

## -1 **The slave's awakening**

The capitalist class, by means of their control of the publicity organs, are able to focus the attention of the working class on things that are often of little concern or consequence; the wage slave's mind is on the war; the exploiter devotes his energies more closely at this time to the source of profits; real wages must not be allowed to rise: forced saving by means of rationing must of necessity be ruthlessly imposed upon those who do not pay income tax. The wage-worker listens to his master's voice and submits to his master's will. The standard of living of the proletariat falls, and this, together with the harassing black-out, induces many to give expression to the dissatisfaction they feel; they inwardly curse many of those in power or they openly denounce Hitler, but one rarely hears a statement that places the blame where it belongs, on the supporters of the capitalist system.

The exploiter could not long continue in his privileged position if he failed to keep going the mills of deception; the capitalist not only lives at the expense of his victims but he succeeds in preventing them from finding out how it is done.

It is obvious that the process will continue until the worker decides to end it, and the idea of ending it will never enter his head until he realises that only by doing so can he hope to enjoy a life worth living.

Shakespeare says: "He that being robbed misses not that he is robbed of, let him not know it and he's not robbed at all."

The worker thinks he sells his labour and, what's more, gets paid for it; whereas he sells his mental and physical energy, his labour-power. Labour-power is the source of all value, and this is sold to the capitalist before the seller delivers the goods. When the working man punches the clock he begins to deliver what the exploiter has bought; the labour-power of the worker is already capitalist property when the wage-slave is producing, that is, when he is undergoing the agony of delivering it. The amount of wealth the worker produces during the day does not determine the price he receives for his labour-power; the wealth produced, that is, the results of his labour, belongs to his employer as it comes into being.

Why does the worker sell his labour-power? Why does the capitalist buy it?

The worker sells his labour-power because he must – or starve. The capitalist buys labour-power because he makes a profit by exploiting it.

The capitalist class own those things essential to human existence: the worker is divorced from ownership; he owns nothing but his mental and physical energy; he is therefore in no position to live except under the terms laid down by the owning class.

The worker does not even own a job, the capitalist retains the right of discharge; all the worker, therefore, can hope for is the loan of a job – by the kind permission of his master.

When the extraction of labour-power is going at full swing the working class are producing wealth in quantities that exceed in value the amount of wages they receive; the

difference between what is required to keep the working class in fair working condition, and what the working class produces, goes to the capitalist class; this is why the capitalist desires to keep the process going and why he is also desirous of preventing the worker from getting a clear idea of what is happening.

The wealth produced is composed of things for sale – commodities. The capitalist, as a result of the process above described, can sell them at a profit; that is, if he can sell them.

Sometimes the sale becomes difficult, owing to the fact that other exploiters are offering similar goods on the market, and, in consequence, the would-be sellers of commodities go further and further afield to discover a place where they can profitably dispose of what they have obtained by making wage slaves work for them. As production increases, so does the struggle for markets, and when some discover that their rivals are trespassing on territory they regarded exclusively as their own, quarrels occur and threats are made.

It frequently happens that capitalists cross swords with each other about the right to possess certain areas where raw materials may be obtained cheap. The friction gets worse and worse as productivity increases, until eventually there is an open quarrel and the war is on.

Deception now assumes form, the worker is told that his country is in danger, and he is informed it is his duty to defend it. He is led to believe that the country is his, although he does not own any of it. If he hesitates to obey the call of duty he is rounded up and made to do so.

There is much hurrying to and fro, and from every quarter appear men and women who never took any interest in the working man before, but who now tell him what he should do and also what his wife and children should do. He listens vaguely, but supposes they know more about it than he does, and from force of habit obeys the instructions issued.

He listens to the radio about the glorious exploits of his fellow workers who are now in uniform. He reads the newspapers and, after vainly trying to puzzle out what it all means, gives it up, accepts everything as inevitable, and hopes it will soon be over.

He has no great knowledge of the world at large and the foreign names of places that now come into the picture are difficult to pronounce or spell; he is somewhat surprised when he goes to the cinema to perceive that the enemy look very much like people he knows, but he is sure they are in the wrong in taking the stand they do. Britain is morally right, she must be; there is no doubt about it, Mr. Chamberlain has said so.

He does not realise that the “enemy” is the result of the same process that forced him to move on unfamiliar lines; the last thing he is likely to perceive is that working men are killing each other wholesale because the buying and selling of commodities and the capitalist ownership of the means of production have brought it about; his greatest hope is that after the war he will be able to get a job and continue indefinitely to sell his labour-power.

He is bewildered by discordant cries of “Fascist!”, “Nazi-ist!”, “Trotskyist!”, “Right deviation!”, etc.

He contributes sometimes to funds, ostensibly collected for babies in Spain or comrades in China, without knowing what becomes of them; he is held spellbound and hypnotised by the easy manner in which some orators use a language utterly unknown to him; he has an uncomfortable feeling that he is out of date or too ignorant to understand. He does not realise that those who lay down the law so emphatically are often working under instructions; selling their labour-power to a Russian bureaucracy or a British capitalist combine, and coming to heel with a bound when their masters crack the whip.

The abolition of the wage system is something that, as yet, has not entered his head. If he hears the phrase the thought comes to him: "How could we live without wages? It's impossible! Why, it's all we have to live upon – except the dole."

The conditions now unfolding will result in making plain to him many things that seem beyond his ability to grasp. When, at the end of the present blood-bath, the unemployed number millions; when the wounded and the maimed are prominent in all localities; when stagnation exists in all branches of production, and those who have been his advisers run around like chickens without heads; when the State rocks as a result of the clash of conflicting elements and amidst this confusion the voice of sanity is heard, he will understand then what is beyond him now. His fellow-worker and he will confer and arrive at the conclusion that the abolition of the wages system is the only sensible thing to do.

How can the wages system be kept going when the wheels of industry are braked by the inability to find markets and the chaos existing in the buying and selling organisations of the capitalist world?

It will exist in some fashion, becoming ever more irksome and distasteful to society in general and the working class in particular.

In contrast to the prevailing discontent will appear with ever-growing clarity the vision of what is possible should the means of production be commonly owned and operated with the idea of producing wealth for the common good.

The wage-slave will then have reached the end of his travail, he will go out of existence along with his exploiter and their hangers-on. He will be transformed into a man bold and free; he will know not only that the world is his but, in addition, how to make the best use of it. Whatever he does henceforth will react, not for the exclusive benefit of a class, but for the well-being of mankind.

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