

# The Australasian Herald of the Impending Economic Revolution.



VOL. 2, NO. 41.

Registered at G.P.O., Sydney, SYDNEY, OCTOBER 16, 1915.

ONE PENNY

## Pittsburg, U.S.A. Carnegie's Slaves.

(By J. H. Beecham.)

In this town, more than anywhere else in America, every worker is part of a machine. Human life there, from that belonging to the child engaged in sweated home work, to that of the highly skilled foreman in the steel mills, is simply a commodity, like iron ore, oil, clay, or any other product. If a machine breaks down in the steel mills it is scrapped, and another promptly substituted; it is bought better than expensive and time-wasting repairs. If a worker gets a piece from overstrain in the roaring heat of the blast furnace, or meets with an accident that temporarily incapacitates him, he also is scrapped and forgotten, without compensation or reward; and his place is promptly filled by another industrial human machine.

In conversation with a foreman employed by the Pressed Steel Car Company, a part of the Steel Trust, in Allegheny, a suburb of Pittsburg, I asked him whether skilled machine operatives made more by the day or by piece work. He said, "A fairly good machine operator who may be making ten shillings (240l. 50 cents) a day at piece work will be put on regular wages, which brings his earnings down to eight shillings a day, or less, if he finds he gets too swift; you see, we work this thing on an absolute system of values. Our motto is: If the machine depends upon the man for speed we put him on piece work; but, if the machine drives the man we pay him by the day. Our plan is, of course, to pay as little wages as possible, and get as much out of our men as possible." "But what about the machine driving the men all to pieces?" I questioned. "That's their funeral," was the amused reply. "There are plenty of new-comers here all the time from all parts of Europe, and as they are not organised they are glad to come in almost at any price. A lot of workers from Europe have only been getting about five shillings a day or less, and they look on ten shillings a day as a fortune. I have got some good men at times, for even five shillings a day here in Pittsburg. But they soon find out they cannot live and pay rent near the mills at this price, so they are always forcing up wages, and I as a representative of the Trust, I must always counteract this tendency." Pittsburg is generally conceded to be the worst city in America, far as the condition of the workers are concerned. Since the great and bloodthirsty strike in the Carnegie Steel Works at Homestead, there have been no other such strikes in any suburb, some years ago, labor has been powerless to organize; and the workmen are absolutely at the mercy of the great Steel Corporation, which practically owns and runs this city of more than half a million inhabitants. In and around Pittsburg there are between 70,000 and 80,000 men employed in the Steel Industry alone.

Those who belong to the Steel Trust, otherwise the Carnegie Corporation, throughout the whole of this vast congregation of men the principle of "Collective bargaining" is the right of men to combine in order to protect wages

is denied. This is the only spot in the United States where the viciously organised labor is absolutely broken. Here the employer has an "open door" for the cheap labor of Europe—the Croats, Slavs, Hungarians, and Lithuanians—immigrants who are brought over to the country in shoals, and used to keep down the demands of American and English labor. In Pittsburg, around the Steel Works districts, it is an understood thing that anyone who attempts to organize labor with a view to formulating any demands for improved conditions either in wages, housing, etc., will be discharged from the employ of the Carnegie Steel Trust. It is only only who has spent hours among the steel workers themselves that one realises how the spirit of the men in this respect has been absolutely crushed. "No one is allowed even to talk about Unions in Homestead to-day," said a former member of the Amalgamated Steel Workers' Union. "In fact, you had better not let the bosses find out you are even thinking about it. Otherwise you'll get fired as sure as fate," and boycotted out of the district.

In the early days, before 1892, the Amalgamated Steel Workers had a very powerful organization. But H. C. Frick and Andrew Carnegie deliberately set to work to make the combination of labor an impossibility in their district; and so Frick and Carnegie did so under the object that the right men to organize anywhere around Pittsburg has been absolutely negotiated. Every man entering the Carnegie Steel Trust does so under what is called "The Iron Bond"—that is, he signs a contract reading: "I hereby pledge myself not to become a member of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, nor any other organization of similar purpose and character. I also pledge myself to withdraw from any organization of such kind of which I may now be a member." Pittsburg to-day therefore is still vivid recollections of the great strike waged against the Carnegie interests for the right of labor to combine. The strikers lost the day, and since that time, even the mention of unionism in any of the Carnegie undertakings is practically forbidden. As to any overt attempt on the part of workmen to combine in Pittsburg—at least in the steel interests, the largest industry—it is followed by instant dismissal. The fact that no combination of workmen is permitted in these great interests, affecting as it does upward of 400,000 men, plays a most important part in the labor conditions in Pittsburg. Skilled superintendents are known to not only refuse to combine of the influx of unskilled labor to keep down wages, but to reduce the pay of skilled men by a gradual system of rates. One iron-borer as against the English-speaking, thus bringing all labor down to a common level. For instance, in the place of six highly skilled men at, say, \$2 per day, one skilled man will be employed at \$1 per day with five others at half, or less than half, the old rate, who

will work under the high-priced man, who is a "speeder up," and gets the last ounce out of their bodies. The lowest form of labor Pittsburg around the furnaces is paid 6d. a day. New-year is paid 6d. a day. New-year is frequently engaged to work for 4s. 5d. per day. How they can live in Pittsburg at 4s. 5d. per day is a mystery. They soon learn better, however, and in a few weeks are earning 6s. 6d. per day. Many boys, young women, and even elderly women work in the steel mills, making spikes, nuts, and bolts, working a full ten-hour day for 2s. 4s. per day. Riveters, punchers (cutting holes in steel plates), shearmen and pressmen in the steel mills make on piecework from 23 to 24 per week. Fitters, carpenters, blacksmiths, mill and painters are getting from 8s. to 10s. per day. Where an American will demand, and often get, if skilled, from 22s. to 23 per day, foreign workmen, even if skilled, will only get half of these sums. For equal work the foreigner is often compelled to take less pay simply because he does not know the ropes so well as the American, and cannot seek another job. Most of the work in Pittsburg is done in the open air, and the heat, the din of machinery, and the noise of escaping steam are incessant. The plants in Pittsburg are terribly congested, and workmen have scarcely room to move back eight inches or so from their benches. Hundreds of injuries in the mills are every day, no real life is kept of them. The waste of life and limb is appalling, and one of the plants is said to have an average of one man killed every day. It is called the "Slaughter House." When a foreign laborer—Scotch, English, Irish, or Continental—is hurt in an American mill his relatives get very scant sympathy at the hands of the American Court. The American laboring man blames the "invading foreigners" for reducing wages and the Courts are slow to nullify the great Steel Trust in damages when the presiding Judge of the Court may owe his seat on the Bench to the political favor of that very corporation. Though "foreigners," including the English-speaking, are not able to drive such good bargains with the bosses as are American laborers, yet these very foreigners are forced by the estate agents and landlords to live in the tenements of their housing accommodation. Landlords receiving £2 and £2 8s. from American families per month for a room, and £10 to £15 for the same parts of the suburbs, charge foreigners £3 and even £4 per month. The average monthly rent paid by the English in Pittsburg is 16s. per month per room. Overcrowding is predominant everywhere in Pittsburg. Houses of from eight to twelve rooms will have from three to six families in them. The landlords are moved by one dominating passion—rent. And they try to get the highest rent at all times. Many tenants are even compelled to use the cellars for bedrooms, though the Pittsburg health authorities are now trying to put a stop to this practice. No attempt seems to be made on the part of the authorities to prevent the exploitation of the workers in the steel mills themselves, nor is any effort made by them to break through the "Iron Bond" scheme of the Carnegie Trust for keeping wages at their lowest possible minimum.

## Railway Boss's Advice. Be A "Patriot."

Owing to an alleged scarcity of labor, in view of the large number of men going to the front, the Railway Commissioner informs the Railway and Tramway employees that they would have to start work earlier, work harder and longer for the future.

If this is good policy for a Department under a Labor Government, there is no reason why employers in general should not put forward the same excuse for lengthening hours and increasing exploitation. "It was up to those staying behind," said the Commissioner, "to make some sacrifice while their comrades are fighting for them at the front."

Quite so, whether at home or at the front, the workers are always expected to do the sacrificing.

It would be interesting to know just what percentage of the interest on loans for Railway and Tramway purposes the holders of securities are sacrificing.

The fact that the "back-swinging" of the Railways and Tramways dares to talk like this to a meeting of employees shows the contempt he holds for their organizations. As a matter of fact, there is no shortage of labor offering in either Department.

This is at the State Labor Bureau alone a registration of approximately 2500 unemployed, which is a queer commentary on Commissioner Milne's "shortages."

As a matter of fact, Milne, like all other bosses, is taking advantage of the state of funk which the whole Trade Union movement is in at the present moment. The secretary of one Union of the Department, for instance, went out at his way to inform the Commissioner and the public in general that his Union intended to ask for an alteration of the conditions of employment for the duration of the war. What more natural as a corollary than that the Commissioner should accept this sign of weakness and incapacity as an excuse for his usual about long hours and harder toil.

When Unions, such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, go out of their way to scab on the unemployed, by voluntarily consenting to work overtime, without the overtime rates existing previously, to work longer hours, and less importance are expected, voluntarily or otherwise, to follow suit.

If there is actually a shortage of workers in comparison with previous conditions, it constitutes a valid reason why they should resort to work harder and work longer; on the contrary, they should choose the opportunity to shorten their hours and better their lot generally.

The bosses never take themselves to task for their lack of patriotism in choosing an overstocked labor market as an excuse for intensifying exploitation.

Their "law of supply and demand" to move across to them in this connection, than any amount of human suffering, or even human life.

When slaves are plentiful it is "Work harder and work longer, or else get out"; when there is a comparative shortage, it is, "Work harder and work longer, or we'll

accuse you of a lack of patriotism."

The patriotism of the boss has ever been in his pocket-book. Low wages, long hours, and the new cry of Efficiency, all means more profit to his mill.

At the present moment he is utilising the canting, hypocritical "loyalty" of Union leaders, and labor politicians, to wring from the working class the few paltry concessions won in the past. If the workers stand for it, they will get low wages, long hours and excessive toil, not alone for the duration of the war, but for the rest of their natural lives.

If the capitalist class in Australasia in a week or two, subscribe £20,000,000 to a War Loan, it is clear proof that the workers should exact a larger tribute of the product of their labor, and, incidentally, serves to show the extent to which they have allowed themselves to be robbed in the past.

Trade Union divisions, the treachery and disloyalty of Union leaders to working class interests, are responsible for the humiliating position in which the workers find themselves to-day. Divided amongst themselves, at the mercy of every charlatan, paid patriot and political windbag that comes along, they are more at the mercy of exploiters than ever before.

Initiative and action on their own account can alone save them. The cumbersome and futile methods of wages boards and arbitration courts should be discarded. A virile organization, out of the lines of Industrial Unionism, into One Big Union of the working class is their only hope.

### THE BARKER APPEAL.

As we go to press, the result of the above case has reached us. Barker appeared before Judge Backhouse, at the Quarter Sessions, on Wednesday, 13th instant. The sentences imposed by the magistrate for printing a poster likely to prejudice recruiting was quashed.

The judge, however, refused to interfere with the fine of £20, or three months, imposed by the magistrate for a breach of the Printing Act.

This related to a "sticker," posted around Sydney, calling on the workers to resort to Sabotage on the job, instead of dabbling in Arbitration Courts and Wages Boards.

"We all know what Sabotage means," remarked the judge, in upholding the sentences.

The charge in this case was that the "sticker" did not bear the printer's name and address.

### "EXPLORED."

Subscribers who had a stamp "Explored," upon their paper, are notified that their subscription will expire during the following month. They will give subscribers ample time to renew their subscriptions. Terms, 4s. per year, per half-year Address, "Manager," Box 88, Haymarket, N.S.W.

### NOTICE.

Any member knowing the whereabouts of R. J. (Dick) Wels is requested to communicate with J. W. Wels, 114 Ashdon-street, Goulburn.





