

EDITORIAL

FIFTEEN QUESTIONS {1}

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Providence, R.I., *Visitor*, an Ultramontane, hence, political Roman Catholic weekly publication, heads, in its September 12 issue, a list of fifteen questions with this recommendation:

“The next time you hear a Socialist soap-box orator, you might interest him in the following list of questions. Clip these questions and carry them with you.”

Seeing that our esteemed contemporary is of the political and economic creed of Ultramontanism, while the *Daily People* is of the political and economic creed of Socialism;

Seeing, furthermore, that, to judge the way things are shaping themselves, the economic and political forces of Capitalism in the land will presently gather to a head under the political and economic banner of Ultramontanism, while the economic and political forces of Labor will be marshalled under the political and economic banner of Socialism, for a final struggle between Capitalism and Socialism;

Seeing all this, the *Daily People* proposes, in the course of the following fifteen weeks, beginning with this issue, to accommodate its esteemed contemporary, and then to invite it to reciprocate by answering another set of fifteen questions which the *Daily People* shall then propound to it.

We begin, accordingly, with the *Visitor's*

QUESTION NO. I

“How will the Co-operative Commonwealth determine the income of each worker?”

ANSWER:—

In order that the answer to the question be understood, two things must first be grasped, and kept in mind.

One is the factor which determines the worker's income today; and that involves the worker's status under Capitalism.

The other thing is the worker's changed status in the Co-operative Commonwealth; from which status flows the factor which will then determine the worker's income.

How is the worker's income determined today, under Capitalism?

The income of the worker is his wages.

That which determines the wages of the worker today is the supply and demand for Labor in the Labor market.

If the supply is relatively large, the price of labor-power, that is, wages, which means income, will be relatively low. If the demand is relatively large, then the income, that is, wages, will rise.

As the Law of Gravitation may be, and is, perturbed by a number of perturbing causes, so with the Law of Wages:—combinations of workers, on the one hand, may counteract an excessive supply of Labor in the Labor market, and keep wages up; on the other hand, capitalist outrages, such as shanghaiing, not to mention innumerable others, may counteract a small supply of Labor in the Labor market, and keep wages down. In the long run the perturbing causes cease to be perceptible factors, and the Law of Supply and Demand re-asserts itself.

It follows that, under Capitalism the status of the worker is not that of a human. His income being his price, and his price being controlled by the identical law that controls the prices of all other articles of merchandise, under Capitalism the worker is a chattel. Insofar as he is a "worker" he is no better than cattle on the hoof—all affectation to the contrary notwithstanding.

What, on the contrary, is the worker's status in the Co-operative Commonwealth?

"Co-operative Commonwealth" is a technical term; it is another name for the Socialist or Industrial Republic. He who says "Co-operative Commonwealth" means, must mean, a social system that its advocates maintain flows from a previous, the present, the Capitalist regimen; a social system that its advocates maintain is made compulsory upon society by the impossible conditions which the Capitalist regimen brings to a head; finally, a social system which its advocates maintain that, seeing it is at once the offspring of Capitalism and the redress of Capitalist ills, saves and

partakes of the gifts that Capitalism has contributed to the race's progress, and lops off the ills with which Capitalism itself cancels its own gifts. The issue of wages, or the worker's income, throws up one of the leading ills of Capitalism.

The Co-operative Commonwealth revolutionizes the status of the worker. From being the merchandise he now is, he is transformed into a human. The transformation is effected by his pulling himself out and away from the stalls in the market where today he stands beside cattle, bales of hay and crates of crockery, and taking his place as a citizen in full enjoyment of the highest civic status of the race.

The means for the transformation is the collective ownership of all the necessaries for production, and their operation for use, instead of their private ownership by the Capitalist, and their operation for sale and profits.

The worker's collective ownership of that which, being stripped of under Capitalism turns him into a wage-slave and chattel, determines his new status. The revolutionized status, in turn, determines his income.

Whereas, under Capitalism, the very question whether the worker shall at all have an income depends upon the judgment, the will or the whim of the Capitalist, whether the wheels of production shall move, or shall lie idle,—in the Co-operative Commonwealth, where the worker himself owns the necessaries for production, no such precariousness of income can hang over his head.

Whereas, under Capitalism, a stoppage of production comes about when the capitalist fears that continued production may congest the market, thereby forcing profits down, and never comes about because there is no need of his useful articles,—in the Co-operative Commonwealth, use and not sale and profits being the sole purpose of production, no such stoppage of production, hence, of income is conceivable.

Whereas, under Capitalism, improved methods of production have an eye solely to an increase of profits, and therefore are equivalent to throwing workers out of work,—in the Co-operative Commonwealth, use and not sale and profits, popular wellbeing and not individual richness, being the sole object in view, improved methods of production, instead of throwing workers out of work, will throw out hours of work, and keep steady, if they do not increase, the flow of income.

Consequently, and finally—

The Co-operative Commonwealth will not determine, the Co-operative Commonwealth will leave it to each worker himself to determine his income; and that income will total up to his share in the product of the collective labor of the Commonwealth, to the extent of his own efforts, multiplied with the free natural opportunities and with the social facilities (machinery, methods, etc.) that the genius of society may make possible.

In other words—differently from the state of things under Capitalism, where the worker's fate is at the mercy of the capitalist—, in the Co-operative Commonwealth the worker will himself determine, will himself be the architect of his fate.

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