THE TRINITY OF PLUNDER.

A CHEERFUL SLAM AT RENT, INTEREST & PROFIT.

BY AUGUST CLAESSENS

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THE NEW YORK CALL

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By AUGUST CLAESSENS

Illustrated by RYAN WALKER

Published by THE NEW YORK CALL

New York City
A PRELUDE.

"Lay on, MacDuff, and damn'd be him who first cries, 'Hold! enough!'"
—Shakespeare.

Some books appeal only to some people. Many books appeal to many people. But no book can appeal to all people.

There is one class of folks that this booklet will not appeal to. They are the sour-faced, lantern-jawed, dyspeptic grouchies, the most pitiful products of the capitalist system. To them a smile or a laugh is positive proof that such laxity and frivolousness can only be the reflection of a thoughtless cranium. Some of this tribe, the academic long-worded, "deep-thinking," phrase-repeating variety, are so serious in aspect that they are too funny for description. Henry does not understand them. And whom Henry does not understand he classifies as a "nut." So there you are.

This booklet, however, is specifically written and illustrated to reach Henry, the representative type of the great mass of the common people. Upon that crowd depends the success of our program and the realization of our ideals of a better civilization.

Now, then, Henry is not much of a thinker. He is a careless student and not much of a reader. Big words stick in his crop and weighty arguments drop to his shoes. But, God bless him, he has a sense of humor. Very often it is undeveloped and crude. But Henry has it in quantity if not in quality. Watch him reading "his" newspaper. One glance at the headlines and he has his fill of international and national events, and he immediately turns to the "funny page." That's Henry!

Oscar Ameringer knows Henry better than any Socialist in this land knows him. Says Oscar, "Henry is very ticklish. Tickle him in the ribs and he starts to laugh. As he laughs he opens his mouth. And when Henry has his mouth open you can shove something inside." And once it's inside him it makes him feel good, and he remembers it. A big-worded lesson drops off him like rain from an elephant's back. But Henry loves to repeat a good story, especially if it illustrates a good point.

The most effective revolutionary weapon is laughter. Let us laugh the capitalist system "deep in the earth," as our Jewish friends would say. Let us laugh this thrice damnable capitalist system out of business. The thing is ridiculous enough, once one understands its nature, to doom and damn it. Let us show the humor of the thing so there will come a social convulsion.

We affectionately dedicate this little booklet to those experts of the revolutionary laugh, Oscar Ameringer, George R. Kirkpatrick, James Carey, John W. Slayton, Tim Murphy, Eugene Wood, Thomas A. Hickey, Gerald M. P. Fitzgibbon, George H. Goebel and a host of other Knights of the "Soap Box" (from whom we swiped some good stories), and those accompanists, Art Young and Ryan Walker, who with pen and brush tickle Henry from the printed page.

Fraternally and chucklingly yours,

AUGUST CLAESSENS.
CHAPTER I.

CAPITAL, CAPITALISTS AND CAPITALISM.

THE economic and social system under which we live is named capitalism. Its foundation is capital, and the owners of capital are the capitalists. Let us take a good look at this thing and study its workings. A knowledge of any nuisance enables us to know how it can be removed. We must also tell why it must be removed. We must convince people that capitalism is a nuisance and an obstacle to our individual and social well-being. So we shall begin by explaining why.

Capital, we are informed, consists of stored-up labor, previously produced wealth, and that this wealth is used in the process of producing more wealth. Now, that is as clear as a mud puddle. Says Karl Marx, to define capital in that fashion is much like saying that a fish is an animal with a tail. So it is. But all animals with tails are not fish.

For example, the money in your pocket and the money in the bank look alike and smell alike. The money in the bank is capital and the money in your pocket—well, if you want to call that capital and you its owner, a capitalist, go to it. There is no law to prevent you. Only, your friends wouldn't recognize you.

The shoes in the store or the sewing machine in a factory are capital, and their owners capitalists. But the shoes on your feet or the sewing machine in your home can hardly be capital. Common sense rebels against calling you a capitalist merely because you own such things. So you see, capital may well be stored-up labor, previously produced wealth (like the shoes on your feet), and wealth used to produce more wealth (like the sewing machine in your home); but these things are not capital.

Capital is a process, a relationship. It consists in the use we make of wealth, and not merely in wealth itself. The shoes on our feet and the sewing machine in our home harm no one, nor does such property enable us to control the destinies of our fellow-men. But when wealth is used as an instrument by which one group in society can get something out of another group, then this wealth becomes capital.

Capital is a means of exploitation and robbery. Through it one small class accumulates great riches. The great masses just get a bare existence. We shall endeavor to explain this game in detail.

This system, however, has not always been with us, and, rest assured, it need not always be. Like previous social systems, it has had its birth, infancy, youth, maturity, old age and decay. Well, at least you can say it has grown some. Your eyes can detect its tottering
senility and your nose must suspect the decay. Yes, the old thing has outlived its usefulness and is rotten through and through. It shrieks to hell for burial.

It must be buried. But the undertakers are lacking in numbers and strength. It's a mighty big corpse, and, unlike other corpses, an exceedingly lively and a dangerously contaminating one. So, you see, a large and well-organized army of undertakers are wanted.

Now that is the object of this booklet. It is to arouse, gather in, organize and prepare a large army of determined and willing undertakers to bury this system of capitalism deep in the ground and to forget the location of its burial.

"But," cry the defenders and supporters of capitalism, "the dear old thing has its good points. Let it live a while longer. It is doing a world of good." Well, we shall presently see how "good" it is doing the world.

CHAPTER II.

HOW DO THEY GET THAT WAY?

To thoroughly understand and appreciate capitalism we must size up its proportions and workings from a distance. The trouble with most folks is that they are too close to the thing to see it. Let us get away from it for a moment and look at it from above.

Suppose a visitor from Mars, Jupiter or the Moon would suddenly drop in on one of us. Would you not be pleased to entertain so unique and innocent a guest? And suppose you had the means, leisure and inclination to show him around a bit, would you not have an interesting job on your hands?

No doubt you would show him the tall office buildings and huge structures of our large cities first. Then you surely would show him the show places in town, the palatial residences of the "best" families. And if you really meant to give the visitor an all round view of our earthly life, you would also have to show him the tenements and shacks where the "worst" families (the rest of us) exist.

By that time our celestial visitor would be as pop full of questions as a cat is of hair.

No doubt among the first questions he would ask would be: "Why do some people on this earth of yours live in those beautiful mansions, with plenty of space, trees, shrubs, flower beds and lawns between them? And tell me, Mr. Man of the earth, why do these other people you have shown me live in those ugly tenements and shacks, in congested and ill-smelling surroundings?"
Those Simple Questions.

Now, how would you answer these simple questions? Surely, you would not say that those who live in the aristocratic sections of our cities live there because they choose to, and that those who live in the poorer districts live there because they dislike the exclusiveness and isolation of the swell portion of the town. Surely not! Any five-year-old knows that this is not a matter of choice.

Your residence in these different parts of the community is largely an accident of birth. If that long-legged bird, at the time of your arrival, happened to drop you into one of those palatial homes, you can smile at your luck. Whether you grow up a genius or an idiot, the chances are 999 out of a 1,000 that you will remain in that environment for the rest of your life. But if that confounded bird makes a mistake, as he has done in the case of the majority of us, and deposits you in some tenement or hovel, depend on it, whether you develop into a genius or an imbecile, the chances are also 999 out of a 1,000 that you will remain in that sort of a neighborhood for the rest of your life.

"Yes," butts in our New York Times reader, "but every man has a chance to rise in this country." You said something, Henry! Yes, when the alarm clock goes off—most of us rise. And we have mighty little chance to rise beyond that call.

Well, if it's not a matter of choice that determines our habitation and position in society, then what is it? What answer would you give to the inquiring visitor from another planet? Probably you may be inclined to fall back upon those popularly accepted explanations that are so ingeniously constructed and so generously offered by the editorial defenders of capitalism. You all know those arguments. We are told that the cultivation and practice of the virtues of thrift, abstinence and industry lead to the distinction between one class and another in our community. And the moral is: Save your earnings, live simply, be sparing in your tastes, and, above all, work hard and you will succeed.

For the benefit of our heavenly visitor, and especially for you, a native of this earth, let us examine these virtues.

Consider first the promise of thrift. We are informed that many of our millionaires began life with nothing. Truly, Henry, you have an excellent beginning. The trouble probably is that you hang around too long at the beginning. Anyway, you must learn to save. You have a chance to become a millionaire. Yes, you have some chance.

A "patriotic" teacher once tried to impress upon the minds of the boys in his class-room that each and every one of them born in this country had an equal chance of some day becoming President of the United States. The boys were visibly impressed. One red-headed
youngster nodged his companion in the ribs and said, "Say, Buddie, I'll sell you my chance for a nickel."

Selling Chances for Greatness.

Should some one offer to buy your chance to become a millionaire, take our advice, don't bargain too long about the price. You have but a slim chance. Most of you millions will have to be satisfied with the "aires."

As to saving, well, figure it out. Suppose you could save $1,000 a year, why, you would need only 1,000 years to attain your goal. Of course, all great undertakings require patience and persistency.

At the rate of only $500 a year it would be much more difficult. If you began saving at the time Christ was born, you would have only some 70 years yet to go. Certainly, you must be blessed with good health and an excellent constitution.

Getting a little nearer to your capacity, may we ask, can you at least save $250 a year? Well, then, good luck to you. Only a trifle of 4,000 years is necessary. In other words, if you had started about the time that Noah guided the elephants down the gang plank of the Ark you would just about be reaching your million now.

We don't want to discourage any ambitious person. Furthermore, let it be understood, we are firm believers in the efficacy of thrift. We know that it was by saving that our plutocrats climbed to the position they now occupy. But we insist that the retail method of saving—saving out of your own little pay envelope—is a tediously long process. You must learn how to save out of the other fellow's envelope. That's the road to success. If you save in wholesale style; that is, saving a portion out of the pay envelopes of hundreds or thousands of workers each week, then your success is more speedily assured.

As to the virtue of abstinence, you surely do not require much instruction on that subject. The working people are the best abstainers on earth! Despite their riotous spending propensities and luxurious tastes, they nevertheless do abstain from parlor cars, limousines, winter resorts, opera boxes, charity balls, the best hotels, and a host of other things. But for some reason or other they don't become rich.

And then, the virtue of industry; yes, hard work. Good gracious, the laboring class is in full possession and practice of that redeeming virtue. You do not have to tell our visitor from Mars, Jupiter or the Moon. (If he stays around these parts for a while) that hard work generally lands one on the dump pile or in the poorhouse.

To obtain real and speedy success you must quit working yourself. You will seldom get anywhere in that pursuit. You must learn how to work the other fellow. That is the success in industry. And, by the way,
the word success is derived from the word "suckers." Without plenty of suckers success would be impossible in many enterprises. (You may not find this definition in any dictionary, but it should be there.)

Now, it may be said that the reason why some folks live better than others is because they have been rewarded by society. But, for what

**When the Alarm Goes Off Henry Rises.**

...do we generally reward people? Surely, you may reply: usefulness to society. Then what constitutes "usefulness" in a human being? You may further reply that it lies in the fact that we cannot very well get along without him or his class.

Indeed, carpenters, masons, plumbers, miners, tailors, etc., are genuinely useful human beings. Yea, in time of strike we realize, as we generally don't realize at any other time, how exceedingly useful these fellows are and how much we suffer when they quit their useful activities.

**Examining Their Usefulness.**

"Then surely," remarks our visitor, "these workers must be the residents in those fine mansions you showed me." We are amazed at his innocence. "No, sir," we hasten to reply, "not yet." "Ah, then, these favored people must indeed be even more useful to mankind than those..."
indispensable mechanics you just described," retorts our guest. And he further asks: "What do those aristocratic dwellers work at? In what way are they useful to society?"

Now we are stumped for a ready reply! This is getting in rather deep now! Well, to save the suspense we shall volunteer a provisional reply for the moment. Knowing that these people are either landowners, bankers or stockholders, we shall say that they are as useful to society as fleas are to a pup!

"How crude! How unfair and vulgar a reply!" protests Henry, and his all too numerous supporters. All right, but consider, we said that this is but a provisional reply.

We shall present the facts and details and argue our conviction that this reply is perfectly justified. We shall take up this trinity one at a time. So we will pick on the landowner first. Come along with us now and leave that celestial visitor alone. He is too naive to understand our society, anyhow.

CHAPTER III.

LAND AND LANDLORDS.

MAN is a land animal. He may soar to the clouds with artificial wings or navigate the waters like a fish, but he always returns to the solid earth. Yet, strange to relate, most of his tribe are landless animals today. How did this come about?

Scriptures tell us that God made this earth for all His people. Few of all His people own enough land to bury a dead cockroach without paying rent to some landlord for the privilege. How does this happen to happen? Nowhere in the Bible is there a record that the Almighty made any deal with the real estate agents. And yet these gentry own practically all the estate that is real. Only that which accumulates under your finger nails, Henry, is all the earth you have left out of your God-given heritage.

Ask the landlords how they came in possession of the earth. Those who are not too sensitive to foolish questions may condescend to answer you. They bought it from other landlords. And these bought theirs from still other landlords, and so on, back into the dim past when the first landlords had to fight for "their" land.

You might feel like Pat when an English absentee landlord told him such a tale. Pat took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, spat in his hands and said: "Begorra, I foight fer moine now!" Don't you try to imitate him. Nowadays such contests go to court. And by the time the court decides in your favor you will have your slice of land—seven by three and six feet deep—in the cemetery.
Gifts From the Gods.

In many European countries the "landed" aristocracies, the kings and queens, dukes and ducks, counts and no-accounts have often told their minions that God gave them the land. In this "free" country statesmen and financiers have echoed the same sentiment. One of the most noted native announcements on this subject came from that gifted oracle, the late George F. Baer—"Divine Right" Baer. He said, gentlemen:

"The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected by the Christian men to whom God in His infinite wisdom has given the property interests of the country."

How can you answer such an argument? You may say that God didn't. And they reply that God did. You can't get anywhere in such a barrage. You may appeal to the preachers, the earthly representatives of the Great Landlord, and ask them for advice. But on this fundamental question of man's right to the earth most of our clergy are as silent as clams at sunrise. Now and then some brave clergyman may give you a vigorous and wholesome reply. Shortly after, this preacher hunts for a new job.

However, many words should not be spilled in such a fruitless discussion. A legend is told of a charmingly simple method our Russian moujik employed in rebuttal to the "Divine Right" argument in Russia.

For ages the great landowners of Russia impressed on the minds of the peasants the story that God gave the land to the nobles. The Russian peasants were always a very meek, humble and submissive sort of people. They were extremely polite and respectfully greeted a superior as "Little Father." They did not doubt his authority. When told that the land was the nobility's property by "Divine Right," the moujik did not argue. He said that the nobility were well educated people and they ought to know more than did he—he, the poor, uneducated, illiterate moujik. If the master said that God gave him the land, then it must be so.

A Personal Call.

Came 1917 and the revolution. One day a delegation of moujiks presented themselves at a landowner's front door and begged for an interview.

"Little Father," said the committee, "remember how thou and thy esteemed forefathers told us how God gave thee the land of Russia? Well, Little Father, we never disputed thy claim, did we? Yesterweek we peasants of Russia were assembled in a great convention in Moscow and our delegations got in touch with our Great Father above and we
asked Him about the land of Russia. He replied that He had changed His mind and that henceforth the land of Russia would belong to the Russian people.

"Don't frown, Little Father. If thou hast any disbelief in the authenticity of the message we got from Heaven please trot out the one thy esteemed grandsires received and thou and we can put the two together and compare the handwriting and signature." Though most dispatches from Russia have been very conflicting, all indications seem to show that that argument is settled.

Of course, we don't wish to imply that the land question in this country will be settled in the Russian fashion. No, we don't. But rest assured, Henry, that the day is coming when all Americans will sing "My country, 'tis of thee" with a tempo and pitch that will sound as if they own what they are singing about.

More Land Than He Can Use.

Now please understand us, Henry, we Socialists have no objection to any man owning enough land to live or work on. Such ownership is a blessing to the whole nation. What we object to is the ownership of more land than the owner can use. When an individual owns more land than he can use he generally owns the land that others must use. Thereby he becomes the pest commonly and lovingly known as a landlord, God bless him!

Surely the average farmer and home owner is not a pest. We Socialists want this farmer to own his farm instead of the banker owning it for him. We also want every American to own his home, the land upon which it stands and enough grass, flowers, shrubs and trees around and between one habitation and another to lend health and loveliness to his surroundings. Why should this prevail only around some people's homes and in everybody's cemetery?

We have nothing against you small, would-be landlords who rent out the upper floor in the shacks you live in. Or even if you have been so reckless as to have bought a lot out at Cow Hill, Pennsyltucky, at $3 down and 50 cents a week. Good luck to you. We Socialists wouldn't trouble about you. We are after bigger fish to fry. Anyway, if the real estate sharks permit you to own that installment-plan lot of yours up to the time of your funeral, cheer up, Henry, at least you will own a private graveyard. And that is something.

The Object of Our Attack.

What we object to is the real land-owning class, the big ones that flourish in the exclusive haunts of the town, those that summer at Newport and winter at Palm Beach. In this "land of the free" there are
these families that own hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, yes, even millions of acres of land. Look up the history of land grabs and railroad grants enumerated and exposed in Gustavus Myer's "History of Great American Fortunes." Then you will know why there are so many landless Americans and why there are tenant farmers and huge untilled tracts of land in this big, beautiful and bountiful land of "ours."

No, we don't blame the land hog. We blame the stupid little pigs that sanction and vote for the continuation and protection of this land-grabbing system. Moreover, we don't ask any landlord to give away his land. Even if he voluntarily did, it would not help many. Leo Tolstoy tried that game. Kind soul, he was bitterly disappointed. The peasants he gave his land to soon lost or sold it to another count. Nothing one may personally do in this direction will help solve the land problem.

Yes, we know that some Socialists are wealthy landowners. What of it? We don't practice what we preach simply because we Socialists don't preach any such nonsense as giving away land or not buying any. Under this system you are either a landlord or a tenant. Take a tip from us, better be a landlord. You can't live Socialism under capitalism. But as you have a swell chance of all becoming landlords you
will eventually come around to our way of looking at things. Socialists say that the land problem must be solved nationally by the will of the majority of the people. We want that job done right, and done so that it will stay done.

We repeat, we don't blame the land-owning class. Man for man, woman for woman, they are as good or as bad as the rest of us. We Socialists blame the system. More so, we blame the people that stand for such a system. And when we hinted that the landowner was as useful to society as fleas are to a pup, we had in mind the beautiful product of this system that enables a non-producing absentee landowner to possess and profit by the land that others must work or live on.

No brains are required to be a landowner. An incurable idiot can own land just as successfully as a genius. Yea, if the law would permit the deeding of a tract of land to an alligator, that animal could perform the functions of a landlord as efficiently as any human being. A landlord has about as much to do with an increase or decrease in a lot's value as has the billboard fence around it.

Then, what gives land its value? Is it the substance, the quality of the dirt, or its rocky base? Sometimes, yes. But why is the land in Labrador of less value than the land on Broadway, New York City? And, lastly, what has the owner got to do with the value of the land?

How Land Values Are Made.

Any sensible person knows that no landlord, dead or alive, ever created land values. These are made by the hustle and bustle of a population, the activity or the probable activity of a number of people around a locality. You could easily sell corner lots at the South Pole if there was a possibility of a large crowd migrating down there. In a word, land values are made by society. Any sensible person, then, ought to know that land values rightfully should belong to society. That is our idea, Henry. Do you get it now?

Socialism demands that the land of the United States shall be owned by the United States. When enough landless Americans get that notion (and there are enough of such Americans to do the trick) they will soon find more than one way by which the land of the nation will be restored to the people. Where there is a will there is a way. But for some time yet we must awaken the will.

Under Socialism, huge tracts of land, no doubt, will be exploited as a national enterprise for one reason or another. Other tracts that can be more successfully farmed on a large scale with great machinery will undoubtedly be worked by the nation, or more probably by cooperative societies. And the small farmer must have his farm. Social-
ism proposes that no man shall have more land than he can use and all men shall have as much as they can use. Goodness knows, this country is big enough for that possibility.

No, we don’t want to get the people back to the land. That’s some job. We want to get the land back to the people, and that will go a long way to invite them back to the land.

As long as people want to exist in congested towns and cities—such is the drift in these troublous times—well, then, we must take people as we find them. And therefore Socialists demand that the land and housing in the cities and towns shall be municipal property and rented to the inhabitants at the cost of maintenance.

Also, with the improved means of transportation which a nationally owned system of conveyance will render, the farmer can be brought nearer to the joys of the city and the city folks nearer to the delights of the land. That will increase the happiness of both elements and reduce the degenerating influence of too much of either environment. This will help some to rebalance our lopsided United States.

Now we are through with the landlord—at least, in our argument here. The big job, however, is yet ahead of us. These lines are written to help get “a head” on you. And when you do and enough others like you, then man will get back to his original classification as a land animal.

As old Charlie Matchett used to say: “All we Socialists want is the earth. Pardon us for our modest request.”

CHAPTER IV.

BANKS AND BANKERS.

Now let us step into the bank and examine what goes on behind those barred windows. You get a sort of creepy feeling when you enter those cold marble halls, and you never feel at home in a bank. Now let us explain why.

What are banks for? Some people tell us that the banks save our money for us. And why? Don’t you know, you silly fellow?—because if you are so careless as to have all your money about you the thieves might get it. So you bring it to the bank. And, God help you, in doing that you often deliver it into the hands of thieves. Look up the facts of some notorious bank failures and you will get what we mean.

No, Henry, we don’t wish to insinuate that all banks are bandits’ headquarters. Honest, we don’t. We only wish to warn you that you never can feel safe—not as long as the banks are in private hands. We shall presently show the reason why.
Banks are not in business to save your money. They don’t pack, salt, pickle or camphor it, and lay it in a vault and guard it for you. They don’t generally say “Thank you” when you hand it in, and you often forget to say “Thank you” when you get it back. You are kind of suspicious about the whole business. And we don’t blame you, Henry. We are also suspicious.

Some folks say that banks make money grow. Now, that’s not possible. You can try that cultivation yourself. Dig a hole in your back yard and stick a half dollar down the hole. Be sure to do that in the spring of the year. Then apply some fertilizer, and be sure to water the spot twice a day. Then watch the plant grow. Nothing doing, eh? That half dollar wouldn’t grow unless it was made of iron, then it would grow—rusty!

Making Money Grow.

Well, if banks don’t save money or make it grow, then what do they do? Other people tell us that banks make money accumulate. Now is that possible? Just try it. Put that half dollar on top of your clothes-closet and forget about it for six months or so. We know that’s a tough job for you, Henry. But, then, try it once, anyway. When the time is up you will find your silver has accumulated—dust!

Then there are still others who say that bankers make money multiply. Now, we don’t fully understand what that means. Probably the bankers have some occult faculty that enables them to know a male from a female dollar. Then they may unite the two in the bonds of matrimony. (Notice the “bonds” and “mony” in that phrase, will you?) And from that marriage may come the offspring in the shape of pennies, nickels, dimes, etc. We say we don’t know. We are simply guessing that may be it.

The Mystery of the Bank.

But, then, Henry, you do feel that there is something very mysterious about the banks! You fetch your money to one window and get it back at another. And for the dirty torn ones you gave them they hand you back crisp new ones—and something else besides. They give you some extra change which the banks call interest.

Now you are interested! You want to know how do they do it? Besides the two windows you know, you no doubt have heard of a third window, or more often a private office. Now the soup thickens. Here is where the fat comes to the surface. At this third window or private office your boss, landlord and storekeeper come to worship and pray. There they ask for and try to get the money your boss gave you, that is, the little you have left after you have paid your bills (if you pay them!). And the money your boss gave you and
you gave to the bank, your boss, landlord and storekeeper get from
the bank in order to get more out of you and to give some of it to
the banker.

Gee, but that's confusing, isn't it, Henry? You betcha! This busi-
ness has most of us confused. But some of us know the workings
of this game and so we are going to tell how it is done.

To begin with, the bank gives you four per cent or so on the money
you let them hold for you. Your boss, landlord and storekeeper bor-
row that money from the banker and give him a gift of two per cent
for the joy of getting it. So, you see, the banker charges these bor-
rowing "friends" of yours six per cent on the money they get. This
is the law in most states.

The Game of Interest.

Now, don't let them kid you, Henry. No business man (least of all
—the banker) is such a generous damphool as to divide up his profits
by giving you four per cent and keeping for himself (to say nothing
of his expense) a measly two per cent.

But, then, the law says the banker can only charge six per cent on
the money he lends. Tell that to the Judge, Henry! Most everybody
knows, and surely the Judge, that the banks often take more than six
per cent. The six per cent passes over the legal counter, but very often
a healthy additional percentage passes under the counter in the form
of bonuses, gratuities and other high-sounding jingles.

Sometimes the game is played open and above board. Testimony
was offered in the sworn statements of the bankers themselves to the
Comptroller of the United States Department of Currency that six per
cent was a rarity, and the bankers in many parts of the country had
been charging all the way from 10 per cent to 2,400 per cent on loans
made in their banks. Now open your mouth, Henry, and we will give
you some of this banker's sworn evidence. Then you can swear a
little yourself.

We shall quote from a document issued by the Government Printing
Office, Washington, 1916. (Don't waste money trying to get a copy,
they say it's out of print and as scarce as hen's teeth.) The document
is entitled, "Investigation of Usury Charges Against Banks. Hearings
Before the Committee on Rules, House of Representatives, Sixty-Fourth
Congress, First Session, on House Resolution 64, January 17 and 24,
1916."

"Hon. W. S. Howard (testifying) : So I have carefully gone over the
report of the Comptroller of Currency. I have carefully called to mind
conditions existing in the State of Georgia. I think the report shows
that we have 114 national banks operating in the State of Georgia under
Federal Charter. The Comptroller reports that under the sworn statements of 66 of these banks operating in Georgia that they have charged usury from 12 per cent to 2,000 per cent on loans that they have made as members of the Federal Reserve system.

* * *

"Mr. Howard (speaking about a national bank in Oklahoma): In the entire calculation of every transaction that that bank had in Oklahoma for nearly one year, covering four or five pages of loans, that not a single, solitary loan was made by that bank in that entire state for a less rate of interest than 15 per cent, and in some instances they charge as high as 2,400 per cent. Yet that bank is operating under a license from this government.

* * *

"Statement of Hon. John Skelton Williams, Comptroller of the Currency, United States Treasury:

'We then looked over the returns (from all national banks in the country), and found that some national banks had admitted under oath that they were charging, not 100 per cent, but 500 per cent and 1,000 per cent per annum in some cases.'

* * *

'I recall one bank which charged an average of 40 per cent on all loans.

* * *

"Four national banks in New York City reported loans made during the year 1915 upon which they had charged interest at the rate of 15 per cent or more but less than 20 per cent, amounting in the aggregate to something over $300,000.

* * *

"(Georgia). One bank reported it had loaned, between 24 per cent and 912 per cent, the sum of $9,372; another bank declared its maximum rate at 254 per cent; while several others admitted rates considerably in excess of 100 per cent."

Mr. Williams reported that sworn statements showed interest charged up to the rate of 24 per cent in Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Indiana, up to 48 per cent in North Dakota, 60 per cent in Illinois, 200 per cent in Alabama, 250 per cent in Texas, and as high as 2,400 per cent in Oklahoma.

How Bankers Grow Fat.

This testimony did not show that every bank was guilty of this high-grade usury. But the Comptroller said, and he had the goods with him, that this practice is very extensive. Now, isn't this a fine state of affairs. You can now understand why our bankers could hardly grow
as stout as some of them are on a diet of merely 2 per cent for expenses and profit.

Even at the legal rate of interest, our bankers clean up neat fortunes because they invest the money you hand them into well-paying bonds, stocks, mortgages and securities. Actual cash seldom leaves their banks nowadays, for the modern fine art in banking consists in transferring credit from one page in the ledger to another; and thus even greater mysteries transpire behind those barred windows than the average mortal can understand.

The money king, His Excellency the Banker, is usually the hockshop owner who owns the whole blame community. He owns some real estate outright and all the rest of it for miles around by owning the mortgages. He has most every business man and shopkeeper by the back of the neck, and they tremble for fear that he will shake them off the earth. He controls the Chamber of Commerce, the press, theaters and even some pulpits, and, by heck, he practically owns the government!

Mr. Williams tells how the bankers farm the farmers. The banker often takes his crop, cattle, home and all except the farmer himself and his troubles. If you want to know what a farmer thinks about bankers, never ask him on Sunday. The farmer reserves that day to bless God for His kindness, and thanks God that He has given the farmer six days in a week to curse the bankers to hell.

**Brains Inspire Admiration.**

It may be said that it requires brains to be a banker. Undoubtedly! That's something you could not say about a landlord. But, then, brains are not always a serviceable or virtuous possession. A pickpocket has more brains than the fellow whose pocket he picks. At least, it seems that way. And it takes an unusually high-grade type of mechanical brains to crack a safe. Probably that's why so many bum mechanics are such law-abiding citizens. Of course, we don't wish to insinuate that the banker is a crook. No, we are only just describing brains as an object for admiration.

Furthermore, we have no quarrel with the banker personally. Our quarrel is against the capitalist system in which our banking game flourishes. Just as we don't complain against the land, but the landlord, so, too, we can appreciate the need of banks and their usefulness to society. They will be with us for some time to come and as long as they are socially useful. But the banker—well, you know what we said about the landlord. Any farmer will tell you, and prove it to you, that the banker is as useful to farming as a potato bug is to the potato plant.
Yes, we repeat, banks do perform some necessary function in this society of ours. But that function could just as well be performed without shoving millions into the pants-pockets of some individuals who do not produce a real cent's worth of value. The banker cuts the pie for the landlord and business man and keeps a generous slice for himself. As to the fellow who bakes the pie—we shall come to him in another chapter.

Bankers Produce Nothing.

If all the bankers would drop dead tomorrow the world would lose nothing, because this crowd produces nothing. They take not only what one has but even what one hasn't got. Figure that out, Henry, and you will know why the whole world is in debt and unborn generations are in hock before they arrive.

Why, this gang even makes the government divide up its cash with them. Do you know that, Henry? The government prints and mints the money. Then it sends the flow into the channels of circulation, and it lands kerplunk into the banks. The city, state and national governments very often find themselves broke. They must borrow money. Where do you think they go to get it? To the United States Treasury? No, Henry, not yet. That would be treason—to the banks! Congress has averted any such calamity, thanks to the banker's influence there. So, when Uncle Sam needs cash, he also has to go to the banks. And there he borrows back some of the money the government itself has manufactured, and the bankers soak Uncle from six to eight per cent for the privilege of getting some of that "In God We Trust" back into the government's pockets. Some game, eh, Henry?

No, we don't blame the banker. We truly admire him. We marvel how he gets away with it. We only blame that one big union of boneheads and boobs that vote for such a skin game.

No, we don't advocate raiding the banks and distributing the change. Not we, Henry. We admired the Russians when we heard how they tackled that job over there. They just called out the Fire Department, put up the ladders, and took the signs off the front of the banks, and then they hung up some brand new ones. Then they told all the employees inside to just keep on figuring and counting, as the places were now under new management, the best in all Russia, the people's own government. Then they told all the loafers hanging around inside to report at once to the headquarters of the street cleaning department.

And at last some of the Russian bankers were restored as useful and respectable members in the community. Of course, such happenings could only happen in barbarous Russia. We don't say that that should be tried in this "free" country. But at least you will admit, Henry, that the example is interesting.
However, this is certain, Henry: the day is coming, and coming soon, when the banks in this country will become the property of the people as a whole, and their numerous transactions and services will be rendered at cost.

The Postal Service and the Rural Credit system are indications of what’s on the way. The state-owned banks and the rapidly increasing number of co-operative banks and credit unions are conclusively showing how banks can be run without the bankers’ supervision and profit.

And when this divorce is finally decreed, you will more fully appreciate, dear Henry, what we said about the relation of the fleas to the pup. And the banker is the damned flea that eats the pup on those parts of his anatomy where the poor pup can’t get around to scratch or bite.

CHAPTER V.

STOCK AND STOCKHOLDERS.

AND now for the stockholders, the third and last of the lucky trinity. Different than the landowner and banker, this parasite is often disguised under various highfalutin names. The stouter variety are named “Captains of Industry,” “Industrial Magnates” and
"Directors of Corporations." The smaller fry are known as brokers and speculators. Of course, bankers and many landlords are also stockholders. In times of stress, storm and suspicion the whole crew of pirates sail under the tearful and sympathetic symbol of "the poor widow and orphan stockholders."

Very few kind words have ever been volunteered in defense of landlords and bankers, but the stockholders, on the other hand, have had no shortage of apologists, defenders and eulogists. Some 20 years ago, when Socialism was barely whispered around these parts, already there was trembling. Members and defenders of the almighty trinity of plunder and pelf had until then dismissed the Socialist program as a blissful theory, an impracticable scheme and an exclusively foreign doctrine. But the darn thing was slowly but surely getting a foothold in "their" dear U. S. A. Oh, mercy! Something had to be done and done quickly. Jails and deportations were not yet thought of. Bouncing them out of their jobs and driving them out of the community only had the effect of making travelling agitators out of these pesky Socialists.

The Civic Federation galloped to the rescue. It called for a Goliath to slay this new little David. From the shores of old England came a welcome response. One William H. Mallock, professor and novelist, said he would come over and argue this Socialist infant into a fever. He said he had some experience at that job in the old country. But the fever inoculated by Mallock and others developed in the British workmen a decidedly scarlet hue. However, our capitalists thought that that could only happen in Europe. Anyway, they wanted help, and Mallock came.

The Lectures of Mallock.

He delivered a series of high-priced lectures. These lectures were fully reported and printed in the "impartial and influential" press of the country. The said addresses were full of wisdom and annihilating logic.

Echoes of Mallock's arguments are still in the air, and every time some "idiotor" of a great daily wants to write a rant against the "Reds" he grabs his well-worn copy of Mallock, breathes in some of its inspiration and then blows it out into a long-winded, big-worded "idiotorial" on Socialism.

Mallock argued that the blessed capitalist class was fairly entitled to their great boodle because they, the capitalists, were endowed by nature, gifted by God, and had risen by lifting themselves by their boot straps. The noted and noble defender said that labor alone produced nothing; it must have intelligent direction. Superior brains and directing ability are needed to produce wealth. Now, the Socialists heartily agreed with
the professor on this line of argument. In fact, they were converted to this idea before they heard him spout. However, the joke was on the professor when he argued that it was the capitalists, the landowners, bankers, and particularly the stockholders, that were the ones that had the superior brains and directing ability. The Socialists politely replied, “Professor, your data is good but your digestion is rotten.” Let us tell you why we told him that.

For example, take six copious and corpulent captains of industry and seat them on six fulsome chairs. Then ask them to kindly demonstrate by their superior intellects how they produce the great wealth that flows into their money bags. Impossible, say you? They must have resources and materials to work with? Right you are, Henry. So we will take the six chairs and the six captains and move the whole shooting match out on a tract of land—let’s say—in Pennsylvania. Then we must make them a present of a large slice of earth with a virgin bed of coal in it. (You might as well give it to them, for they will grab it somehow anyway.) Now seat the sextet on the land and watch their superior brains and directing ability extract the coal from the ground. Nothing doing, eh? You guessed it, Henry. If you were to wait for that crew to roll up their sleeves and root for the coal you had better get ready to move to the tropics next winter. You say, we forgot to give capital to the capitalists to work with. Brains and ability are not enough to mine coal. Right you are again. So we shall have to furnish them some capital at once. Now, remember, we gave them land with coal in it, capital to buy the machinery and necessary equipment, and they brought their precious superior brains and directing ability with them. Now watch them produce.

What’s the matter now? Haven’t they started the diggings yet? Why, Henry, they appear to be in distress. They are yelling for something. Something’s missing, sure. Yes, now we can hear them. They are calling for help, help—HELP WANTED! You recognize that call, Henry, don’t you? Come, let’s see what these capitalists want.

Looking over the “Help Wanted” ads we see that they want a mining engineer. Superior brains! They want some surveyors and mechanical engineers. More superior brains! They call for a mine superintendent. You see, Henry, they must have directing ability! Then the mine owners must have miners, skilled men who know how and where the coal veins run, carpenters to build the shafts, elevators, tracks and supports, men to work in the tipple and a host of unskilled laborers to drag, break, sort and ship the coal. Once that help responds and gets on the job you can see the dirt fly and loads and loads of black diamonds bubble forth out of the mouth of the mine.
The six captains of industry we brought with us are now in the way. They merely stand around as spectators. But we are too busy to be annoyed with loafers now. They seem to appreciate that fact, anyway, and that is probably the reason why the miners seldom ever see the mine owners around. Yea, verily, it's a wise miner who knows his own mine owner.

After all that "Help Wanted" has been on the job and the mine has operated under average luck, the inventory at the end of the season will show that enough coal was produced and sold to pay all the real superior brains and directing ability and the skilled and unskilled labor. And after all that crowd is paid off, you will notice, Henry, that a neat sum of money is left over for somebody. For whom? Don't you know? It's for the stockholders. It's their dividends. But what do the stockholders do? Why, you poor fish—they hold the stock!

Few people realize what hard work it is to hold stock. You are constantly worried to remember how much you have, whether it rises or falls in value, when the dividends are due and when the coupons must be clipped and sent in and the profits collected. This is the most hazardous and nerve-wrecking labor in the whole mining industry!

We don't suppose it's necessary to tell you, Henry, how indispensable the stockholder is to society. When we talk about fleas we slander the little insects by the comparison. Surely, everybody knows that if the stockholders would suddenly leave this earth, and the gilt-edge rusted on the stock, what a calamity would follow. The land would cave in, the rivers would dry up, the mines would become barren, the rails on the railroads would curl up in despair and the machinery in the factories would collapse with nervous prostration! Oh, horrors! Long live the stockholders!

The Astor Baby.

Talking about superior brains and directing ability, we haven't told you near enough yet, Henry. Get this one, will you?

In 1912 there was born a most wonderful kid. We refer to the precious Astor baby. That remarkable boy had such an abundance of superior brains and directing ability that the moment he was born he had already accumulated $3,000,000.00. His late father left him that fortune and further provided in his will an extra $20,000.00 a year for the baby's maintenance. The loving mother soon after went to court and complained that $20,000.00 a year was too small a sum to bring up a baby in these days of the high cost of living. Thoughtless father! Men do exhibit so little sense!

Of course, you should know, Henry, that these three million bucks that kid started out in life with were not in cash. No, sir. They were
invested in stocks, bonds and real estate. Invested in mines, railroads, factories, etc. Now, imagine what all that infant superiored and directed.

In an article appearing in the New York Times an expert accountant estimated the income on the three million dollars left to the Astor baby. He said that about $140,000.00 a year would grow out of the original and at that rate there would accumulate at least $5,357,889.00 by the time young Astor would arrive at the age of one and twenty. So, you see, this young man will be cast adrift on the sea of manhood with a paltry possession of over eight millions.

Picture in your mind the prodigious “superior brains” and “directing ability” of an infant “earning” $140,000.00 a year! When this Astor baby was two years old he had already “earned” more than a quarter of a million. Isn’t that an amazing performance for a two-year-old? Look back to your childhood, Henry, and consider how you fiddled away your time at that age.

Here is another one. Some years ago the widow of one of the Standard Oil crowd died in an insane asylum. What the old lady left behind showed that that wonderful woman “earned” hundreds of thousands a year on her stocks and bonds even though she was hopelessly crazy. Evidently superior brains and directing ability lose none of their magic even though their owner rooms in an asylum.

Now, just one more illustration, probably the best of the lot. We think we can get away with it if we say that when a man dies his brains and ability die with him. (Yes, a fellow may live even though his brains are dead. But, generally speaking, a dead man is dead all the way through.) Now then, if a capitalist dies, his superior brains and directing ability also die. Isn’t that so? But the facts show the contrary! Examine the estate of a capitalist 10 years after he is dead, and, lo and behold, his fortune is more than doubled. Now, may we not ask, why in blazes is there any need for a capitalist living quite so long if he stands in the way of his own fortune? There should immediately be organized a Society for the Prevention of Longevity among Capitalists.

The Stockholder’s Brains.

We certainly do not wish to infer that all capitalists are brainless or useless people. No, sir, we Socialists are happy to recognize ability wherever it may reside. True, there are great directors, organizers and geniuses among a few of the capitalist class. These few are indispensible to the success of many industries. Very often, however, much of this ability is wasted in conniving, wasteful and destructive enterprises.
In the early days of capitalism most every capitalist understood the business he owned. He worked his way (and then worked others on his way) from the bottom to the top of his business. While here and there you can still find such a relic of bygone days, you will have to realize, however, that we now live in the day of the huge stock corporation. Its owners are thousands of stockholders. This stock is bought and sold in the exchanges all over the world. By no stretch of the imagination can one be led to believe that a holder of stock in Paris or Vienna can exercise any of his ability, assuming that he has some, let's say, in the mining of copper in Montana. Furthermore, most every multi-millionaire owns stocks, bonds and shares in hundreds of different and most varied industries. The man does not live nor can be born that can intelligently understand or direct all these establishments. When a plute invests some cash in stock he doesn't care two hoots whether it's stock in gun-powder, face-powder, sausages or bibles. All he cares about is what dividends it will breed. Superior brains and directing ability are absolutely necessary, but, like you, fellow-workers, they are hired and fired.

Read what Charles M. Schwab has to say on this subject. Speaking of brains, he certainly is no small potato.
"Captains of industry are not hunting money. America is heavy with it. They are seeking brains—specialized brains—and faithful, loyal service. Brains are needed to carry out the plans of those who furnish the capital."

That's letting the rat out of the trap. But, even in this frank statement, Schwab is kidding. Any fool knows that even the "plans" are generally furnished by hired brains.

The Reward of Risk.

The latest argument and apology for the capitalist class is seemingly more logical than old Mallock's. Many "great" editors, professors and statesmen have forsaken Mallock and his "Reward of Ability" for the new propaganda, "The Reward of Risk." This is the way it sounds: "A capitalist is one who invests his money. In so doing he risks it. And the profit he makes is the reward for the risk he takes." Isn't that grand reasoning. So truly untrue!

A landlord plants his money in a piece of land. In so doing he takes an awful chance. And so great are the chances of the land caving in or the wind blowing it away that our nervous landlords keep on raising the rents!

The banker lends money. (You mean credit.) In so doing he risks it. (Tell that to the Judge!) And the interest he charges is but the reward he asks for the risk he has taken. How considerate of him!

The stockholder invests his money in an enterprise. In so doing he fearlessly takes a chance. The dividends he takes are but his "wages" of risk.

Now, there is one serious defect in this comedy. The principal actors are completely overlooked. The greatest investment in any industry is made by those who, not quite so voluntarily either, invest their sweat and blood, their health and strength and frequently their limbs and lives. These investors, the workers, take the biggest risks and receive the smallest rewards.

Something like this happens in some of the thrilling and neckbreaking stunts performed by our movie "stars." The "star" doesn't do the stunt at all. An inconspicuous and cheaply hired poor devil "doubles" for the "great" actor, who undeservedly gets the applause—and the big salary.

Just compare the great "risks" in the following hazardous pursuits: The miner underneath the earth's crust and the mine owner in his Fifth avenue residence! A brakeman switching in a hundred-tracked freight yard on a cold wintry night and the railroad magnate on his private yacht! The men in the inferno of a stokehole out on the stormy seas and the steamship bondholder rolling along the highways in his limousine! And so on, and so on. Add more illustrations to suit your
tastes. But don't leave out of this gallery of contrasts the picture of a big-bellied banker out on the golf links of his country club and a hump-backed farmer out in the broiling sun plucking weeds or hoeing potatoes. Oh, what a risk one of these fellows takes! And, oh, what a pile the other guy makes! Cruel world, eh, Henry?

If all the stock and bondholders of our railroads dropped dead tomorrow that insignificant event would hardly upset the schedule of a freight train. But should the engineers, firemen, dispatchers, signalmen, brakemen and the numerous other necessary hands on our railroads take a ride on the tail of a passing comet, and none could be found to replace them, in a short while our miles of railroad tracks would become nursery beds for nature's glorious weeds.

**Our Idea.**

Yes, dear soul, we realize perfectly that "capital" is also indispensable. Truly, without funds, investment and tools the workers can only labor at gymnastics. Our contention is that instead of the stock and bond owners being permitted to own the stored-up labor of past generations that the possession of all such wealth shall reside in the treasury of society. It should really be the wealth of the Commonwealth.

In society's treasury it becomes the reserve fund needed for new industries, extensions, inventions, improvements, wear and tear, insurance and emergency. Today this vast accumulation passes from the hands of the great financier—

Who was quite useful in a way,
And served a function in his day.

It passes down to his heirs, who frequently squander this precious heritage in dissipation and debauchery.

Let us simplify and polish up the bone of our contention. We Socialists appreciate the necessity for land, but not the landlords—the banks, but not the bankers—"capital," but not the capitalists. Land, banks and industries are absolutely indispensable. The capitalist trinity of plunder is absolutely dispensable. Beds are a boon to the human race, but not the bed bugs. Darn them!

**Charity.**

The last and most tearful of all the apologies for the capitalist class is the following: "Admitting the parasitical character of most of the owners of great wealth, consider, however, the immense good that many of them do in returning to society part of the wealth they have accumulated in many useful and lasting benevolences." In a word—charity. How sweet and noble of them! What great hearts and generous impulses!
Without mocking good intentions altogether, a cool examination must show that charity or philanthropy is unconsciously or consciously the cruelest fraud imposed upon the toiling masses. Here is a story by John W. Slayton that illustrates our feelings to perfection.

Schmidt and his dog, Fritz, once went into a great wood to hunt. After a while they discovered that they were lost. The man and the dog frantically stumbled around for hours. Overcome by fatigue they rested. Soon the German found that his appetite was suing him for non-support. He looked at the dog, and the dog looked at him. Their feelings were mutual. "By golly, dog," said Schmidt, "either I eat you or you eat me." As he began to sharpen his knife the dog grew suspicious. He wagged his tail and rubbed his long, cold nose against the German's leg. Schmidt's heart said, "Don't do it," his stomach said, "Do it." After a struggle his heart got the best of him, for he did love Fritz.

When a man is hungry his wits are sharpened. Schmidt stumbled across an idea. "Ox-tail soup is good, why not dog's-tail soup?" said the German to himself. Before Fritz knew what had happened he was minus half a tail. The German cooked and ate the soup. It revived his strength somewhat. He smiled a smile of satisfaction. Soon, however, his attention was drawn to the dog. The poor animal, short half a tail, looked miserable and hungry. He howled in despair. The German's heart was touched. "You want something to eat, you poor dog," said Schmidt. Then another idea struck him. He fished the bones of the dog's tail out of the pan and gave them to the dog. One gulp and the bones slid down into the dog's stomach. He licked his nose happily, barked thankfully, and wagged what he had left of his tail in appreciation. Charity, that's what that poor dog got!

Philanthropy is all right in a way, but the wrong donors receive the credit and the honor. Some day an indignant public may engage some stone cutters to strike off the name of Andrew Carnegie from those countless libraries scattered over the world. Not because of a lack of appreciation for these temples of knowledge. But because the wrong name adorns their portals. If we must have names on these buildings let us chisel in some correct ones. We can select some from among the hordes of poor hunkies who toiled, sweated and died in the Carnegie steel hells around Pittsburg. Out of their miserable lives and agonies the great Carnegie fortune was born. A name like Pzemzykgehovich or Bokalewitzsky may not sound as Scotch or look so nice on the front of a library as a name like Carnegie. But it may be a damn sight truer and more respectable.
The Real Donors.

Some day, when our sense of fairness rises to its fullest measure, we may also take the name Rockefeller from the institutions that family has “given” us. We can more properly adorn those benevolences with the names of the women and children who were shot and burned to death on the bleak hills above Ludlow, Colorado, in the battle of the miners for a mere livelihood. Out of the bitter toil of a vast host of workers in a hundred industries has risen this colossal, arrogant and brutal fortune of the Rockefellers. Some day their charity will be considered a monumental insult to the working class of our generation.

Charity is also like unto a man who fell among thieves. They robbed him of the small fruits of his labor—his week’s pay. He raised one hell of a holler. To still his bawling the thieves took pity on him. They kept his bills, but returned to him his small change. In amazement he stood transfixed. Soon some neighbors came upon him. After some speechless moments, his ventilator wide open, words struggled forth from it. He related what had happened. “Look,” he gasped, “they returned to me my odd dimes and pennies.” “Well, you lucky simp,” said his consoling friends, “that’s better than nothing!”

Nothing! That appears to be the ideal of many of our fellow-workers. Anything above that makes them most grateful. But we, Henry, have a larger ideal. We believe that a desired state of society is one in which the workers shall receive in compensation the full social return of what their labor produces. And when that goal is attained, charity or philanthropy will be unnecessary.

CHAPTER VI.
LABOR AND LABORERS.

It is often said that labor alone produces all wealth. That’s not quite correct. Labor applied to natural resources—the real raw materials—is the creator of useful things. All those things which are necessary to our social existence constitute the wealth of society. The measure of wealth is the amount of average labor expended to produce it. When we exchange wealth we exchange quantities of labor power or services useful to others. Exchangeable wealth is the joint product of nature and labor.

What do we mean by “labor” or “labor power”? Karl Marx defines it as “the aggregate of mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description.” Labor consists of not only unskilled but skilled and technical abilities. In the largest possible sense we can include as labor
all the service one man renders to another in furnishing some necessary of life.

The crowd that sells its services for wages or salaries constitutes the useful portion of the population, the laborers. The group that buys the services of others (and possess the power to buy such services, because they own the resources, machinery, jobs and opportunities for work)

This Is Charity.

constitutes the capitalist class. Our contention is that the capitalists generally produce nothing. They appropriate (swipe) what others create. We shall now try to show you how that's done.

How We Are "Done."

Suppose a bunch of us were to start a factory. Our idea in doing so was not to manufacture some necessary. No, sir, our primary idea is to make some easy money. We don’t give a darn as to what we may manufacture except that it will be a line of goods that will bring us the speediest possible and largest returns.

The first thing to do is to pool our cash and then borrow more. Cash always attracts more cash, and it flirts with credit. Next we incorporate and print some neatly engraved pieces of paper and call them stock.
Then we encourage some suckers to buy it. Next we rent a loft or a building, and we buy some machinery and equipment. Presently we purchase some raw materials, and then clear the decks for action.

Notice, please, so far we have had little earthly chance to make any money. Our cash doesn’t breed. The stock, common or preferred, doesn’t work. (Of course, we could have sold some phony stock, cashed in and beat it. But we are not that sort of a concern.) The loft or building is a running expense. And the machinery, equipment and raw materials are dead stock. There is only one magic that can bring all that investment to life. That is labor. So we hustle to get some at once.

We buy our labor at the “market price,” or less if we can. We understand that the “market price” generally averages about what it costs our laborers to exist from week to week. However, our notion is to pay them no more than we have to and get all we can out of them. For a while some members of our concern may actually work in the plant in some useful capacity. As soon as we get on our feet we will hire some one to do such work. That will enable us to spend our summers up North and our winters down South.

What We Call Profits or Velvet.

Our plant is now at work. Goods are being produced and sold, and the balances on our ledgers start in to show results. The bookkeeper figures up our expenses and deducts them from our income, and there bobs up our profits. We say we paid so much for labor, so much for interest, rent, wear and tear, overhead and raw materials. If some of us actually did some useful work we charge that on under salaries. The cream that floats on top of the milk we call profits or velvet.

But there is more to the story. We are sorry to say that we could not keep all of the “velvet” our laborers gave us. Among what we figured as “running expenses” appears some juicy items that were really some of the “velvet” we had to share with another gang of respectable bandits. There is the “interest” the banker got. That came out of what our laborers produced. Then there is the item “rent.” Here the landlord got a share of what the worker produced. These birds demanded theirs for the privilege of letting us get ours. All this boodle is figured into the “cost of production.”

Laborers purchase the commodities that they and other laborers have produced. With the wages we pay our laborers they buy back commodities at the retail prices. And here is what they pay for. They pay for the actual cost of production plus the banker’s interest, the stockholder’s dividends, the landlord’s rent, the manufacturer’s, jobber’s and
retailer's profits. No wonder, Henry, there is such an awful difference between what you are paid for making a thing and the price you pay to own it. Whenever some great statesman orates about "our great wealth," remember, Henry, that it came out of your hide and the hides of others like you.

Now, don't call this robbery. Robbery is an ugly word, and most folks are shocked by the sound of it. If you say that many laborers are underpaid and starved most folks will scorn you as a Bolshevik. But if you are careful to say that many laborers suffer from malnutrition you will be hailed as a Sociologist. So keep out of trouble and don't call capitalism a system of robbery. Call it Exploitation. That sounds French and polite. But between you and us, Henry,

Calling an onion a rose
Does not deceive the nose.

**What We Must Do.**

The Socialist goal is the ending of this system of exploitation, the abolition of this colossal organized plunder! To accomplish that end we demand the socialization of the land. Once the landlords depart from our midst, each family ought to be able to secure enough land to live or work on. We insist on the nationalization of the banks and their operation at cost. We advocate the collective ownership of the mines, railroads and industries and the production of the necessaries of life for the use and welfare of society, instead of for the profits of a few.

No, we don't merely advocate "government ownership." We are not anxious to turn over all the industries of the land into the power of a gang of politicians. We also hope to see the professional politicians in hell. We plan to give the directing ability, superior brains, skilled and unskilled laborers, a voice, vote and representation on the boards of management of our nationalized industries. And we don't expect to achieve the millennium, heaven on earth, or a state of perfection. All we hope to accomplish is the organization of the brawn and brains of the nation into a gigantic collective and co-operative effort to produce the wealth of the nation. Through this program we hope to abolish the waste of competition, the anarchy in production, the class conflicts and the shameful extremes of great wealth and intense poverty. That's what Socialists are working for all over the world.

To sum up, our main idea is to rid the world of parasites. Now, a parasite is not necessarily a fellow who hails from Paris. No doubt there are plenty of them in that town. A parasite is one who lives on another fellow. To get rid of our parasites, Henry, we must get you
and others like you to understand Socialism, and then organize the working men and women of our country into powerful industrial and political organizations. When we are at least as well organized industrially and politically as the Trinity of Plunder is the final scrap will be short and sweet. We are many. They are few.

We often wonder why the plutes, when speaking of cattle, speak of so many "heads." And when they speak of you and your kin, Henry, they say so many "hands." Now, don't let them kid you any longer. Read the labor press. Develop a "head" on you. Altogether let us march forward, a little more lively, please, toward the next order of society, the Co-operative Commonwealth, a League of the Peoples of All Nations, the Brotherhood of Man.

(Finis.)

(Either yours or the plutes.)
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