

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 293.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 1910.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

DERVISH MATHEMATICS.

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WITH great tooting of horns several large corporate employers of labor have announced “raises of wages.” The capitalist press of the is going dizzy with joy over it—of course intending the joy to be absorbed by the workers, to the still greater joy of the employers, who can then covertly pluck them some more. The Boston *Herald* has its spasm pictorially. A large scale is shown nailed to the wall, In one pan the Increased Cost of Living, in a market basket, has weighed so heavily that the scale is all awry. In the other pan, knocked sky-high, is a bunch of empty Pay Envelopes, which three puffy hands, carefully labeled U.S. Steel, Pennsylvania R.R., and N.Y., N.H. & H.R.R., are gingerly filling with Increases of Wages. The whole spasm is entitled “Restoring the Balance.”

This is Dervish mathematics.

Money wages, despite all their apparent solidity, are a snare and a delusion. By and of themselves, they tell nothing. Two men may be getting \$5 each in money wages, and yet the pay of one be twice as much as that of the other. Two men may be getting \$2 and \$10 respectively, and yet the \$10 man be the poorer. Man can not subsist on money. In its metal or paper material resides no capacity for satisfying hunger or keeping out the cold. It is only when money is converted by purchase into commodities which have that capacity that its value is ascertained. The amount of commodities purchasable by a given money wage, and not the figure stamped upon its face, are the measure of that wage’s size or smallness.

Now, what has happened to money, and with it, to money wages? In the past fourteen years the purchasing power of the dollar has dropped in the neighborhood of 45 per cent. The greenback is just as long and green as ever, the metal dollar just as round and heavy. The figures and emblems on both have remained unchanged. Yet none the less truly have they lost in value. What could be bought in 1896 for \$1

now costs \$1.75. Only a little more than half what a dollar would purchase fourteen years ago will that dollar purchase now. Thus although a workman may be getting to-day identically as many “dollars” in wages as he was in '96, he has in fact suffered a wage reduction of 45 per cent.

Hence the rockets and red fire indulged in in the capitalist press over the recently announced “raises in wages.” They must make those “raises” look “big.” Taking them at their own word, which there is every reason to doubt, the Sugar Trust only raised wages 5 to 10 per cent; the Steel Trust, 6; the Pennsylvania road, 6; the Delaware & Lackawanna, 6; the New York Central, 6; and others in the same ratio. Moreover, these increases of 5, 6, or 10 per cent., are not 5, 6, or 10 per cent. on the old higher-valued wages; they are 5, 6, or 10 per cent. of the present depreciated wages, bringing them down in fact to all ironical 3, 4, or 5 per cent. The lower the increases in fact, all the more necessity for inspired jubilation, all the louder must the pretence be shouted of their “Restoring the Balance.”

Skilful Dervishes of India place a bean on a platter. A few skilful passes, and the amazed audience thinks it sees three or a dozen. The American working class wants no Dervish mathematics.

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Uploaded April 2011

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