## THE INTERNATIONAL.

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## The Working Class.

For the International Socialist there is neither Jew. nor Gentile, white nor black, as such: a Kaffir, or an English man, or even a vile Hun, may be an exploiter or a wage slave. Most whites in this country however need a Merriman always at their back to remind them of the obvious fact that the bulk of our working class is native, coloured, or Asiatic, and that whereas the outlook of the white wage earner largely tends to approximate to the ambition of a fortune, hunter, that of the black kraal-dweller is rapidly changing to the typical proletarian stagnation, with no hope of emancipation in his lifetime from the chains of wagery. Not all natives are proletarian yet; but as they are more and more completely driven into the labour market by Land Acts, Pass Laws, recruiters' bribes, and—education, the raw 'noble savage' is quickly becoming a rare antique. Tolstoi, not recognising Socialism as a philosophy of actualities, protested against the doctrine that every one must become a factory hand before he could attain economic freedom. If it were merely a doctrine, his protest would have been good. Our own eyes prove it a daily fact.

Where then is the working class movement which will win for these helots that reconomic freedom? Analogy from other countries confirms the observation that for a time. at least it-will be over-distracted with political struggles for status, franchise, parliamentary représentation, capitalist state education, and the like,—under the leadership of intellectuals themselves prone to batten on the movement; and that only when it becomes more predominantly concerned with the economic struggle in industry will it take on the clear revolutionary Socialist character, and at the same time become self-led: class-conscious enoughe to dispense with the middleman, and powerfully enough organised to defy the inevitable attempts at repression and reaction by a Government alarmed too late.

'Abantu Batho,' the Johannesburg native paper, edited (consciously or unconsciously) under the aegis of the Native Affairs Department and Capitalist class, has nevertheless ventured in its issue of last week on a mild, still somewhat cringing, yet perhaps epoch-making outburst entitled "Native Drudgery". As a change from Native Contingent flagwagging, aping of Europeans, adulation of Government, pro-native-landlord protests against Land Acts, old-fashioned bookish aspirations for the vote as the be-all and end-all, and snobbish cravings by an educated few for social recognition as whites, the article is on a good wicket, and sounds at last the initial rumblings of a spontaneous, indigenous classconscious industrial movement in South Africa. It says:

"The unskilled labour and all kinds of drudgery, both at the mines and in urban areas, are done by the native if people. . . They form the major population of the country and they belong to the working class. . . . They are the mainstay of the country's industries and the backbone of the land's prosperity. . . And they are the most worked and the least paid.

Treatment.

that a European thinks more of his dog or other. Unions and the Transvaal Native Council to seize every domestic animal of his than he does of the blackman who does all the work for his comfort by even luxury. A European would sconer see that his horse has a good clean stable than that his native servant gets a december room to sleep in. Some employers are so inconsiderate and almost brutal that they do not care 'even for their females! native servants to be housed properly, if at all Assoon as all girl's day's work is over-usually far in the night-she sil turned adrift expected to return to work in good time the forlowing day.

110urs of work.

"Native servants, at business places, and private homes, are extremely overworked. In laundry work especially, which is done mostly by women, there is a regular sweating-system of a most shameful character. Bundles of washing of extraordinary quantities of clothing are required to be done within a certain time at quite a low wage—a bundle that takes the whole day to wash being paid for with one to two shillings. Some steam-laundries, we are told, do not give time even for meals, a woman starting to iron at seven in the morning on to six at night without a break. No wonder most of the native female servants usually suffer from rheumatic gout and quite a number of physical deterioration and deformaty among our working women is noticeable. The same kind of overwork obtains at some big offices in town where natives commence duties at quite early hours and are not allowed a single hour for preparing and taking their meals till late at night. . .

"The usual rate of pay is from 7/6 to 15 - a week. Out of this a man is expected to pay his rent, feed his family and himself, pay taxes, provide for doctor's bills, dress decently with his dependents, and do a thousand-and-one other things. It is impossible! He must be driven to do extreme things in order to get a livelihood or meet domestic requirements. Talk of crimes of theft, illicit liquor dealing or even violence! How can a community be immune of these where responsible citizens fail to provide sufficient means of subsistence and are content only with seeing to their own comforts. and luxuries? It is often pleaded that a native has very little or no needs worth thinking of, consequently he should be satisfied with the lowest wages. This is a fallacy -a wilful blindness to facts. European civilization has brought with it European Wants...

"We would urge the Transvaal Native Council to inquire into the question of how natives are employed, especialy in big towns, with a view to approaching the Native Affairs Department on the matter. In the absence of organised Labour. Unions among natives it is suggested that the inquiry should be directed to hours of work, rate of pay, and general treatment,

particularly of women and girls."

We have omitted some more racial passages from our quotations because, though they are excused by the equally racial attitude of white men, racialism is fundamentally irrelevant to the working class movement. The white prodetariat of Europe, and of South Africa too for that matter, is treated by the master class in the same way, in essentials, as the black. Indeed the reference to organised Labour Unions shows that our contemporary is coming near to an inkling both of the position of the working class and of the true remedy, which is not "approaching the Native Affairs Department on the matter," nor Labour Unions "among the natives" as such, but one Big Union of all workers. irrespective of race, colour or creed. The increasing understanding among write workers that natives are their fellow workers. and not animals or something below the working class which the working class in its turn is entired to exploit, compled with the opening of the adding eye as foreshadowed in the arricle quoted, is big with promise for the future of the Lab-"The talk among natives is quite common concMovement in South Airied. Ne invite the white about opportunity of conferring together on this common movemant of theirs; and in this convection the L. S. L. Leering. tion of a year ago, though for from exhaustive on the matter, will bear quoting again:

> The emancipation of the workers require the im--mediate abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems and the llifting of the native worker to the political and industrial status of the white, meanwhile endeavouring to prevent the increase of the native wage workers and to assist the existing native wage workers to free

themselves from the wage system."