workless yet have no leisure. From Prague, Filipcova (F 2395) questions any planned intervention as a denial of leisure for "leisure is activity in which a man belongs to himself." De Ruvo (E 9786) compares today's structured free time with the time devoted to the activities of the mind that in old Greece distinguished free man from slave, or the time reserved by early Christians for "praying and loving" while now "the masses of workers are conditioned to revel in exercising this slavery in exchange for a brief vacation or free tickets to the theater or sports events."

It is curious, as Huizinga pointed out a quarter century ago, that sports is an industry in which the workers are called players and consists of activities that never were productive and even gentlemen may play at these or other non-productive activities as gambling, while a sportsman fishes or hunts in imitation, as Veblen noted, of the honorific male roles of primitive society. The cultivated mass concern with sport makes some ask is it the new "opium of the people". Conspicuously it

stands apart as the one area about which it is socially permissible to argue vehemently. Recently according to some observers sex has boomed both as a participant and as a spectator sport, reported at times as a makeshift and inadequate substitute for more genuine intimacy, absorbing more free time and becoming a much more widely accepted subject for conversation than for example, peace, prison conditions or production for use. The easing of old restrictions on sex spectacles can be interpreted as a dodge to dissipate frustrations and forces that might prove disruptive to a too-old social order.

We need "time to stand and stare" and we need the tensions of commitments we must meet. We need time to be ourselves alone and times of complete involvement with others, time to create as part of a group, time to create doing our own thing, time to be passively amused, time to use our muscles and our senses in ways our work does not provide, and hopefully, more of us will demand time to plot with our fellows how to make a saner world.

For such reasons, and not only to straighten up an aching back, union militants urge a shorter work week. Union officers have customarily answered them that the rank and file do not want a shorter work week, that they are not quite bright enough to know what to do with it, their wives don't want them hanging around the house, and they have no place else to go except the tavern and the doctor told them to stay out of that. William Faulkner complained that work is the only thing we can do for eight hours as we can't eat that long, or drink that long, or make love that long. A new generation of workers reports some success in mixing the three, along with a bit of work, some music and reading and outdoor activity, some discussion and meditation. They are demanding "30 for 40." They are giving some hope to those ecologists who worry that too much work is wasting the world. As plant managers see it, these young workers with their plans to humanize the job and their drive to have some fun on it, are "making



work and play one inane continuum." Among them are intellectual grandchildren of Lafargue who see themselves as forerunners of a future in which work and leisure are indistinguishable purposeful activities, far from inane, self-directed, freed from all taint of commodity culture because we work for the fun of it and get what we want for free.

#### Suggested Readings

On history: As general background any good history of Europe of 19th century, Shapiro's for example, and C. E. Maurice's *The Revolutionary Movement of 1848-9*, then Marx's essays: *The Communist Manifesto*, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, or *Germany in 1848*, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Civil War in France*. Lissagaray wrote a good participant history of the Commune. I have relied much on Alistair Horne's *The Fall of Paris* (St. Martin's Press, 1965) though he makes Rigault a villain and says of Marx's *Civil War*: "Karl Marx's paper on the Commune which he wrote while the 'Bloody Week' was still raging in Paris (although he himself got no closer than the British Museum) must be rated as one of the all-time classics of journalism. His facts were astonishingly accurate; but then he proceeded to distort them for his own dialectic ends." There is a sympathetic account of Rigault in Raymond Postgate's *Out of the Past*. The *Massachusetts Review*, summer 1971 (Vol. XII, No. 3) has some two hundred pages of essays re-evaluating the 1871 Commune, including one by Royden Harrison proving extensive British labor sympathy. Louis Lorwin's 1912 book *Labor Movement in France* focuses on these earlier years; Volume IV of Jurgen Kuczynski's *Short History of Labor Conditions* deals only with France.

On the hours of labor, Woytinsky has an extensive article in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, and there is a one-volume condensation of E. Thorold Rogers' *Six Centuries of English Life and Labor*. J. L. and Barbara Hammond's *The Town Laborer* is an

unforgettable description of British labor during the Industrial Revolution.

For Lafargue's life I have depended primarily on the three volumes of the *Engels-Lafargue Correspondence* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow.) There is a regrettably unpublished PhD. dissertation, "Paul Lafargue: Marxist Disciple and French Revolutionary Socialist" by William Henry Cohn, University of Wisconsin, 1972—thanks to Ronald Creagh and Robert Halsted for making it known and available to me and to Saul Mendelson for reading my original draft. I found reference books generally ill-informed on Lafargue. Samuel Bernstein's *Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France* (Russel & Russel, 1965) and Franz Mehring's *Karl Marx* provide some details and background.

On this "problem" of leisure, there is a lengthy bibliography by decades since 1900 at the end of *Mass Leisure* by Eric Larrabee and Rolf Meyersohn, (Free Press, 1958) the volume itself being a collection of noted essays in the field. Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) alone rivals Lafargue's essay for durability on this topic. In *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, distinguished articles on leisure by Ida Craven in the 1933 and by Joffre Dumazadier in the current edition. Dumazadier's *Toward a Society of Leisure* was translated by David Riesman (Free Press, 1967). A scanning of the *Sociological Abstracts* is most rewarding. The Ford Foundation funded a Center for the Study of Leisure at the University of Chicago which issued many studies but is no longer operative; the Faculty of Human Kinetics and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, offers interdisciplinary courses in related fields and also provides document and computerized retrieval services in Therapeutic Recreation, Sociology of Sport, etc., while the National Recreation and Park Association publishes the *Journal of Leisure Research* at Arlington, Va., 22209, for leisure has become an important business.

—Fred Thompson, 1973



## PREFACE

M. Thiers, at a private session of the commission on primary education of 1849, said: "I wish to make the influence of the clergy all-powerful because I count upon it to propagate that good philosophy which teaches man that he is here below to suffer, and not that other philosophy which on the contrary bids man to enjoy." M. Thiers was stating the ethics of the capitalist class, whose fierce egoism and narrow intelligence he incarnated.

The Bourgeoisie, when it was struggling against the nobility sustained by the clergy, hoisted the flag of free thought and atheism; but once triumphant, it changed its tone and manner and today it uses religion to support its economic and political supremacy. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it had joyfully taken up the pagan tradition and glorified the flesh and its passions, reproved by Christianity; in our days, gorged with goods and pleasures, it denies the teachings of its thinkers like Rabelais and Diderot, and preaches abstinence to the wage-workers. Capitalist ethics, a pitiful parody on Christian ethics, strikes with its anathema the flesh of the laborer; its ideal is to reduce the producer to the smallest number of needs, to suppress his joys and his passions and to condemn him to play the part of a machine turning out work without respite and without thanks.

The revolutionary socialists must take up again the battle fought by the philosophers and pamphleteers of the bourgeoisie; they must march up to the assault of the ethics and the social theories of capitalism; they must demolish in the heads of the class which they call to action the prejudices sown in them by the ruling class; they must proclaim in the faces of the hypocrites of all ethical systems that the earth shall cease to be the vale of tears for the laborer; that in the communist society of the future, which we shall establish "peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must," the impulses of men will be given a free rein, for "all these

impulses are by nature good, we have nothing to avoid but their misuse and their excesses,\* " and they will not be avoided except by their mutual counterbalancing, by the harmonious development of the human organism, for as Dr. Beddoe says, "It is only when a race reaches its maximum of physical development, that it arrives at its highest point of energy and moral vigor." Such was also the opinion of the great naturalist Charles Darwin. +

This refutation of the "Right to Work" which I am republishing with some additional notes appeared in the weekly "Egalité", 1880, second series.

P.L.

*Sainte-Pélagie Prison, 1883.*

## THE RIGHT TO BE LAZY

Let us be lazy in everything, except in loving and drinking, except in being lazy.

—Lessing.

### I. A DISASTROUS DOGMA

A strange delusion possesses the working classes of the nations where capitalist civilization holds its sway. This delusion drags in its train the individual and social woes which for two centuries have tortured sad humanity. This delusion is the love of work, the furious passion for work, pushed even to the exhaustion of the vital force of the individual and his progeny. Instead of opposing this mental aberration, the priests, the economists and the moralists have cast a sacred halo over work. Blind and finite men, they have wished to be wiser than their God; weak and contemptible men, they have presumed to rehabilitate what their God had

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\* Descartes. "Les Passions de l'ame."

+ Doctor Beddoe. "Memoirs of the Anthropological Society. Charles Darwin. "Descent of Man."



cursed. I, who do not profess to be a Christian, an economist or a moralist, I appeal from their judgement to that of their God; from the preachings of their religious, economics or free-thought ethics, to the frightful consequences of work in capitalist society.

In capitalist society work is the cause of all intellectual degeneracy, of all organic deformity. Compare the thorough-bred in Rothschild's stables, served by a retinue of bipeds, with the heavy brute of the Norman farms which plows the earth, carts the manure, hauls the crops. Look at the noble savage whom the missionaries of trade and the traders of religion have not yet corrupted with Christianity, syphilis and the dogma of work, and then look at our miserable slaves of machines. \*

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\* European explorers pause in wonder before the physical beauty and the proud bearing of the men of primitive races, not soiled by what Paepig calls "the poisonous breath of civilization." Speaking of the aborigines of the Oceanic Islands, Lord George Campbell writes: "There is not a people in the world which strikes one more favorably at first sight. Their smooth skin of a light copper tint, their hair golden and curly, their beautiful and happy faces, in a word, their whole person formed a new and splendid specimen of the 'genus homo'; their physical appearance gave the impression of a race superior to ours." The civilized men of ancient Rome, witness Caesar and Tacitus, regarded with the same admiration the Germans of the communist tribes which invaded the Roman empire. Following Tacitus, Salvien, the priest of the fifth century who received the surname of master of the Bishops, held up the barbarians as an example to civilized Christians: "We are immodest before the barbarians, who are more chaste than we. Even more, the barbarians are wounded at our lack of modesty; the Goths do not permit debauchees of their own nation to remain among them; alone in the midst of them, by the sad privilege of their nationality and their name, the Romans have the right to be impure. (Pederasty was then the height of the fashion among both pagans and Christians.) The oppressed fly to the barbarians to seek for mercy and a shelter." (De Gubernatione Dei.) The old civilization and the

When, in our civilized Europe, we would find a trace of the native beauty of man, we must go seek it in the nations where economic prejudices have not yet uprooted the hatred for work. Spain, which, alas, is degenerating, may still boast of possessing fewer factories than we have of prisons and barracks; but the artist rejoices in his admiration of the hardy Andalusian, brown as his native chestnuts, straight and flexible as a steel rod; and the heart leaps at hearing the beggar, superbly draped in his ragged *capa*, parleying on terms of equality with the duke of Ossuna. For the Spaniard, in whom the primitive animal has not been atrophied, work is the worst sort of slavery. \* The Greeks in their era of greatness had only contempt for work: their slaves alone were permitted to labor: the free man knew only exercises for the body and mind. And so it was in this era that men like Aristotle, Phidias, Aristophanes moved and breathed among the people; it was the time when a handful of heroes at

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rising Christianity corrupted the barbarians of the ancient world, as the old Christianity and the modern capitalist civilization are corrupting the savages of the new world.

M. F. LePlay, whose talent for observation must be recognized, even if we reject his sociological conclusions, tainted with philanthropic and Christian pharisaism, says in his book "Les Ouvriers Europeens" (1885): "The Propensity of the Bachkirs for laziness (the Bachkirs are semi-nomadic shepherds of the Asiatic slope of the Ural mountains); the leisure of nomadic life, the habit of meditation which this engenders in the best endowed individuals,—all this often gives them a distinction of manner, a fineness of intelligence and judgement which is rarely to be observed on the same social level in a more developed civilization.....The thing most repugnant to them is agricultural labor: they will do anything rather than accept the trade of a farmer." Agriculture is in fact the first example of servile labor in the history of man. According to biblical tradition, the first criminal, Cain, is a farmer.

\* The Spanish proverb says: Descanzar es salud. (Rest is healthful.)



Marathon crushed the hordes of Asia, soon to be subdued by Alexander. The philosophers of antiquity taught contempt for work, that degradation of the free man, the poets sang of idleness, that gift from the Gods:

O Melibae Deus nobis haec otia fecit. \*

Jesus, in his sermon on the Mount, preached idleness: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Jehovah the bearded and angry god, gave his worshipers the supreme example of ideal laziness; after six days of work, he rests for all eternity.

On the other hand, what are the races for which work is an organic necessity? The Auvergnians; the Scotch, those Auvergnians of the British Isles; the Galicians, those Auvergnians of Spain; the Pomeranians, those Auvergnians of Germany; the Chinese, those Auvergnians of Asia. In our society, which are the classes that love work for work's sake? The peasant proprietors, the little shopkeepers; the former bent double over fields, the latter crouched in their shops, burrow like the mole in his subterranean passage and never stand up to look at nature leisurely.

And meanwhile the proletariat, the great class embracing all the producers of civilized nations, the class which in freeing itself will free humanity from servile toil and will make of the human animal a free being,—the proletariat, betraying its instincts, despising its historic mission, has let itself be perverted by the dogma of work. Rude and terrible has been its punishment. All its individual and social woes are born of its passion for work.

## II. BLESSINGS OF WORK.

In 1770 at London, an anonymous pamphlet appeared

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\* O Melibaeus! a god has granted us this idleness. Virgil's *Bucolics*. (See appendix, page 67)

under the title, "An Essay on Trade and Commerce". It made some stir in its time. The author, a great philanthropist, was indignant that "the factory population of England had taken into its head the fixed idea that in their quality of Englishmen all the individuals composing it have by right of birth the privilege of being freer and more independent than the laborers of any country in Europa. This idea may have its usefulness for soldiers, since it stimulates their valor, but the less the factory workers are imbued with it the better for themselves and the state. Laborers ought never to look on themselves as independent of their superiors. It is extremely dangerous to encourage such infatuations in a commercial state like ours, where perhaps seven-eighths of the population have little or no property. The cure will not be complete until our industrial laborers are contented to work six days for the same sum which they now earn in four." Thus, nearly a century before Guizot, work was openly preached in London as a curb to the noble passions of man. "The more my people work, the less vices they will have," wrote Napoleon on May 5th, 1807, from Osterod. "I am the authority...and I should be disposed to order that on Sunday after the hour of service be past, the shops be opened and the laborers return to their work." To root out laziness and curb the sentiments of pride and independence which arise from it, the author of the "Essay on Trade" proposed to imprison the poor in ideal "work-houses," which should become "houses of terror, where they should work fourteen hours a day in such fashion that when meal time was deducted there should remain twelve hours of work full and complete."

Twelve hours of work a day, that is the ideal of the philanthropists and moralists of the eighteenth century. How have we outdone this *nec plus ultra*! Modern factories have become ideal houses of correction in which the toiling masses are imprisoned, in which they are condemned to compulsory work for twelve or fourteen hours, not the men only but also women and



children.\* And to think that the sons of the heroes of the Terror have allowed themselves to be degraded by the religion of work, to the point of accepting, since 1848, as a revolutionary conquest, the law limiting factory labor to twelve hours. They proclaim as a revolutionary principle the Right to Work. Shame to the French proletariat! Only slaves would have been capable of such baseness. A Greek of the heroic times would have required twenty years of capitalist civilization before he could have conceived such vileness.

And if the miseries of compulsory work and the tortures of hunger have descended upon the proletariat more in number than the locusts of the Bible, it is because the proletariat itself invited them. This work, which in June 1848 the laborers demanded with arms in their hands, this they have imposed on their families; they have delivered up to the barons of industry their wives and children. With their own hands they have demolished their domestic hearths. With their own hands they have dried up the milk of their wives. The unhappy women carrying and nursing their babes have been obliged to go into the mines and factories to bend their backs and exhaust their nerves. With their own hands they have broken the life and the vigor of their children. Shame on the proletarians! Where are those neighborly housewives told of in our fables and in our

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\* At the first Congress of Charities held at Brussels in 1857 one of the richest manufacturers of Marquette, near Lille, M. Scrive, to the plaudits of the members of the congress declared with the noble satisfaction of a duty performed: "We have introduced certain methods of diversion for the children. We teach them to sing during their work, also to count while working. That distracts them and makes them accept bravely 'those twelve hours of labor which are necessary to procure their means of existence.'" Twelve hours of labor, and such labor, imposed on children less than twelve years old! The materialists will always regret that there is no hell in which to confine these Christian philanthropic murderers of childhood.

old tales, bold and frank of speech, lovers of Bacchus? Where are those buxom girls, always on the move, always cooking, always singing, always spreading life, engendering life's joy, giving painless birth to healthy and vigorous children?... Today we have factory girls and women, pale drooping flowers, with impoverished blood, with disordered stomachs, with languid limbs... They have never known the pleasure of a healthful passion, nor would they be capable of telling of it merrily! And the children? Twelve hours of work for children! O, misery. But not all the Jules Simons of the Academy of Moral and Political Science, not all the Germinys of jesuitism, could have invented a vice more degrading to the intelligence of the children, more corrupting of their instincts, more destructive of their organism than work in the vitiated atmosphere of the capitalist factory.

Our epoch has been called the century of work. It is in fact the century of pain, misery and corruption.

And all the while the philosophers, the bourgeois economists—from the painfully confused August Comte to the ludicrously clear Leroy-Beaulieu; the people of bourgeois literature—from the quackishly romantic Victor Hugo to the artlessly grotesque Paul de Kock,—all have intoned nauseating songs in honor of the god Progress, the eldest son of Work. Listen to them and you would think that happiness was soon to reign over the earth, that its coming was already perceived. They rummaged in the dust of past centuries to bring back feudal miseries to serve as a sombre contrast to the delights of the present times. Have they wearied us, these satisfied people, yesterday pensioners at the table of the nobility, today pen-valets of the capitalist class and fatly paid? Have they reckoned us weary of the peasant, such as La Bruyere described him? Well, here is the brilliant picture of proletarian delights in the year of capitalist progress 1840, penned by one of their own men, Dr. Villermé, member of the Institute, the same who in 1848 was a member of that scientific society (Thiers, Cousin, Passy, Blanqui, the academician, were



in it), which disseminated among the masses the nonsense of bourgeois economics and ethics.

It is of manufacturing Alsace that Dr. Villermé speaks,—the Alsace of Kestner and Dollfus, those flowers of industrial philanthropy and republicanism. But before the doctor raises up before us his picture of proletarian miseries, let us listen to an Alsatian manufacturer, Mr. Th. Mieg, of the house of Dollfus, Mieg & Co., depicting the condition of the old-time artisan: "At Mulhouse fifty years ago (in 1813, when modern mechanical industry was just arising) the laborers were all children of the soil, inhabiting the town and the surrounding villages, and almost all owning a house and often a little field." \* It was the golden age of the laborer. But at that time Alsatian industry did not deluge the world with its cottons, nor make millionaires out of its Dollfus and Koechlin. But twenty-five years after, when Villermé visited Alsace, the modern Minotaur, the capitalist workshop, had conquered the country; in its insatiable appetite for human labor it had dragged the workmen from their hearths, the better to wring them and press out the labor which they contained. It was by thousands that the workers flocked together at the signal of the steam whistle. "A great number", says Villermé, "five thousand out of seventeen thousand, were obliged by high rents to lodge in neighboring villages. Some of them lived three or four miles from the factory where they worked. +

"At Mulhouse in Dornach, work began at five o'clock in the morning and ended at eight o'clock in the evening, summer and winter. It was a sight to watch them arrive each morning into the city and depart each

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\* Speech delivered before the International Society of Practical Studies in Social Economics, at Paris in May 1863, and published in the French "Economist" of the same epoch.

+ Note that this was before the era of railroads and street cars. (Translator.)

evening. Among them were a multitude of women, pale, often walking bare-footed through the mud, and who for lack of umbrellas when the rain or snow fell, wore their aprons or skirts turned up over their heads. There was a still larger number of young children, equally dirty, equally pale, covered with rags, greasy from the machine oil which drops on them while they work. They were better protected from the rain because their clothes shed water; but unlike the women just mentioned, they did not carry their day's provisions in a basket, but they carried in their hands or hid under their clothing as best they might, the morsel of bread which must serve them as food until time for them to return home.

Thus to the strain of an insufferably long day—at least fifteen hours—is added for these wretches the fatigue of the painful daily journeys. Consequently they reach home overwhelmed by the need of sleep, and next day they rise before they are completely rested in order to reach the factory by the opening time."

Now, look at the holes in which were packed those who lodge in the town: "I saw at Mulhouse in Dornach, and the neighboring houses, some of those miserable lodgings where two families slept each in its corner on straw thrown on the floor and kept in its place by two planks.... This wretchedness among the laborers of the cotton industry in the department of the upper Rhine is so extreme that it produces this sad result, that while in the families of the manufacturers, merchants, shopkeepers or factory superintendents, half of the children reach their twenty-first year, this same half ceases to exist before the lapse of two years in the families of weavers and cotton spinners."

Speaking of the labor of the workshop, Villermé adds: "It is not a work, a task, it is a torture and it is inflicted on children of six to eight years. It is this long torture day after day which wastes away the laborers in the cotton spinning factories". And as to the duration of the work Villermé observes, that the convicts in prisons work but ten hours, the slaves in the west Indies work



but nine hours, while there existed in France after its Revolution of 1789, which had proclaimed the pompous Rights of Man "factories where the day was sixteen hours, out of which the laborers were allowed only an hour and a half for meals." \*

What a miserable abortion of the revolutionary principles of the bourgeoisie! What woeful gifts from its god Progress! The philanthropists hail as benefactors of humanity those who having done nothing to become rich, give work to the poor. Far better were it to scatter pestilence and to poison the springs than to erect a capitalist factory in the midst of a rural population. Introduce factory work, and farewell joy, health and liberty; farewell to all that makes life beautiful and worth living. +

And the economists go on repeating to the laborers, "Work, to increase social wealth", and nevertheless an economist, Destutt de Tracy, answers: "It is in poor

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\* L. R. Villermé. "Tableau de l'état physique et moral des ouvriers dans les fabriques de coton, de laine et de soie (1840). It is not because Dollfus, Koechlin and other Alsatian manufacturers were republicans, patriots and protestant philanthropists that they treated their laborers in this way, for Blanqui, the academician, Reybaud, the prototype of Jerome Paturot, and Jules Simon, have observed the same amenities for the working class among the very catholic and monarchical manufacturers of Lille and Lyons. These are capitalist virtues which harmonize delightfully with all political and religious convictions.

+ The Indians of the warlike tribes of Brazil kill their invalids and old people; they show their affection for them by putting an end to a life which is no longer enlivened by combats, feasts and dances. All primitive peoples have given these proofs of affection to their relatives: the Massagetae of the Caspian Sea (Herodotus), as well as the Wends of Germany and the Celts of Gaul. In the churches of Sweden even lately they preserved clubs called family clubs which served to deliver parents from the sorrows of old age. How degenerate are the modern proletarians to accept with patience the terrible miseries of factory labor!

nations that people are comfortable, in rich nations they are ordinarily poor"; and his disciple Cherbuliez continues: "The laborers themselves in co-operating toward the accumulation of productive capital contribute to the event which sooner or later must deprive them of a part of their wages". But deafened and stupified by their own howlings, the economists answer: "Work, always work, to create your prosperity", and in the name of Christian meekness a priest of the Anglican Church, the Rev. Mr. Townshend, intones: Work, work, night and day. By working you make your poverty increase and your poverty releases us from imposing work upon you by force of law. The legal imposition of work "gives too much trouble, requires too much violence and makes too much noise. Hunger, on the contrary, is not only a pressure which is peaceful, silent and incessant, but as it is the most natural motive for work and industry, it also provokes to the most powerful efforts." Work, work, proletarians, to increase social wealth and your individual poverty; work, work, in order that becoming poorer, you may have more reason to work and become miserable. Such is the inexorable law of capitalist production.

Because, lending ear to the fallacious words of the economists, the proletarians have given themselves up body and soul to the vice of work, they precipitate the whole of society into these industrial crises of over-production which convulse the social organism. Then because there is a plethora of merchandise and a dearth of purchasers, the shops are closed and hunger scourges the working people with its whip of a thousand lashes. The proletarians, brutalized by the dogma of work, not understanding that the over-work which they have inflicted upon themselves during the time of pretended prosperity is the cause of their present misery, do not run to the granaries of wheat and cry: "We are hungry, we wish to eat. True we have not a red cent, but beggars as we are, it is we, nevertheless, who harvested the wheat and gathered the grapes." They do



not besiege the warehouse of Bonnet, or Jujurieux, the inventor of industrial convents, and cry out: "M. Bonnet, here are your working women, silk workers, spinners, weavers; they are shivering pitifully under their patched cotton dresses, yet it is they who have spun and woven the silk robes of the fashionable women of all Christendom. The poor creatures working thirteen hours a day, had no time to think of their toilet. Now, they are out of work and have time to rustle in the silks they have made. Ever since they lost their milk teeth they have devoted themselves to your fortune and have lived in abstinence. Now they are at leisure and wish to enjoy a little of the fruits of their labor. Come, M. Bonnet, give them your silks, M. Harmel shall furnish his muslins, M. Pouyer-Quertier his calicos, M. Pinet his boots for their dear little feet, cold and damp. Clad from top to toe and gleeful, they will be delightful to look at. Come, no evasions, you are a friend of humanity, are you not, and a Christian into the bargain? Put at the disposal of your working girls the fortune they have built up for you out of their flesh; you want to help business, get your goods into circulation,—here are consumers ready at hand. Give them unlimited credit. You are simply compelled to give credit to merchants whom you do not know from Adam or Eve, who have given you nothing, not even a glass of water. Your working women will pay the debt the best they can. If at maturity they let their notes go to protest, and if they have nothing to attach, you can demand that they pay you in prayers. They will send you to paradise better than your blackgowned priests steeped in tobacco."

Instead of taking advantage of periods of crisis, for a general distribution of their products and a universal holiday, the laborers, perishing with hunger, go and beat their heads against the doors of the workshops. With pale faces, emaciated bodies, pitiful speeches they assail the manufacturers: "Good M. Chagot, sweet M. Schneider, give us work, it is not hunger, but the passion for work which torments us." And these

wretches, who have scarcely the strength to stand upright, sell twelve and fourteen hours of work twice as cheap as when they had bread on the table. And the philanthropists of industry profit by their lockouts to manufacture at lower cost.

If industrial crises follow periods of overwork as inevitably as night follows day, bringing after them lockouts and poverty without end, they also lead to inevitable bankruptcy. So long as the manufacturer has credit he gives free rein to the rage for work. He borrows, and borrows again, to furnish raw material to his laborers, and goes on producing without considering that the market is becoming satiated and that if his goods don't happen to be sold, his notes will still come due. At his wits' end, he implores the banker, he throws himself at his feet, offering his blood, his honor. "A little gold will do my business better", answers the Rothschild. "You have 20,000 pairs of hose in your warehouse; they are worth 20c. I will take them at 4c." The banker gets possession of the goods and sells them at 6c or 8c, and pockets certain frisky dollars which owe nothing to anybody: but the manufacturer has stepped back for a better leap. At last the crash comes and the warehouses disgorge. Then so much merchandise is thrown out of the window that you cannot imagine how it came in by the door. Hundreds of millions are required to figure the value of the goods that are destroyed. In the last century they were burned or thrown into the water. \*

But before reaching this decision, the manufacturers travel the world over in search of markets for the goods which are heaping up. They force their government to annex Congo, to seize on Tonquin, to batter down the Chinese Wall with cannon shots to make an outlet for their cotton goods. In previous centuries it was a duel to

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\* At the Industrial Congress held in Berlin in Jan. 21, 1879, the losses in the iron industry of Germany during the last crisis were estimated at \$109,056,000.



the death between France and England as to which should have the exclusive privilege of selling to America and the Indies. Thousands of young and vigorous men reddened the seas with their blood during the colonial wars of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

There is a surplus of capital as well as of goods. The financiers no longer know where to place it. Then they go among the happy nations who are loafing in the sun smoking cigarettes and they lay down railroads, erect factories and import the curse of work. And this exportation of French capital ends one fine morning in diplomatic complications. In Egypt, for example, France, England and Germany were on the point of hairpulling to decide which usurers shall be paid first. Or it ends with wars like that in Mexico where French soldiers are sent to play the part of constables to collect bad debts. \*

These individual and social miseries, however great and innumerable they may be, however eternal they appear, will vanish like hyenas and jackals at the approach of the lion, when the proletariat shall say "I will". But to arrive at the realization of its strength the proletariat must trample under foot the prejudices of Christian ethics, economic ethics and free-thought ethics. It must return to its natural instincts, it must

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\* M. Clemenceau's "Justice" said on April 6, 1880, in its financial department: "We have heard this opinion maintained, that even without pressure the billions of the war of 1870 would have been equally lost for France, that is under the form of loans periodically put out to balance the budgets of foreign countries; this is also our opinion." The loss of English capital on loans of South American Republics is estimated at a billion dollars. The French laborers not only produced the billion dollars paid Bismarck, but they continued to pay interest on the war indemnity to Ollivier, Girardin, Bazaine and other income drawers, who brought on the war and the rout. Nevertheless they still have one shred of consolation: these billions will not bring on a war of reprisal.

proclaim the Rights of Laziness, a thousand times more noble and more sacred than the anaemic Rights of Man concocted by the metaphysical lawyers of the bourgeois revolution. It must accustom itself to working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting.

Thus far my task has been easy; I have had but to describe real evils well known, alas, by all of us; but to convince the proletariat that the ethics inoculated into it is wicked, that the unbridled work to which it has given itself up for the last hundred years is the most terrible scourge that has ever struck humanity, that work will become a mere condiment to the pleasures of idleness, a beneficial exercise to the human organism, a passion useful to the social organism only when wisely regulated and limited to a maximum of three hours a day; this is an arduous task beyond my strength. Only communist physiologists, hygienists and economists could undertake it. In the following pages I shall merely try to show that given the modern means of production and their unlimited reproductive power it is necessary to curb the extravagant passion of the laborers for work and to oblige them to consume the goods which they produce.

### III.

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF OVER-PRODUCTION.

A Greek poet of Cicero's time, Antiparos, thus sang of the invention of the water-mill (for grinding grain), which was to free the slave women and bring back the Golden Age: "Spare the arm which turns the mill, O, millers, and sleep peacefully. Let the cock warn you in vain that day is breaking. Demeter has imposed upon the nymphs the labor of the slaves, and behold them leaping merrily over the wheel, and behold the axle tree, shaken, turning with its spokes and making the heavy rolling stone revolve. Let us live the life of our fathers, and let us rejoice in idleness over the gifts that



the goddess grants us." Alas!, the leisure which the pagan poet announced has not come. The blind, perverse and murderous passion for work transforms the liberating machine into an instrument for the enslavement of free men. Its productiveness impoverishes them.

A good workingwoman makes with her needles only five meshes a minute, while certain circular knitting machines make 30,000 in the same time. Every minute of the machine is thus equivalent to a hundred hours of the workingwomen's labor, or again, every minute of the machine's labor, gives the workingwomen ten days of rest. What is true for the knitting industry is more or less true for all industries reconstructed by modern machinery. But what do we see? In proportion as the machine is improved and performs man's work with an ever increasing rapidity and exactness, the laborer, instead of prolonging his former rest times, redoubles his ardor, as if he wished to rival the machine. O, absurd and murderous competition!

That the competition of man and the machine might have free course, the proletarians have abolished wise laws which limited the labor of the artisans of the ancient guilds; they have suppressed the holidays.\*

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\* Under the old regime, the laws of the church guaranteed the laborer ninety rest days, fifty-two Sundays and thirty-eight holidays, during which he was strictly forbidden to work. This was the great crime of catholicism, the principal cause of the irreligion of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie: under the revolution, when once it was in the saddle, it abolished the holidays and replaced the week of seven days by that of ten, in order that the people might no longer have more than one rest day out of the ten. It emancipated the laborers from the yoke of the church in order the better to subjugate them under the yoke of work.

The hatred against the holidays does not appear until the modern industrial and commercial bourgeoisie takes definite form, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Henry IV asked of the pope that they be reduced. He refused because

Because the producers of that time worked but five days out of seven, are we to believe the stories told by lying economists, that they lived on nothing but air and fresh water? Not so, they had leisure to taste the joys of earth, to make love and to frolic, to banquet joyously in honor of the jovial god of idleness. Gloomy England, immersed in protestantism, was then called "Merrie England." Rabelais, Quevedo, Cervantes, and the unknown authors of the romances make our mouths water with their pictures of those monumental feasts,\* with which the men of that time regaled themselves between two battles and two devastations, in which everything "went by the barrel". Jordaens and the Flemish School have told the story of these feasts in their delightful pictures. Where, O, where, are the sublime gargantuan stomachs of those days; where are

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"one of the current heresies of the day is regarding feasts" (Letters of Cardinal d'Ossat). But in 1666 Perefifixus, archbishop of Paris, suppressed seventeen of them in his diocese. Protestantism, which was the Christian religion adapted to the new industrial and commercial needs of the bourgeoisie, was less solicitous for the people's rest. It dethroned the saints in heaven in order to abolish their feast days on earth.

Religious reform and philosophical free thought were but pretexts which permitted this jesuitical and rapacious bourgeoisie to pilfer the feast days of the people.

\* These gigantic feasts lasted for weeks. Don Rodrigo de Lara wins his bride by expelling the Moors from old Calatrava, and the Romancero relates the story:

Las bodas fueron en Burgos  
Las tornabodas en Salas:  
En bodas y tornabodas  
Pasaron siete semanas  
Tantas vienen de las gentes  
Que no caben por las plazas

(The wedding was at Bourges, the infaring at Salas. In the wedding and the infaring seven weeks were spent. So many people came that the town could not hold them.....).

The men of these seven-weeks weddings were the heroic soldiers of the wars of independence.



the sublime brains encircling all human thought? We have indeed grown puny and degenerate. Embalmed beef, potatoes, doctored wine and Prussian schnaps, judiciously combined with compulsory labor have weakened our bodies and narrowed our minds. And the times when man cramps his stomach and the machine enlarges its out-put are the very times when the economists preach to us the Malthusian theory, the religion of abstinence and the dogma of work. Really it would be better to pluck out such tongues and throw them to the dogs.

Because the working class, with its simple good faith, has allowed itself to be thus indoctrinated, because with its native impetuosity it has blindly hurled itself into work and abstinence, the capitalist class has found itself condemned to laziness and forced enjoyment, to unproductiveness and overconsumption. But if the over-work of the laborer bruises his flesh and tortures his nerves, it is also fertile in griefs for the capitalist.

The abstinence to which the productive class condemns itself obliges the capitalists to devote themselves to the over-consumption of the products turned out so riotously by the laborers. At the beginning of capitalist production a century or two ago, the capitalist was a steady man of reasonable and peaceable habits. He contented himself with one wife or thereabouts. He drank only when he was thirsty and ate only when he was hungry. He left to the lords and ladies of the court the noble virtues of debauchery. Today every son of the newly rich makes it incumbent upon himself to cultivate the disease for which quicksilver is a specific in order to justify the labors imposed upon the workmen in quicksilver mines; every capitalist crams himself with capons stuffed with truffles and with the choicest brands of wine in order to encourage the breeders of blooded poultry and the growers of Bordeaux. In this occupation the organism rapidly becomes shattered, the hair falls out, the gums shrink away from the teeth, the body becomes deformed, the stomach obtrudes abnormally, respiration becomes difficult, the

motions become labored, the joints become stiff, the fingers knotted. Others, too feeble in body to endure the fatigues of debauchery, but endowed with the bump of philanthropic discrimination, dry up their brains over political economy, or juridical philosophy in elaborating thick soporific books to employ the leisure hours of compositors and pressmen. The women of fashion live a life of martyrdom, in trying on and showing off the fairy-like toilets which the seamstresses die in making. They shift like shuttles from morning until night from one gown into another. For hours together they give up their hollow heads to the artists in hair, who at any cost insist on assuaging their passion for the construction of false chignons. Bound in their corsets, pinched in their boots, décolleté to make a coal-miner blush, they whirl around the whole night through at their charity balls in order to pick up a few cents for poor people,--sanctified souls!

To fulfill his double social function of non-producer and over-consumer, the capitalist was not only obliged to violate his modest taste, to lose his laborious habits of two centuries ago and to give himself up to unbounded luxury, spicy indigestibles and syphilitic debauches, but also to withdraw from productive labor an enormous mass of men in order to enlist them as his assistants.

Here are a few figures to prove how colossal is this waste of productive forces. According to the census of 1861, the population of England and Wales comprised 20,066,244 persons, 9,776,259 male and 10,289,965 female. If we deduct those too old or too young to work, the unproductive women, boys and girls, then the "ideological professions", such as governors, policemen, clergy, magistrates, soldiers, prostitutes, artists, scientists, etc., next the people exclusively occupied with eating the labor of others under the form of land-rent, interest, dividends, etc....there remains a total of eight million individuals of both sexes and of every age, including the capitalists who function in production, commerce, finance, etc. Out of these eight



millions the figures run:

Agricultural laborers, including herdsmen, servants and farmers' daughters living at home	1,098,261
Factory Workers in cotton, wool, hemp, linen silk, knitting	642,607
Mine Workers	565,835
Metal Workers (blast furnaces, rolling mills, etc.)	396,998

Domestics	1,208,648
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"If we add together the textile workers and the miners, we obtain the figures of 1,208,442; if to the former we add the metal workers, we have a total of 1,039,605 persons; that is to say, in each case a number below that of the modern domestic slaves. Behold the magnificent result of the capitalist exploitation of machines."\* To this class of domestics, the size of which indicates the stage attained by capitalist civilization, must still be added the enormous class of unfortunates devoted exclusively to satisfying the vain and expensive tastes of the rich classes: diamond cutters, lace-makers, embroiderers, binders of luxurious books, seamstresses employed on expensive gowns, decorators of villas, etc. +

Once settled down into absolute laziness and demoralized by enforced enjoyment, the capitalist class in spite of the injury involved in its new kind of life, adapted itself to it. Soon it began to look upon any change with horror. The sight of the miserable conditions of life resignedly accepted by the working class

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\* Karl Marx's "Capital".

+ "The proportion in which the population of the country is employed as domestics in the service of the wealthy class indicates its progress in national wealth and civilization." (R. M. Martin, "Ireland Before and After the Union," 1818). Gambetta, who has denied that there was a social question ever since he ceased to be the poverty stricken lawyer of the Cafe Procope, undoubtedly alluded to this ever-increasing domestic class when he announced the advent of new social strata.

and the sight of the organic degradation engendered by the depraved passion for work increased its aversion for all compulsory labor and all restrictions of its pleasures. It is precisely at that time that, without taking into account the demoralization which the capitalist class had imposed upon itself as a social duty, the proletarians took it into their heads to inflict work on the capitalists. Artless as they were, they took seriously the theories of work proclaimed by the economists and moralists, and girded up their loins to inflict the practice of these theories upon the capitalists. The proletariat hoisted the banner, "He who will not work Neither shall he Eat". Lyons in 1831 rose up for bullets or work. The federated laborers of March 1871 called their uprising "The Revolution of Work". To these outbreaks of barbarous fury destructive of all capitalist joy and laziness, the capitalists had no other answer than ferocious repression, but they know that if they have been able to repress these revolutionary explosions, they have not drowned in the blood of these gigantic massacres the absurd idea of the proletariat wishing to inflict work upon the idle and reputable classes, and it is to avert this misfortune that they surround themselves with guards, policemen, magistrates and jailors, supported in laborious unproductiveness. There is no more room for illusion as to the function of modern armies. They are permanently maintained only to suppress the "enemy within". Thus the forts of Paris and Lyons have not been built to defend the city against the foreigner, but to crush it in case of revolt. And if an unanswerable example be called for, we mention the army of Belgium, that paradise of capitalism. Its neutrality is guaranteed by the European powers, and nevertheless its army is one of the strongest in proportion to its population. The glorious battlefields of the brave Belgian army are the plains of the Borinage and of Charleroi. It is in the blood of the unarmed miners and laborers that the Belgian officers temper their swords and win their epaulets. The nations of Europe have not national armies but



mercenary armies. They protect the capitalists against the popular fury which would condemn them to ten hours of mining or spinning. Again, while compressing its own stomach the working class has developed abnormally the stomach of the capitalist class, condemned to over-consumption.

For alleviation of its painful labor the capitalist class has withdrawn from the working class a mass of men far superior to those still devoted to useful production and has condemned them in their turn to unproductiveness and over-consumption. But this troop of useless mouths in spite of its insatiable voracity, does not suffice to consume all the goods which the laborers, brutalized by the dogma of work, produce like madmen, without wishing to consume them and without even thinking whether people will be found to consume them.

Confronted with this double madness of the laborers killing themselves with over-production and vegetating in abstinence, the great problem of capitalist production is no longer to find producers and to multiply their powers but to discover consumers, to excite their appetites and create in them fictitious needs. Since the European laborers, shivering with cold and hunger, refuse to wear the stuffs they weave, to drink the wines from the vineyards they tend, the poor manufacturers in their goodness of heart must run to the ends of the earth to find people to wear the clothes and drink the wines: Europe exports every year goods amounting to billions of dollars to the four corners of the earth, to nations that have no need of them. \* But the

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\* Two examples: The English government to satisfy the peasants of India, who in spite of the periodical famines desolating their country insist on cultivating poppies instead of rice or wheat, has been obliged to undertake bloody wars in order to impose upon the Chinese Government the free entry of Indian opium. The savages of Polynesia, in spite of the mortality resulting from it are obliged to clothe themselves in the English fashion in order to consume the products of the Scotch distilleries and the Manchester cotton mills.

explored continents are no longer vast enough. Virgin countries are needed. European manufacturers dream night and day of Africa, of a lake in the Saharan desert, of a railroad to the Soudan. They anxiously follow the progress of Livingston, Stanley, Du Chaillu; they listen open-mouthed to the marvelous tales of these brave travelers. What unknown wonders are contained in the "dark continent"! Fields are sown with elephants' teeth, rivers of cocoanut oil are dotted with gold, millions of backsides, as bare as the faces of Dufaure and Girardin, are awaiting cotton goods to teach them decency, and bottles of schnaps and bibles from which they may learn the virtues of civilization.

But all to no purpose: the over-fed capitalist, the servant class greater in numbers than the productive class, the foreign and barbarous nations, gorged with European goods; nothing, nothing can melt away the mountains of products heaped up higher and more enormous than the pyramids of Egypt. The productiveness of European laborers defies all consumption, all waste.

The manufacturers have lost their bearings and know not which way to turn. They can no longer find the raw material to satisfy the lawless depraved passion of their laborers for work. In our woolen districts dirty and half rotten rags are raveled out to use in making certain cloths sold under the name of renaissance, which have about the same durability as the promises made to voters. At Lyons, instead of leaving the silk fiber in its natural simplicity and suppleness, it is loaded down with mineral salts, which while increasing its weight, make it friable and far from durable. All our products are adulterated to aid in their sale and shorten their life. Our epoch will be called the "Age of adulteration" just as the first epochs of humanity received the names of "The Age of Stone", "The Age of Bronze", from the character of their production. Certain ignorant people accuse our pious manufacturers of fraud, while in reality the thought which animates them is to furnish work to their laborers, who cannot resign themselves to



living with their arms folded. These adulterations, whose sole motive is a humanitarian sentiment, but which bring splendid profits to the manufacturers who practice them, if they are disastrous for the quality of the goods, if they are an inexhaustible source of waste in human labor, nevertheless prove the ingenuous philanthropy of the capitalists, and the horrible perversion of the laborers, who to gratify their vice for work oblige the manufacturers to stifle the cries of their conscience and to violate even the laws of commercial honesty.

And nevertheless, in spite of the overproduction of goods, in spite of the adulterations in manufacturing, the laborers encumber the market in countless numbers imploring: Work! Work! Their superabundance ought to compel them to bridle their passion; on the contrary it carries it to the point of paroxysm. Let a chance for work present itself, thither they rush; then they demand twelve, fourteen hours to glut their appetite for work, and the next day they are again thrown out on the pavement with no more food for their vice. Every year in all industries lockouts occur with the regularity of the seasons. Over-work, destructive of the organism, is succeeded by absolute rest during two or four months, and when work ceases the pittance ceases. Since the vice of work is diabolically attached to the heart of the laborers, since its requirements stifle all the other instincts of nature, since the quantity of work required by society is necessarily limited by consumption and by the supply of raw materials, why devour in six months the work of a whole year; why not distribute it uniformly over the twelve months and force every workingman to content himself with six or five hours a day throughout the year instead of getting indigestion from twelve hours during six months? Once assured of their daily portion of work, the laborers will no longer be jealous of each other, no longer fight to snatch away work from each other's hands and bread from each other's mouths, and then, not exhausted in body and mind, they will begin to practice the virtues of laziness.

Brutalized by their vice, the laborers have been unable to rise to the conception of this fact, that to have work for all it is necessary to apportion it like water on a ship in distress. Meanwhile certain manufacturers in the name of capitalist exploitation have for a long time demanded a legal limitation of the work day. Before the commission of 1860 on professional education, one of the greatest manufacturers of Alsace, M. Bourcart of Guebwiller, declared: "The day of twelve hours is excessive and ought to be reduced to eleven, while work ought to be stopped at two o'clock on Saturday. I advise the adoption of this measure, although it may appear onerous at first sight. We have tried it in our industrial establishments for four years and find ourselves the better for it, while the average production, far from having diminished, has increased." In his study of machines M. F. Passy quotes the following letter from a great Belgian manufacturer M. Ottevaere: "Our machines, although the same as those of the English spinning mills, do not produce what they ought to produce or what those machines would produce in England, although the spinners there work two hours a day less. We all work two good hours too much. I am convinced that if we worked only eleven hours instead of thirteen we should have the same product and we should consequently produce more economically." Again, M. Leroy-Beaulieu affirms that it is a remark of a great Belgian manufacturer that the weeks in which a holiday falls result in a product not less than ordinary weeks.\*

An aristocratic government has dared to do what a people, duped in their simplicity by the moralists, never dared. Despising the lofty and moral industrial considerations of the economists, who like the birds of ill omen, croaked that to reduce by one hour the work in

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\* Paul Leroy-Beaulieu. *La Question Ouvriere au XIX siecle*, 1872.



factories was to decree the ruin of English industry, the government of England has forbidden by a law strictly enforced to work more than ten hours a day, and as before England remains the first industrial nation of the world. \*

The experiment tried on so great a scale is on record; the experience of certain intelligent capitalists is on record. They prove beyond a doubt that to strengthen human production it is necessary to reduce the hours of labor and multiply the pay days and feast days, yet the French nation is not convinced. But if the miserable reduction of two hours has increased English production by almost one-third in ten years, what breathless speed would be given to French production by a legal limitation of the working day to three hours. Cannot the laborers understand that by over-working themselves they exhaust their own strength and that of their progeny, that they are used up and long before their time come to be incapable of any work at all, that absorbed and brutalized by this single vice they are no longer men but pieces of men, that they kill within themselves all beautiful faculties, to leave nothing alive and flourishing except the furious madness for work. Like Arcadian parrots, they repeat the lesson of the economist: "Let us work, let us work to increase the national wealth." O, idiots, it is because you work too much that the industrial equipment develops slowly. Stop braying and listen to an economist, no other than M. L. Reybaud, whom we were fortunate enough to lose a few months ago. "It is in general by the conditions of hand-work that the revolution in methods of labor is regulated. As long as hand-work furnishes its services at a low price, it is lavished, while efforts are made to

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\* It should be observed that this was written in 1883, since which time the United States has taken the first rank. The soundness of Lafargue's reasoning is confirmed by the fact that in this country the hours of labor in the most important industries are even less than in England. (Translator.)

economize it when its services become more costly." \*

To force the capitalists to improve their machines of wood and iron it is necessary to raise wages and diminish the working hours of the machines of flesh and blood. Do you ask for proofs: They can be furnished by the hundreds. In spinning, the self-acting mule was invented and applied at Manchester because the spinners refused to work such long hours as before. In America the machine is invading all branches of farm production, from the making of butter to the weeding of wheat. Why, because the American, free and lazy, would prefer a thousand deaths to the bovine life of the French peasant. Plowing, so painful and so crippling to the laborer in our glorious France, is in the American West an agreeable open-air pastime, which he practices in a sitting posture, smoking his pipe nonchalantly.

#### IV.

#### NEW SONGS TO NEW MUSIC

We have seen that by diminishing the hours of labor new mechanical forces will be conquered for social production. Furthermore, by obliging the laborers to consume their products the army of workers will be immensely increased. The capitalist class once relieved from its function of universal consumer will hasten to dismiss its train of soldiers, magistrates, journalists, procurers, which it has withdrawn from useful labor to help it in consuming and wasting. Then the labor market will overflow. Then will be required an iron law to put a limit on work. It will be impossible to find employment for that swarm of former unproductives, more numerous than insect parasites, and after them must be considered all those who provide for

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\* Louis Reybaud. *Le coton, son regime, ses problèmes* (1863).



their needs and their vain and expensive tastes. When there are no more lackeys and generals to decorate, no more free and married prostitutes to be covered with laces, no more cannons to bore, no more palaces to build, there will be need of severe laws to compel the working women and workingmen who have been employed on embroidered laces, iron workings, buildings, to take the hygienic and calisthenic exercises requisite to re-establish their health and improve their race. When once we begin to consume European products at home instead of sending them to the devil, it will be necessary that the sailors, dock handlers and the draymen sit down and learn to twirl their thumbs. The happy Polynesians may then love as they like without fearing the civilized Venus and the sermons of European moralists.

And that is not all: In order to find work for all the non-producers of our present society, in order to leave room for the industrial equipment to go on developing indefinitely, the working class will be compelled, like the capitalist class, to do violence to its taste for abstinence and to develop indefinitely its consuming capacities. Instead of eating an ounce or two of gristly meat once a day, when it eats any, it will eat juicy beefsteaks of a pound or two; instead of drinking moderately of bad wine, it will become more orthodox than the pope and will drink broad and deep bumpers of Bordeaux and Burgundy without commercial baptism and will leave water to the beasts.

The proletarians have taken into their heads to inflict upon the capitalists ten hours of forge and factory; that is their great mistake, because of social antagonisms and civil wars. Work ought to be forbidden and not imposed. The Rothschilds and other capitalists should be allowed to bring testimony to the fact that throughout their whole lives they have been perfect vagabonds, and if they swear they wish to continue to live as perfect vagabonds in spite of the general mania for work, they should be pensioned and should receive every morning at the city hall a five-dollar gold piece

for their pocket money. Social discords will vanish. Bond holders and capitalists will be first to rally to the popular party, once convinced that far from wishing them harm, its purpose is rather to relieve them of the labor of over-consumption and waste, with which they have been overwhelmed since their birth. As for the capitalists who are incapable of proving their title to the name of vagabond, they will be allowed to follow their instincts. There are plenty of disgusting occupations in which to place them. Dufaure might be set at cleaning public closets, Gallifet\* might perform surgical operations on diseased horses and hogs. The members of the amnesty commission might be sent to the stock yards to pick out the oxen and the sheep to be slaughtered. The senators might play the part of undertakers and lackeys in funeral processions. As for the others, occupations could be found for them on a level with their intelligence. Lorgier and Broglie could cork champagne bottles, only they would have to be muzzled as a precaution against intoxication. Ferry, Freycinet and Tirard might destroy the bugs and vermin in the departments of state and other public houses. It would, however, be necessary to put the public funds out of the reach of the capitalists out of due regard for their acquired habits.

But vengeance, harsh and prolonged, will be heaped upon the moralists who have perverted nature, the bigots, the canters, the hypocrites, "and other such sects of men who disguise themselves like maskers to deceive the world. For whilst they give the common people to understand that they are busied about nothing but contemplation and devotion in fastings and maceration of their sensuality,--and that only to sustain and aliment the small frailty of their humanity, --it is so far otherwise that on the contrary, God knows, what

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\* Gallifet was the general who was directly responsible for the massacre of thousands of French workingmen at the closing days of the Paris Commune.



cheer they make; et *Curios simulant, sed Bacchanalia vivunt*. \* You may read it in great letters, in the coloring of their red snouts, and gulching bellies as big as a tun, unless it be when they perfume themselves with sulphur." + On the days of great popular rejoicing, when instead of swallowing dust as on the 15th of August and 14th of July under capitalism, the communists and collectivists will eat, drink and dance to their hearts' content, the members of the Academy, of moral and political sciences, the priests with long robes and short, of the economic, catholic, protestant, jewish, positivist and free-thought church; the propagandists of Malthusianism, and of Christian, altruistic, independent or dependent ethics, clothed in yellow, shall be compelled to hold a candle until it burns their fingers, shall starve in sight of tables loaded with meats, fruits and flowers and shall agonize with thirst in sight of flowing hogsheads. Four times a year with the changing seasons they shall be shut up like the knife grinders' dogs in great wheels and condemned to grind wind for ten hours.

The lawyers and legislators shall suffer the same punishment. Under the regime of idleness, to kill the time, which kills us second by second, there will be shows and theatrical performances always and always. And here we have the very work for our bourgeois legislators. We shall organize them into traveling companies to go to the fairs and villages, giving legislative exhibitions. The generals in riding boots, their breasts brilliantly decorated with medals and crosses, shall go through the streets and courts levying recruits among the good people. Gambetta and his comrade Cassagnac shall tend door. Cassagnac, in full duelist costume, rolling his eyes and twisting his mustache, spitting out burning tow, shall threaten

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\* They simulate Curius but live like Bacchanals. (Juvenal.)

+ Rabelais "Pantagruel," Book II, Chapter XXXIV, Translation of Urquhart and Motteux.

every one with his father's pistol.\* and sink into a hole as soon as they show him Lullier's portrait. Gambetta will discourse on foreign politics and on little Greece, who makes a doctor of him and would set Europe on fire to pilfer Turkey; on great Russia that stultifies him with the mincemeat she promises to make of Prussia and who would fain see mischief brewing in the west of Europe so as to feather her nest in the east and to strangle nihilism at home; on Mr. Bismark who was good enough to allow him to pronounce himself on the amnesty .....then uncovering his mountainous belly smeared over with red and white and blue, the three national colors, he will beat the tattoo on it, and enumerate the delicate little ortolans, the truffles and the glasses of Margaux and Y'quem that it has gulped down to encourage agriculture, and to keep his electors of Belleville in good spirits.

In the barracks the entertainment will open with the "Electoral Farce."

In the presence of the voters with wooden heads and asses' ears, the bourgeois candidates, dressed as clowns, will dance the dance of political liberties, wiping themselves fore and aft with their freely promising electoral programs, and talking with tears in their eyes of the miseries of the people and with copper in their voices of the glories of France. Then the heads of the voters will bray solidly in chorus, hi han! hi han!

Then will start the great play, "The Theft of the Nation's Goods"

Capitalist France, an enormous female, hairy-faced and bald-headed, fat, flabby, puffy and pale, with sunken eyes, sleepy and yawning, is stretching herself out on a velvet couch. At her feet Industrial Capitalism, a gigantic organism of iron, with an ape-like mask, is mechanically devouring men, women and children, whose thrilling and heart-rending cries fill the air; the

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\* Paul de Cassagnac, like his father, Granier, was prominent as a conservative politician, journalist and duelist.



bank with a marten's muzzle, a hyena's body and harpy-hands, is nimbly flipping coins out of his pocket. Hordes of miserable, emaciated proletarians in rags, escorted by gendarmes with drawn sabers, pursued by furies lashing them with whips of hunger, are bringing to the feet of capitalist France heaps of merchandise, casks of wine, sacks of gold and wheat. Langlois, his nether garment in one hand, the testament of Proudhon in the other and the book of the national budget between his teeth, is encamped at the head of the defenders of national property and is mounting guard. When the laborers, beaten with gun stocks and pricked with bayonets, have laid down their burdens, they are driven away and the door is opened to the manufacturers, merchants and bankers. They hurl themselves pell mell upon the heap, devouring cotton goods, sacks of wheat, ingots of gold, emptying casks of wine. When they have devoured all they can, they sink down, filthy and disgusting objects in their ordure and vomitings. Then the thunder bursts forth, the earth shakes and opens, Historic Destiny arises, with her iron foot she crushes the heads of the capitalists, hiccoughing, staggering, falling, unable to flee. With her broad hand she overthrows capitalist France, astounded and sweating with fear.

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If, uprooting from its heart the vice which dominates it and degrades its nature, the working class were to arise in its terrible strength, not to demand the Rights of Man, which are but the rights of capitalist exploitation, not to demand the Right to Work which is but the right to misery, but to forge a brazen law forbidding any man to work more than three hours a day, the earth, the old earth, trembling with joy would feel a new universe leaping within her. But how should we ask a proletariat corrupted by capitalist ethics, to take a manly resolution....

Like Christ, the doleful personification of ancient slavery, the men, the women and the children of the

proletariat have been climbing painfully for a century up the hard Calvary of pain; for a century compulsory toil has broken their bones, bruised their flesh, tortured their nerves; for a century hunger has torn their entrails and their brains. O Laziness, have pity on our long misery! O Laziness, mother of the arts and noble virtues, be thou the balm of human anguish!

## APPENDIX

Our moralists are very modest people. If they invented the dogma of work, they still have doubts of its efficacy in tranquilizing the soul, rejoicing the spirit, and maintaining the proper functioning of the entrails and other organs. They wish to try its workings on the populace, in *anima vili*, before turning it against the capitalists, to excuse and authorize whose vices is their peculiar mission.

But, you, three-for-a-cent philosophers, why thus cudgel your brains to work out an ethics the practice of which you dare not counsel to your masters? Your dogma of work, of which you are so proud, do you wish to see it scoffed at, dishonored? Let us open the history of ancient peoples and the writings of their philosophers and law givers. "I could not affirm," says the father of history, Herodotus, "whether the Greeks derived from the Egyptians the contempt which they have for work, because I find the same contempt established among the Thracians, the Cythians, the Persians, the Lydians; in a word, because among most barbarians, those who learn mechanical arts and even their children are regarded as the meanest of their citizens. All the Greeks have been nurtured in this principle, particularly the Lacedaemonians."\*

"At Athens the citizens were veritable nobles who had to concern themselves but with the defense and the administration of the community, like the savage

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\* Herodotus, Book II.



warriors from whom they descended. Since they must thus have all their time free to watch over the interests of the republic, with their mental and bodily strength, they laid all labor upon the slaves. Likewise at Lacedaemon, even the women were not allowed to spin or weave that they might not detract from their nobility." \*

The Romans recognized but two noble and free professions, agriculture and arms. All the citizens by right lived at the expense of the treasury without being constrained to provide for their living by any of the sordid arts (thus, they designated the trades), which rightfully belonged to slaves. The elder Brutus to arouse the people, accused Tarquin, the tyrant, of the special outrage of having converted free citizens into artisans and masons. +

The ancient philosophers had their disputes upon the origin of ideas but they agreed when it came to the abhorrence of work. "Nature," said Plato in his social utopia, his model republic, "Nature has made no shoemaker nor smith. Such occupations degrade the people who exercise them. Vile mercenaries, nameless wretches, who are by their very condition excluded from political rights. As for the merchants accustomed to lying and deceiving, they will be allowed in the city only as a necessary evil. The citizen who shall have degraded himself by the commerce of the shop shall be prosecuted for this offense. If he is convicted, he shall be condemned to a year in prison; the punishment shall be doubled for each repeated offense."\* \*

In his "Economics," Xenophon writes, "The people who give themselves up to manual labor are never promoted to public offices, and with good reason. The greater part of them, condemned to be seated the whole

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\* Biot. *De L'abolition de L'esclavage ancien en Occident*, 1840.

+ Livy, Book I.

\* \* Plato's "Republic," Book V.

day long, some even to endure the heat of the fire continually, cannot fail to be changed in body, and it is almost inevitable that the mind be affected." "What honorable thing can come out of a shop?" asks Cicero. "What can commerce produce in the way of honor? Everything called shop is unworthy an honorable man. Merchants can gain no profit without lying, and what is more shameful than falsehood? Again, we must regard as something base and vile the trade of those who sell their toil and industry, for whoever gives his labor for money sells himself and puts himself in the rank of slaves." \*

Proletarians, brutalized by the dogma of work, listen to the voice of these philosophers, which has been concealed from you with jealous care: A citizen who gives his labor for money degrades himself to the rank of slaves, he commits a crime which deserves years of imprisonment.

Christian hypocrisy and capitalist utilitarianism had not perverted these philosophers of the ancient republics. Speaking for free men, they expressed their thought naively. Plato, Aristotle, those intellectual giants, beside whom our latter day philosophers are but pygmies, wish the citizens of their ideal republics to live in the most complete leisure, for as Xenophon observed, "Work takes all the time and with it one has no leisure for the republic and his friends." According to Plutarch, the great claim of Lycurgus, wisest of men, to the admiration of posterity, was that he had granted leisure to the citizens of Sparta by forbidding to them any trade whatever. But our moralists of Christianity and capitalism will answer, "These thinkers and philosophers praised the institution of slavery." Perfectly true, but could it have been otherwise, granted the economic and political conditions of their epoch? War was the normal state of ancient societies. The free man was obliged to devote his time to discussing the

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\* Cicero's "De Officiis," I, 42.



affairs of state and watching over its defense. The trades were then too primitive and clumsy for those practicing them to exercise their birth-right of soldier and citizen; thus the philosophers and law-givers, if they wished to have warriors and citizens in their heroic republics, were obliged to tolerate slaves. But do not the moralists and economists of capitalism praise wage labor, the modern slavery; and to what men does the capitalist slavery give leisure? To people like Rothschild, Schneider, and Madame Boucicaut, useless and harmful slaves of their vices and of their domestic servants. "The prejudice of slavery dominated the minds of Pythagoras and Aristotle,"—this has been written disdainfully; and yet Aristotle foresaw: that if every tool could by itself execute its proper function, as the masterpieces of Daedalus moved themselves or as the tripods of Vulcan set themselves spontaneously at their sacred work; if for example the shuttles of the weavers did their own weaving, the foreman of the workshop would have no more need of helpers, nor the master of slaves.

Aristotle's dream is our reality. Our machines, with breath of fire, with limbs of unwearying steel, with fruitfulness, wonderful inexhaustible, accomplish by themselves with docility their sacred labor. And nevertheless the genius of the great philosophers of capitalism remains dominated by the prejudice of the wage system, worst of slaveries. They do not yet understand that the machine is the saviour of humanity, the god who shall redeem man from the sordidae artes and from working for hire, the god who shall give him leisure and liberty.

## NOTES

On persons and places  
named in Lafargue's essay.

(The number immediately following the name gives the page on which the name occurs.)

Blanqui, Jerome Adolphe (41) (1798-1854) economist who inherited the chair of J.B. Say; made extensive investigations of working class conditions and though ordinarily opposed to government intervention felt it necessary to protect workers. Referred to by Lafargue as academician to avoid confusion with his brother, the well known Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) outstanding revolutionist jailed a large part of his life, including the entire period of the Commune, and then for eight more years.

Borinage (55) the west half of the Belgian province of Hainaut, like the Charleroi basin, east half of same province, a mining, steel and textile area. See further note under Charleroi.

Boucicaut, Mme (70) widow of the merchant (1810-1877) who founded the Bon Marché, the celebrated emporium. She continued it to 1887 and left a large fortune to its employees.

Broglie, Albert duc de (63) (1821-1901) supporter of Orleanist claim to the throne; premier 1873-4 and 1877 during persecution of the Communards.

Cassagnac, Paul Grenier de (64) (1843-1904) Bonapartist journalist, like his father a notorious bully and duelist; among his victims was the republican leader Flourens who however survived. After 1871 he edited *Le Pays* until it was stopped in 1874 for violence of its articles; in 1876 he supported McMahon's plot to overthrow the Republic.

Chagot, Louis Jules (46) (1801-1877) ran metal working establishments at Creusot before 1836 when Schneider enterprises were established there; represented Saone-et-Loire in Bonaparte regime.

Charleroi (55) (see also Borinage) battleground four times:—Revolutionary army took it from Germans



June 25, 1794; on June 15, 1815 French took it on eve of Waterloo; taken by Germans Aug. 22, 1914, but mentioned here because in 1867 "the mineowners of the Charleroi Basin goaded their miserably paid workers into revolt and then let loose the armed forces against them"; the IWMA gave what support it could in "the panic-stricken reign of terror which followed". (Mehring, Marx, p. 393) Lafargue's reference to barracks location corresponds to similar development of barracks system in England in 1819 when soldiers refused to shoot down neighbor women for bread riots so that Hessian troops were brought in to flog the British troops, or in America following the railroad strikes of 1877 for the same general reason.

Cherbuliez, A.E. (45) (1797-1869) economist and author of several optimistic pamphlets in style of Bastiat attacking socialism.

Clemenceau, Georges (f.n. 48) (1841-1929) "The tiger" of 1919 was mayor of Montmartre when the communards seized their guns in March of 1871; he tried to negotiate between the Commune and Thiers; a radical republican who employed Lafargue's brother-in-law, Longuet, on his paper in 1880.

Comte, A. (41) (1798-1857) philosopher, founder of influential school called Positivism; his classification of knowledge basis for synthetic philosophy of Spencer and Lester Ward. His followers in the 1870's were occupied with preaching patience and optimism to the oppressed.

Dolfuss (42) a leading family in the industrial city of Mulhouse (q.v.) and its chemical industry. Its members served as mayor on several occasions; Jean Dolfuss wrote on economics.

Dufaure, Jules A.S. (57) (1798-1881) Thiers supporter; Minister of Public Works in 1839, promoted rail construction; supported the republic in 1848; member of the National Assembly in 1871; Minister of "Justice" under Thiers, and premier in 1876; in 1879 he forced the resignation of President Macmahon for plotting against the republic. Dufaure's cabinet fell in 1876 as result of

Gambetta's income tax proposal, and the demand for freedom of conscience and worship, and amnesty for the Communards. The actually bare faces of Dufaure and Girardin may be seen in *Nouveau Larousse Encyclopedie Illustré*.

Ferry, Jules (63) (1832-1893) republican politician and promoter of colonial expansion; as Minister of Education 1879-80 founded the secular school system; was premier for two periods in the 80's; was part of the government of Sept. 4, 1870, and had to steal away from Hotel de ville in March 1871 after Thiers left for Versailles. Marx in his *Civil War in France* (Kerr edition, page 56) says: "Jules Ferry, a penniless barrister before the 4th of September, contrived as mayor of Paris, during the siege, to job a fortune out of famine."

Freycinet, Charles (63) (1828-1923) mining engineer; wrote on child and female labor in England; supporter of Gambetta; Minister of Public Works under Dufaure; promoted three milliard scheme for government acquisition of existing railroads and construction of new.

Gallifet, Gaston Alexandre August, Marquis de, Prince des Martignes (63) (1830-1909) notorious as the butcher of the Communards; served Napoleon III in Mexico, Italy and Algeria; in 1872 suppressed an Algerian rebellion; later favorite crony of Edward VII.

Gambetta, Leon (54, 64, 65) (1838-1882) Rose to prominence in 1868 when he defended Delescluse who had opened a fund in his paper to provide a tombstone for Baudin who had been shot on the barricades in 1851. Gambetta's defense of Delescluze ridiculed the government, and being timed with the economic and diplomatic reverses of the government, turned the tide against Napoleon III. In September 1870 he made himself Minister of the Interior (in charge of police) and in October took over the Ministry of War, ballooned out of Paris to direct resistance to the Prussians; he did not support Thiers or Versailles. At 1878 Congress of Berlin he championed Greece against the Ottoman Empire, and was thus suspected by Lafargue of aiding



reactionary Russia. A consistent republican, in September 1870 he took down the red flag when it was raised and replaced it with the tricolor of revolutionary France of 1792. He urged amnesty for the Communards, introduced the bill in 1880 that granted it, and before that promoted funds for their relief in exile.

Germiny, Charles-Gabriel Lebeque, comte de, (41) (1789-1871) Minister of Finance many times, including 1840, during the brief republic of 1848, and under Napoleon. Reference could be to his son who in 1877 skipped to Brazil after conviction.

Girardin, Emile de (57) (1806-1881) promoter of low-priced journals, usually following trends of public opinion, but in 1851 he did pioneer the idea of a general strike in France, later supported Napoleon III. In the 70's his mass journals were usually pro-republic. See note on Dufaure.

Guizot, Francois (39) (1787-1874) ran cabinet 1840-1848; the reference presumably is to his recurrent advice "enriches vous" work, make money, and if you don't have a vote now, you will if you get rich. Under Louis Philippe he thwarted all democratic trends, and was dumped in the revolt of 1848.

Hugo, Victor (41) (1802-1885) best known in America for his 1862 novel *Les Miserables* that depicts at one point the 1830 July uprising; best known in France as poet and liberal agitator. In exile during second Empire he coined the title "Napoleon the Little", and returned as a hero to France after downfall of the Empire. He launched the fund for the National Guard to buy their own cannon, basis for their refusal to surrender these. As member of the Versailles Assembly he refused to ratify the treaty with Prussia, and withdrew from Assembly March 8 when it refused to seat Garibaldi. During Commune he retreated to Brussels unallied with either revolutionary Paris or Versailles. After fall of commune urged amnesty; major poem on 1871, *L'Année Terrible*. On Hugo's death Lafargue wrote from prison a pamphlet *Legend of Victor Hugo* assailing him as a fraud. (Translated in *Neue Zeit*

April-June 1888).

Jujurieux (46) Town in Department of the Ain, chief industry the casting off of silk.

Kestner, G.M.J.S. (42) (1803-1870) paternalistic owner of chemical industry founded by his father at Thann; elected to represent Haut-Rhein.

Koch, Paul de (41) writer 1793-1871

Koechlin, Eugene (42) (1815-1885) like Dolfuss, head of another leading capitalist family at Mulhouse; ran Koechlin freres, mayor in 1870 and represented Mulhouse at the Bourdeaux Assembly.

Langlois, Amedée Jerome (66) born 1819, collaborator with Proudhon on his paper *Le Peuple*; after Proudhon's death, published his works. In 1867 published his own doctrines as *L'Homme et la revolution*. Though rich and living a retired life he joined IWMA and at the Basle Congress opposed Bakunin and contended for right of individual property. he was offered command of the National Guard in early days of the Commune, but refused it; joined the government in Versailles instead and wound up as a republican politician.

Leroy-Beaulieu (41, 59) Born 1842. Political writer, author of treatise on female labor, 1871, and on colonization; contended that Marx plagiarized Proudhon and that capital instead of exploiting labor, makes it more productive and thus better off.

Lorgeril, Hippolyte Louis, Viscomte de (63) (1811-1888) ultra-clerical royalist journalist, poet and politician.

Lullier, Chas. E. (65) (1838—d. Panama 1891) an alcoholic former soldier who was put in command of the National Guard by the Central Committee of the Commune but soon arrested by it for being drunk and incompetent. In 1873 he was sentenced to death, but sent to New Caledonia instead; returned to France 1880 and became Boulangist.

Mulhouse (43) "the Manchester of France", in Alsace and so lost in war of 1870; previously had had a third of all the spindles in France. See note on Pouyer-Quertier.



Passy, Hippolyte (41) (1793-1886) finance minister to Louis-Philippe and Louis Napoleon; uncle of Frederic (b. 1822), economist and disarmament advocate.

Pouyer-Quertier, Augustin Thomas (46) (1820-1891) Rouen mill owner; Thier's finance minister in 1871 whose handling of indemnity to Prussia is questioned as to enrichment of Thiers gang and bribe for Prussian aid in "pacification" of Paris by Marx (*Civil War* p. 66, Kerr.). As soon as Alsace taken by Germany, he set up protective tariff against Mulhouse textile products. At public meeting following 1884 Guesdist conference, Lafargue raised this point and wrote Engels: "I drove them to fury when I told them that Pouyer-Quartier the cotton master must have rejoiced at the signing of the surrender of Alsace which relieved him of the competition of Mulhouse."

Reybaud, L. (60) (1799-1879) publicist and politician; anti-Napoleon; in 1836 published a book on socialists and other reformers.

Schneider, Eugene (46) (1805-1875) one of an industrial dynasty that in 1837 set up at Creusot to build locomotives and in 1874 went into armorplate, gunmetal and other "merchant of death" business, now owns electric equipment and other companies as Schneider SA. The IWMA conducted a strike shortly before the 1870 war at this Creusot plant and while E. Schneider was president of the Corps Legislatif. Since then members of the family have often misrepresented Creusot.

Simon, Jules (41) (1814-1896) held chair of philosophy at the Sorbonne during reign of Louis-Philippe; dismissed from this post by Napoleon III because of his open defiance of his seizure of power. In September 1870 he joined the Government of National Defense, urging a regime of order; included in Marx' denunciation of graft (*Civil War* p. 66.)

Thiers, Adolphe (34, 42) (1797-1877) historian and journalist who supported the revolt of 1830 to replace Charles with Louis-Philippe, aiming at a British style monarchy to serve the business class. As Minister of the

Interior in 1834 he suppressed the outlawed strike of silk workers at Lyons, but spread word in Paris that they had taken over the city, thus bringing about a demonstration of leftists he had slaughtered. Some think his 1871 plan followed same pattern. As historian he argued a government defeats revolt most readily by surrendering the capital if it must in order to remain mobile in the field and besiege the rebels in the capital. President of Republic 1871-1877.

Tirard, Pierre Emanuel (63) (1827-1893) Thiers handyman, mayor of the section of Paris occupied by banks and large business.

Villermé, L.R. (42) (1782-1863) medical doctor and statistician, wrote on prison conditions and 1840 conditions of textile workers.



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