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EDITORIAL

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WITH the tenacity of a disease the question keeps cropping up, How will the Socialist or Industrial Republic equalize payments? or, How will the Socialist Republic manage to escape the rush of applicants for “pleasant jobs”?

The two questions dove-tail into each other, if they do not resolve themselves into the same thing. The disease of their tenacious re-occurrence lies in the flightiness of those minds who fail to realize that individual points are rooted in principles, and that the principle is the thing to grapple with and grasp.

The principle at the bottom of the answer of these questions is:—

Value (exchange value) is measured by the amount of labor-power crystallized in, and socially necessary for the production of a commodity. This implies time, or labor-time—two hour’s work must consume more labor-power than one. It does not follow from this that “labor-time,” as a measure of value, considers that days are equivalent, the day of one worker being equal, hence, worth the day of another. The difference lies in “simple labor” and “complex labor.” Complex labor embodies in one hour, more hours than simple labor. Quoting Marx:

By the subordination of man to the machine, or by the extreme division of labor, which co-operation dictates, “men are effaced before labor”; “the balance of the pendulum has become the exact measure of the relative activity of two workers, as it is of the speed of two locomotives”; it is “not necessary to say that the hour of one man is worth the hour of another man, but rather that a man of one hour is worth another man of an hour”; “is your hour equal to mine? That is a question debated and settled by competition”; competition determines how many days of simple labor are contained in a day of complex labor.”

The principle once grasped, the myriad questions that spring from the subject are obvious. The questions concerning equalization of payment and “pleasant jobs” are of this category.

How shall the payment of different occupations be regulated? how shall the rush of applicants for “pleasant jobs” be escaped?—Competition will settle that.

The terms “complex labor” and “simple labor” may be put respectively into other words—“labor that consumes more fiber” and “labor that consumes less fiber” in a given time. For instance:

On the identical trolley car the labor of the motorman, within a given time, consumes more fiber than the labor of the conductor. Going further away, the labor of a miner consumes more fiber than that of a motorman. What is the relation between these? How many hours of the one equal how many hours of the others? Given the free field of unimpeded competition, the relative number of applicants will answer the question. The least fibre-consuming occupation will be competed for more numerously. The relative numbers will determine how many hours of motoring and conducting are equivalent to one hour of mining; and the relation of hours will, in turn, lower the competition for the occupation which, although more “pleasant” in itself, becomes less so by its longer hours; while the competition for the occupation which, altho’ less “pleasant” in itself, will become more “pleasant” by reason of its shorter hours.

The law of value is the principle whose untrammled operation solves the question of “equalization of payment” and of the “rush for pleasant jobs” that so much perplexes those who approach the question from above, instead of systematically from below—solves it as completely as the tracing of a word to its root explains the word, and illumines the history that the word has experienced.

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