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EDITORIAL

## LABOR'S GAINS!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** CORRESPONDENT to the Cleveland *Citizen* who signs himself "A.R.," discussing the various trade union demands for wage increases and the efforts now being made by the employers to resist them, is led to make some observations on the actual value of those increases to the worker.

He pronounces them "a delusion and a snare."

Says he, "Looking at it from an economic standpoint of view, it is doubtful whether the securing of a wage increase is really beneficial to the workers; for it naturally follows that the bosses will simply shift the extra outlay on the consumer and that double and treble in proportion to the granted raise in wages. The workers being all consumers are thus forced to return the increase—and a good quantity of interest to boot—when they make their purchases of the necessaries of life. So it can be seen that the whole procedure in the end works for the benefit of the capitalist class, while the worker is the loser."

How near the truth this statement is may be gathered from the index number, "based upon the prices per pound of 100 leading articles," published in *Bradstreet's* of June 13. According to this index number: "Compared with July 1, 1896, the low water mark of the past decade, the present figures show an advance of  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent." These are wholesale figures, however, and do not clearly reflect the increase the worker must pay according to retail prices, which are approximately 50 per cent. higher. Who is there, that will declare that wages have increased in proportion to the increased wholesale prices given in the above index figures? and who will say that they have been so great as to meet the retail advances? Surely no wage-worker will!

But though wage increases are "a delusion and a snare" to the Cleveland *Citizen's* correspondent, he still finds some benefits to Labor in the trades-unionism

“winning” them. Says he: “The real benefit accruing to organized labor from their endeavors to better their social and economic condition has been in the REDUCTION OF THE HOURS OF TOIL. One, two or three hours less work per day that have been attained in the last century by most of the crafts, are the real gains.”

Is this true? Is a reduction of hours a GAIN, or is it merely a restoration of old conditions? Thorold Rogers in his *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* says “The artisan who is demanding at this time an eight hour day is simply striving to recover what his ancestors worked by four or five centuries ago.” Considering that the eight hour day is by no means universal, among the crafts, the question arises, where is the gain?

But, to pursue the matter further: it must be apparent from the experience of the modern workers that a reduction of hours does not secure a reduction of toil; on the contrary, it imposes an intensification of toil, so that to-day less hours simply mean harder labor. What, with the decrease of the working age limit to 42 years, the constant increase of output per worker, and the growth of mental and nervous diseases among the workers, due to the incessant tension of modern machine industry—what, with all this, is the “gain,” brought about by the reduction of hours, but another trade union “delusion and a snare?”

Labor will know no gains as long as it upholds the fraudulent unionism and bogus socialism of which the *Cleveland Citizen* is a leading exponent, in the interests of Samuel Gompers and the capitalist class. Labor will only reap gains when it declares in favor of a unionism and a socialism which organizes to overthrow the capitalist system, which strives for a system of production and distribution in which society—the workers—shall own all capital, and in which, consequently the fruits of labor and invention shall go to the workers, instead of as at present, to the capitalist class. Such unionism and Socialism is the unionism of the S.T. & L.A. and the Socialism of the Socialist Labor Party.

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

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