

1897

Labor Versus Capital

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Recommended Citation

Thomas, Irving, "Labor Versus Capital" (1897). *Student and Lippitt Prize essays*. Paper 62.
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LABOR VERSUS CAPITAL.

Labor is that individual work, whether material or immaterial, which is directed toward the production of useful things. And capital is that portion of useful things which is directed towards the production of other useful things, called wealth. The obtaining of capital implies self-denial on the part of the obtain^r. He must not consume all of the products of his labor, and he must be frugal and industrious in order to accumulate a sufficient amount of capital to start in business. Now after he has acquired a certain capital, be it hundreds, thousands, or millions of dollars, is it not sacred to his own use? Who can fairly gainsay his right to employ it as he sees fit? Is it not all the balance due him from his past self-denial?

Regard for a moment the contemptible spirit of those, who grouped and massed in ignorance and poverty, after consuming all and even more than they produce, unite to howl at the capitalist, "Divide with us, you miser." Now let one of this terribly oppressed and downtrodden class obtain an education, and by means of work and economy realize a fortune,

and we hear no more from him. He is henceforth silent about the leveling of wealth. It looks as if the man who consumes all he produces and wishes to consume all his eyes can see, is really more covetous than the ⁴avaricious employer, who pays as small wages as he possibly can, but yet furnishes employment for an increasing body of laborers. Still the employer has a great power over the laborer; and when employers combine to try to take from the laborer his God-given rights, the laborer must have recourse to some means of resistance. The best economic condition for the advancement of the laborer and also the capitalist is found in pure competition. But when the laborer becomes weak, ignorant, superstitious and debased, he can no more compete with capital for a subsistence, than a lame horse with a sound one in the race for a prize. He must have, as Walker says, "A crutch upon which to lean", and labor organizations answer this purpose.

Not more than a century ago, when labor unions were forbidden by law, in England, persons of both sexes and of all ages from three to seventy, were confined in ^{unhealthy} ~~wealthy~~ factories and worked sixteen hours a day for less than thirty-five per cent of the wages which they receive at the present time.

A little later this law was repealed, and so-called labor guilds were formed; and from them have developed the well organized unions of to-day, which include in membership about half of the laborers of the civilized world. Among the pioneer organizations of America, we find The National Association of Journeymen Printers, which was started in 1850; The National Trade Association of Hat Furnishers, organized in 1854; and The Sons of Vulcan, established in 1858. And since the Civil War, The Knights of St. Crispin, The Patrons of Husbandry, and the Knights of Labor, have been the foremost organizations. They have admitted workmen and have educated them technically and morally. Nearly all of the advantages which the laborer of to-day has over the laborer of a century ago, may be attributed to the combined and persistent efforts of labor organizations. Their purpose is to make their members more efficient, to teach economy, and to inculcate virtue and refinement. Members of these orders call themselves brothers, and in many cases are as true to one another as brothers. If a member is ill, he has watchers and a weekly allowance to keep his family from want.

Many intelligent people are prejudiced against labor

organizations and trades unions, because they have instigated strikes, which have caused much loss to employers and a vast amount of suffering to the laborers. Mr. B. W. Hopper writes,- "Never in any case has an extensive strike resulted in an advance in wages." Further, the celebrated Frenchman, M. Theodor Fix, says;- "After making vast sacrifices, the workmen almost invariably succumb." Granting that these statements are true and that the laborer goes back to work on the same terms as before, there cannot fail to be different feelings between the employer and the employed. The employer dreads a recurrence of such an interruption of business, and is gradually lead to a tacit compromise with the laborer. As insurrections mark the first steps towards political freedom, so the strike is the starting point of the elevation of the laborer. The utility of strikes can remain unquestioned only when the first steps of advance are being taken by a body of laborers who for a long period have been abused and deeply abased. Without doubt the day of strikes is passing. Their only efficiency has been to break up a crust of custom, and to restore confidence to laborers, a portion of whose remunerative rewards had for a long period been unjustly kept from them. The laboring classes should be happy that they have acquired that individual and

general intelligence and that industrial activity which have put them beyond the necessity of resorting to such brutal means. The Knights of Labor, the most powerful labor organization in this country, have within the past few years repeatedly voted down strikes which have been proposed in their meetings. And it may be said that the general feeling among the unions is against strikes, except in extreme cases.

There is an organization of Internationalists, or Anarchists, which is altogether different in its origin and in the character of its work. The nature of this order may best be shown by giving its declaration of principles, as drawn up at its congress in Pittsburg. These are as follows:- "First, Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means; i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action. "Second, Establishment of a free society, based on a cooperative organization of production. "Third, free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organization without commercial profit mongery. "Fourth, Organization of education on a secular, scientific and equal basis for both sexes. "Fifth, Equal rights for all without distinctions of sex or race. "Sixth, Regulation of all public affairs by free

contracts between the autonomous ~~and~~ communes and associations on a federalistic basis." As may be plainly seen from these declarations, these Internationalists wish to abolish everything that pertains to law and order. Now that this organization is weak, it does not attract much attention; but it is growing in this country and also in Europe. The most bitter feelings are cultivated and cherished, the basest passions are allowed to take possession of the mind and body, anything and everything is right with them, that accomplishes their objects. How to meet a general outbreak of riots and Anarchy, is a question which the world may have to answer sometime in the near future.

In Europe attempts have been made to suppress this movement, but without very much success. It seems as if the most effective way to prevent outbreaks of Anarchy, is to educate the mass of laborers, and this work should be the crowning achievement of organized labor.

Living Legend.