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EDITORIAL

## THE NEW SLAVERY.

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**I**N the days when chains and iron collars were considered indispensable portions of a slave's costume, it was the masters, not the slaves, who stood the expense of these trinkets. In the new slavery which is reaching its culmination—and therefore its breaking point—in these United States, it is the slave himself who foots the bill for the fetters which bind him to his toil.

Following the lead of United States Steel, the International Harvester Trust has decided to introduce the profit sharing plan among its employes. This gigantic corporation, which has a special department devoted to fighting to the last ditch every damage suit brought by its maimed and crippled workmen, now seeks to clamp still tighter the yoke about their necks, by making them ostensible co-sharers in the fruit of their own exploitation.

To be exploited is bad; to be rendered tame to the process by hopes of sharing in its profit, is worse; worst of all is to be deluded into calmly submitting, and then lose even the promised palliation. If to be subject to the first two is to be in the frying pan, then to embrace the last is to jump into the fire. That is just the plight of those employes of the McCormick Harvester concern who are foolish enough to swallow the bait now dangled before their noses.

Of the preferred stock 12,500 shares are to be sold to the employes at \$115 each, and 15,000 shares of common at \$75. The price of the stock is to be deducted in instalments from the wages.

In 1907 the preferred stock of this corporation paid 7% dividends; the year before the common yielded 4%. Even should the rates remain as high as that, which, in the nature of things is improbable, the employes will have to spend nearly a half of their working lives in getting into such a position as to benefit by their stock ownership. At the above rates, it would take a purchaser of preferred stock 16

and 3-sevenths years, and a buyer of common 18 and 3-quarter years, to regain in dividends the cost price of his share. Up to that time the company would be ahead of the game, he would be the loser. Moreover, in the interval he is supposed to sweat himself to the utmost so as to increase his dividends; not to strike, lest dividends be stopped; not to ask for an increase in wages, lest dividends be lowered; and above all, not to leave the company's employ no matter what the exactions put upon him, for thereby stock ownership and dividends would vanish together.

Leaving aside the fact that the company can manipulate dividend figures to suit itself, and so render its workmen's profits illusory; leaving aside the fact that the pinching and saving the workmen will do to pay for their stock will be used as pointers by the company as to how much it can safely reduce wages; leaving aside a dozen other things, what is this profit-sharing scheme but a marvelous clever device for riveting faster the chains about the workers' necks, and charging the cost of the iron and the blacksmithing up to them?

The Harvester company's own admission that it hopes thereby to "establish permanence among its employes" gives all the answer needed. By the very means by which it seeks to save itself, Capitalism is working out its own doom. The new slavery that is will soon have become the Old Slavery that was.

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