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EDITORIAL

## THE CONDITIONS LEADING TO THE EXPANSION CRY.

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**T**he United States maintained for years the position of a country which was sufficient in itself. It could and did produce what it needed, and it could consume what it produced. We find that at the close of the Civil War the factory system had not assumed its present proportions, and that the factory town was not merely industrial. It was also an agricultural community. The wage workers, during a time of idleness, turned to the land, and there raised what was necessary for sustenance. The winter months were devoted to work in the factories, and with many men, the spring and summer were devoted to farming, or, if it happened to be a coast town, to fishing.

With the introduction of the larger factory and the improved machine, the man could no longer play the dual role of artisan and farmer. He must be one or the other, and he must depend absolutely on one or the other for a livelihood. At that point there commenced a campaign along three lines. The workers demanded a shorter day, the restriction of immigration, and the limitation of apprentices.

The demand for a shorter day indicated the realization of the fact that production had reached a stage when the elastic work day of from ten to sixteen or more hours, was more than sufficient to produce the articles that could be sold at once. Along with that there should have been a recognition of the fact that the organization of the factory, and the introduction of improved machines, in themselves had lessened to an almost immeasurable degree the number of hours necessary to produce a given article. The workingmen did not see this fact, and while they agitated and strove for the smaller number of hours, the constant growth of the system of production was rendering all their efforts of no avail.

They did work fewer hours in the year, but they were hours which they should have preferred to pass in the factory, because they came during dull seasons, during strikes, and during enforced idleness. The chance to work at all must be obtained after striving with their fellow-workers, and proving that they could work more rapidly, more humbly, and more cheaply.

The number of immigrants landed on our shores turned attention toward them, and there was a blind fight to prevent the influx of foreigners. One machine, even for the simplest part of a simple operation, has more influence upon the conditions in which the working class lives, than has the coming of thousands of men from other lands. The labor-saving machine is instantly seized by the capitalists of all countries, and that machine is operated by the working class of all countries, so it does not matter where it is operated, its effect in the end is the same. It lessens the chance for employment, and it makes production more rapid. As the continuation of production depends upon ability to sell the articles produced, the matter circles around to the starting point.

The working class' demand for a shorter day does not affect the total output of the factory. As the working men in other countries use the machine, and as capitalism is a matter extending over all lands, the place where the articles are produced, does not affect, for good, the position of the working class. This also circles around to the starting point. The workers derive no benefit from the restriction of immigration, as the working class, no matter where it lives, will still continue to produce with improved machines with highly developed working forces in the factory, and in competition, not alone with fellow-countrymen, but with the world-wide working class.

The apprentice matter was only temporary, and could only exist in those branches where skill was required, and where long training was necessary to acquire that skill. The machine eliminated the apprentice, and the crafts in which he still exists to-day are few and far between. His existence, in the first place, was of less moment than the coming of even one machine, but the working class did not recognize the fact.

These issues died of their own worthlessness, but still the desperate condition of those forced to work for a living continued, and new issues, new cures and new hopes took their place. The factories became larger, the combination and organization of factories in trusts and syndicates went on, and machines became swifter, more complex, and more impossible for the operators to own.

This increased efficiency in production was accompanied by a larger output, a lessening of the time during the year in which it was possible to obtain work, a decrease in wages, the use of child labor, the supplanting of the man by the woman, and finally by wholesale shut-downs, by suffering and by dire distress.

The markets of the country were "congested," and there were no purchasers for the goods in the storehouses, and until the storehouses were relieved of their

burden, it would be impossible for the mills and factories again to start up. All the old explanations for this state of affairs were proven to be wrong, so new excuses must be invented, and the trust was accused of causing the misery, and the foreign market was expected to relieve it.

The cry for foreign markets or “expansion” as it is now called, did not come from the working class, but it came from the capitalist class which has control of the goods when they are made. The worker is interested only in the sale of his ability to work. When he has sold that, and through the agency of the machine has applied his energy to raw material, and has produced an entirely new article, his interest ceases. Then his employer has a still further concern. He must sell what has been manufactured. It is impossible at the present proportion of the product received by the working class, and the high rate of production, for this country to absorb all that is turned out. For this reason, the capitalist has attempted to impress upon the working man the necessity for straining to obtain new markets, control of foreign trade, and to subject distant and foreign people to our dominion.

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