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Five Cents

## Wage Slave Riots

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The recent race riots in Chicago revealed at one stroke a new tactic of the capitalist class of this country and also vividly impressed upon the mind of the revolutionary worker the necessity for understanding and explaining why such exhibitions of butchery occur in a so-called civilized society.

The average person—that is the apathetic creature who never uses his cranial apparatus for thinking—deplores such outbreaks and naively wonders why people riot against each other because of a variation of a few shades in the color of skin. This same element in Russia used to attribute the pogroms to the fact that some people were Jews and others Gentiles, but the Russian revolutionist knew that race hatred against the Jewish population was deliberately fostered by the ruling class in order to conceal from the exploited workers and impoverished peasants the real cause of their misery. Because a number of the Jews were tradesmen, and thus economically separate from the workers and peasants, it was easy for the nobility of Russia to propagate the idea that all Jews were the enemies of all other people and that the elimination of the Jews would mean the end of suffering for the Christians who remained. Despite the fact that a larger proportion of the Jews were workers this erroneous conception prevailed to a sufficient extent to serve the purpose of the ruling clique. The government of the Czar was sufficiently powerful to have prevented the pogroms had it so desired, but instead of preventing the massacres it deliberately fostered them at Kischneff, Belostok, Homel and a number of other places. A noteworthy feature of these pogroms was the fact that they always occurred at a time of unrest amongst the workers.

Put the negro population of this country in place of the Jewish population of the Russia of the Czars and you have a very good analogy. Ever since the Civil war certain communities of the South have been afflicted with race riots. The excuse for riots in the South is nearly always an alleged attack by a negro upon some white person. The origin of the riots and lynchings can be traced to the creation, through slave labor, of a snobbish Southern aristocracy which monopolized all the productive land of the country. After the civil war thousands of the negroes remained as wage slaves upon the estates of their former masters. A number of them tried to eke out an existence upon small tracts of unproductive land. There was also an element in the South living upon unproductive land known as "the poor white trash." The aristocracy of the South found its political expression through the Democratic party, and as the manufacturers of the North, represented by the republican party had "freed" the negroes from chattel slavery the colored population of the South was potential voting cattle for the republican party. The enfranchisement of the negroes by the republican party heralded the downfall of the political supremacy of the aristocracy even in the South, so the spokesmen of this aristocracy declared the granting of the ballot to the negroes was an attempt to turn the South over to the black race. The impoverished white population, absorbing the ideas of its ruling class, organized for the purpose of exterminating the negro or at least establishing such a reign of terror that no negro would dare assert his alleged "constitutional rights." The "poor white trash," like the Russian workers and peasants who blamed the Jew for their misery, were led to attribute their miserable condition to the negro, thus obscuring the responsibility of the large land holders.

Race rioting in the United States, formerly confined to the South, has, during the past fifteen years, spread to the North and devastated whole sections of cities. The latest excesses of

that brand of mass murder have been the Washington, D. C., and the Chicago riots.

The United States government and the government of the State of Illinois were powerful enough to have crushed these disorders by using a very insignificant part of their coercive force, but in both cases the riots lasted for days and many lives were criminally sacrificed. It is easy to understand the attitude of the police force, as the police are nearly always connected with the underworld and many of the participants in the Chicago riots were denizens of the underworld, who have been thrown out of their former habitues and upon the streets because of the enforcement of national prohibition. No longer able to ply its old occupations so effectively this element, comprising a part of the slum proletariat, is ready to hand to serve capitalism in every conceivable contemptible manner.

The government, with its police, which appears so impotent against race riots, always regains its virility when any portion of the working class rises against the capitalist class. Who ever heard of strike riots continuing unabated for a week? Let workmen striking for better conditions even demand their alleged constitutional rights and both police and militia will wade knee deep in blood in order to teach the rebellious slaves a proper respect for "law and order."

The riots in Chicago started over a fight among colored and white bathers at a Lake Michigan beach, which resulted in the death of an unidentified negro boy and the fight rapidly spread to all parts of the "black belt" of Chicago. Many people were killed and hundreds sent to the hospitals for treatment. The principal fighting was in and around the stock yards district. In the large stock yards and packing plants of Chicago thousands of whites and negroes are employed side by side. For a long time it has been persistently rumored that the negroes worked for lower wages than the white men, which engendered a hatred among the white wage slaves against the black wage slaves. The beach episode offered an excellent opportunity for violent expression of this hatred and in a few hours the smouldering flame burst into a white heat. The white members of the army of the unemployed had stood at the gates of the employment offices shoulder to shoulder with negroes who were also there to bargain with the agent of the boss regarding the possibilities of disposing of their labor power. In some instances the negroes were employed in preference to the white men and vice-versa. The race riots offered the opportunity long awaited for each to eliminate the other from the slave market, foolishly hoping thereby to better their respective conditions.

The capitalist class can now sit back and laugh at this exhibition of assinity on the part of the wage slaves. The capitalist knows that as long as the white workingmen imagine the negro workingmen are responsible for their slavery and degradation they will not turn their attention to him.

Many of the irresponsible and to a large extent vicious incompetents who were employed by the United States government during the war to deliver "four minute speeches" deliberately propagated mob action, without a reprimand from the government. This same aggregation of degenerates is to a considerable degree responsible for the excesses practiced during the race riots. In the last analysis the government is responsible for these outbreaks because it encouraged such tactics during the war, despite all the high sounding bunk of Professor Wilson to the contrary.

The workers, both negro and Caucasian, must realize the fact that their misery is not due to race antagonisms, but to

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