



Tom Glynn

Industrial Efficiency and its Antidote

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I.

If indications count for anything, Australia is shortly going to be quite up to date in the science of exploitation. Though local exploiters have never exhibited any other tendencies than those characteristic of their class throughout the world in this respect, still their economic experts and politicians, Labor and Liberal alike, would appear to be of the opinion that there are a few tips on the "scientific" management of labor which their Australian paymasters would do well to study. So the various State Governments have jointly agreed to import a gentleman from U. S. A., "the land of the free and the home of the slave," where the art of wringing the last ounce of surplus-value out of the worker's hide has of late years made more progress than in any other country in the world.

The subject of "Industrial Efficiency" was briefly dealt with in a recent issue of "Direct Action" in reply to an article which appeared on the subject in the Sydney "Sun," but as the matter is evidently going to develop into something more than a "pious wish" on the part of the master class and their press, a more detailed explanation of the manner in which "scientific management" works out, so far as the worker is concerned, is necessary.

Perhaps one could not do better in this respect than quote the following extract from an article on the sub-

ject in the Sydney "Morning Herald" of June 19:

After pointing out that in "an ideal state of things the savings effected would be distributed between all three," capitalist, wage-worker, and consumer, the writer lets the cat out of the bag, so far as the capitalist system being "an ideal State" is concerned, by informing us that: "At the Bethlehem Steel Works wages were increased 60 per cent in this way. The new system of work here raised the output of iron per man from 16 to 59 tons, and the aggregate wages bill, despite the increase in the rate, was cut down by about \$80,000 per annum. The net result, as Hobson points out, was in this case all in favour of the employers."

Whoever "Hobson" may be, it was scarcely necessary for him to point out such a very obvious fact. As we are not given the value of the total wages, or the value of the aggregate output, it is impossible in this case to determine the rate of surplus value (the proportion of profits to wages) realized by the employers; but, nevertheless, it is clear that if the rate of wages increased by 60 per cent (which, by the way, may be taken with the proverbial grain of salt), and the aggregate wages decreased by \$80,000, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 50 per cent of the workers formerly employed went to swell the "capitalist reserve army," the unemployed.

This is, as a matter of fact, how every scheme for intensifying exploitation, whether it be euphoniously called "scientific management" or any other name, must eventually, by the natural laws of capitalist production, work out.

Let us assume that the total social capital advanced in wages for a given period be equal to 100. If, in the process of production, values equal to 200 are produced we have a rate of surplus value equal to 100 per cent. (We leave aside the consideration of the value of the raw material, etc., as such value is always incorporated in the new product, and, therefore, in the long run, costs the capitalist nothing.)

Now if, by "scientific management" or other schemes for increasing the intensity of labour, the total values produced are increased to 250, we have still the same result, so far as the material position of the worker is concerned, only the rate of surplus-value, or, to put it more boldly, the rate at which he is robbed, has increased by 50 per cent.

The capitalist plea for Industrial Efficiency therefore, at best, merely amounts to saying to the worker: "The more you allow me to rob you, the more of the proceeds of the robbery I will be enabled to pay you." If, however, values equal to 200 are only needed to supply the solvent demand, we have the same result as that pointed out by the "Herald" scribe in the case of the Bethlehem Steel Works. Hand in hand with the increase in the intensity of labour goes unemployment, with the starvation and misery which follows in its train. And yet we have "economists" who pretend that the education of the working class is their first desire, and politicians of every stripe, informing us that the salvation of the workers lies in increased efficiency!

It may be contended that, as in the case of the Beth-

lehem Steel Works, the workers actually employed benefit by increased wages. Even assuming this to be the case, what of it? The position of the working class as a whole is more insecure, unstable, more parlous than ever. Competition for jobs grows more keen, unemployment becomes intensified in all spheres of industry, and wages ultimately fall, in consequence, to their former level.

II.

The capitalist system of production is conditioned upon three essentials: First, the value of the raw materials, wear and tear of machinery, etc., must be incorporated in the new product; in the second place, the labourer must reproduce the value of his own wages, and thirdly, a surplus over and above the value of the capital advanced by the capitalist for the aforementioned requisites. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, we have not the capitalist system of production, but some other; consequently, when we hear reformers, politicians and Labor leaders wailing for "industrial efficiency first, and then a more equitable distribution of wealth," the cry arises either from ignorance of the economic laws underlying capitalism, or from a desire on the part of those who know better to lead the workers into economic quagmires.

It must be obvious at once that any method for increasing surplus value by increased efficiency, longer hours of labour, new inventions, etc., must be welcome to the capitalist; but what is not so apparent, and what the economic apologists of the capitalist system like to

conceal, is that such increases have no internal relation whatever to the laws governing wages.

Labor-power being a commodity, its value, like all other commodities, is determined by its cost of production, and, being somewhat inseparable from the labourer, its value, therefore, is based on the minimum of the physical means of subsistence. It may rise above this minimum, according to the standard of social development, the degree of organized resistance to exploitation, or it may fall below, as in times of industrial depression, when unemployment is rife, and when, as frequently happens, the workers starve, not because of "decreased efficiency," but for the very opposite reason, that the markets are glutted with the products of their labour. What must be borne in mind is, and it is fully confirmed by the industrial history of capitalism, that the means of subsistence is the determining factor, the starting point from which all fluctuations in wages must be explained, and not as our "Industrial Efficiency" experts would have us believe, from the total product of the labourer.

Here it might be expedient to ask these advocates of efficiency a pertinent question or two.

If it is a fact that wages are determined by the productivity of the labourer, why is it that in the last half-century, when the productiveness of labour by new discoveries and inventions, has been increased a hundred-fold, when with the modern means of transportation and communication, the natural resources of what our forefathers called "the ends of the earth" have been

brought within hallowing distance, so to speak, of the great centres of European population—why is it that the great mass of workers are still getting but the bare means of subsistence and living in constant dread of the bread-line? Or, to make the question easier for our local "economists," why is it, as the figures of the Commonwealth Statistician show, that the Australian worker is receiving today a smaller proportion of his product than ten years ago, despite the fact that, as shown by the same statistics, the labourer's productivity has increased enormously?

Of course these gentry, whose hearts are overflowing with good intentions (?) towards the working class will tell us that things should not be so, that there is "room for improvement in the distribution of wealth," that "nobody sympathizes with the position of the workers more than I do," etc., etc.; but all this is merely equivalent to saying that Capitalism should not be Capitalism; that the capitalist system of production should not bring along its own natural laws; but the workers do not benefit by this insufferable hypocrisy and patronage. As well might they regret the tendency and danger of a smouldering volcano to work havoc among the adjacent inhabitants as soon as a certain degree of heat has been reached. Pious vapourings about an "ideal state of things" and what the worker "ought to get" won't alter facts.

III.

It is sometimes contended that every increase in the employer's profits increases his available capital, and,

therefore, enables him to give employment to more wage-labourers, but this plea, as already indicated, is merely a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. There is another aspect of the question, however. With the development of the Trust, production, in accordance with the economic demand, is more and more being regulated, always keeping in mind, of course, the solvent demand. As the Trust develops, therefore, there will be an increasing tendency to convert only that portion of the products of labour into capital which is actually needed to supply the economic requirements of society; hence, every increase in the intensity of labour, every method for increasing the total product, "industrial efficiency," in a word, which is so dear to the hearts of our exploiters, will have the very opposite effect to that claimed for it, as a lesser quantity of that portion of capital advanced as wages will be required.

So far as those spheres of industry are concerned, in which the Trust has not yet found a footing, the future of the worker is no less precarious—assuming, of course, that the little schemes of the capitalist class and their efficiency experts are allowed to come to maturity. The history of the capitalist system affords many illustrations of how blind competition among capitalists, with the resultant phenomenon of over-production, affects the economic and social well-being of the workers.

Marx throws a flood of light on this question of over-production in his third volume of "Capital" in dealing with the cotton crisis in Lancashire following the year 1860. Many authorities state that more cotton goods were produced in that year than were absorbed by the

world's markets in the following three. As a result, over 50 per cent of the workers were thrown out of employment; those actually employed were obliged to offer themselves for any wages the manufacturers in their benevolence offered, 4 or 5 shillings per week being considered something above the ordinary; young girls left the factories because they could not earn as much as one shilling per week, and begged to be taken into the charitable institutions. One factory inspector reported that "had information concerning self-acting minders, that is to say, men who operate a few self-actors, who had earned 8/11 after fourteen days of full employment, and their house-rent was deducted from this sum. The manufacturer returned one-half of this rent to them as a gift." Marx parenthetically remarks, "how generous!" Thousands were obliged to accept employment on relief work at "a bare ordinary charity sum," those being lucky enough to obtain such work getting the magnificent wages of from 5 to 12 shillings per week, this last mentioned amount only being given to men with families of eight!

"It was," says Marx, "in a way, a golden age for the manufacturers, for the labourers had either to starve or work at any price profitable for the bourgeois. The Assistance Committee acted as watch-dogs. At the same time the manufacturers, in secret agreement with the Government, hindered emigration as much as possible, either for the purpose of having their capital, invested in the flesh and blood of the labourers, ready at hand, or of safe-guarding the squeezing of rent out of the labourers."

To what does all this point ? Unmistakably to the

fact that every minute worked by the cotton operatives, over and above the time actually required to reproduce their wages, every time a worker hastened across the floor of the factory when he might have walked more leisurely, every time a machine was oiled, when it ought to be allowed to run hot, every device of the capitalist for improving efficiency, but hastened the coming of the time when the workers should find themselves on the street corner, the unpitied wretches of a system that rewards them for their industry by starving them.

"But," someone will say, "this was in the sixties." Capitalism has not changed its nature since. Whatever restraint may have been placed on the Beast since those days—and it does not amount to much—his natural tendency is still to run amuck, and the advocates of "efficiency" are just the gentlemen who desire the workers to slacken their hold on the reins. Besides, if it were necessary, numerous occurrences of late years could be given as an example of the effects of over-production, its demoralizing effects upon the condition of the working class. The reader probably will doubtless recall some instances in which he himself was perilously near the bread-line after the boss had informed him "the job was finished" or "times were slack." Enough has been said to show that where competition reigns in production, every wail for industrial efficiency on the part of the master class and their satellites is at bottom but a cry for more profits, and should sound a note of warning to the workers if an increased proportion of their numbers is not to be dumped on the human scrap-heap.

IV.

To the student of economic development, this loudly manifested anxiety of the capitalist class for productive efficiency comes as no surprise. The rapidity with which Japan, South America and other hitherto backward countries, have entered into the arena of capitalist production is, wherever industry is not internationally trustified, engendering an ever keener competition for markets between the capitalists of the various countries, and the kudos will naturally gravitate towards that country where efficiency has reached the highest pitch; in other words, the country where "scientific management of the human factor," as the "Herald" expresses, has increased the rate of surplus value above all others.

Unfortunately, in Australia statistical returns give us but a bare indication of what that rate may be in this country. The figures for the manufacturing industries in 1913, for instance, tell us (and it must not be forgotten that the statistician is more or less dependent upon the good faith of the manufacturers) that the value added in the labor process to the materials of production was 65 millions, and the total wages paid 33 millions. At first glance this would indicate a rate of surplus value of approximately 100 per cent. But the capital advanced as wages may not have been one-fifth of 33 million pounds. It depends, among other things, upon the turn-over.

Let us take a simple illustration: I invest a capital of \$ 2m productive industry, \$1m for raw material—the

further consideration of which is immaterial for the present argument—and \$1m as capital reserved for wages. Assuming the capital is turned over four times a year, and that the value added in the labour process, as in Australian manufactures, exceeds wages by 100 per cent, at the end of three months I realize the total capital advanced as wages, with an additional value of \$1m. The process is repeated in the second, third and fourth quarters of the year, at the end of which, with a smile of complacency at my munificence, I hand the Government official, whose business it is to collect such data, a return bearing the items, "wages paid, \$4m," "value added by manufacture, \$80m" The figures are duly published in the capitalist press, and the wages bill is exclusively dwelt upon to the exclusion of all else; the workers are castigated for "trying to cripple industry," and leading articles and speeches on "Industrial Efficiency [sic]," if the same wages are to be maintained, are the order of the day. I wink the other eye, for deep down in the business department of my capitalistic heart I know that the total capital advanced by me as wages did not exceed \$1m at any period during the year, and the rate of surplus value was, therefore, in reality, not 100 per cent, but 400. I began the old year with a capital of \$1m reserved for wages. I enter the new with the same capital, after all dead expenses have been met, and a nice little bonus ungrudgingly handed over to me by the workers, who are duly grateful for my being so kind as to give them-work! They will be given "work" till eternity, provided they give me, as formerly, the product. Nay, I may also (provided the slave market is abundantly stocked, in case of trouble) take the tip of my "economic experts" and put the stop-watch and cine-

matograph on their movements, in order that some of them may doubly appreciate the "benefits" of work when they find themselves unemployed as a consequence of my "scientific management."

Is not this the game that is being played before the workers' eyes at this moment? What is the solution? "One Big Union," replies some one. But One Big Union won't materialize in a day. *The antidote to the "Industrial Efficiency" cry lies in an immediate agitation for a shorter work-day, combined with the intelligent adoption of ca' canny, "go easy" and other methods of sabotage on the job. This is vitally necessary for all workers, irrespective of their beliefs as to methods of organization, political, religious or racial prejudices. The Surplus Value of the capitalist class must be curtailed, for its every increase strengthens the bonds of slavery. One Big Union alone can entirely strike off the shackles.*

The master class are fully alive to the situation, and, while they are at this particular juncture preying on the workers' credulity with the hypocritical cry of "no classes," they are insidiously and unscrupulously laying their plans for the prosecution of the class war with their usual brutal disregard for the workers' welfare. Let us remember, then, that devolution is possible in human society as well as evolution, that deterioration must as surely follow apathy as progress in our material conditions will follow intelligent agitation and action. "Scientific Management" must be met by "Scientific Sabotage" if the "Law of Progress" is not a law of which the boss is to be left a monopoly.

Note.—Since the above was written, events brought

about by the war indicate that the ruling class is determined to have "increased efficiency" in the workshop, even if it has to be enforced at the point of the bayonet.

The Munitions Act in England is a new move in this direction, and while the war may be the immediate cause of the introduction of this Act, there can scarcely be a doubt that if it becomes justified from the efficiency standpoint, the principle of compulsion, which means no more nor less than industrial conscription, has come to stay in industry, so far as the master class is concerned.

All this goes once more to show what the I. W. W. unceasingly teaches, that the war against exploitation must of necessity in the future be carried out on the job. Every new move of the master class to increase the intensity of labour, and thereby the total product, calls for a counter move and new tactics on the part of the workers right where such products are created.

This is bound to raise a howl of execration from the efficiency experts; but the revolt of the South Wales miners at present in progress affords a striking illustration of the hypocrisy and falsehood of their economic teaching, showing conclusively that though the workers' output be ever so large, they have to fight stubbornly for every cent wrested from the rapacious hand of the class alone which benefits by efficiency.

This strike also shows that, despite the chloroforming propensities of war-mad jingoos, the instinct of the workers is, at bottom, correct, and affords a better criterion of what constitutes economic truth than all the theorizing of the spectacled "experts" who study the produc-

tion and distribution of wealth, and the class struggle arising there from, from the comfortable depths of an arm-chair.

It is manifest that the war must cause a considerable shortage of labor-power in the market when peace is again restored, as compared with the previous supply. Every possible effort is therefore going to be made to get the last ounce of value out of the labor-power available, and that the master class is fully alive to the occasion the following cable from a recent issue of the "Sun" amply proves:—

SCIENCE IN INDUSTRY. AN IMPORTANT MOVEMENT.

(Published in the Times.) LONDON, Tuesday,

A Government White Paper outlines a scheme of organising [sic] and developing industrial scientific research with the object of establishing a permanent body consisting of a Privy Council committee, with a small advisory council, the Privy Council committee to include the Lord President, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary for Scotland, the Presidents of the Boards of Trade and Education, Lord Haldane, Mr. A. H. Dyke Acland, and Mr. Pike Pease.

The advisory council is to consist of the best scientific brains of the country, and its scope will be to promote and organise [sic] scientific research in trades and industry, particularly in regard to those suffering through inability to reproduce trade processes which are localized abroad, principally in Germany.

This is significant when judged in conjunction with the clamour for efficiency, now a daily feature in the capitalist press. A shining light of that pet organization of capitalists, known as the Workers' Educational Association, only recently let himself go to the extent of a third of a column in the Sydney "Herald," pointing out that the pensioning of "one-armed, one-legged, one-eyed and stiff-jointed soldiers," when they ought to be employed in industry, was a shameful waste of "productive energy."

There arises too a louder and bolder demand for female and child labour in nearly all branches of industry. The "Weekly Trade Report," the private organ of the Merchants' and Traders' Association of Australasia, not many weeks ago, for instance, brazenly declared that factory legislation must be thrust aside, that, whatever the unions may do, employers must be allowed to take advantage of "women, boys and girls who are willing (!) to work for low wages and long hours!"

Workers would, therefore, do well to hearken to the masters' battle-cry, a cry for their sweat and blood, and recognize that the real industrial struggles of the class war have yet to be fought. The vacillating and compromising policy of Trade Unionism will no longer suffice. A virile organization knowing no law but that of expediency, ready at all times and by the adoption of any means, to advance the interests of the working class, is an absolute necessity, if we are not to sink into a slavery more damnable than any that history knows of.

—T. G.

Notes on Tom Glynn

Tom Glynn was a blacksmith and a migrant from County Galway in Ireland. He arrived in Melbourne around 1889 and shortly afterwards enlisted for the Boer War where he was both mentioned in dispatches for bravery and court-martialled for refusing to carry out the order of a British officer to shoot a Boer child.

He served in many posts during the first incarnation of the Australian IWW. Tom was editor of Direct Action and secretary to the Sydney Local. Fellow workers knew him as a scholar and as "the intellectual of the bunch". He was remembered as a man having a "Burning hatred of injustice and a positively saintlike kindness and devotion to his fellow men." All right it was his daughter that said so but that's all right too

Late in 1916 he, and eleven others, were arrested and (during a period of heightened patriotic idiocy and war hysteria that came with and influenced the referenda upon conscription) were framed on charges of incendiarism. Found guilty of same he told the court that: "I am not a criminal and no sentence of this court can make me a criminal so long as my conscience is clear and clean ... Politicians have been responsible for us being where we are today, but so far as I am concerned, I know this verdict and the sentences that are to follow will help the working class to understand, better than years of talk would do, the ideals for which we fight." As far as Judge Pring was concerned the words might as well not have been spoken as he was sentenced to of fifteen years hard labour on each of three counts—to be served concurrently.

During the next years when the IWW became a proscribed organisa-



tion; when members were given jail just for belonging; when migrant members were deported – and not necessarily to the countries they came from; when the state co-operated with employers in drawing up blacklists for those suspected of being tarnished with IWW ideas; when men were broken or driven into crime and families were thrown into poverty and distress – during all these years the campaign for the freeing of the 12 continued. In its fold came people of good will concerned at the injustice that had been done in its name.

In the end the frame-up unravelled because of the dedication of such people and Tom was released in 1920 after "serving" nearly four years.

For a while it looked as though the Communist Party might be an alternative to the broken IWW and Glynn joined and was the first editor for its newspaper. The relationship did not last, however, and he returned to promoting industrial unionism.

Tom Glynn was not well for many years and eventually died in 1934 from an illness that had its origins in his incarceration in Long Bay jail.

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Preamble to the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.

There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among the millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things in life.

Between the two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centring of management of the industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars.

Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all it's members in any one industry, or in all if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work", we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system".

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall be overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

