

GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

Should We Fear Labor?

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Part 6

Several years ago while talking with a tramp to whom I gave a lift the conversation turned to labor problems. "We've got to get into the war to get full employment," he emphatically stated. And to my query as to what would happen to labor after the war he shrugged his shoulders, and said "It's goin' to be bad for many of us. They only want kids that can step lively. It's going to be hell for us older folks."

Labor fears, just as every thinking man fears, the reconstruction period that is coming after the war. The, as yet trivial government cutbacks in orders are already giving many laboring men a taste of what may be the bitter suffering that hundreds of thousands if not tens of millions must shortly face. What is this condition in society that only war can temporarily alleviate? Why is it that workers can be subjected to the dread fear of want and industrial exploitation? Everywhere one turns one hears the same thought expressed "Just wait, labor is riding high now, but after the war they'll sweat blood!" Workers are not slaves, yet today there is rapidly building up an attitude of revenge, to be exacted of those who have only their labor to sell, once the war is over. If laborers are not slaves, how is it that many employers contemplate exploiting them?

It is contended by many that workers submit to exploitation because they cannot work without machinery, and having none at their own command, must beg of a capitalist on his own terms for the privilege of using his. If that is true then workers are not free, for they are mastered by their economic necessity. But if it is true why do not the workers make their own machinery?

By its very nature machinery is not an accumulation of the distant past. It is in constant production and is produced by the working classes. If tomorrow every piece of machinery in this country were to be destroyed, if cities were to be

wiped off the face of the earth, as Rome plowed salt where once proud Carthage stood, if labor were reduced to its bare brawn and brain, then if it were left alone, BUT LEFT FREE TO PRODUCE AND TO TRADE, the cities and factories, and machines would soon be finer and bigger than before, as was Chicago after her fire.

The reason why working men do not control the machines they make, is that their wages are too small to permit their retaining an interest in the equipment. They make a bare subsistence, and it is their pecuniary want that deprives them of their natural share and control of the capital they use, and makes them in very truth slaves in fact, if not in name.

But why should workers be poor? Why should they be eternally on the brink of the economic chasm? Their very name proves that they are not idle. They are the builders, the makers and the sowers but they are not the reapers. It is the laboring class who toil, and the leisure class who, by some subtle governmental alchemy, reap. Workers are poor not because they do not work, but because they do not get their share of all they produce. Somewhere along the line their earnings are siphoned off, and the monopolist collects. This is what the Socialists and most modern day economists consider as "surplus value."

They believe that labor produces more than it receives as wages. But how could there be "surplus value" if labor got all it produced? What is it then that diverts the surplus from those who make it to those who squander it? This is the great inner problem that labor alone must solve! No matter how iniquitous a privilege may be, those who enjoy it will fight to the last drop to preserve it. The reform must come from those who are stung by its injustice, and only labor can free America.

To understand the surplus product of labor there are three factors to be kept in mind,—the laborer, his implements, and the land.

When these three factors are understood the truth is apparent that the surplus that labor produces and leisure gets is attributable not to the capitalism with reference to manmade tools and equipment, but with the falsely confused and named capitalism, actual monopoly and

privilege in land. Even with man-made equipment capitalized, as long as men are free and land is free and accessible there could not be the siphoning off of a surplus and there could not be an industrial slavery. But where land is capitalized, monopolized, through special privilege, through private law, there and there only, through tribute, or robbery, call it what you will, a surplus product appears and likewise the factory slave.

It is not for the lack of machinery which it produces that the laboring classes are exploited by the owners of machinery (capital) IT IS FOR THE LACK OF AVAILABLE FREE LAND TO COMPETE WITH VALUABLE land and thus relieve the congestion of the disemployed. When Mr. Peel, in Marx's celebrated "Das Capital," left England with \$250,000 and 3000 workers to set up his empire in Swan River what happened? He had the machinery, the money, and the workers, but while they were industrial slaves in England, South Australia was a free land, and the workers as soon as they set foot in that free land set up business for themselves. Not only did Mr. Peel not set up an industrial slavery whereby he might siphon off the "surplus

value," but Mr. Peel learned to do his own work.

In his fight for reform Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England, has this to say: "It is quite true that the land monopoly is not the only monopoly which exists, but it is the mother of all other forms of monopoly. It is quite true that unearned increments in land are not the only form of unearned or undeserved profit which individuals are able to secure; but it is the principle form of unearned increment which is derived from processes which are not merely not beneficial but which are positively detrimental to the general public. Land, which is a necessity to human existence, which is the original source of all wealth, which is strictly limited in extent, which is fixed in geographical position—land, I say, differs from all other forms of property in these primary and fundamental conditions."

The fight of labor in this country is the fight of every soldier at the front. It is the fight for the basic idea that a man has a right to toil, and to the fruit of his toil, that this country of the people, by the people and for the people is big enough to provide ten jobs for ten men. This is not labor's fight alone, nor the soldier's fight, it is the fight of every man and woman, it is the fight of every child as yet unborn. Let us not shirk our part.