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EDITORIAL

WHERE WRIGHT IS WRONG.

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IT would be far easier to point out where Carroll D. Wright is right. That's the exception. And yet, voluminous though the mass is of his errors, the gentleman just got off a brace of them that are of peculiar flavor, in point both of the light they throw upon the mental caliber of this "intellectual" and the usefulness of exposing them.

In a speech recently delivered in Philadelphia, Mr. Carroll D. Wright said:

"I object to have Labor called a commodity for the reason that the merchandise that the workingman has to dispose of is of a perishable nature."

Here we have no less a luminary than a "national statistician" of Labor, and everything else statistical, establishing a definition that every fruit-vendor could knock into a cocked hat. According to Mr. Wright, bananas, grapes, apples, etc., would not be merchandise. They surely are perishable. Being perishable, they are excluded from the category of merchandise by Mr. Wright's definition.

No more need be said on this head to knock of a heap the above argument by Mr. Wright. From the extremely perishable banana to the extremely durable Bessemer steel billet,—all of which are merchandise—merchandise runs the gamut of all degrees of perishability. 'Tis not that feature of an object that makes or unmakes it a merchandise. What determines its merchandise feature is its quality to satisfy a human want. As bananas satisfy the human want of hunger, and steel billets the human want of hard instruments of production, so labor-power satisfies the want of yielding more wealth than its exchange-value costs to the purchaser. As labor-power is such a useful article in demand, it is a merchandise, whether perishable or not.

And now comes Mr. Wright's conclusion: Labor not being a merchandise, for the reason he alleges, the solution of the Labor Question, according to the gentleman, is, not Socialism, but—"profit sharing"!!

Mr. Carroll D. Wright, before starting on his anti-Socialist crusade, should have made a pact with the Steel Trust to postpone that savage reduction of from 5 to 20 per cent. on the wages of 168,000 of their stock-holding, and, therefore, “profit-sharing” employes. It is a bad background to revive the “profit sharing” corpse of malodorous Dolgeville memory. But such is fate, especially the fate that pursues the praise-singers of capitalism. It ever leaves them in the lurch when they need help most, and helps to expose them.

“Profit sharing” implies the theory of peace between the purchasing capitalist and the perishable merchandise Labor. No more need be said to expose the folly. It is as legless as that about Labor not being a merchandise because perishable. The “profit sharing” between the perishable banana and the purchaser is a picture of immense convincing power.

As the owner of the perishable banana hastens at an ever declining price to find a purchaser for his perishable merchandise, so the workingman, the owner of the perishable merchandise labor-power, hustles to find a purchaser, at ever declining price,—the physical and economic reasons that move them are identical. “Profit sharing with its purchaser by the merchandise labor is identical as stop-rotting by the merchandise banana when chewed up and swallowed by its purchaser.

Buy why this strenuous effort on the part of Mr. Wright, an effort so strenuous that it pulls him all out of joint? For very simple reasons:

First—The gentleman knows that the real difference between the merchandise labor-power and all others is that the former is human, and that it may discover its merchandise plight, which means its inevitable decline coolie-ward,—a dangerous difference; and

Second—The gentleman knows that Labor is “getting on” to the secret.

As well might Mr. Carroll D. Wright expect to stop a moon eclipse by beating upon old kettles, as seek to stem with his rattle the tidal wave that is rising, moved by the groundswell of the Socialist-demonstrated fact that, under capitalism, Labor is but a merchandise. The gentleman could not perform the feat, nay, not if he traveled perpetually from one end of the country to the other on the Pullman pass that took him to Chicago when he went there to investigate the Pullman strike of 1894!

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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