

The background of the cover is a collage of various international labor movement posters. The posters are rendered in a stylized, layered manner with thick red and black outlines. Visible text includes 'WORLD', 'UNITE', and 'FOR' in English, and 'العمال' (Workers) in Arabic script. The posters are arranged in a way that they overlap and create a sense of depth and global unity.

**KARL MARX'S
WORKERS' INQUIRY**

INTERNATIONAL HISTORY,
RECEPTION, AND RESPONSES

CLARK MCALLISTER

NOTES FROM BELOW

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Karl Marx's Workers' Inquiry

International History, Reception, and Responses

First published by Notes from Below 2022

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	iv
Introduction	1
Karl Marx - Instructions for the Delegates (1866)	28
Friedrich Engels - Report on the Miners' Guilds (1869)	37
Karl Marx - Enquête Ouvrière (1880)	47
Równość - Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy (1880)	58
Przedświt - Do Towarzyszy (1886)	62
Recht Voor Allen (1880)	74
Workers' Responses to the Inquiry	86
V.I. Lenin - Questionnaire (1894/5)	118
Hilde Weiss - Die "Enquête Ouvrière" von Karl Marx (1936)	122
Andrew Rothstein, Communist Party of Great Britain (1933)	145
New International - A Workers' Inquiry (1938)	152
T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel's Introduction (1963)	154
Ken Lawrence - A Workers' Inquiry by Karl Marx (1973)	157
Nabarde Kargar - Workers' Struggle (1976)	159
Postscript: Discovering Workers' Power	162

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This book is dedicated to all these comrades who maintain the effort of building a contemporary international workerism.

Introduction

Clark McAllister

In 1880, Karl Marx composed a 101-questioned survey, the *Enquête Ouvrière* (“Workers’ Inquiry”), for Benoît Malon’s French newspaper *La Revue Socialiste*. Distributed in 25,000 copies to workers across France, the inquiry was later described as a “masterpiece”, “a magnificent example of Marx’s work”.¹ The questions ask, in striking detail, for factual information about the world of work inside and outside the workplace, allowing respondents to convey information while also coming to a greater understanding of the capitalist labour-process. Crucially, the inquiry was geared to highlight where workers have material leverage within the workplace, enabling them to organise successfully against exploitation and advance their own interests.

As part of broader attempts to initiate inquiries into the situations of workers across Europe, the *Enquête Ouvrière* established an important methodology that has been subsequently utilised by workers and militant researchers throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the method of *workers’ inquiry*. From

¹ Rothstein, A. (1933) *Karl Marx: A Workers’ Enquiry*, 3-7.

the efforts of the Johnson–Forest Tendency in the US to the monumental workers' movement in Italy in the 1960s–70s, Marx's inquiry has been consistently reproduced alongside the most significant moments of the class-struggle between labour and capital, providing a way for socialist militants to grasp the ever-changing technical and social composition of the working-class.² Aiming to increase knowledge of workers' situations in order to advance workers' power, the method of inquiry continues to form the basis of vibrant and subversive undercurrents of workers across the world today.

There is also an extensive and rich tradition of scholarship tracing the history of inquiry since Marx's questionnaire. Works such as Asad Haider and Salar Mohandesi's *Workers' Inquiry: A Genealogy* (2013), Jamie Woodcock's *The Workers' Inquiry from Trotskyism to Operaismo* (2014), and Marcelo Hoffman's *Militant Acts* (2019), have made significant contributions in this regard: advancing an understanding of the complex and interconnected histories emerging since Marx's effort.

Yet, despite this influence, the original impact of Marx's *Enquête* has been notably overlooked. While valued for its conceptual design and practical import, most scholars agree that the inquiry was, in Marx's own time, a categorical failure: that it received no responses, and that it was condemned to irrelevance, “forgotten for sixty years” amidst dusty archives.³

² For a detailed discussion of class composition, see: ‘What is class composition’, Notes from Below, available at: <https://notesfrombelow.org/what-is-class-composition>

³ Ovetz, R. (2020) *Workers' Inquiry and Global Class Struggle*, London: Pluto; Haider, A. and Mohandesi, S. (2013) ‘Workers' Inquiry: A Genealogy’, Viewpoint Magazine, Issue 3, available at: <https://viewpointmag.com/2013/09/27/workers-inquiry-a-genealogy>

This consensus, however, is far from accurate in its pessimistic appraisal of the results of the *Enquête Ouvrière*. In reality, Marx's inquiry enjoyed a remarkable circulation across Europe in the 1880s. Widely reproduced and translated, the *Enquête* found enthusiastic support in the Netherlands, for instance, amongst trade unionists and socialist workers, who submitted considerable responses to the questionnaire. In Poland, it was smuggled past the shadow of the Tsar and into the first factories of the Russian-partition, inspiring subsequent attempts at inquiry by Marxist revolutionaries in Eastern Europe. So subversive was the *Enquête*, it was even seized and suppressed by Italian police in Milan, *twice*.⁴

This early history of Marx's inquiry has been uncovered by the editor of this volume through substantial archival research. The impetus for this was the discovery of a curious footnote in an appendix of the *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, revealing the publication of the *Enquête Ouvrière* in the above-mentioned countries in 1880.⁵ By initially attempting to find these reproductions, I subsequently discovered that Marx's inquiry had not only enjoyed a significant circulation in the immediate years following its publication, but that it formed the basis for further, novel developments in the practice of workers'

⁴ Marx's inquiry was published in Italian in the first two issues of Paulo Valera's Milanese newspaper *La Lotta* in July, 1880 (Crotti, I. and Ricorda, R., (1992) *Scapigliatura e dintorni*, Padua: Piccin Nuova Libreria). Both issues of the paper were seized and destroyed by Italian police, as indicated in contemporary commentary from the 14 July 1880 issue of French paper *L'Égalité*. (Gallica (bnf.fr)).

⁵ Marx-Engels Collected Works (MECW), Volume 24, 1874-83: 635-36.

inquiry in different countries.⁶ Not only did these efforts receive responses, but the method of inquiry itself appeared as a central method of operation for important struggles in the workers' movement of the late nineteenth century.

The purpose of this book, then, is to present these materials and highlight their significance. It is hoped that, by doing so, this volume will enable a wider readership to appreciate the early fruits of Marx's inquiry – “the most recent example of Marxism as practiced by Marx himself”⁷ – as well as to see the relevance and importance of this method for our own time, beyond its historical significance, as a concrete form of intervention into the class-struggle.

Reproductions of the uncovered materials have been collected, translated into English, and published in the second half of this issue for the first time. Also included are significant introductions to the inquiry, as well as other documents related to its history. In this first section, I offer a brief overview and historical contextualisation of these sources, beginning with Marx's organising efforts within the First International Workingmen's Association – an important starting-point for understanding workers' inquiry which, incidentally, has also been largely overlooked.

⁶ The majority of research was conducted through digitalised archives. The Polish material was sourced through the extensive Jagiellońska Biblioteka Cyfrowa, and Dutch material through Delpher.

⁷ Lawrence, K. (1973) *A Workers' Inquiry by Karl Marx* – included in a later chapter.

Inquiry and the IWMA

Founded in St Martins Hall in London in 1864, the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA) was established to facilitate increased communication and cooperation between workers' organisations operating in different countries, aiming at "the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation of the working classes", and "the abolition of all class rule".⁸ As part of this effort, Marx, who was elected to the leading General Council and Standing Committee of the IWMA from its earliest days, developed the idea of a statistical inquiry into the situations of workers across Europe.⁹ Specifically, he recommended that inquiries, "instituted by the working classes themselves", be coordinated through the regional branches of the International, that reports be compiled, and that these be published and printed on an annual basis.¹⁰

Marx submitted these ideas as a central motion to the Association's pivotal Geneva Congress of 1866.¹¹ His proposal was unanimously accepted, although widespread repression of the IWMA, including state-seizure of its assets and resources, prevented central reports from materialising as planned. Nevertheless, at a local level, inquiries successfully took place. 2,000 miners from Lugau, Germany, for example, sent detailed accounts of their living and working conditions after affiliating to the

⁸ MECW, Volume 20, 1864-68: 14-15.

⁹ Documents of the First International, Volume 1, The General Council of the First International 1864-1866. The London Conference, 1865. Minutes. 13-14; 341-42.

¹⁰ MECW, Volume 20, 1864-66: 186-87.

¹¹ MECW, Volume 21, 1867-70: 37-44; 464.

International in 1868. A report on the German miners' situations was published the following year by Friedrich Engels, Marx's long-time comrade, who previously established his proficiency in the art of inquiry with the monumental study *Conditions of the Working Class in England* (1844). Included in this volume, Engels' report on the Lugau miners represents a fascinating early example of workers' inquiry. It details with clarity the methods employers used to cheat workers out of their pension contributions and extort their labour through the imposition of severe piece-work rates.

More than reports, the political thrust of inquiry is demonstrated in the IWMA's continual interventions in the class-struggle of the 19th century. Through its extensive networks and branches, the International was able to generate funds to aid striking-workers across Europe and America, and utilised its international communication channels to warn workers of strike-breaking, helping solidify transnational solidarity between the international working-class. In this way, inquiry formed a crucial precondition for concrete acts of solidarity. At the same time, inquiries were organised by capitalists: in Britain, for instance, select government commissions investigated trade unions, opposing their existence, and smearing them as a threat to the economy and the security of the state – in other words, as a threat to the smooth functioning of organised exploitation.¹² For Marx, who highlighted these investigations, it was clear: inquiry is never neutral. Inquiry is a political act, aimed at enforcing a particular material reality, not simply a quest to uncover truth or uphold ideas of justice.

¹² MECW, Volume 20, 1864-66: 510.

La Revue Socialiste: The Enquête Ouvrière

Despite the gradual decline of the International in the late 1870s, Marx continued to refine the method of workers' inquiry: composing, in 1880, the famous *Enquête Ouvrière*. It is important to contextualise the appearance of this document against the situation of the workers' movement at the time, as well as within the trajectory of Marx's own thinking. Workers had achieved some remarkable victories in the preceding decades, from the growth of powerful trade unions in Britain to the abolition of slavery in America. These victories led Marx to speak of the proletariat as a conquering power, and to exalt, in his letter to Abraham Lincoln, the "triumphant war cry" of the working-classes against slavery and exploitation.¹³

This optimism, however, was balanced with a serious consideration of some major defeats: in particular the 1864 January Uprising in Poland and the brutal suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871. The defeat of the Paris Commune, an attempt by the working-class to govern their own city, led to a period of suppression for workers and communists in France. This had an especially draining effect on Marx – who fell into an intense period of depression as a result of this. To make matters worse, the IWMA itself split in 1872 following irreconcilable differences between anarchist and socialist factions, primarily over how to interpret and move forward after the defeat of the Commune. These political experiences were also accompanied by new advances in the capitalist organisation of work, including the introduction of new forms of technology and large-scale machinery into production.

¹³ MECW, Volume 20, 1864-66: 19-20.

Following such developments, communists needed to focus on new strategies, new techniques, and new forms of organisation. In this context, Marx stated: "I regard all the workers' congresses, particularly socialist congresses, in so far as they are not related to the immediate given conditions in this or that particular nation, as not merely useless but harmful."¹⁴ Without organised, working-class fighting-power, without proletarian *Angriffskraft*, Marx claimed that any attempts to pursue socialist politics "will always fade away in innumerable stale generalised banalities." For Marx, what was necessary then, as it is for militants today, was to seek "for an exact and positive knowledge of the conditions in which the working-class – the class to whom the future belongs – works and moves."¹⁵ Such an endeavour, pursued with cautious optimism, was articulated in the *Enquête Ouvrière*.

The *Enquête* represents a significant expansion on the questions previously posed in the IWMA efforts. Indeed, it entails a fundamentally qualitative shift: rather than pursuing a broad knowledge of workers' situations, the questionnaire rigorously scrutinises the immediate dynamics of the capitalist labour-process. Its political character is obvious: through pursuing the questions, the respondent is led to consider the disjuncture between workers and capitalists, and is faced with an empirical demonstration of opposing interests in the capitalist organisation of work. Consider, for example, the following questions:

75. Compare the price of the commodities you man-

¹⁴ Marx, Letter to Nieuwenhuis, February 1881. Marxists.org.

¹⁵ Marx, K. (1880) Workers' Inquiry/Enquête Ouvrière, *La Revue Socialiste*. Marxists.org.

ufacture or the services you render with the price of your labour.

81. Do any resistance associations exist in your trade and how are they led?

82. How many strikes have taken place in your trade that you are aware of?

90. Have there ever existed associations among the employers with the object of imposing a reduction of wages, a longer working day, of hindering strikes and generally imposing their own wishes?

99. State the obligations of the workers living under this system [profit-sharing]. May they go on strike, etc. or are they only permitted to be devoted servants of their employers?¹⁶

The document, in many ways, represents one of the clearest demonstrations of Marx's political method: "the *ruthless criticism of the existing order*, ruthless in that it will shrink neither from its own discoveries, nor from conflict with the powers that be."¹⁷ Although published over 140 years ago, the vast majority

¹⁶ Surviving responses to the French inquiry may elude us, but they do exist. This is confirmed in an appeal from a later issue of the paper in July 1880: "A number of our friends have already sent a response to our workers' inquiry questionnaire; we thank them, and we insist to those of our friends and our readers who have not yet answered, to be good enough to hail themselves." (La Revue Socialiste, 05 July 1880, Gallica (bnf.fr)).

¹⁷ Marx, Letter to Ruge, September 1843. Marxists.org.

of the questions could be asked of workers today, emphasising the fundamental invariance of capitalist relations of production.

It is clear that the *Enquête Ouvrière*, whilst a novel and unique document, did not emerge from thin-air: it appeared long after widespread attempts to pursue inquiry through the International. The inquiry can, therefore, be said to represent the finished-product of a sustained attempt by Marx to create an original methodology, one that would simultaneously increase knowledge of work and workers' situations whilst also acting as a political intervention to advance workers' leverage and power: the method of *Workers' Inquiry*.

Although responses to the French questionnaire have eluded discovery, this is not the case with other incarnations of Marx's inquiry. The *Enquête Ouvrière* was reproduced in the July-August 1880 issue of Polish journal *Równość* ("Equality") as *Kwestyjonyaryjusz Robotniczy*, and appeared again later that year in the Dutch socialist newspaper *Recht Voor Allen*. Both efforts led to the establishment of further inquiries undertaken amidst complex and competitive political climates. Significantly, responses from workers survive in both instances. A closer look at these efforts, and the figures involved in pursuing them, reveals deeper connections to the IWMA and Marx. In order to recount these, it is necessary to first briefly consider the political context within which these endeavours took place.

Workers' Inquiry in Poland

In the nineteenth century, Poland was partitioned into different territories belonging to Russia, Austria-Hungary and Prussia. Significant industrialisation began in the Russian Partition – known as Congress Poland – in the 1860s, with an estimated

300,000 industrial workers emerging in the subsequent decades. So vast was the expanse of industry, the city of Łódź became known as “Polish Manchester”, referencing its extensive factories and large working-class population.¹⁸

Inspired by the IWMA the first socialist militants began operating in Poland at this time. Innovative methods were employed for building contacts with workers: including securing jobs in factories and forming political cells (nuclei of militants rooted in the workplace), setting up strike funds and disseminating propaganda.¹⁹ These efforts were considerably successful. In Warsaw, a group around the militants Ludwik Waryński and Stanislaw Mendelson had, by 1876, organised between 300-400 workers in resistance organisations based on the principles of the First International.²⁰ They drafted the first *Programme of Polish Socialists*, a Marxist political declaration which affirmed the necessity of workers’ revolution and reproduced the official Statutes of the IWMA.

This was a daring, dangerous undertaking. The Tsarist secret police had declared to the Russian Tsar earlier that decade their desire to establish a commission to investigate and suppress workers’ organising:

to investigate to what extent there is at present any agitation among the workers in the Kingdom of Poland and what measures are advisable on the part of the

¹⁸ Dziewanowski, M. K. (1951) ‘The Beginnings of Socialism in Poland’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 29, No. 73: 520.

¹⁹ Blit, L. (1971) *The Origins of Polish Socialism, the History and Ideas of the First Polish Socialist Party, 1878-1886*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 24-27; Dziewanowski, 1951: 523.

²⁰ Dziewanowski (1951): 523.

Government as well as private owners in order to preserve our land from being penetrated by the International and similar associations.²¹

Indeed, the Tsarist bureaucracy maintained: “Of all lands belonging to His Imperial Majesty, the kingdom of Poland more than any other constitutes a favourable ground for the International.” A decade previously, Polish revolutionaries attempted to overthrow the Russian authorities in the January Uprising of 1863–64, a failed rebellion against which Russia implemented martial law and the policy of Russification. Many thousands of rebels were executed, or else sentenced to hard labour in Siberia. Others fled – to Geneva, Paris, and London.²² Mass repression began again in 1878, targeting the nascent workers’ movement, and forcing many socialists to flee the country, including Waryński and Mendelson.

Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy

Relocating to Geneva, Mendelson published the journal *Równość* from 1879, facilitating a means of communication between the workers’ movement and the Polish exile community. The purpose of the journal was to advance the *Programme of Polish Socialists*. This included presenting an overview and history of the workers’ movement, “exposing the facts of the economic,

²¹ Dziewanowski (1951): 522.

²² Dziewanowski (1951): 514. The issue of Polish independence was of central concern to the workers’ movement in the nineteenth century – forming the impetus for the formation of the International in 1864. Many participants of the January Uprising, such as aristocratic rebel Anna Henryka, later fought for the Paris Commune in 1871.

political and moral life of our society”, and discussing the practical issues of “organising a socialist party in Poland and in other European countries.”²³

In a special issue in July 1880, the journal published a “*Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy*” (Workers’ Questionnaire): a reproduction of Marx’s *Enquête Ouvrière* from *La Revue Socialiste*. With a new introduction focusing on the situation in Poland, the *Kwestyjonyjusz* affirmed the necessity of international inquiries: only in this way, the editors emphasised, can the working-class combat the nationalism, antisemitism, and all other ideologies which served then, as now, to keep the working-class divided and exploited: “be they the citizens of the Republic or the slaves of the Tsar”, the inquiry reads, “the interests of the working people are always the same wherever there are entrepreneurs and workers, capitalists and proletarians.”

Significantly, the editors of *Równość* declared their intention to publish a new questionnaire, modelled on the *Enquête Ouvrière*, encompassing questions directed specifically towards Polish workers – focused, for example, on examining guild relations. This emphasises the novel impact of the original survey – not only reproduced here in a completely different national, social, and political context, but also acting as a blueprint for future, unique workers’ inquiries. These future efforts would materialise in issues of the radical newspaper *Przedświt* (“Daybreak”), also edited by Mendelson. In surviving issues of the paper, references can be found to a *Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy* published in 1881 – often advertised as a pamphlet

²³ *Równość*, No.1, 1879. Jagiellonian Digital Library, available at: <https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/publication/709741/edition/671882/content>

available to buy from the editors.²⁴ Beyond reasonable doubt, this is the product of the above-mentioned plan for a specific inquiry into the situation of Polish workers.

Unfortunately, copies of the questionnaire itself have evaded discovery, although it was certainly smuggled into Poland and used there to supplement the organising efforts of the early socialist movement – as indicated by a significant appeal in the paper in 1886. Emphasising the necessity of inquiry with pugnacious militancy, this 1886 *Przedświt* appeal does not mince words, affirming the abolition of capitalism as the ultimate aim of workers' organising. "Even though they rule the world today, capitalists never stop looking for ways to increase their power", reads one part of the appeal. "In Warsaw, the society for the support of industry, composed of capitalists and farmers, also organises a survey, because in order to maximise profits from their capital, they need to know the state of the country", reads another. In order to combat the predominance of these capitalist inquiries, *Przedświt* put forward a novel suggestion, recommending individual workers create their own questionnaires:

If each one of us works in this way, we can build an edifice of knowledge from tiny blocks – workers' knowledge, knowledge of the prevailing oppression and of the need for a better social order... whoever does not have a printed questionnaire, let him compose one himself.

²⁴ Issues 6-7 (1881) and issue 5 (1884) of *Przedświt* contain advertisements for the questionnaire, indicating its circulation throughout the decade.

The importance placed on workers' knowledge should not be understated. The *Przedświt* appeal emphasises this as follows:

In the past, when small workshops were the norm, the foreman kept his secrets to himself. Today it is a different matter, since everything is in the hands of the workers. The old mysteries of the foremen have sunk into the machines that the workers create and with which they work... In the past, high walls divided one craft from another, and guild laws were strictly observed. Today, all the crafts are merging into a single whole, and every separate craft is broken up again into fractions, and it embraces ever greater masses of workers. In short, nothing is a secret from today's workers. The factory is a big, open book – you only have to read it, and you will understand what it is that ails you, and what you have to do to change things for the better.

The optimism with which the writers of *Przedświt* regard workers' knowledge of production should be considered in light of subsequent attempts to limit, distort, and control this. Just as the medieval craft guilds were broken down by capitalist relations of production, so too does capital demand the breaking-up of workers' knowledge of production in the modern factory, achieved through successive de-skilling and Taylorist management techniques which concentrate knowledge in the hands of managers. As the *Przedświt* inquiry claims: "the factory", or any workplace for that matter, "is a big, open book – you only have to read it." Such a reading today necessitates an understanding that the factory is not always an open book,

but a distorted economic battlefield.

Przedświt encouraged workers to maintain correspondence with the paper, while also acknowledging the dangerous circumstances workers operated under: ““There are other ways to send letters from the Kingdom of Poland, though of course we cannot write about them publicly.” Following this is printed a letter from a worker, “Wola”, rooted in a factory cell in Poznan, detailing the realities of wage-labour across six different workplaces. In Wola’s account, workers in these factories experienced chronic overwork, pitiful wages, threats of sackings and deportations, and were even, in some cases, physically beaten by employers. If ever one needed a case for the complete emancipation of the working-class and the abolition of capitalist relations of production, it exists in the reports of workers’ inquiries – whether of the 19th century or today.

Proletaryat

Ultimately, the efforts of the groups around *Równość* and *Przedświt* were not undertaken simply to gain a greater understanding of workers’ situations, but to come to this understanding in connection with (and as a precondition for) organising workers in the class-struggle. This is demonstrated in the formation of the first Marxist political party in Poland, *Proletaryat*, of which Ludwik Waryński assumed a key role. The party printed a paper of the same name in Warsaw, containing workers’ accounts of employment and working conditions in local factories and providing a means for workers to share and circulate information. Members were also well-rooted amongst the working-class, helping to support numerous strikes, and notably organised against an attempt by the Warsaw

police to force women into degrading fortnightly hygiene examinations.²⁵ These efforts were coordinated through the distribution of pamphlets and the party's paper – showing how workers' inquiry is a political activity undertaken to aid the proletariat's material struggle against exploitation.

Proletaryat had to operate covertly and illegally to avoid persecution by the state. According to historian Lucjan Blit, the party's members were constantly armed with revolvers, knives and knuckle-dusters in preparation for police-raids on their printing-press.²⁶ Indeed, as early as 1881, socialists were arrested for possession of the journal *Równość* – and by extension, the *Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy*. Ultimately, *Proletaryat* was brutally suppressed in 1883, its members executed or sentenced to forced-labour. Waryński himself died in a Russian labour camp in 1889. Hundreds more workers and organisers were arrested, deported, or executed between 1883–1886. The contemporary details of these persecutions are detailed in issues of *Przedświt*, then still printed in Geneva by Waryński's comrade, Stanislaw Mendelson.

Yet, as the *Przedświt* appeal and Wola's inquiry of 1886 attest, Polish workers continued to organise throughout the nineteenth century. Various subsequent incarnations of *Proletaryat* emerged later that decade, acting as an early hub for future Eastern European communist revolutionaries. Rosa Luxemburg, for example, received her first political training through the clandestine party. Mendelson would also go on to establish the Polish Socialist Party, a mass party which held a substantial influence in Polish politics into the twentieth century. In spite

²⁵ Blit (1971): 68–69.

²⁶ Blit (1971): 84.

of subsequent differences which would emerge between these groups – including, for example, splits over the importance of the Polish national question, and debates over the adoption of reformist or revolutionary strategies – their influence on aiding proletarian struggles in Poland is unquestionable. Ultimately, the central role attributed to workers' inquiry by these groups attests to the method's importance: for raising consciousness as much as investigating work, and acting as a groundwork towards developing a socialist political strategy.

Strongly echoing these Polish efforts, Marxist militants in Russia adopted similar methods in the subsequent decade. In 1894, Lenin produced a questionnaire for worker-organisers to use in factories in St Petersburg. Reminiscent of the questions posed in Marx's inquiry, and sharing the same political purpose as the Polish attempts, the questionnaire was part of the first organising efforts leading to the establishment of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working-Class – a predecessor of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and the Bolsheviks.

The *Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy* from *Równość*, the *Przedświt* appeal, and Wola's inquiry have each been translated into English and published in the collection below. Lenin's questionnaire is also included.

Workers' Inquiry in the Netherlands

In October 1880, Marx's inquiry was published in the Dutch socialist newspaper *Recht Voor Allen*, and later the trade unionist paper *De Werkmansbode*. The pursuit of inquiry in the Netherlands took place amidst a complex terrain of struggle, with numerous simultaneous inquiries promoted by capitalists at

the time. These have been documented meticulously in the Dutch literature, especially J. M. Welcker's 1978 study *Gentlemen and Workers*. As Welcker emphasises, inquiries into working conditions and wages were pursued by the bourgeois 'Society for the Promotion of Industry' (an association of employers) as early as 1870 – as a response to, and in an attempt to combat the rise of radical trade unions and socialist demands amongst the working-class.

At the same time, the Hague section of the Dutch International organised their own inquiry into the budgets of working-class households. It is unclear whether or not the Dutch Internationalists' inquiry was undertaken as part of the wider IWMA effort promoted by Marx, or whether it was pursued on the local branch's own initiative. In any case, the inquiry (completed in 1871) was considered a pivotal endeavour, described by one former IWMA member as "the only useful work we [the Hague section] have done".²⁷

In 1872, a broader survey was initiated through the trade union federation ANWV (Algemeen Nederlandsch Werklieden-Verbond). The ANWV was politically moderate, having been founded, ironically enough, with the intention of curbing the influence of the communist International. Nevertheless, it did support workers' actions and generated strike-funds to aid workers in the class-struggle. The federation would later become more sympathetic to the International, with its chairman, Heldt, declaring: "we also want the abolition of child labour, cooperation, better education, more pay, less working time..."²⁸

²⁷ Welcker, J. M. (1978) *Heren en Arbeiders: in de vroege Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging 1870-1914*, Amsterdam, Van Gennep: 8.

²⁸ Welcker (1978): 33.

Many Internationalists organised with the ANWV, and likely had a role in promoting the inquiry of 1872. Its results, alas, were seemingly inconsiderable.

Despite these shortfalls, plans for the survey would feature heavily in the correspondence between two prominent Dutch socialists: the militant blacksmith Willem Ansing, who founded the first Dutch branch of the International, and the former Lutheran preacher Domela Nieuwenhuis. Nieuwenhuis, who became a significant figure of the Dutch labour-movement, was known (rather sycophantically) by many of his followers as “redeemer” and “King of the Poor”.²⁹ Marx would later characterise him as an annoying “little Dutch parson”, and Eleanor Marx described him in no uncertain terms: a “Jesus Christ *mal tourné*”.³⁰ In preparation for a wide-ranging workers’ survey, Nieuwenhuis received the ANWV inquiry from Ansing in 1878, who also generated support amongst trade unions for continued efforts at inquiry. This led to the publication, in October 1880, of a major workers’ questionnaire in Nieuwenhuis’ paper *Recht Voor Allen* and (later) the ANWV paper *De Werkmansbode*. Links to Marx and the International would come full circle here, as the questionnaire was lifted, with some alterations, from the original workers’ inquiry of *La Revue Socialiste*.

Significantly, the *Recht Voor Allen* reproduction of Marx’s inquiry received many responses from workers. Fifty-eight

²⁹ Stutje, J. W. (2012) ‘Bearded, Attractive and Beloved: The Charisma of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, (1846-1919)’, in J. W. Stutje (ed), *Charismatic Leadership and Social Movements: The Revolutionary Power of Ordinary Men and Women*, Berghahn Books: 66; Veenman, J. (2019) *Domela’s Arbeiders Enquête: Een zoektocht naar bruikbare statistiek*, online dissertation: 6.

³⁰ Stutje, 2012: 68; MECW Volume 46, 1880–83: 365.

of these survived, discovered in the archive of Lodewijk van Deyssel by J. M. Welcker.³¹ The responses came from workers in various industries, and they reveal the dire working conditions and wages received by Dutch workers at the time. The *Recht Voor Allen* inquiry also sparked major debates over the role of statistics in politics, leading ultimately to significant workers' participation in a national inquiry conducted by the Dutch state in 1887.³² Incidentally, this was one of Marx's aims in his original questionnaire, where he stated the importance of pressuring the French state to institute "a far reaching investigation into facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation".

Although conducted by socialists, and indeed while constituting the most radical and extensive of all the surveys produced in that period in the Netherlands, there are important, if subtle, distinctions between the *Recht Voor Allen* inquiry and Marx's original *Enquête Ouvrière*. Some discussion of these differences already exists in the Dutch literature, notably in Welcker's work, and also by Veenman (2019). A brief expansion on these is necessary here.

As Marx emphasises, workers' inquiry should be undertaken by and for workers, as only workers "and not saviours sent by providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills to which they are prey." Working-class emancipation can only be conquered by and for the working-class themselves, and so the *Enquête Ouvrière* is entrusted directly to the hands of the proletariat. While reproducing many of the questions from

³¹ Hart, P. D. 't. (1979) 'J. M. Welcker, Heren en arbeiders in de vroege Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging 1870-1914', in *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Vol. 94, No. 2: 314.

³² Giele, J. (1981) '*De arbeidsenquête van 1887, Deel 3: De vlasindustrie*', Tilburg: Uitgeverij Link: 323-26.

the Enquête, the *Recht Voor Allen* inquiry proceeds according to different ideas over the emancipation of workers. As emphasised by Veenman (2019), Nieuwenhuis asks for “the help of the workers” in his appeal, so that he can conduct his own survey and his own analysis.³³

This would be emphasised again in a further issue of his newspaper, where one enthusiastic contributor writes: “The excellent idea of Mr. Domela Nieuwenhuis must be vigorously put into practice, but if left to the sole workman, I fear little will come of it; the boards therefore have to take the matter to heart.” Where Marx is unequivocal over working-class autonomy, here instead it appears that the inquiry is not to be led by workers, but by professional bureaucrats. Construing the workers as an external subject, there to aid the researcher who, while supportive of workers’ struggle, directs the inquiry ‘from above’, upholds the distinction between intellectual and manual labour. More than this, it can lead sympathetic militants to erroneous conclusions: for example, following the institutions that claim to represent workers, rather than engaging with the class itself.

Workers’ inquiry is also primarily a political tool, used to supplement the organisation of proletarian power in the class struggle. Nieuwenhuis’ own later efforts at this, as a major leader of the Dutch labour-movement, fell short. One important reason for this was his antisemitism. In the 1880s, Nieuwenhuis would open up his newspaper – by this time the official organ of the Dutch Social Democratic League – to conspiracy theories and attacks against Jews.³⁴ His party actively neglected to

³³ Veenman (2019): 28–29.

³⁴ Stutje, J. W. (2017) ‘Antisemitism among Dutch Socialists in the 1880s and 1890s’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 51, No. 3–4: 335–55.

organise with the Jewish proletariat in Amsterdam – at the time probably the largest working-class Jewish community in Western Europe.³⁵ In this way, the pretensions of a vile ideology, harboured and promoted by political leaders standing outside of the working-class, served to work against the principles of internationalism and universality at the core of socialist politics, and split the proletariat along racist and identitarian lines, and into competing trade unions.

This highlights the contested terrains upon which inquiry proceeds – not only is this undertaken opposingly by workers and employers, but even those considered socialist revolutionaries may well pursue inquiry without recognising workers' autonomy, and work (intentionally or otherwise) 'above' the class itself, even turning sectors of the proletariat against each other.

Marx's Inquiry in the Twentieth Century

The influence of Marx's *Enquête Ouvrière* in the twentieth century is monumental. Published in the American Trotskyist paper *New International* in 1938, the inquiry was brought to the attention of CLR James and Raya Dunayevskaya, two prominent Marxist militants who facilitated novel developments in worker-writing in 1940s America. Known from their pseudonyms as the organising figures of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, the group produced classic, historically significant workers' inquiries, including *The American Worker* (1947), *Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal* (1952), and *A Woman's Place* (1953).

The work of the Johnson-Forest Tendency informed a rich

³⁵ Stutje (2017): 344-45.

tradition of workers' inquiry in Europe – inspiring the groups *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in France and *Quaderni Rossi* and *Classe Operaia* in Italy. In the 1960s, the politics around these tendencies played a key role in the workerist and autonomist currents in European Marxism, forming an important bedrock to one of the largest proletarian rebellions of the twentieth century. The history of these struggles, and of the role played by workers' inquiry in understanding and advancing them, has been thoroughly documented by Balestrini and Moroni (2021)³⁶ and Wright (2002; 2021)³⁷, amongst others.

Outside these struggles, Marx's *Enquête Ouvrière* continued to inform important communist political organising throughout the twentieth century, reproduced amidst a fascinating variety of historically significant contexts. In Weimar Germany, for example, Marx's inquiry acted as the blueprint for a massive socio-psychoanalytic inquiry into working-class psychology on the eve of fascism in 1929. Conducted by the Institute for Social Research and led by the prominent psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, the study was withheld from publication until 1984, then released as *The Working-Class in Weimar Germany: A Psychological and Sociological Study*. In addition to many of Marx's original questions, the survey also focused on workers' subjective attitudes and political leanings, asking, for example, about workers' opinions on marriage and child raising, whether they belonged to any political parties, and what books they liked to read.

³⁶ Balestrini, N. and Moroni, P. (2021) *The Golden Horde: Revolutionary Italy 1960-1977*, London: Seagull Books.

³⁷ Wright, S. (2002) *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, London: Pluto; Wright, S. (2021) *The Weight of the Printed Word: Text, Context and Militancy in Operaismo*, London: Brill.

The inquiry received 1,100 responses, although many were lost as the Institute fled from Nazi persecution in the 1930s. 584 surviving responses were analysed by Fromm and Hilde Weiss (who uncovered Marx's inquiry in the archives of the German Social Democratic Party) and subsequently incorporated as an important part of the Frankfurt School's study on *Authority and the Family*, and later influencing *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno et al.³⁸ Weiss also published a significant essay on Marx's original questionnaire in the Frankfurt School's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, in 1936. Contextualising the inquiry against previous attempts to investigate the working-class in France, as well as discussing the epistemological profundity of the survey, Weiss' essay is probably the most detailed and in-depth analysis of Marx's questionnaire to date. It has been translated into English and published in full in the second part of this issue.

The inclusion of psychological questions was inspired by a separate inquiry from 1912: Adolf Levenstein's *Die Arbeiterfrage*, probably the first workers' questionnaire to include sustained psychological questions. Although undertaken with no reference to Marx's *Enquête Ouvrière*, Levenstein's work deserves a reassessment alongside Marx's workers' inquiry. Conducted autonomously with workers, Levenstein's inquiry is the result of four years of worker-writing and investigation. Levenstein posed questions about subjective experiences, asking, for example: "Do you think while you work, and what do you think about – and is it at all possible to think while

³⁸ Roiser, M. and Willig, C. (1995) 'The Hidden History of Authoritarianism', *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 8, No. 4: 77–97.

you work?”.³⁹ Questions like this provoked imaginative and fascinating responses: one Silesian miner stated, “At work I build castles in the air, construct countries and worlds, conduct politics great and small, and philosophise like Diogenes”.⁴⁰ The survey also demonstrated a significant proletarian affection for Marx and Nietzsche, whose books workers reported thinking of as an escape from monotonous manual labour while at work.

Elsewhere, the Communist Party of Great Britain published Marx’s questionnaire as a pamphlet in 1933. The introduction, written by Andrew Rothstein, has been reproduced below. In Sri Lanka, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, a mass Trotskyist party which played a pivotal role in establishing Indian and Sri Lankan Independence, also printed the inquiry in 1955. Iranian communist exiles under the name Nabarde Kargar (Workers’ Struggle) translated the inquiry into Persian in 1977, in London. With an introduction addressed specifically to Iranian workers, the Persian pamphlet has been translated into English below.

Marx’s inquiry was also reproduced by the radical journalist Ken Lawrence for the Freedom Information Service in America, in 1973. The FIS played an important role in the American South during the civil rights movement, advancing the struggles of black workers against racist oppression and capitalist exploitation. Lawrence’s introduction to Marx’s workers’ inquiry contains an important statement affirming the importance of the questionnaire for understanding Marxism as a material practice, not simply an abstract theory. He states: “it is the

³⁹ Roiser and Willig (1995): 88.

⁴⁰ Sweeney, D. (2003) ‘Cultural Practice and Utopian Desire in German Social Democracy: Reading Adolf Levenstein’s *Arbeiterfrage* (1912)’, *Social History*, Vol. 28, No. 2: 187.

most recent example of Marxism as practiced by Marx himself.”

The work of Marx, who claimed “I am not a Marxist”, has often been misrepresented as an abstract philosophical effort, or worse, an ideology. The importance of the questionnaire throughout Marx’s political life, from its centrality within the IWMA to the survey of *La Revue Socialiste*, demonstrates the opposite, and underlines the practical import at the core of Marxism: a tool for understanding and advancing proletarian power in the class-struggle.

Karl Marx - Instructions for the Delegates (1866)

These instructions, written by Marx in August 1866, were submitted to the First General Congress of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), held in Geneva in September of that year. They were first published in English in the newspaper The International Courier, in February 1867. The Geneva Congress represented a pivotal moment for the IWMA, establishing the revolutionary character of the Association and its focus on class-struggle and worker organising. The Association adopted almost all of Marx's proposals, including his call for international workers' inquiries, reproduced below, which was accepted unanimously. Marx's instructions on trade unions, the limitation of the working day, and the Polish national question are also included here, relevant as they are to the history outlined in this volume. Original footnotes from the Marx-Engels Collected Works (MECW) version have also been included in this abridged reproduction.

Organisation of the International Association

Upon the whole, the Provisional Central Council recommend the *plan of Organisation* as traced in the Provisional Statutes. Its soundness and facilities of adaptation to different countries without prejudice to unity of action have been proved by two years' experience. For the next year we recommend London as the seat of the Central Council, the Continental situation looking unfavourable for change.

The members of the Central Council will of course be elected by Congress (5 of the Provisional Statutes) with power to add to their number.

The *General Secretary* to be chosen by Congress for one year and to be the only paid officer of the Association. We propose £2 for his weekly salary.⁴¹

The uniform *annual contribution of each individual member of the Association* to be *one half penny* (perhaps one penny). The cost price of cards of membership (carnets) to be charged extra.

While calling upon the members of the Association to form benefit societies and connect them by an international link, we leave the initiation of this question (*etablissement des societes de secours mutuels. Appoi moral et materiel accorde aux orphelins de l'association*)⁴² to the Swiss who originally proposed it at the conference of September last.

⁴¹ In the French text the following paragraph has been added: "The *Standing Committee*, which is in fact an executive of the Central Council, to be chosen by Congress, the function of any of its member to be defined by the Central Council." The same paragraph is given in the German text - *Ed.*

⁴² Foundation of benefit societies; moral and material assistance to the Association's orphans. - *Ed.*

International combination of efforts, by the agency of the association, in the struggle between labour and capital

(a) From a general point of view, this question embraces the whole activity of the International Association which aims at combining and generalising the till now disconnected efforts for emancipation by the working classes in different countries.

(b) To counteract the intrigues of capitalists always ready, in cases of strikes and lockouts, to misuse the foreign workman as a tool against the native workman, is one of the particular functions which our Society has hitherto performed with success. It is one of the great purposes of the Association to make the workmen of different countries not only *feel* but *act* as brethren and comrades in the army of emancipation.

(c) One great "International combination of efforts" which we suggest is a *statistical inquiry into the situation of the working classes of all countries to be instituted by the working classes themselves*. To act with any success, the materials to be acted upon must be known. By initiating so great a work, the workmen will prove their ability to take their own fate into their own hands. We propose therefore:

That in each locality, where branches of our Association exist, the work be immediately commenced, and evidence collected on the different points specified in the subjoined scheme of inquiry.

That the Congress invite all workmen of Europe and the United States of America to collaborate in gathering the elements of the statistics of the working class; that reports and evidence be forwarded to the Central Council. That the Central Council elaborate them into a general report, adding the evidence as an appendix.

That this report together with its appendix be laid before the next annual Congress, and after having received its sanction, be printed at the expense of the Association.

General Scheme of Inquiry, which may of course be modified by each Locality

1. Industry, name of.
2. Age and sex of the employed.
3. Number of the employed.
4. Salaries and wages: (a) apprentices; (b) wages by the day or piece work; scale paid by middlemen. Weekly, yearly average.
5. (a) Hours of work in factories. (b) The hours of work with small employers and in home work, if the business be carried on in those different modes. (c) Nightwork and daywork.
6. Meal times and treatment.
7. Sort of workshop and work: overcrowding, defective ventilation, want of sunlight, use of gaslight. Cleanliness, etc.
8. Nature of occupation.
9. Effect of employment upon the physical condition.
10. Moral condition. Education.
11. State of trade: whether season trade, or more or less uniformly distributed over year, whether greatly fluctuating, whether exposed to foreign competition, whether destined principally for home or foreign competition, etc.⁴³

⁴³ The Minute Book of the General Council has "consumption" instead of "competition." - Ed.

Limitation of the Working Day

A preliminary condition, without which all further attempts at improvement and emancipation must prove abortive, is the *limitation of the working day*. It is needed to restore the health and physical energies of the working class, that is, the great body of every nation, as well as to secure them the possibility of intellectual development, sociable intercourse, social and political action. We propose *8 hours work* as the legal limit of the working day. This limitation being generally claimed by the workmen of the United States of America,⁴⁴ the vote of the Congress will raise it to the common platform of the working classes all over the world. For the information of continental members, whose experience of factory law is comparatively short-dated, we add that all legal restrictions will fail and be broken through by Capital if the *period of the day* during which the 8 working hours must be taken, be not fixed. The length of that period ought to be determined by the 8 working hours and the additional pauses for meals. For instance, if the different interruptions for meals amount to *one hour*, the legal period of the day ought to embrace 9 hours, say from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., or from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., etc. Nightwork to be but exceptionally permitted, in trades or branches of trades specified by law. The tendency must be to suppress all nightwork.

⁴⁴ When the Civil War ended, the movement for the legislative introduction of an eight-hour working day intensified in the USA. Leagues of struggle for the eight-hour day were set up all over the country. The National Labor Union declared at its inaugural convention in Baltimore in August 1866 that the demand for the eight-hour day was an indispensable condition for the emancipation of labour.

Trades' unions. Their past, present and future

(a) Their past.

Capital is concentrated social force, while the workman has only to dispose of his working force. The *contract* between capital and labour can therefore never be struck on equitable terms, equitable even in the sense of a society which places the ownership of the material means of life and labour on one side and the vital productive energies on the opposite side. The only social power of the workmen is their number. The force of numbers, however is broken by disunion. The disunion of the workmen is created and perpetuated by their *unavoidable competition among themselves*.

Trades' Unions originally sprang up from the *spontaneous* attempts of workmen at removing or at least checking that competition, in order to conquer such terms of contract as might raise them at least above the condition of mere slaves. The immediate object of Trades' Unions was therefore confined to everyday necessities, to expediences for the obstruction of the incessant encroachments of capital, in one word, to questions of wages and time of labour. This activity of the Trades' Unions is not only legitimate, it is necessary. It cannot be dispensed with so long as the present system of production lasts. On the contrary, it must be generalised by the formation and the combination of Trades' Unions throughout all countries. On the other hand, unconsciously to themselves, the Trades' Unions were forming *centres of organisation* of the working class, as the mediaeval municipalities and communes did for the middle class. If the Trades' Unions are required for the guerilla fights between capital and labour, they are still more important as

organised agencies for superseding the very system of wages labour and capital rule.

(b) Their present.

Too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital, the Trades' Unions have not yet fully understood their power of acting against the system of wages slavery itself. They therefore kept too much aloof from general social and political movements. Of late, however, they seem to awaken to some sense of their great historical mission, as appears, for instance, from their participation, in England, in the recent political movement, from the enlarged views taken of their function in the United States, and from the following resolution passed at the recent great conference of Trades' delegates at Sheffield:

“That this Conference, fully appreciating the efforts made by the International Association to unite in one common bond of brotherhood the working men of all countries, most earnestly recommend to the various societies here represented, the advisability of becoming affiliated to that body, believing that it is essential to the progress and prosperity of the entire working community.”

(c) Their future.

Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberately as organising centres of the working class in the broad interest of its *complete emancipation*. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves and acting as the champions and rep-

representatives of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the non-society men into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered powerless⁴⁵ by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large⁴⁶ that their efforts, far from being narrow — and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.

Polish question

(a) Why do the workmen of Europe take up this question?⁴⁷ In the first instance, because the middle-class writers and agitators conspire to suppress it, although they patronise all sorts of nationalities, on the Continent, even Ireland. Whence this reticence? Because both, aristocrats and bourgeois, look upon the dark Asiatic power in the background as a last resource against the advancing tide of working class ascendancy; That power can only be effectually put down by the restoration of Poland upon a democratic basis.

(b) In the present changed state of central Europe, and especially Germany, it is more than ever necessary to have a democratic Poland. Without it, Germany will become the outwork of the Holy Alliance, with it, the co-operator with republican

⁴⁵ The French text here reads: “incapable of organised resistance” - *Ed.*

⁴⁶ The French and German texts read: “convince the broad masses of workers” - *Ed.*

⁴⁷ The French reads: “Necessity of annihilating Russian influence in Europe by implementing the right of nations to self-determination and restoring Poland on a democratic and social basis.” The German has a similar subtitle in slightly altered wording - *Ed.*

France. The working-class movement will continuously be interrupted, checked, and retarded, until this great European question be set at rest.

(c) It is especially the duty of the German working class to take the initiative in this matter, because Germany is one of the partitioners of Poland.

Friedrich Engels - Report on the Miners' Guilds (1869)

Engels' report on the Miners' Guild in the Coalfields of Saxony constitutes one of the first workers' inquiries published by the International. The article demonstrates the importance of workplace inquiry in revealing the political character of economic struggles. The reproduction below includes original footnotes from the MECW, and a brief introduction taken from an endnote in the MECW version detailing its publication history.

Engels made out this report at Marx's request on the basis of material sent in by the Saxon miners from Lugau, Nieder-Würschnitz and Oelsnitz. The miners informed the General Council and Marx personally of their desire to join the International (see Note 58). On February 13, 1869 Marx wrote to Engels that the Lugau miners were the first in Germany to enter into direct contact with the International Working Men's Association and that it was necessary to give them public support.

Marx highly praised Engels' report, which was written in English. "Thanks a lot for the report. It is perfectly clear," he wrote to Engels on February 24. The report was read by Marx to the General Council on February 23, and it resolved

to base it published in English and in German translation. An abridged version appeared in a report of the General Council meeting in *The Bee-Hive*, No. 385, February 27, 1869. Other English newspapers to which Marx applied, including *The Times*, *The Daily News* and *The Morning Advertiser*, refused to publish the document. Marx himself translated Engels' manuscript into German (see his letter to Engels of March 2, 1869), and it was published in *Der Social-Demokrat*, No. 33, March 17, *Demokratisches Wochenblatt* No. 12 (supplement), March 20, and *Zukunft*, Nos. 67 and 68, March 20 and 21, 1869. The English original has not been preserved.

The report was published in English in full for the first time in *The General Council of the first International. 1868-1870*, Moscow, 1966.

The first *wage scale* we take, e. g., that of the Niederwüschnitz Company, shows us the overall condition of the miners in the collieries of the Erzgebirge. A week's wage for adult miners amounts to from 2 talers to 3 talers 12 silver groschen 6 pfennigs, for juveniles between 1 taler 10 silver groschen and 1 taler 20 silver groschen. A week's wage for an average miner amounts approximately to 2 2/3 talers. At the demand of the owners the workers have to work at piece rates. The *wage scale* is arranged in such a way that the piece rate will not usually exceed the normal rate for a day's work. Every worker must give a month's notice to leave, and that on the first day of the month. Consequently, if he refuses to work at piece rates on the terms proposed, he can be *forced* to it for 4-8 weeks at the least. Such being the circumstances, it is simply ridiculous to talk of regulating the piece rate by mutual agreement, of a free contract between

worker and capitalist!

Wages are paid in two instalments; an advance is made on the 22nd of the month, the remainder for that month being paid on the 8th of the following month. The capitalist therefore retains wages that he owes his workers for a full three weeks on the average — this compulsory loan to the employer is all the more agreeable since money is thus obtained without the payment of interest.

As a rule the miners work in twelve-hour shifts, and the aforementioned weekly wages are paid for 6 twelve-hour working days. The twelve-hour working day includes 2 hours (2 half hours and 1 full hour) for meals, or so-called *rest periods*. If the work is urgent, shifts last eight hours (i.e., each man does 3 shifts in 48 hours) with *half an hour for meals*; they may even last six hours, in which case “*no rest period is granted*”.

These facts offer a gloomy picture of the condition of the miners. But to appreciate their serf-like status we must also examine the *rules of the miners' guilds*. Let us take the rules for the coal-mines, those of (I) the high and mighty *Prince Schönburg*, (II) the *Niederwürschnitz Company*, (III) the *Niederwürschnitz-Kirchberg Company*, and (IV) the *Joint Lugau companies*.

The income of the miners' guilds consists of (1) the workers' entrance fees and dues, fines, unclaimed wages, etc., and (2) contributions from the capitalists. The workers pay 3 or 4 per cent of their wages, the owners of (I) pay 7 silver groschen 5 pfennigs monthly for every paid-up miner, of (II) 1 pfennig for every scheffel [1/8 ton] of coal sold, of (III) as initial contribution and to found a miners' guild fund — 500 talers; after that the same dues as the workers, and of (IV) like those of (II), plus a membership fee of 100 talers from each of the joint companies.

Are we not overwhelmed by this picture of friendly harmony

between capital and labour? After that, who will dare to go on harping on their contradictory interests? But, as the great German thinker Hansemann once said, "business is business". So we might ask what the worker has to pay for the magnanimity of the "exalted coal-owners". Let's see.

The capitalists contribute in one instance (III) as much as the workers, in all other instances appreciably less. For this they lay claim to the following rights in respect of *the property of the guild*:

I. "No properly rights in respect of the guild fund shall accrue to members of the miners' guild, and they shall not expect to obtain more from the fund than the amount to which they, according to the rules, are entitled in certain circumstances, in particular they shall not be able to propose sharing the fund and its ready cash even in the event of any of the works ceasing to operate. Should there be a complete shut-down in the coal-mines of Prince Schönburg in Oelsnitz", then, after satisfaction of ready claims, "the right to dispose of the remainder is vested in the Prince, owner of the coalfields."

II. "In the event of the joint Niederwürschnitz Coal Company closing down, the miners' guild fund shall also be closed down, and the right to dispose of the remaining money is vested in the management."

Members of the guild fund have *no property rights in respect of the guild fund*.

III. as in II.

IV. "The guild fund shall be considered the inalienable property of its present members and those who join it in future. Only in the unexpected event of the complete liquidation of all the joint coal-mines and the consequent closing down of the miners' guild" — now, in this unexpected event one might have expected the workers to be able to divide up among themselves any money remaining. Nothing of the sort! In this case "the management of the last closed trust shall direct suggestions to the Royal District Board. The last-named authority shall decide how this sum of money is to be used."

In other words, the workers pay the greater part of the contributions to the guild fund, but the capitalists *arrogate to themselves the ownership of the fund*. The capitalists seem to make the workers a present. Actually, the workers are forced to make a present to their capitalists. Together with the property right, the latter obtain control of the fund.

The *chairman* of the fund board is the coalfield manager. He is the chief administrator of the fund, he decides all disputed issues, determines the amount of fines, etc. Next below him is the *secretary of the guild*, who is also the treasurer. He is either appointed by the capitalist or has to get the latter's approval if he is elected by the workers. Then come the ordinary *members of the board*. They are usually elected by the workers, but in one instance (III) the capitalist appoints three members of the board. What sort of "board" this actually is can be seen from the rule obliging "*it to hold a meeting at least once a year*". Actually it

is run by the chairman, and the board members carry out his orders.

This Mr. Chairman, the coalfield manager, is a powerful person in other respects too. He can reduce the probation period for new members, issue extra allowances, even (III) expel workers whose reputation he deems poor, and he can always appeal to the capitalist, whose decision is final on *everything concerning the miners' guild*. Prince Schönburg and the managers of the joint stock companies can, for instance, alter the guild rules, raise the workers' dues, reduce sick benefits and pensions, create new obstacles or formalities in dealing with claims on the fund. In short, they *can do what they like with the workers' money*, with the one reservation that they need the sanction of the government authorities, who have never yet displayed any *desire* to know anything about the condition or needs of the workers. In enterprise III the managers even reserve themselves the right to expel from the guild any worker *who has been brought to trial by them, even if he has been acquitted!*

And what are the benefits for which the miners so blindly subordinate their own affairs to an alien despotism? Listen to this!

1) In the event of sickness they receive medical treatment and a weekly allowance, in enterprise I — up to a third of their wages, in III — up to a half of their wages, in II and IV — up to a half or, if the illness is due to an accident at work, $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ respectively. 2) The incapacitated receive a pension depending on their length of service, and hence on their contributions to the guild fund, from $\frac{1}{20}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of their last wages. 3) If a member dies his widow receives an allowance of between $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the pension which her husband was entitled to, and a weekly pittance for each child. 4) A burial allowance in the event of

death in the family.

The noble prince and enlightened capitalists who compiled these rules, and the paternal government which endorsed them, owe the world the solution of⁴⁷ this problem: if a miner with the full average wage of 2 2/3 talers a week is half starved, how can he live on a pension of, say, 1/20 of this wage, some 4 silver groschen a week?

The tender concern which the rules display for the interests of capital comes out clearly in the way mine accidents are treated. With the exception of enterprises II and IV there is no special allowance if illness or death occurs through an accident "in the course of duty". *In not a single case is the pension increased if disability follows from a mine accident.* The reason is very simple. This clause would substantially increase payments out of the fund and very soon make even the most short-sighted see the real nature of *presents* from the capitalist gentlemen.

The rules imposed by the capitalists of Saxony differ from the constitution imposed by Louis Bonaparte⁴⁸ in that the latter still awaits the crowning touch whereas the former already have it in the form of the following article applicable to all:

"Every worker who leaves the company, be it voluntarily, be it compulsorily, thereby leaves the guild and forfeits all rights and claims both to its fund and to the money he himself has contributed."

Thus, a man who has worked 30 years in one mine and contributed his share to the guild fund, forfeits all his hard-earned

⁴⁸ *Constitution faite en vertu des pouvoirs delegues par le peuple francais a Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, par le vote des 20 et 21 decembre 1851* - Ed.

rights to a pension as soon as the capitalist *chooses to sack him!* This article turns the wage-worker into a serf, ties him to the soil, exposes him to the most shameful mistreatment. If he is no lover of kicks, if he resists the cutting of wages to starvation level, if he refuses to pay arbitrarily imposed fines, if he dares to insist on official verification of weights and measures — he will always receive the same old answer: get out, but your fund contributions and your fund rights stay with us!

It seems paradoxical to expect manly independence and self-respect from people in such a humiliating position. Yet these miners can be counted — much to their credit — among the vanguard fighters of the German working class. Their masters are therefore beginning to be greatly worried, despite the tremendous hold the present organisation of the miners' guilds gives them. The most recent and meanest of their rules (III, dating from 1862) contains the following grotesque clause against strikes and associations:

“Every guild member must always be satisfied with the pay accruing to him in accordance with the wage scale, he must never take part in joint action to force higher wages, to say nothing of inciting his work-mates to the same, but should, rather, etc.”

Why have the Lycurguses of the *Niederwürschnitz-Kirchberg* Coalfield Company, Messrs. B. *Krüger* F. W. *Schwamkrug* and F. W. *Richter* not also deigned to make it a rule that henceforward every coal purchaser “*must always be satisfied*” with the coal prices fixed by their exalted selves? This is too much even for Herr von

Rochow's "limited understanding of the loyal subject".⁴⁹

As a result of agitation among the miners, *preliminary draft rules* for the unification of miners' guilds of all coalfields in Saxony were recently published (Zwickau 1869). They were drawn up by a workers' committee under the chairmanship of Mr. J. G. Dinter. The main points are: 1) All guilds to be united in a single guild. 2) Members retain their rights as long as they live in Germany and pay their dues. 3) A general meeting of all adult members constitutes the supreme authority. It elects an executive committee, etc. 4) Contributions by the masters to the guild fund must make up half those paid by the workers.

This draft in no way reflects the views of the most intelligent miners of Saxony. It comes rather from a section which prefers reforms with the permission of capital. It bears the stamp of unpracticality on its brow. What a naive idea indeed that the capitalists, unrestrained rulers over the miners' guilds up to now, will surrender their power to a democratic general workers' meeting and still pay their contributions!

The *basic evil* lies in the very fact that the capitalists *contribute*. As long as this continues, they cannot be removed from running the guild and the fund. To be genuine workers' societies, the miners' guilds must rely exclusively on workers' contributions. Only thus can they become Trades Unions which protect individual workers from the arbitrariness of individual masters.

⁴⁹ This expression was used by the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Rochow. In his letter of January 15, 1838 to the citizens of Elbing who had expressed their dissatisfaction at the expulsion of seven opposition Professors from Gottingen University, Rochow wrote: "It behoves a loyal subject to exhibit due obedience to his King and Sovereign ... ; it does not behove him to apply the measure of his limited understanding to the actions of the head of the State."

The insignificant and dubious advantages which come from the capitalists' contributions — can they ever compensate for the state of serfdom into which they force the workers? Let the Saxon miners always remember that what the capitalist puts into the guild fund he *gets it all back, and more, from the workers' wages*. Guilds of this type have the unique effect of *suspending the operation of the law of supply and demand to the exclusive advantage of the capitalist*. In other words, by the *unusual* hold which they give capital over individual workers, they press down wages even *below* their usual average level.

But should the workers then present the existing funds — naturally after compensation for the acquired rights — to the capitalists? This question can only be decided by *law*. Although *endorsed by the supreme royal authority*, certain articles in the rules patently conflict with generally accepted legal regulations concerning contracts. In all circumstances, however, the separation of the workers' money from the capitalists' money remains the essential precondition to any reform of the miners' guilds.

The contributions of the Saxon coalfield owners to the guild funds are an involuntary admission that capital is up to a certain point responsible for accidents which threaten the wage worker with mutilation or death during the execution of his duty at his place of work. But instead of allowing this responsibility to be made the pretext for extending the despotism of capital, as is the case now, the workers must agitate for *this responsibility being regulated by the law*.

Karl Marx - Enquête Ouvrière (1880)

Marx produced this famous Workers' Inquiry questionnaire for Benoît Malon's newspaper La Revue Socialiste in 1880. It was published anonymously in a special issue of the paper in April of that year, and distributed around France, to workers' organisations and trade unions, in 25,000 copies. Marx's authorship is confirmed in his letter to Friedrich Sorge from November 1880.⁵⁰ The version below has been reproduced from the English transcription of the French original on Marxists.org.⁵¹

Not a single government, whether monarchy or bourgeois republic, has yet ventured to undertake a serious inquiry into the position of the French working class. But what a number of investigations have been undertaken into crises — agricultural, financial, industrial, commercial, political!

The blackguardly features of capitalist exploitation which were exposed by the official investigation organized by the

⁵⁰ Marx, Letter to Sorge, November 5 1880. Marxists.org.

⁵¹ One question (No.73), omitted from the version on Marxists.org has been included here, and the questions have been split into four sections, in line with the French original.

English government and the legislation which was necessitated there as a result of these revelations (legal limitation of the working day to 10 hours, the law concerning female and child labor, etc.), have forced the French bourgeoisie to tremble even more before the dangers which an impartial and systematic investigation might represent. In the hope that maybe we shall induce a republican government to follow the example of the monarchical government of England by likewise organizing a far reaching investigation into facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation, we shall attempt to initiate an inquiry of this kind with those poor resources which are at our disposal. We hope to meet in this work with the support of all workers in town and country who understand that they alone can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer and that only they, and not saviors sent by providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills which they are prey. We also rely upon socialists of all schools who, being wishful for social reform, must wish for an *exact* and *positive* knowledge of the conditions in which the working class — the class to whom the future belongs — works and moves.

These statements of labor's grievances are the first act which socialist democracy must perform in order to prepare the way for social regeneration.

The following hundred questions are the most important. In replies the number of the corresponding question should be given. It is not essential to reply to every question, but our recommendation is that replies should be as detailed and comprehensive as possible. The name of the working man or woman who is replying will not be published without special permission but the name and address should be given so that if necessary we can send communication.

Replies should be sent to the Secretary of the *Revue Socialiste*, M. Lecluse, 28, rue royale, saint cloud, nr. Paris.

The replies will be classified and will serve as material for special studies, which will be published in the *Revue* and will later be reprinted as a separate volume.

I

1. What is your trade?
2. Does the shop in which you work belong to a capitalist or to a limited company/ State the names of the capitalist owners or directors of the company.
3. State the number of persons employed.
4. State their age and sex.
5. What is the youngest age at which children are taken off (boys or girls)?
6. State the number of overseers and other employees who are not rank and file hired workers.
7. Are their apprentices? How many?
8. Apart from the usual and regularly employed workers, are there others who come in at definite seasons?
9. Does your employer' undertaking work exclusively or chiefly for local orders, or for the home market generally, or for export abroad?
10. Is the shop in a village, or in a town? State the locality.
11. If your shop is in the country, is there sufficient work in the factory for your existence or are you obliged to combine it with agricultural labor?
12. Do you work with your hands or with the help of machinery?
13. State details as to the division of labor in your factory.
14. Is steam used as motive power?

15. State the number of rooms in which the various branches of production are carried on. Describe the specialty in which you are engaged. Describe not only the technical side, but the muscular and nervous strain required, and its general effect on the health of the workers.
16. Describe the hygienic conditions in the workshops; the size of the rooms, space allotted to every worker, ventilation, temperature, plastering, lavatories, general cleanliness, noise of machinery, metallic dust, dampness, etc.
17. Is there any municipal or government supervision of hygienic conditions in the workshops?
18. Are there in your industry particular effluvia which are harmful for the health and produce specific diseases among the workers?
19. Is the shop overcrowded with machinery?
20. Are safety measures to prevent accidents applied to the engine, transmission and machinery?
21. Mention the accidents which have taken place in your personal knowledge.
22. If you work in a mine, state the safety measures adopted by your employer to ensure ventilation and prevent explosions and other accidents.
23. If you work in a chemical factory, at an iron works, at a factory producing metal goods, or in any other industry involving specific dangers to health, describe the safety measures adopted by your employer.
24. What is your workshop lit up by (gas, oil, etc.)?
25. Are there sufficient safety appliances against fire?
26. Is the employer legally bound to compensate the worker or his family in case of accident?
27. If not, has he ever compensated those who suffered acci-

dents while working for his enrichment?

28. Is first-aid organized in your workshop?
29. If you work at home, describe the conditions of your work room. Do you use only working tools or small machines? Do you have recourse to the help of your children or other persons (adult or children, male or female)? Do you work for private clients, or for an employer? Do you deal with him direct or through an agent?

II

30. State the number of hours you work daily, and the number of working days during the week.
31. State the number of holidays in the course of a year.
32. What breaks are there during the working day?
33. Do you take meals at definite intervals, or irregularly? Do you eat in the workshop or outside?
34. Does work go on during meal times?
35. If steam is used, when is it started and when stopped?
36. Does work go on at night?
37. State the number of hours of work of children and young people under 16.
38. Are there shifts of children and young people replacing each other alternately during working hours?
39. Has the government or municipality applied the laws regulating child labor? Do the employers submit to these laws?
40. Do schools exist for children and young people employed in your trade? If they exist, in what hours do the lessons take place? Who manages the schools? What is taught in them?

41. If work takes place both night and day, what is the order of the shifts?
42. What is the usual lengthening of the working day in times of good trade?
43. Are the machines cleaned by workers specially hired for that purpose, or do the workers employed on these machines clean them free, during their working day?
44. What rules and fines exist for latecomers? When does the working day begin, when it is resumed after the dinner hour break?
45. How much time do you lose in coming to the workshop and returning home?

III

46. What agreements have you with your employer? Are you engaged by the day, week, month, etc.?
47. What conditions are laid down regarding dismissals or leaving employment?
48. In the event of a breach of agreement, what penalty can be inflicted on the employer, if he is the cause of the breach?
49. What penalty can be inflicted on the worker if he is the cause of the breach?
50. If there are apprentices, what are their conditions of contract?
51. Is your work permanent or casual?
52. Does work in your trade take place only at particular seasons, or is the work usually distributed more or less equally throughout the year? If you work only at definite seasons, how do you live in the intervals?
53. Are you paid time or piece rate?

54. If you are paid time rate, is it by the hour or by the day?
55. Do you receive additions to your wages for overtime? How much?
56. If you receive piece rates, how are they fixed? If you are employed in industries in which the work done is measured by quantity or weight, as in the mines, don't your employers or their clerks resort to trickery, in order to swindle you out of part of your wages?
57. If you are paid piece rate, isn't the quality of the goods used as a pretext for wrongful deductions from your wages?
58. Whatever wages you get, whether piece or time rate, when is it paid to you; in other words, how long is the credit you give your employer before receiving payment for the work you have already carried out? Are you paid a week later, month, etc.?
59. Have you noticed that delay in the payment of your wages forces you often to resort to the pawnshops, paying rates of high interest there, and depriving yourself of things you need: or incurring debts with the shopkeepers, and becoming their victim because you are their debtor? Do you know of cases where workers have lost their wages owing to the ruin or bankruptcy of their employers?
60. Are wages paid direct by the employer, or by his agents (contractors, etc.)?
61. If wages are paid by contractors or other intermediaries, what are the conditions of your contract?
62. What is the amount of your money wages by the day and week?
63. What are the wages of the women and children employed together with you in the same shop?
64. What was the highest daily wage last month in your shop?

65. What was the highest piece wage last month?
66. What were your own wages during the same time, and if you have a family, what were the wages of your wife and children?
67. Are wages paid entirely in money, or in some other form?
68. If you rent a lodging from your employer, on what conditions? Does he not deduct the rent from your wages?
69. What are the prices of necessary commodities, for example:
 - (a) Rent of your lodging, conditions of lease, number of rooms, persons living in them, repair, insurance, buying and repairing furniture, heating, lighting, water, etc.
 - (b) Food — bread, meat, vegetables, potatoes, etc, dairy produce, eggs, fish, butter, vegetable, oil, lard, sugar, salt, groceries, coffee, chicory, beer, wine, etc., tobacco.
 - (c) Clothing for parents and children, laundry, keeping clean, bath, soap, etc.
 - (d) Various expenses, such as correspondence, loans, payments to pawnbroker, children's schooling and teaching a trade, newspapers, books, etc., contributions to friendly societies, strikes, unions, resistance associations, etc.
 - (e) Expenses, if any necessitated by your duties.
 - (f) Taxes.
70. Try and draw up a weekly and yearly budget of your income and expenditure for self and family.
71. Have you noticed, in your personal experience, a bigger rise in the price of immediate necessities, e.g., rent, food, etc., than in wages?
72. State the changes in wages which you know of.
73. Describe wage reductions during bad trade and industrial crises.
74. Describe wage increases during so-called prosperity peri-

ods.

75. Describe any interruptions in employment caused by changes in fashions and partial and general crises. Describe your own involuntary rest periods.
76. Compare the price of the commodities you manufacture or the services you render with the price of your labor.
77. Quote any cases known to you of workers being driven out as a result of introduction of machinery or other improvements.
78. In connection with the development of machinery and the growth of the productiveness of labor, has its intensity and duration increased or decreased?
79. Do you know of any cases of increases in wages as a result of improvements in production?
80. Have you ever known any rank and file workers who could retire from employment at the age of 50 and live on the money earned by them as wage workers.
81. How many years can a worker of average health be employed in your trade?

IV

82. Do any resistance associations exist in your trade and how are they led? Send us their rules and regulations.
83. How many strikes have taken place in your trade that you are aware of?
84. How long did these strikes last?
85. Were they general or partial strikes?
86. Were they for the object of increasing wages, or were they organized to resist a reduction of wages, or connected with the length of the working day, or prompted by other

motives?

87. What were their results?
88. Tell us of the activity of the courts of arbitration.
89. Were strikes in your trade ever supported by strikes of workers belonging to other trades?
90. Describe the rules and fines laid down by your employer for the management of his hired workers.
91. Have there ever existed associations among the employers with the object of imposing a reduction of wages, a longer working day, of hindering strikes and generally imposing their own wishes?
92. Do you know of cases when the government made unfair use of the armed forces, to place them at the disposal of the employers against their wage workers?
93. Are you aware of any cases when the government intervened to protect the workers from the extortions of the employers and their illegal associations?
94. Does the government strive to secure the observance of the existing factory laws against the interests of the employers? Do its inspectors do their duty?
95. Are there in your workshop or trade any friendly societies to provide for accidents, sickness, death, temporary incapacity, old age, etc.? Send us their rules and regulations.
96. Is membership of these societies voluntary or compulsory? Are their funds exclusively controlled by the workers?
97. If the contributions are compulsory, and are under the employers' control, are they deducted from wages? Do the employers pay interest for this deduction? Do they return the amounts deducted to the worker when he leaves employment or is dismissed? Do you know of any cases when the workers have benefitted from the so-called

- pensions schemes, which are controlled by the employers, but the initial capital of which is deducted beforehand from the workers' wages?
98. Are there cooperative guilds in your trade? How are they controlled? Do they hire workers for wages in the same ways as the capitalists? Send us their rules and regulations.
99. Are there any workshops in your trade in which payment is made to the workers partly in the form of wages and partly in the form of so-called profit sharing? Compare the sums received by these workers and the sums received by other workers who don't take part in so-called profit sharing. State the obligations of the workers living under this system. May they go on strike, etc. or are they only permitted to be devoted servants of their employers?
100. What are the general physical, intellectual and moral conditions of life of the working men and women employed in your trade?
101. General remarks.

Równość - Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy (1880)

The following introduction to Marx's inquiry, reproduced as Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy in Polish, was included as a supplement to the July 1880 issue (no. 10 and 11) of the radical journal Równość, edited by Stanisław Mendelson in Geneva. It also included the original questions, slightly edited (these have not been reproduced here, present as they are in Marx's inquiry reproduced in this volume). The introduction has been translated into English by Maciej Zurowski.

Workers' Questionnaire

The set of questions printed below is a translation of a questionnaire published in the fourth issue of the French journal *Revue Socialiste*. These questions touch on almost all aspects of a worker's life, and if one managed to compile many detailed answers, one would gain an accurate picture of the condition of French workers.

If such a questionnaire is considered necessary in France, it could be of great service to us as well. In France, the workers' question has been discussed almost constantly for almost a

century. It is a topic of conversation, it is written about, it is acted on: in books and in papers, you can often find a wide range of subjects of close concern to workers. In our country, in contrast, such things are not given any attention at all. 'How does a worker live?' – Apparently, that is not such an important matter that anyone would care about it. 'How much does a worker earn daily?' – What a strange question! 'What does a worker each for lunch; what does he wear; in what kind of places does he live?' – What ridiculous things to ask! 'How does the foreman exploit the apprentice; how does the entrepreneur rob the worker?' – To ask such questions is dangerous business. Indeed, it is tantamount to socialism, and the police isn't joking around when it comes to socialism. Is one even allowed to write about such things in newspapers? – The papers are meant to print more important news: for example, whether a nobleman will or will not visit the country, whether this or that member of parliament will become a minister, whether a famous actress will leave our stages for good, whether last night's concert was nice, whether tomorrow's 'charity' ball will be a success – these are the really interesting topics that 'everyone' reads with pleasure.

Now then – let 'everyone' else keep reading about these important matters. Even if the questionnaire printed here is not of interest to 'everyone', it should nonetheless be of interest to workers. After all, their lives, and those of their families, depend on whether it's easy or difficult to find work. Their health depends on whether working hours at the workshops are long or short. Their future depends on whether there is dough or not. Workers cannot be indifferent about these questions. They are more important to them than the fortunes of famous and not-so-famous actresses, eloquent and inarticulate members

of parliament, benevolent and malevolent monarchs, and so on. So, if the papers do not talk about these matters, if they do not want to touch them, then workers have the right and duty to reflect and mull over these questions on their own accord.

This much is understood. But will anything tangible result from such contemplations – can replies to a questionnaire have any use for workers? Maybe – they could even be of great use. When today workers say again and again that they suffer hunger and poverty, they are talking about an ordinary problem. They have grown used to it, and they bear it patiently, occasionally complaining just to vent, to ease the pain. But how can they ease their pain when they do not know about each other, when they do not know what ails them, what makes them sick? After all, a doctor cannot cure a sick man if he does not thoroughly examine what hurts him and why. Likewise, as long as the workers are unaware how their comrades live, how much they earn and how they work – first and foremost those closest to them, then the workers from Prussia, Austria, Russia, and even France, Britain, and so on – they will not be able to help themselves. That is because each of them will have some different opinion on the causes of poverty and how to tackle it. One will say the Jews are to blame, another that it's the Germans' fault, a third one will say it's because of drinking, a fourth one will blame godlessness taking hold among workers, a fifth one will argue it's due to the practice of 'mondaying' [*poniedziałkowanie*]⁵², a sixth one will find entirely different reasons, and each and every one of them will have a different remedy for these ills. Only when all the workers learn about each other, become aware of their

⁵² 'Mondaying' refers to the practice of not coming into work on Mondays to extend the weekend and as a form of social rebellion – Translator

problems and begin to contemplate how to end them, everyone will identify the root cause of their eternal misery and hardship and join forces in order to abolish it.

This is also the reason why everyone who has any intention of improving the lot of the workers should begin to collect answers to these questions.

Since these questions are intended for France, they do not cover all aspects of our workers' lives. In particular, there is a lack of questions concerning guild relations.⁵³ In spite of this, however, one cannot help but wonder at the almost complete congruity between the things that ail the workers from the banks of the Seine and those from the Vistula, be they citizens of the Republic or slaves of the Tsar. It is obvious that the interests of the working people are always the same wherever there are entrepreneurs and workers, capitalists and proletarians.

⁵³ We will try to publish a new questionnaire at a later point that will rectify this problem – original note

Przedświt - Do Towarzyszy (1886)

This appeal for workers' inquiries was published in the Polish radical newspaper Przedświt in May 1886. Edited by Mendelson in Geneva, the paper frequently advertised an 1881 'Kwestyjonyjusz Robotniczy', and the appeal below makes reference to questionnaires in contemporary circulation. Also included in this section is the response of a worker, using the alias Wola, to pre-existing appeals for inquiry, detailing the conditions and political realities of six different workplaces in Poland. Translated into English by Maciej Zurowski.

For Comrades

Our journal, *Przedświt*, has a dual purpose, addressing two types of readers. On the one hand, we want to draw the attention of the workers to their plight, point to them the way to liberate themselves from the oppression of capital and thus become the warriors of the social revolution, as it were. This aspect of *Przedświt's* influence might be regarded as the preliminary groundwork. The idea is to provoke thought, stimulate minds, call the attention of the worker, awaken him from the sleep into which poverty and oppression have lulled him. However, we

cannot content ourselves with this objective. It is not sufficient to make others think – we also need to educate ourselves further, develop and refine our ideas, enrich ourselves with knowledge. It is not enough to be aware of evil, it is not enough to understand that we live in poverty, and it is not even enough to know that socialism is the path to liberation. Beyond all this, we need to familiarise ourselves with today's [political and economic] order in its entirety: we need to expose the secrets of all the swindles by which they keep the people in bondage. We all understand, after all, that in order to defeat an enemy, we need to know him well: we need to know where to strike him and what force to use. In other words, we must try to get to know today's social system in all its complexities and familiarise ourselves with all forms of oppression.

That, however, is not enough. True, we need to monitor the dirty machinations of the capitalists, but this knowledge alone will not suffice. Take the example of a teacher who wants to educate a child: first he will need to get to know the child, learn what its weaknesses and inclinations are. He will follow every step, every move of the child entrusted to him. If he observes something particular about the child, he has to get to the bottom of it – i.e. he has to find out what causes the child's behaviour. In short, he has to familiarise himself with the child's personality traits.

We need to proceed in the exact same fashion. Once we have acquainted ourselves with the different forms of oppression that capital imposes on labour, we must familiarise ourselves with the basis of today's relations and determine what constitutes their character. And what else is the basis of today's social relations if not the prevailing organisation of work? The more we look at the present organisation of work, the more we find

that it is a rather unproductive form of work organisation, because today human labour is governed by the speculation of individual capitalists. Thus acquainted with the oppression to which the worker is subjected – that is, the exploitation of labour by capital – we can also see that there is today a disorder of work instead of work organisation. This is also what gives rise to crises, etc. This last circumstance has a twofold significance for us: today's chaos is the cause of many a misfortune that afflicts the working people. To learn about this chaos is therefore to learn about the causes of our misery. There is another use we can draw from its study, though: by examining the chaos and understanding its causes, we inadvertently arrive at ideas that indicate how work should be organised, what should be done, and how it should be done so that a genuine, universally useful organisation of work can emerge in the place of the chaos in which work is steeped today. In other words, our examination will teach us how to build the structure of social relations in the future, ensuring that it is based on equality, freedom and justice.

So, as you see, comrades, the task before us is twofold: we have to inspire and encourage the masses of workers to reflect upon their fate, but we have to improve and educate ourselves too. We must educate and improve ourselves so we can tear down the present order and build a better social system in its place.

As a matter of fact, comrades, I do not believe that these tasks are the responsibility of scholars. They are the workers' own responsibility. Admittedly, there are scholars who look at things impartially and tell us honestly what they see, but most scholars do not live up to that task. They constitute a group of servants who live off profits and are therefore concerned only with how to preserve the present state of affairs. Having

merged with the ruling class, they only serve that class, not the truth. During the reign of the aristocratic class, intellectuals defended the aristocrats, but when the capitalists took the helm of government, all that serves power began to side with them. Now that the liberation of the working people is on the agenda, the working people themselves should take care of it. Once they have gained in strength, once they have prepared themselves sufficiently to assert their rights, then oh! – we shall not lack anything.

And please do not assume that this is something outside the powers of the worker. No! The course of historical developments alone will make your task easier. In the past, when small workshops were the norm, the foreman kept his secrets to himself. Today it is a different matter, since everything is in the hands of the workers. The old mysteries of the foremen have sunk into the machines that the workers create and with which they work. Moreover, in the past it was difficult for workers to come together and communicate. Today, the development of industry is bringing you together, concentrating you in big workplaces; all you need to do is communicate with each other. In the past, high walls divided one craft from another, and guild laws were strictly observed. Today, all the crafts are merging into a single whole, and every separate craft is broken up again into fractions, and it embraces ever greater masses of workers. In short, nothing is a secret from today's workers. The factory is a big, open book – you only have to read it, and you will understand what it is that ails you, and what you have to do to change things for the better.

Abroad, in countries where the working people have obtained consciousness sooner than in ours, it is superfluous to speak of a need for workers to become acquainted with the present state of

things. Suffice it to say that when governments make so-called surveys⁵⁴ on the state of industry, etc., the workers are called upon to voice their opinions. And the masters of capital, who rule everything and only reluctantly admit workers to the polls, have nonetheless more than once had to concede that workers possess a great knowledge of things, and good sense too. In Belgium, for example, where there have recently been major riots, the workers, when questioned by police commissioners, gave answers that demonstrated an immeasurable knowledge. In our country, unfortunately, the workers are not yet so well informed. And that is why we need to work all the more. Those who have the people's cause at heart will work with redoubled energy to bring closer the moment when labour can emerge victorious from its struggle against capital.

It is for this purpose that we are addressing you today, comrades. We are pointing to the importance of consciousness, i.e. the task of a deep and serious understanding of the current state of affairs – and we urge you to get to work, which will facilitate and prepare the victory of the social revolution.

For the reluctant and unwilling, we shall merely point to the example set by the capitalists. Even though they rule the world today, capitalists never stop looking for ways to increase their power. Today they are investigating how to improve the tools

⁵⁴ These so-called 'surveys' are in fact investigations. In social matters, governments or even private companies (for example, manufacturers' associations) organise surveys, i.e. investigations into these or those aspects of social life. There are also surveys on women's and children's work, surveys on the state of industry, etc. In Warsaw, the society for the support of industry, composed of capitalists and farmers, also organises a survey, because in order to maximise profits from their capital, they need to know the state of the country, etc – original note

of the trade, tomorrow they will be exploring ways to replace workers with machines; the next day they will be looking for new markets for their products – or rather, for the products they have appropriated – and so on. And we are supposed to fold our arms and confine ourselves to general grievances? No, we must get down to work! At first, we need to collect the material on which we can base serious indictments against the prevailing order. Then we need to equip ourselves with the means by which we can destroy the present system and with the necessary knowledge to create a better one. To achieve this, it is essential that we work conscientiously and according to a plan. Let each of us draw up a questionnaire, i.e. a series of questions to which we shall seek answers. If each one of us works in this way, we can build an edifice of knowledge from tiny blocks – workers' knowledge, knowledge of the prevailing oppression and of the need for a better social order. And when information on all that exists is gathered from all parts of our country and then reaches the working class, there will be a universal uproar of protest – and the moment when the people assert their rights will draw nearer.

The kind of questionnaires we are talking about have already been circulated around the country more than once: one of them was even printed. *Przedświt* will issue a new questionnaire soon. But whoever does not have a printed questionnaire, let him compose one himself. Let everyone write down how many people work in this or that factory; how much each category of worker is paid; how they are paid; what the health conditions are in the factory (on the premises etc.); what the rules at work are; how they are handled; what the working hours are; what the situation is with respect to night work, Sunday work, women's and children's work. Then everyone should write down how the

workers of this trade or the other live; what the cost of housing is; food (bread, meat, etc.), clothing; whether their wives and children work. In short, describe the worker's life at home and at work. Finally, let them add whether there are strikes in their town and what results they wield; what kind of incidents occur between workers and landlords or caretakers; what abuses there are, etc. If this work is carried out conscientiously, it will make for a good start.

As you see, the task is not difficult, and you probably realise how great its benefits will be. By gathering this kind of information from all over the country, we will create a knot that will unite all Polish workers into one whole. So let us get to work! Let everyone try to do their best and as much as they can. It is enough if you just send us the facts, and we at *Przedświt* will try to arrange them into a concise whole. For today, we are quoting a single letter from Poznan. A lot is missing from this letter. Each of you, reading this letter, will realise that it does not give a complete picture of the life of a worker. So try to fill in the blanks and do better. The beginning is the most difficult, and today we can only thank the author for making a start and giving us a range of information.

Attention. Please send letters using the address of *Przedświt*.

Write to :

Imprimerie polonaise

7, Route de Carouge

Geneve – Suisse

There are other ways to send letters from the Kingdom of Poland, though of course we cannot write about them publicly.

Poznan, May 1886

Due to the banishment decrees, I cannot write to you about the success of the *Przedświt* appeal; nor can I tell you publicly how the ranks of our small band are growing. Let this last fact simply be confirmed by one symptom: following your advice, we have started to collect data on the life of workers, their working conditions and so on. You have to admit that this is a significant step forward. Perhaps for the first time, the Polish workers in the Principality are beginning to realise what they are putting on the altar of patriotism – capitalist patriotism, to be precise.

But let us get to the facts – as of today, from Poznan.

The factory of the Zeyland company (Meblo etc.). The manufacturer Zeyland has been nicknamed ‘the disgusting one’, so great is his fame among the working population of our city. Let us add that he rightfully deserves this nickname: for not only has he slashed prices, but wages as well. The workers in his factory work piecemeal and earn 8–12 marks per week. However, it often happens that one, two, three or many workers go home on a Saturday with earnings of only 6–7 marks in their pockets. If anyone happens to get a lot of work one week and earns, say, 15 marks, he will not get it a second time, because he has earned ‘too much’. The next time, someone else will get the extra work, and for a lower wage too.

The ‘healthcare’ is a so-called governmental fund. Workers enrolled in this scheme belong to the third class.

The following incident testifies to the kind of terrorism that reigns in this factory. Citizen Wichrzycki, who had been employed at the factory for a long time, was accused of ‘pride’ by the factory foreman Hildebrandt. In reality, this is what

happened: Wichrzycki, who had already worked a lot in the big cities, did not possess the humility that unfortunately still exists in smaller towns. Eventually it came to a dispute between Wichrzycki and Hildebrandt, in which the carpenter Kulka also took part. Still on the same day, a paternal decree from Mr Zeyland was placed in Kulka's workshop, stating that Wichrzycki and Kulka, because they were mutineers, could go to prison and be expelled from the country. At the same time, they were not allowed to go back to their workplace. When Wichrzycki and Kulka demanded to speak to Zeyland, a policeman appeared instead, summoning them to the police commissioner. The latter commenced his work, but neither Wichrzycki nor Kulka let themselves be frightened. It is only a pity that they complied with the commissioner's summons in the first place because it was unlawful. In the end, Wichrzycki and Kulka themselves demanded to be dismissed from the factory.

The factory of the Cegielski company. In October 1885, this factory still employed 300 workers. Soon afterwards they began to sack people due to the reduced number of orders. By the time of the New Year holidays, 100 had been fired. Thus, workers who had wasted seven, ten or 17 years at Cegielski suddenly lost their jobs. Among others, the blacksmith Kolasiewicz, who had worked at the Factory for 17 years, was sacked. He was accused of no longer being "as strong as when he was young" and of "sometimes falling ill". Anyway, it is the blacksmiths of the factory who have had more than one run-in with foreman Litowski, a true pillar of the *Orędownik* and the so-called third

estate.⁵⁵ Give that our third estate is not very strong, however, the blacksmiths have to use their hard-earned money to pay Mr Litkowski for beer, etc, which serves to ‘fortify’ him.

Earnings at the factory range from 7–15 marks per week. Conditions have deteriorated considerably since the New Year. Working hours are from 8 in the morning until 4 in the evening.

Health insurance is factory-based – you pay 54 pfennigs a week. In case of illness 12 *trojaks* (1 mark 20 pfennig) are paid out daily. Third-class government insurance is 14 pfennigs, and the daily salary paid out in case of illness is 80 pfennigs. In case of death, both kinds of insurance pay out 64 marks.

The *Katz and Kutner shoe factory* is also notable for driving down wages. The workers are paid per piece, but so little that they earn between 8 and 10 marks for 11 hours of work per day. Moreover, the factory owners prefer to give them work and send them home to do it there. Sometimes it happens that a worker gets a job in the evening and is expected to complete it by the following morning. The workshops of these gentlemen are so dark that your eyesight will fail you, and under these circumstances errors are unavoidable. Even so, money is sometimes deducted from worker’s wages for ‘non-accuracy’. Mr Katz and Mr Kutner have yet another bad habit: they provide poor material. When the customer returns shoes for repair, the worker must pay a penalty and do the repair for free. Countless workers have been victimised by these kind of abuses. Health insurance is governmental; workers belong to the third class. In spite of the fact that the law sets the workers’ contributions at

⁵⁵ *Orędownik*: Polish-language periodical (journal) published in Poznan between 1871 and 1939. Created as a journal for the petty bourgeoisie, the paper dealt mainly with political and social issues, adhering strictly to the principles of Roman Catholicism – Translator

14 pfennigs, the foreman Szriwer makes them pay 15 pfennigs. Another kind of abuse comes in the shape of the following fraud: Messrs Katz and Pies, who have an arrangement to exploit workers' wages, have only eight apprentices working in their workshop – the rest of them work from home. Katz and Pies make the latter pay the full contribution to the health insurance fund, i.e. 21 pfennigs, despite the fact that the law requires the factory owners to pay one third, i.e. 8 pfennigs. As far as workshop facilities are concerned, it must be noted that there is no drinking water there, and the workers have to walk at least 100 steps to get a drink, which takes a lot of time.

Humel's bookbinding workshop is so dark that you have to turn on the light in the daytime to see what you are doing. Moreover, it is damp and cramped. The courtyard is only seven metres long and eight metres wide. There are toilets in the courtyard, which are constructed in a very primitive way, and the smelly air comes in through the windows into the hole called the workshop. Wages are about 9–12 marks per week.

The *shoemaker Skoraczewski* has three apprentices whom he makes work from 6 am to 10 pm without any breaks, and whom he beats mercilessly. If one of the apprentices earns 'too much', money is deducted from his wages to rectify this! Wages are per piece; weekly earnings are 7–12 marks. The esteemed gaffer is sometimes not content with this policy, so he tears the heels off the finished piece of work, orders it to be done again, and 'deducts' from the earnings. Mr Gaffer wants a 'third' estate and is a veritable pillar of the *Orędownik*. Health insurance is governmental; workers belong to the third class.

Urbanowski's machine manufacturing plant employs around 80 people. This year's crisis, however, is hardly giving the workers anything to do; they are working from 8am to 4pm,

but sometimes only four hours a day. The company's health insurance is divided into three classes. In the first class the contribution is 25 pfennigs, the payout 7 marks and 50 pfennigs per week; in the second class 20 pfennigs contribution and 5 marks payout; in the third class 15 pfennigs contribution and 3 marks 50 pfennigs payout. Urbanowski regards himself as the father of the workers: he taunts them, calls them idiots, etc. – and at times he hits them too. Sadly, our people are so badly enslaved that they endure all this with humility.

I will give more details in a future letter.

Wola.

Recht Voor Allen (1880)

The following section includes excerpts from the Dutch radical newspaper Recht Voor Allen (Justice for All), as well as the trade unionist paper De Werkmansbode (The Workman's Messenger), revealing the importance of Marx's inquiry in the Netherlands. The first text, the appeal for inquiry itself, has been reproduced in full, including all of the abridged questions: these were slightly edited by the author, Nieuwenhuis, in order to make the inquiry relevant to workers' situations in the Netherlands. All excerpts have been translated into English by Riva Boutylkova.

Recht Voor Allen (Justice for All), 30 October 1880

To the trade unions and workers' associations in the Netherlands and to all workers who want to help us!

The state of the working classes is the subject of the greatest ignorance. Only now and then is the corner of the veil around this lifted. The government does not interfere at all and instead passes it by indifferently, giving the general saying: that is no government business. As if the wellbeing of the largest class, the majority of citizens, is not a necessary condition for the wellbeing of the country!

I want to try to obtain some information about this situation and therefore ask for accurate insights, because only with the cooperation of all the workers in the cities and in the country is it possible to conduct such an investigation. And yet the situation must first be known before we can determine the means of a cure. Therefore, I intend to carry out a survey of the condition of the workers in the Netherlands, and for this I urgently request the help of the workers.

To this end, I have prepared over 60 questions, which are numbered, and may I request that any answers are given the same number as the question. It is, of course, not necessary to answer all the questions, but the questions one can and will answer, should be filled in as clearly and precisely as possible. The name of the sender will in no case be disclosed, unless expressly permitted, but it should still be given to me, in order to be able to correspond with the participant if necessary.

Please send all replies to my address: Mr. F. DOMELA NIEUWENHUIS, Sundastraat 28, *The Hague*.

With confidence in your assistance and an urgent appeal for the cooperation of all those who are able to provide the necessary information, I hope to be able to collect data that will give the opportunity to truthfully disclose the situation of the working class.

1. What is your trade?
2. Are you employed by a capitalist or by an association?
Name them.
3. How many persons are there at work? What age and sex are they?
4. At what age are children employed?
5. How many supervisors and officials are there, who are not

- ordinary salaried employees?
6. Are there any apprentices and how many?
 7. Does your patron only work for customers of the place, for the domestic market or for the foreign export?
 8. Is the workplace in the city or outside?
 9. Is your industrial work sufficient for you to live on, or do you do agricultural work on top of it?
 10. Do you work by hand or by machine?
 11. Is steam used as a motive force?
 12. Give a description of the technical part of your work, and the effort of it?
 13. Give a description of the workplace from a health point of view: ventilation, temperature, humidity, inhalation of dust, best rooms and cleanliness.
 14. Is there a health surveillance of the workplaces?
 15. Do any special diseases occur in your profession?
 16. Are the machines installed to prevent all accidents?
 17. How is the lighting?
 18. In case of fire, are there sufficient means of escape?
 19. How does your patron deal with the workers in case of accidents?
 20. For home working, describe the state of your workroom?
Are you helped by others (wife and children)?
 21. How many hours do you work per day and per week?
 22. How many days off do you have?
 23. When are the meal breaks?
 24. Is the meal taken inside or outside the workplace? Regularly or not?
 25. Do you work during meal breaks?
 26. Is there nightwork?
 27. How long do children under 16 work?

28. Are there schools for children in your profession?
29. What regulations exist for tardiness?
30. How is overtime dealt with?
31. How much time do you lose going to and from the work-place?
32. Are you hired by day, by week, by month?
33. On what terms can you leave or be sent away?
34. What is the penalty for breach of contract?
35. Do you work for appointed times, or regularly throughout the year? If you work at appointed times, how do you live in between?
36. Are you paid by timepieces or by the product?
37. If you are paid for your time, is it by the hour or by the day?
38. Is there extra pay for overtime?
39. How is the piece rate determined?
40. In the case of piecework, is quality used in order to reduce wages?
41. How are you paid? How long is your employer's credit for labour?
42. Have you noticed that late payment often forces you to go to the Lombards [creditors] and get money at high interest? Or incur debts? Do you know of cases where workers lost their wages due to bankruptcy?
43. Is the wage paid by employers or intermediaries?
44. How high is your wage in money? How high is that of women and children?
45. What was the highest wage in your workshop in the last month? And the lowest?
46. How high is the highest wage for piecework? And the lowest?
47. Are your wages paid entirely in cash or otherwise?

48. What are the prices of: a) rent, repairs, insurance, purchase and maintenance of furniture, lighting, heating, water; b) food: bread, vegetables, potatoes, milk, eggs, butter, coffee, sugar, beef, tobacco, meat, fat; c) dress, bowassing, soap; d) other expenses such as: postage, school fees, paper, sheets, contributions; e) expenses caused by your company; f) tax.
49. Give a weekly or annual budget of income and expenses.
50. Have you noticed a greater increase in food than in wages?
51. Report any change of wages in new times.
52. Report wages in times of standstill. And in good times.
53. Do you know about workers made redundant by the introduction of machines?
54. Has the duration and fatigue of labour been increased or reduced by the development of machinery?
55. Have you known ordinary workers who, at the age of 50, could retire and live on their earned money?
56. On average, how long can a worker work in your profession?
57. Are there resistance funds? Send the regulations of these.
58. Have there ever been strikes and with what consequences?
59. Do you know of any cases where workers are supported by the government against illegal acts and exploitation?
60. Are there health insurance funds, funeral buses, etc. in your profession? Send the rules.
61. Is accession voluntary or compulsory? Are they under the supervision of the patron?
62. Are there cooperative associations in your profession? How do they operate? Do they use workers like the capitalists?
63. What is the condition of the workers in your profession physically, mentally and morally?

On request of postage, this item will be sent to all who request it. Any such request will be pleasant to me.

De Werkmansbode (The Workman's Messenger), 06
November 1880

A Great Work.

Mr. F. Domela Nieuwenhuis in The Hague has circulated a letter to the trade and workmen's associations in the Netherlands, with no less than 63 questions about everything and anything related to life and work, the family and everything else of the workman.

The purpose of these questions is to receive answers from everyone who can provide them, but first and foremost from the workers themselves, who are best placed to provide them.

And what does Mr. Nieuwenhuis want to do with the answers? To collect and process them, to shed the desired light on the situation of the working classes, which is now obscure, to spread knowledge of that situation, about which the greatest ignorance currently reigns and without which it is not possible to make the desired improvements.

This work by Mr Nieuwenhuis deserves appreciation and, above all, cooperation. Without the latter, he cannot possibly deliver what he intends to. May there be no lack of this cooperation on the part of the workmen.

No one should be afraid to give answers. Mr Nieuwenhuis guarantees the confidentiality of the names of all those who send him answers, and one shouldn't be discouraged by the effort. Everyone must only answer as many of the 63 questions

as he is able to or as they think desirable and useful. If someone finds the formulation of answers a bit difficult for himself, he might find a friend or colleague who will lend him a helping hand.

The cooperation must be general and, if possible, extend not only to all branches of industry but also to all factories and workplaces; without that the survey, as Mr. N. calls his work, cannot be considered complete.

It is therefore not enough to leave this work to the management of his association, which usually does all things so well, but the cooperation of everyone is necessary in order to distribute the questions among other workmen and to incite and urge them to answer.

It would therefore perhaps be more effective if Mr Nieuwenhuis, instead of one, sent a hundred or more copies to each organization, with the encouragement or request to assist him in the general distribution.

In the meantime, may everyone do what he can to obtain the success which Mr. Nieuwenhuis' work so amply deserves, especially in the interest of the working classes.

Copies of the paper containing the questions may be obtained free of charge from Mr F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, Sundastraat, The Hague.

B. H. Heldt

Recht Voor Allen, 06 November 1880

Announcements.

With thanks we received from F. G. in Amsterdam 25 cents in stamps. He sent this in the hope that all subscribers to "Recht voor Allen" would follow his example, in order to cover the necessary expenses connected with the workers' enquiry which was started in last week's issue. He would like forms with questions to be made for this purpose as well as expense papers, because in that way the answers can be given more easily and they can be kept in a bound form later. Maybe this can be good, but we don't see the immediate necessity of this.

Furthermore he points out the weight of sleeping quarters and dwellings, for which he insists on an accurate description of them. Especially his closing words are important to all of us: "This survey is of such importance that every honest and truthful and progressive worker must give it his full sympathy. All trade unions should feel called upon to deal with these very important questions before all other matters in their meetings, for each workplace, to make this work fruitful.

We are hoping that this call will not be in vain.

In addition to the address given by Mr. Domela Nieuwenhuis, the forms are also available from H. Gerhard, Binnen Brouwerstraat 30, Amsterdam.

Recht Voor Allen, 13 November 1880

Submitted

Statistics for Working Men

The excellent idea of Mr. Domela Nieuwenhuis must be vigorously put into practice, but if this is left to the single workman, I fear little will come of it; the boards must therefore take the matter to heart and need to do comparatively little to do this.

I would like to point out that the management of each trade union is trying to find someone to distribute and collect the list and to ask questions; in places where there is no trade union, the workmen's association does this. If the person appointed is a diligent man, he will probably succeed in getting the list, in whole or in part, properly initiated by the persons concerned.

Possibly, and this would be highly desirable and useful, the workers' statisticians thus formed will then be able to unite to form a permanent *bureau for workers' statistics*, which will send their statements annually or, preferably, quarterly to a general secretary, and will hold an annual meeting that will discuss the means for the statistics to increasingly serve their purpose of giving an overview of the situation proven by figures.

And if associations and not individuals can spare a small annual contribution, this goal can be achieved: the contribution need not be large, because most depends on the zeal and suitability of the correspondents.

The great importance of good statistics to the labour movement demands swift implementation.

Amsterdam, Nov. '80 J. A. F.

De Werkmansbode, 25 December 1880

A subscriber reports the following:

In the *Supplement* to your Magazine of November 20th, I read the questions posed by Mr. F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, with the purpose of “shedding the desired light on the situation of the working class, to spread knowledge of that situation, without which it will not be possible to make the desired improvements successfully.” While reading these questions, it seemed to me as if I had come across them earlier in another language. I had doubts about this impression, since I had read in various newspapers – this one included – the fact that Mr. Nieuwenhuis had compiled the collection of questions. To be sure, I searched among various papers and soon found a document entitled: “*Publication de la Revue Socialiste. Enquête Ouvrière.*” It contains a questionnaire of 101 questions. I put it next to Mr. Nieuwenhuis’ questions and the resemblance proved striking. The first question in the questionnaire reads: *Quel est votre métier?* Mr. N. asks: What is your trade? Question two: *Est ce que l’atelier dans lequel vous travaillez appartient à un capitaliste ou à une compagnie d’actionnaires? Donnez les noms des capitalistes employeurs ou des directeurs de la compagnie?* At Mr. N.: Are you employed by a capitalist or by an association? Name them. Questions three and four of the questionnaire are summed up in one with Mr. N. This is also the case with others. Some are not found with him. E.g. no. 101: *Observations générales.* This explains the difference and the number of the 63 questions of Mr. N. and the 101 of the questionnaire. Whoever wants to make further enquiries should consult the “*Revue Socialiste*” which, according to its own statement, also has an agent in this country in Mr. de Graaf, publisher in Haarlem. Would Mr. L’écluse, in St.

Cloud, the editor of the “*Revue*” or Mr. Dervaux, its publisher in Paris, have given a somewhat extensive translation of the questions posed by Mr. Nieuwenhuis? If so, it would have been only decent to name Mr Nieuwenhuis as the author. Or would the reverse be more likely? I leave the decision to the reader and limit myself to these two remarks: (1) that, according to the cover, the French document was printed in 25,000 copies and is sent among others to all who ask for it and (2) that, although it does not contain a date, it appeared in print quite some time before “the questions from Mr Nieuwenhuis.”

De Werkmansbode, 01 January 1881

Dear Editor!

Your subscriber must be very happy with his discovery of the questions I distributed to you in order to report them in your magazine; to me they hardly seem worthy of mention. I have never given it up as my work and have never claimed credit for it, but have tried, following the example of others in France and Germany, to carry out a survey, not because I enjoyed it so much - I have more work than I can manage alone - but simply because no one else was doing it. If someone, for example, is willing to take over my task, I will gladly send him all the documents, which cause a mountain of work, the results of which are impossible to draw up for the time being.

I had already been thinking about such questions for a long time and had already asked some of them when the *Enquête ouvrière* appeared in the *Revue Socialiste*. I greeted it with joy, especially as there was enough material in those 101 questions to make something out of them for us. This is what I did and that is

how the questions came out into the world. So little did I make a secret of it, that I showed the French questions to people with whom I came into contact, in order to make them an example for us. The cooperation I receive from all sides proves that it has been received in good taste.

It interests me very little where something good comes from, but more so that if it is good, I can use it to my advantage, since I apply the principle: *je prends mon bien ou je le trouve* (I take the good where I find it). If the writer thinks that I am gaining special honour by this, then he is wrong, I only wanted to know about the situation of the working class. Also, the most important part of the work is not the questions, but the processing of the answers.

You will oblige me with the posting of these rules about the discovery of your subscriber.

Yours,

F. Domela Nieuwenhuis.

The Hague, 27 Dec. '80

Workers' Responses to the Inquiry

*The following selected responses to the Dutch inquiry have been translated from Welcker's 1978 publication of the complete Dutch responses (in *Heren en Arbeiders*), discovered in the archives of Lodewijk van Deyssel. While a partial and initial translation, it is hoped that a complete translation of the responses into English can be undertaken in the future.*

12. Give a description of the technical part of your work, and the effort required.

“My work requires a great deal of vigilance, so that I am chased from one thing to another all day long... [he has to] work more than 20 vats 3 times a day for 1 1/2 hours to pour the barrels of the aforementioned dirty bone-char [that] fills 4 feet into vats with bone-char water and hydrochloric acid, brought to the boil by electric current [and further running water in the juices...]. I still carry on a lot of other work, but these are too diverse to [...] write down.”

‘G Enters’, Sugar Factory Worker, Amsterdam (3).

“It is not only a theoretical, but also a very practical subject, a

heavy effort.”

‘J. H Assenbroek’, *Shipwright, Secretary of Eendracht, Amsterdam* (4).

“Very tiring and dirty.”

‘A. Laarman’, *Machinist, Dordrecht* (8).

“Our work is terribly dirty and filthy and sometimes dangerous with heavy lifting, the dust of the cast iron is harmful to the chest, also one does not always have the tools one needs, and this creates a lot of trouble for the workman.”

Anonymous, Ironworker, Dordrecht (9).

“Of the ten boys who from school onwards have kept to the trade of blacksmith fire-worker, one becomes a matador⁵⁶, four or five become a blacksmith and the rest are masters or foremen. The latter are subordinates or foremen of the fire-worker, like a builder to a mason. As for the effort, it is to be regretted that some parents let their sons choose this profession, which seems very attractive to the boys; that processing of gleaming iron, which causes the sparks to splash around the ears, but which makes them, if they are not built well, through the heavy labour and the dust, coals and sulphur fumes, either old men, or sends them to an early grave (certain it is still ripe with death!)”

‘W Ansing’, *Blacksmith, Amsterdam* (12).

“Hard Work”

⁵⁶ The meaning of ‘matador’ in the Dutch original is unclear. This could refer to the use of blacksmiths’ prongs, shaped like a bull’s horns, or perhaps to indicate a position of authority in the workshop.

'H. D. van de Wiel', *Moulder, Rotterdam* (13).

"Our profession is not an art, but requires knowledge and a lot of care, and in warm weather a lot of effort."

Bread Baker's Assistant, member of 'Loon naar werk' ('wages for work'), a Bakers' Union (18).

"[Explains in detail his trade and how it differs from carpentry. The wood must not be too wet or too dry; the trade requires alertness and caution, a lot of effort and study ...] If not, the work is messed up: no nail or paintbrush is at one's disposal to hide this from the eye. Imagination and style, the worker thinks about all that: and a mountain of troubles awaits you. Hence we often work after bed, yes, lethargy and sadness is very often the result of the work of the cabinetmaker and with this effort of the mind comes almost always the effort of the body, through which our work always comes too expensive in the eyes of the patrons, few trades will exist where one has to stick so much to the work as with making furniture. [From everything it would appear that] a cabinet maker who can bless his work until his old age must exert himself mentally and physically."

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker and President of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association 'Eendracht', Groningen (20).

"Our work demands as much effort in the mind as in the body."

'A. ter Borg', *Furniture Maker, secretary of 'Eendracht', Groningen* (21).

"According to our trade, we are subject to much exertion."

W. Croeze, Furniture Maker, member of Eendracht, Groningen (22).

“As I am a cabinet-maker it requires much effort on my part because we make a good job of it and because our trade is beset by all kinds of accidents.”

S. Wierda, Furniture Maker, member of Eendracht, Groningen (24).

“The typesetter and the printer, who have mastered their trade, must work with head and hands, especially the typesetter, who must be able to read written text well, must have some idea of imaginative and decorative work, must know about the necessary trade items, etc. The effort is obvious. There is no real physical labour. The printer must master his press as well as the hand press, and through knowledge of the typeface received from the typesetter, of the paper and of the correct printing force of his press, ensure that the printed matter is good.”

J. G. Dohe, Typesetter, secretary of the executive committee of the Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

“A look at a printing office near you will show you.”

D. Nanning, Typesetter, Appingedam (26).

“When I work, the effort is great.”

S. Zeijl, Tailor, Sneek (28).

“Some of the work is done in a stooped posture, and some of the muscles are overworked in relation to the others.”

W. Vervloet, Ornament Worker, The Hague (30).

“The work for me consists in the preparation of commissions which are to be delivered, the articles are more than five thousand in number and all have names or numbers of foreign origin

which one must know as well as the prices since we are charged with the sale to shopkeepers both inside and outside the city.”

C. Van der Linden, Warehouse Assistant, Amsterdam (33).

“Now the Recruits have their part in the postal wagon service that starts at half past three in the morning until half past nine in the evening...”

G. van Loijengoed, Postman, Amsterdam (52).

“When one arrives at the train, which must be done half an hour before departure, one begins with recording the train and putting the numbers on a note which has to be given to each main station, one then inspects the train to ensure everything is in a decent state, before loading goods so that the sweat runs down one’s back until it is time to leave, then one gets into the wagon and checks that all goods with lists and addresses correspond, unloads this at different places where such people have to load at the same time what has to be shipped, then takes note of all defects and irregularities on the train and takes note of arrival and departure times and what is being transported and all that comes with it. Regardless of the nature of one’s responsibilities, we have to write reports which are issued to us so that after the shift one must sit down and write until the middle of the night because these reports have to be handed in the next morning before coming on duty.”

J. G. Sulzle, Conductor on the Netherlands Railway, Rotterdam (54).

“We now carry 1200 bales with seven workers from 8am to 4pm, and there is no break for lunch, and if there is no time we go up to the mast to continue the work.”

C. S., Ship's Rigger, Rotterdam (56).

13. Give a description of the workplace from a health point of view: ventilation, temperature, humidity, inhalation of dust, best rooms and cleanliness.

“Adequate ventilation, no problems with cutlery rooms or mess or dampness.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“Bedding and a lot of dust and only one best room.”

W. v. Klaphek, Factory Worker, 'sweating for my bread', Utrecht (2).

“According to question 13, the workshop is composed of a square stone building with a wooden roof, of which one side is closed but provided with two glass windows, which not only let in some light but also do not withhold it during rainstorms. On the other side were 10 holes, designed to let through the foul-smelling vapour, which is produced by boiling water with hydrochloric acid and dirty bone-char, which is in tubs, as this would cause the wooden roof to rot. At the front of the workshop (called the bone-char laundry) is a small door which serves as an entrance to the street. At the rear side of the workshop there are again two large doors about the size of large barn doors. These serve to bring in the dirty bone-char, and also to discharge the washed bone-char, so that they are always open, allowing all types of weather to enter, which is very harmful to health. One season heavy heat and another unbearable coldness due to draught. [When pouring out the bottles of hydrochloric acid, which] gives off such a suffocating vapour, I almost feel the blood burst out

of my nose and mouth from coughing because of the heavy stimulation of the chest by inhalation.”

G Enters, Sugar Factory Worker, Amsterdam (3).

“There are two best rooms for a staff of 300, but they are cleaned twice a day.”

J. H. Assenbroek, Shipwright, Secretary of Eendracht, Amsterdam (4).

“[I] work in a workplace which is highly unhealthy. When you enter the workshop, you are greeted with the dirtiest cellar and the foul stench of the toilets. Fresh air can hardly find its way in. However, it seems to compete with the aforementioned stench for the lives of 4 to 5 workers as much as possible and shorten it. But when the weather is hot, you will ask – not even then, because then the draught is not able to suppress the stench by day, and at night? then the patron is afraid of the cats (thieves) entering. The workshop is located behind the residential street, completely separated from humanity. No wonder that a 25-year-old muscular and strong young man, who worked for 6 years in various similar workshops, and then 5 years in the one mentioned, has been bedridden with fever and rheumatism for 3 months now.”

Anonymous, Coppersmith, Amsterdam (6).

“Our workshops are as we found them and as they are used by the Royal Netherlands Navy and we arrange them according to our interests without worrying about the health of the workers.”

A. J. Lansen, Labourer, Vlissingen (7).

“Very much in winter, very cold.”

A. Laarman, Machinist, Dordrecht (8).

“The forge, approximately 50 feet long, 20 feet wide and 15 feet high contains seven coal fires, which swallow the smoke through the chimneys, with a heavy temperature a lot of smoke and vapour must find its way through the open door or window. The cutlery room is located on the shore above the water and is accessible to all workers within the gate. Four people can sit at the same time; when leaving the workshop one is exposed to rain and cold which often causes severe colds, because one is sweaty due to the fireworks.”

Bosma, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (11).

“The forge where I work is 120 metres long, 50 metres wide and 30 metres high. It is two buildings in one. Containing the forge and benchwork of the boat making shop and the forge and benchwork of the boiler making shop. They are still separated by a bulkhead, rigging or wall. Every day 35 to 40 large and small coal fires burn; partly with and partly without chimney caps. Ventilation is provided by windows along the two buildings at the top of the roof. In most cases, the wind blows the smoke and coal vapour downwards rather than upwards. It is therefore remarkable that the directors and vice-directors, going through the factory section, seldom choose their route along these forges, but rather along the neighbouring building, nicknamed the brugstraat (bridge street), because the Kattenburgerbrug (cathedral bridge) is erected there. This bridge street is separated by a wall, here and there by large windows, which cannot be opened, but give a view into the forge. The privies or cutlery-rooms are on the side of the shore and in such a way that during high tide one can reach them by looking

up and laying down planks and beams. Five or six men can sit next to each other and if one does not carefully hold the loosened and tied items against one's body, the naked part will come into contact with that of the man or boy sitting next to you."

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

"It is better in the foundry than in the spinning shop where there is no heat and no dust so it is not unhealthy there and there is enough fresh air."

Foundry Worker, Hengelo (14).

"This question makes me pause, I can answer it, but not in a pleasant way, because the spinning mills leave much to be desired in this area, but this cannot be changed. There is about 70 to 80 degrees of heat. In addition, during the winter months the windows are nailed shut so that no fresh air can enter, and also the inhalation of dust is very bad in some workshops and with it the foul smell of the toilets."

Porter, Hengelo (15).

"It is not so healthy in the weaving mills, not that there is so much heat, but because so many people are gathered there, the air is spoiled."

Weaver, Hengelo (16).

"Many private workshops are humid, and there is much inhalation of flour dust and coal vapour, which is injurious to health, and there are many workers who are susceptible to draughts."

Bread Baker's Assistant, Bread Bakers' Companions Association 'Loon naar werk' (wages for work), Amsterdam (18).

“The workshop measures 40 m by 15 m and is divided into upstairs and downstairs. The lower part is again divided into five sections. The first two are offices and warehouses. The third is a workshop for spinning, the fourth is used as a processing area, and one half of the fifth is used as a drying area and the other as a machine room. Between the 3rd and 4th section is the staircase to the top. The office is also connected to the upper section by a staircase. The upper section is a one-piece attic used as a weaving mill. The long side walls rise six feet above the floor, on which the roof rests. The staircase is covered from the draught. The light comes through windows in the roof, and there are also windows in the small side walls; all these windows can be opened. The three cutlery rooms are outside the factory. The workshop is dry. When the weather is good, the dust can be discharged through the open windows; when the weather is bad, it can sometimes get dusty, because our work generates quite a bit of dust. Cleanliness is entrusted to our care, i.e. the boys or we ourselves keep the floor and the looms clean, the rest remains a mess until now. I say so far, because it is a new factory, we have only been working there for six months, but in the previous factory nothing was cleaned except the floor. There is no drinking water at all.”

W. P. G. Helsdingen, Carpet Weaver, Rotterdam (19).

“Very low and subdued, for years there has been no sight of whitewash or water for cleaning, and the humidity is very low due to the many substances caused by dirt and the various woodworking processes. Ventilation rather good. Best room as dirty as you can't imagine. A whore would by no means want to put his pig in such a cage. This is the truth! My comrades have told me not to forget it.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association 'Eendracht', Groningen (20).

“The workshop as it is now is going fine because it was cleaned in the summer but then it had not been touched for 5 years. The temperature is sometimes very low because one cannot see out of one's eyes because of the smoke.”

S. Wierda, Furniture Maker, member of Eendracht, Groningen (24).

“On the whole, the workshops can be called quite bad from a health point of view. As the typesetter needs good light, the workshops are usually located in the highest part of the building, and usually have low ceilings. Besides the polluted air, the workers inhale lead particles and dust, the result of which is that everyone looks like a ghost. And when we add to this the many gaslights, which consume so much fresh air, in the absence of sufficient ventilation, you can imagine the result. A few workshops make a favourable exception to this.”

J. G. Dohe, Typesetter, secretary of Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

“There is nothing here that leaves something to be desired.”

D. Naning, Typesetter, Appingedam (26).

“The effort [is] great, because I have to do my work in a room in which I sleep, eat and drink with my wife and 5 children, and have to do everything here.”

S Zeijl, Tailor, Sneek (28).

“The workshop consists of a wagon which, because of poor

construction or age, is prone to getting cold and other illnesses due to the passage of time, wetness during rain, drought and dusty windows, which are defective.”

J. G. Sulzle, Conductor on the Netherlands Railway, Rotterdam (54).

“Open air mostly; when working inside the warehouses sugar smell, inhaling a lot of dust when processing spices, indigo etc.; Best rooms unprecedented opulence, everywhere messy.”

H. Hendriks, Wagonbearer's Servant, Amsterdam (57).

15. Are there any particular diseases in your profession?

“Not much other than colds and coughs.”

W. v. Klaphek, Factory Worker, Utrecht (2).

“Coughing because of the heavy excitation of the chest due to the inhalation [of hydrochloric acid vapours].”

J. H. Assenbroek, Shipwright, Amsterdam (4).

“Yes, the money fever.”

A. J. Lanssen, Labourer, Vlissingen (7).

“Breast disease and lung disease amongst wage workers.”

A. H. Janssen, Carriage Forger, Secretary of the Metalworkers' Association 'Eendracht', Arnhem (10).

“Yes. Shortness of breath. Heavy cough which causes all the consequences at a late age, but affects the youthful too, ruining the eyes and ears by 40.”

Bosma, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (11).

“The shortness of breath and the coughing of many of my comrades often makes me think: would not your lungs and breasts be full of dust, vapour and sulphur? Because of such illness and injury I could not do my work, and after three days I was still collecting black dust from my nose and chest.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“Because of heat and prolonged exertion of the body. E.g. heavy cough, cold, fever, cramps, etc.”

H. Kuhr, former Baker's Companion and now self-employed shopkeeper with no staff, Amsterdam (17).

“Many chest ailments due to harmful inhalation.”

Baker's Assistant, member of Loon naar werk, Amsterdam (18).

“Most weavers become shaky and nervous, chest ailments are also the dreaded enemies of weavers.”

W. P. G. Helsdingen, Carpet Weaver, Rotterdam (19).

Yes, in the more than 12½ years of our Association's existence, 11 have died, of which no less than 7 have died of chest complaints and teering [tuberculosis], and one died insane.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association 'Eendracht', Groningen (20).

“The workers in our profession mostly die of consumption.”

A. ter Borg, Furniture Maker, Secretary of Eendracht, Groningen (21).

“Lots of ‘teering’ [tuberculosis].”

J. G. Dohe, Typesetter, Secretary of Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

16. Are the machines designed to prevent accidents?

“No.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“As for the position and operation of the machines, this does not allow them to be operated without danger, so that we ourselves are forced to operate them out of a concern for our own preservation. [The boiler is very dangerous] yes, even a few weeks ago a hole blew in it, although this did not cause an accident then because the stoker was not standing in front of the boiler at the moment of the explosion, being occupied with throwing up coal or some other necessary activity. [The hole has not been sufficiently closed, a new plate should have been put in] because the old one which is still in there is not thicker than a new penny, and this has to withstand the force of 45 pounds of steam night and day. [He himself also has to be very careful] to protect the other workers from accidents and also not to cause the patron (whom I will call by this name) any great damage in case of the slightest negligence. [Great accidents can happen because of this [i.e. too little light at night] as the above mentioned tanks are completely open from above [so that there is the danger of falling into a boiling hydrochloric acid tank] which has already happened several times and the workers had to stay at home for 5 or 6 weeks.”

G. Enters, Sugar Factory Worker, Amsterdam (3).

“It is going quite well. We are in favour of no accidents, because too much working time is lost.”

A. J. Lansen, Labourer, Vlissingen (7).

“No.”

A. H. Janssen, Carriage Forger, Secretary of Metalworkers' Unity, Arnhem (10).

“No! Scissors, punches and drills are out in the open for everyone to use. I came to the factory as a boy and was unfamiliar with these machines. A man under whose care I was placed as a boy ordered me to cut a piece of plate in half; my fingers got caught between the plate and the knife, because I did not have enough strength to press the plate down, with the result that the flesh came off the front and middle fingers to the bone. This accident is still visible on my right hand. In order not to be too long in answering questions, I will leave it at that, as I can relate terrible scenes of accidents caused by the machines, of which I was aware, in answering this question 16.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

38. Is there extra pay for overtime?

“Yes, three cents an hour.”

J. H. Assenbroek, Shipwright, Secretary of Eendracht, Amsterdam (4).

“None.”

A. Laarman, Machinist, Dordrecht (8).

“No.”

Anonymous, Ironworker, Dordrecht (9).

“Sunday double and night single.”

A. H. Janssen, Carriage Forger, secretary of the Metalworkers' Association 'Eendracht', Arnhem (10).

“Not for me.”

H. D. van de Wiel, Moulder, Rotterdam (13).

“In factories, in case of long overtime, but one or two hours are not taken into account. In ordinary bakeries the weekly wage remains the same.”

H. Kuhr, Former Bakers' Assistant, now self-employed shopkeeper with no staff, Amsterdam (17).

“No, night and day and overtime are paid according to the same standard.”

W. P. G. Helsdingen, Carpet Weaver, Rotterdam (19).

“The same wages as are paid for regular work.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker and President of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association 'Eendracht', Groningen (20).

“In some cases overtime is paid a bit more, but the regular daily wage is the rule. There are also workplaces where they pay less than for day work.”

J. G. Dohe, Typesetter, secretary of the executive committee of the Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

“Even for more work than the tariff requires, an effort is made to pay as little as possible.”

J. Buis, Cutter (tailoring), Sneek (27).

“No, they do not.”

W. Vervloet, Ornament Worker, The Hague (30).

39. How is the piece rate determined?

“One has to work so fast and heartily for daily wages that we could not do it any faster with piecework, so there is no piecework here.”

Anonymous, Ironworker, Dordrecht (9).

“There are no rates for piecework. It is assumed. When the management or the bosses do not know about the work, it sometimes happens that the workman is in good shape, but when he wants to take advantage of this opportunity and earns more than 30 cents on every guilder, then he or someone else who takes on such work later, will be deducted so much, that with the best effort one cannot earn more than 1/5 of the principal sum. After some haggling and weighing up, I receive a written note, signed by the assistant director, saying f. 1.25 per item, i.e. f. 1.25 for the 100 items. All Saturday evenings I and my foremen are paid for the hours we worked from Friday morning until Thursday evening at normal wages. Now the work is finished and we have received f. 100. so f 25. is left over: this is extra income and is paid out when the work is at the place where it is meant to be, because only then one has the full conviction that it is satisfactory. In most cases this takes no longer than 14 days after delivery.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“If it is done well, they will be paid, otherwise not.”

H. D. van de Wiel, Moulder, Rotterdam (13).

“In the old days, people worked on weekly wages in our factory. A carpet weaver earned f 7 per week, and so did a mat weaver. This wage was 50 cents more or less for some, but I believe that married people usually got more. A carpet weaver used to make 60 old sheets of carpet per week. A mat weaver usually made 12 mats a week. When I joined the factory 15 years ago, people started to work by the piece. Now a carpet weaver usually makes double the amount he used to, and so does a mat weaver. The unit wage was set at 8½ to 9 cents per yard of carpet and 45 cents for a mat. I don't know how this calculation was made; I was just a boy at the time. The patron did not do badly, I do know that.”

W. P. G. Helsdingen, Carpet Weaver, Rotterdam (19).

“Supply and demand is everything here too - even beer is haggled with the work in the manner of a merchant. Even for more work than the tariff requires, they try to give as little as possible, which sometimes leads to unfair commissions.”

J. Buis, Cutter (tailoring), Sneek (27).

“In the beginning calculated by time, later by competition.”

W. Vervloet, Ornament Worker, The Hague (30).

50. Have you noticed a greater increase in [the price of] food than in wages?

“Decrease of wages.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“A resounding yes.”

J. H. Assenbroek, Shipwright, Secretary of Eendracht, Amsterdam (4).

“For a very long time.”

A. Laarman, Machinist, Dordrecht (8).

“Yes.”

Anonymous, Ironworker, Dordrecht (9).

“The expenses mentioned above or rather asked for were investigated by the association Concordia in old Amsterdam newspapers and found that for 25 years now foodstuffs have been increased by 25 per cent and wages by 10 per cent since then, so a difference of 15 per cent.”

Bosma, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (11).

“According to the market prices of the trustees in Amsterdam compared with 25 years ago, wages have risen by 10% and food by 25%, so the shortage on the side of the workers is 15%.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“During my seven years of marriage I have noticed that needs have increased yet my salary has been reduced in the last three years due to a lack of work.”

H. D. van de Wiel, Moulder, Rotterdam (13).

“It is my firm opinion, based on observation, that the prices of the necessaries of life have risen much more than wages.”

W. P. G. Helsdingen, Carpet Weaver, Rotterdam (19).

“In some cases they have, in some they have not.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of the Furniture Manufacturers' Association 'Eendracht', Groningen (20).

“When I calculate all the year round and as I told you in item 9, if nothing comes in between, I have nothing left over.”

S. Wierda, Furniture Maker, member of Eendracht, Groningen (24).

“Yes, there is.”

J. G. Dohe, Typesetter, Secretary of the executive committee of the Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

“Yes, from rye bread and other necessities. My wages remained the same.”

D. Nanning, Typesetter, Appingedam (26).

“The increase in foodstuffs is very bad. The earnings 15 per cent increased, but the work is made much better than before.”

S. Zeijl, Tailor, Sneek (28).

“Yes.”

W. Vervloet, Ornament Worker, The Hague (30).

“I have often seen this increase in winter and in spring when

the big merchants could prosper while my wife bought food of lesser quality.”

C. van der Linden, Warehouse Assistant, Amsterdam (33).

53. Do you know of workers made redundant by the introduction of machines?

“No.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“Yes, some.”

Anonymous, Ironworker, Dordrecht (9).

“Yes, many. Tools in the workshops like scissors–punching– and drilling machines, which are turned by hand require for a plate of $\frac{1}{2}$ English dm 3 persons at the wheel and 2 or more at the plate: according to the length of the plate and subsequently heavier plate more workmen, if this works with steam, then the wheelwrights are superfluous and thus the machines are useless.”

Bosma, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (11).

“Too many to mention. A few small examples: A punch to press small holes of $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{5}{8}$ inch diameter English size, not driven by machines, requires two men to turn the wheel $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$ etc. Every $\frac{1}{4}$ thickness of iron requires the labour of one more man. The same is true of cutting, planing, slotting, drilling and turning machines. Consider now the colossal reduction of labour caused by steam alone in a factory where over 100 such machines are in use, while the machines themselves consume many more workers.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“This is difficult to say one person will say that the introduction of the machines has created work, another will say that the work is now done more quickly than with the hands, but I do know that with the introduction of the machines there are workmen who nowadays have no work at slack times. Some have no work, these are the weavers, because the weavers’ machines work as much per day as anyone else with their hands in a week.”

Porter, Hengelo (15).

“Because of the introduction of machines in our trade, there are many bakers’ companions without work.”

Break Bakers’ Assistant, member of ‘Loon naar werk’ (‘wages for work’), Amsterdam (18).

“No, it is because of the fact that, in general, work is done too long, and that, in my opinion, is the greatest cancer for the workman.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of Eendracht, Groningen (20).

“No.”

J. G Dohe, Typesetter, Secretary of the executive committee of the Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

“Yes, at the steam carpentry factory here.”

D. Naning, Typesetter, Appingedam (26).

“Yes.”

H. J. Giliams, Tailor, Sneek (29).

“Yes, in our workshop from 6 to 3.”

W. Vervloet, Ornament Worker, The Hague (30).

54. Has the duration and fatigue of labour been increased or reduced by the development of machinery?

“Decreased.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“The fatiguing part has been somewhat reduced, in some cases significantly reduced, but the duration has increased everywhere.”

A. J. Lansen, Labourer, Vlissingen (7).

“Increases.”

A. Laarman, Machinist, Dordrecht (8).

“The fatigue has been reduced, but I am of the opinion that the machine, although necessary, holds back many workers.”

A. H. Janssen, Carriage Forger, Secretary of the Metalworkers' Association 'Eendracht', Arnhem (10).

“That has remained virtually the same for the workman, when one works faster because of the machines this is to the advantage of the Patron, because the workman is always working, whether there is steam or not, work is the message, the harder the better.”

Bosma, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (11).

“We work long and hard. This is not the fault of steam or

machines but of the push by the patrons. e.g. I have to make a plate on a boat or boiler. Holes have to be made in the plate so that it can be riveted in place with nails. I draw them on the plate. If there is no punching machine in the workshop, they have to be punched in, otherwise they are printed, which is much quicker. Is this interval of time to my advantage? No, I am not idle, but am already riveting the plate, while otherwise I would still be punching holes.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“I would say it has been reduced as much by the length of time as by the fatigue of the labour.”

Foundry Worker, Hengelo (14).

“The duration has been reduced a great deal by machine work.”

Bread Bakers' Assistant, member of Loon vaar werk (wages for work), Amsterdam (18).

“The reduction of duration is not a given for us; once again we blame excessively long working hours. As far as fatigue is concerned, it has definitely decreased.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of Eendracht, Groningen (20).

58. Have there ever been strikes and with what results?

“In 1866 with favourable consequences.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“In the spring of ‘69 the Shipwrights Association “Eendracht” was founded, in March of said year, and in April it sent a circular to the patrons requesting that the working day be changed from 12 to 10 hours and that wages be increased from f 1.80 to f 2.00, this was refused and we stopped work unanimously, which lasted about four weeks, the result of which was that we were granted a request for f 2.00 in the two working hours, and then the workers felt so delighted that they accepted the offer and resumed work, striking a blow for me and others as it were. In ‘72 we repeated our request to bring the day to 10 hours and after suffering and struggle on 1 March 1873 the day was set to 10 working hours, divided into 4 so-called shifts. But because of the continuing rise in the price of basic necessities we felt compelled to send another circular to the patrons – this was in the year ‘76 – with the request to raise the wages from 20 to 25 cents per hour or rather to f 2.50 per day, but this too was rejected and in April of the same year another partial strike was held which lasted 6 days with again no good results. But from then on, by writing and talking to the patrons, the gentlemen patrons set the wages at 22 cents, and at the same time introduced the hourly rate, which was very high, but we were forced to give in.”

J. H. Assenbroek, Shipwright, Secretary of Eendracht, Amsterdam (4).

“In my profession never.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“When the iron foundry was busy in 1876 we decided by a large majority to demand that the director dismiss our boss who had been a tyrant to us for 7 years and the result was that he himself soon resigned.”

H. D. van de Wiel, Moulder, Rotterdam (13).

“They do not take place here because no one dares to be the first. [There was a small strike a few years ago over a dispute of a payment of wages to a worker].”

Porter, Hengelo (15).

“No, because there is no agreement. So if there were a general strike, there would be immediate improvement. So now they are playthings and slaves of the rich.”

H. Kuhr, Former Bakers' Assistant, now self-employed shopkeeper with no staff, Amsterdam' (17).

“Once and then we started working together, so called co-operative work, after which we received a raise from our employer.”

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of Eendracht, Groningen (20).

“When in '64 the wages were 14 cents, no servants were allowed to work in our workshop for that amount of money, only for 17 cents and then the shop was out of order for 3 weeks.”

S. Wierda, Furniture Maker, member of Eendracht, Groningen (24).

“In 1869 in Amsterdam with fairly good results, but could have been better if all printing companies had participated. In 1867 strikes took place at Mr. v. d. Weijer in Utrecht Thime in Arnhem and Thime in Nijmegen.”

J. G. Dohe, Typesetter, Secretary of Nederlandsche Typografen Bond, Amsterdam (25).

63. How is the condition of the workers in your trade, physically, mentally and morally?

“Leaves much to be desired.”

Snijders, Diamond Cutter, Konningstraat (1).

“There is a lot of difference.”

A. Laarman, Machinist, Dordrecht (8).

“Physically aged, most of them mutilated. Mentally and morally: miserable, stupid, religious and do not act out of indifference. Cursing is the order of the day.”

Bosma, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (11).

“Incidentally, it is almost impossible to find a worker in the factory who is not more or less mutilated: Some have deep grooves or scars, some have lost tips of fingers, others have lost an eye, and others still have one or two fractures. Those who have lost their arms or both eyes are not seen again. Mental and moral: completely demoralised: stupid, silly, rough, religious; swearing, drinking, debauched. I have used everything: reasoning, journals, writings, Rights for All, it has cost me money, brought hatred and contempt from the people, the bosses and the directors, that's the end of it.”

W. Ansing, Blacksmith, Amsterdam (12).

“The condition of the workers is spiritually deadening because of long and arduous work which is also detrimental to the body and as far as morality is concerned, most of them don’t even know what it is, though there are some exceptions.”

H. D. van de Wiel, Moulder, Rotterdam (13).

“As far as morality is concerned, this sometimes leaves much to be desired. The life of factory workers is sometimes very rough, but this will gradually improve as they grow to understand this themselves. And also that their situation is not as it should be. [About the workers in general:] There are workers who [...] according to their opinion, tell the supervisor everything that happens in a workplace, even give him an extra from their meagre wages, yes it is sad and all this happens without a patron knowing anything about it.”

Porter, Hengelo (15).

“Mostly exhausted, dejected creatures, because of their unyielding way of life, because of their addiction to work.”

H. Kuhr, Former Bakers’ Assistant, now self-employed shopkeeper with no staff, Amsterdam (17).

“Having no time to think of moral and social interest because of a lack of rest.”

Bakers’ Assistant, member of Loon naar werk, Amsterdam (18).

“Describing the physical condition is not easy, most of them are young and healthy, but it is certain that this will change to a worse state. Piecework with its continuous effort undermines

the strongest constitutions. On the spiritual level, the situation is rather unpleasant. One does not care about the reverend or the priest, when one is together, and one does not want to be inferior to the other, but to withdraw oneself firmly from the influence of these parasites of society, one lacks courage, spirit and willpower. Cowardly, insipid writings find readers, but books that require the use of the brain are ignored. I believe they are too lazy to think. It is clear that morality does not win out here. When one has worked hard all week, the greatest pleasure for many is a drink. I often hear it when we leave the factory: 'Thank God for a drink soon'. Most people are also averse to socialising, and an evening spent in a pub or elsewhere is more attractive to them than attending meetings or reading useful books."

W. P. G. Helsdingen, Carpet Weaver, Rotterdam (19).

"Physically they are alright as long as they are there, generally pale. Spiritually it is not going well at all. Their morals have increased astonishingly since the foundation of the Association."

H. B. Mulder, Furniture Maker, President of Eendracht, Groningen (20).

"[Physical]: One can see that they are printers or binders. Mentally some are quite well developed. The moral conduct is quite good."

D. Nanning, Typesetter, Appingedam (25).

"They are therefore each others' and also their own competitors. [...] This means that such a worker, seldom, indeed almost never, in the time he could spare, makes use of the open air or serves his children for other purposes (besides clothing); he has actually

got used to it in the dry days, he has forgotten it or rather he has never known it. At any rate, I fear that such a time is boring for such a person. It is obvious that his development has come to a standstill. His workshop, be it at home or at the shop of his patron, is his all, at least the main thing he seems to identify with, hence many a tailor suffers from stoppage (how is it possible that there are no more diseases specific to our profession! It seems that the body can also get used to a less healthy way of life!)”

J. Buis, Cutter (tailoring), Sneek (27).

“Sir I believe that in the last question the proverb may rightly be invoked that the last lots weigh the most. To be able to judge this, one would have to study each one in particular and this is not easy for someone who has had to give his education largely by himself. In nature they are all healthy and physically well developed as there is never any question of serious illness. In the last six years three persons have died of illnesses that in my opinion have nothing to do with the work. As far as the spiritual situation is concerned, both patrons are Lutheran, there are twelve Roman Catholics, and the others are Protestant or Lutheran, no Jews they are never accepted, and everyone can act as he chooses because the Patrons never ask about it when accepting. As far as the moral situation is concerned, first of all, morality leaves nothing to be desired as the Patrons always set a good example, most of the workmen are married and in the presence of the Patrons no one will speak improperly. Honesty leaves something more to be desired as six people have been removed for theft, one of them has been handed over to the police, the others have only been chased away. For the rest they are all badly developed of mind, have little or no sound

judgement, never speak about improvement of their situation and when spoken about they do not understand me at all. For most of them money is the only basis if they can get it, they think they have nothing left to do, which stems from the relatively low weekly wages, which for most of them are too small to feed and clothe their wives and children properly. They do not want to hear about the union because they are afraid to fall into disgrace with the patron who of course does not want to know about it in his interest... about this I could tell you a lot but I fear that I will be too boring for you should you however desire to receive some clarifications from me I am gladly prepared to send you these..."

C. van der Linden, Warehouse Assistant, Amsterdam (33).

"Physically there are 40 p.c. unhappy (lame, hunchbacked or other defects) spiritually most are R. Catholics because in N. Brabant it is as it were their cradle, but by experience there are many educated ones among them, at S. Democracy they are very strongly represented... An example will give you a glimpse into the special life of our profession: I can personally name those who work a little on Tuesdays, work well on Wednesdays and work through the Friday night, including the Saturday night, until Sunday morning or even the afternoon, and then go out, drink and drink until it is the day of the week again; I also know of even more unfortunate examples that one has to experience, but which cannot be given in writing."

C. G. van Harrewijn, Shoemaker, The Hague (31).

"Physically weakened and dejected by lack of food required by the arduous work, which leads to exhaustion mentally and morally miserable..."

L. van Willegenburg, Bricklayer, Amsterdam (34).

“In England a horse is treated better than a worker here.” (p.295)

S. Mulder, Peat Worker, Smilde (50).

V.I. Lenin - Questionnaire (1894/5)

*This Questionnaire on the Situation of Workers in Enterprises was composed by Lenin in 1894 for distribution amongst factory workers in St Petersburg.⁵⁷ The document appears in Harding and Taylor's 1983 text: *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879-1906*, kindly brought to my attention by Marcelo Hoffman.*

The reproduction below includes, from the same text, a recollection of I.V. Babushkin, a contemporary worker-organiser involved in a study circle with Lenin which later became the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working-Class. Geared towards organising factory workers, the League was a significant predecessor to the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

This questionnaire is not included in the Russian editions of Lenin's *Sochineniya* nor in the English *Collected Works* but its attribution to Lenin is confirmed by the memoirs of Ivan Babushkin in *Vospominaniya o Vladimire Iliche Lenine* (3 vols., Moscow, 1956-60), 1, p. 114. Babushkin recalled how:

⁵⁷ Harding, N. and Taylor, R. (1983) *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879-1906*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 138-139.

the lecturer [Lenin] gave us lists of previously prepared questions which prompted us to make a closer study and observation of factory and mill life. During working hours we found excuses to go into another shop to collect material, either by personal observations, or, where possible, in conversation with the workers.

My tool box was always full of notes of all kinds; during the dinner-hour I tried to write up the data on hours and wages in our shop.

See also *Recollections of I. V. Babushkin* (Moscow, 1957), p. 56.⁵⁸

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE SITUATION OF WORKERS IN ENTERPRISES (1894/5)

V.I. Lenin

1. The number of workers in the institution - men, women, adolescents, children, the total number.
2. When and how long the employment is for, or if it is without a definite term. Is there anything special about it? (Employment through a contractor, the district authorities, an artel,⁵⁹ etc.)
3. Does the owner break the terms of employment before their term has expired, e.g. by paying less?
4. Do workers leave the employer before their term has

⁵⁸ Harding, N. and Taylor, R. (1983) *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879-1906*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 383.

⁵⁹ An "artel" is a cooperative association.

- expired? In droves or one at a time? How does the owner react? Does he complain to a court or to an inspector, does he protest to other owners?
5. How many hours a day does the work last? Is there night and holiday work? Always or from time to time? How are the shifts arranged? Is there frequently work outside hours? Can one refuse to work on holidays and outside hours?
 6. Information on monthly output. The number of workers. The jobs given to men and women. Working together or apart? The monthly output: of the ordinary worker, the skilled worker, the slow worker. Who provides the food? Who provides the quarters? Is it piece-work, or is it done by day or by month?
 7. How much higher is the pay for holiday or out-of-hours work?
 8. How many times a month are wages paid out and in what manner: in cash, in goods, in shop tokens? Are there any abuses in the payment (delays, miscalculations, etc.)?
 9. Have the wages recently been increased or reduced? If so, what explanation has been given?
 10. Deductions from wages in roubles and kopeks: to the artel, the shops, for arrears.
 11. A list of fines. In round numbers how much a month does this affect the individual? Are there irregularities in the penalties?
 12. How do the masters and owners treat the workers? Give examples.
 13. Is there dissatisfaction among the workers with conditions in the factory? How is this dissatisfaction manifested? Revolts. Is it possible to give more details of all the strikes

in this institution or in others in which [the workers] have participated, or about which they have known: when, for what reason, how many people took part, how it went - peacefully or violently, were the army called in, how did it end - whether it was a success or a failure and why it ended as it did?

14. Are the factory laws of any use to the workers? What kind of man is the factory inspector? How does he treat the workers? Give some of his actions as an example.
15. Are there factory shops and consumers' cooperatives in the institution? If yes, give the following figures: what are the prices on the open market and in the factory shop for rye-flour, high quality wheat, salt beef, lard, eggs, milk, potatoes, sugar, salt, kerosene etc.?
16. As far as the worker, single and married, is concerned [the cost] per month [of]: accommodation, food (in artels and individually), heating, light, and per year: taxes, debt loan payments, clothing, shoes, tobacco, vodka?

Hilde Weiss - Die “Enquête Ouvrière” von Karl Marx (1936)

Hilde Weiss’ essay was first published in Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, the journal of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, in 1936. The reproduction below is the first complete English version of Weiss’ essay, translated by Maciej Zurowski.

It appears from Marx’s letter of November 5, 1880, addressed to Sorge that the ‘Enquête Ouvrière’ published in the *Revue Socialiste* on April 20, 1880, was the work of Marx himself. He writes: “I have prepared for him [Benoît Malon, the editor of the *Revue Socialiste*] the Questionneur [sic] which was first published in the *Revue Socialiste* and afterwards distributed in a large number of copies throughout France.”⁶⁰ Only the detailed questionnaire, containing a hundred questions, and the accompanying text seem to have survived. A note in a later issue of the *Revue Socialiste*, the style of which suggests that it may have been written by Marx, indicates that some replies had been

⁶⁰ “Twenty-five thousand copies of this appeal were printed and were sent to all labor organizations, socialist and democratic groups, French newspapers and individuals who requested copies.” (Note on the ‘Enquête Ouvrière’ in *Revue Socialiste*, April 20, 1880).

received, and that when a sufficient number had come in they would be published.⁶¹ The journal *Egalité*, which was published during this period, and which Marx described in the same letter to Sorge as the first "workers' paper" in France, repeatedly urged its readers to take part in the survey and included copies of the questionnaire.⁶²

Marx created an important document with this survey shortly after the Marseilles Socialist Congress of 1879. As he related in his letter to Sorge, it would contribute to the constitution of the "first real workers' movement in France". After years of the French socialist movement's splintering into various groups and tendencies, after years of operating under the most severe illegality since the days of the Paris Commune, the "revolutionary collectivists", the Guesdists, the Blanquists and the followers of Proudhon agreed on a programme and achieved the first great success in Marseilles, which laid the foundations for the formation of a "workers' party". It was characteristic of this period, in which the workers' movement

⁶¹ "Concerning the 'Enquête Ouvrière': A number of our friends have already responded to our questionnaire, and we are grateful to them. We urge those of our friends and readers who have not yet replied to do so quickly. In order to make the survey as complete as possible we shall defer our own work until a large number of questionnaires has been returned. We ask our proletarian friends to reflect that the completion of these 'cahiers du travail' is of the greatest importance, and that by participating in our difficult task they are working directly for their own liberation." *Revue Socialiste*, July 5, 1880.

⁶² "In its last issue the *Revue Socialiste* has taken the initiative in an excellent project... The significance of an investigation of working-class conditions as they have been created by bourgeois rule is to place the possessing caste on trial, to assemble the materials for a passionate protest against modern society, to display before the eyes of all the oppressed, all wage-slaves, the injustices of which they are the constant victims, and thereby to arouse in them the will to end such conditions." *L'Egalité*, April 28, 1880.

broke from the radical socialist petty-bourgeois tendencies, that after the congress of Marseille two organisations were initially formed in parallel: one that only admitted working-class members in order to make the contrast to the ruling class most explicit ('Federation du parti ouvrier') and a second that allowed socialists who were not workers to join ('Federation des groupes socialistes').⁶³ Both organisations pursued the same goal: they wanted to make the working class stand on its own feet by completely breaking with groups that believed in the possibility of reconciliation or liberation by the ruling class. Around 1880, Marx set the French workers' movement the principal task of creating a workers' party, of confining itself to its own strength and of developing it. The 'Enquête Ouvrière' was meant to serve the same purpose, inviting the workers to describe their own social condition, which until then had only been undertaken by members or representatives of the propertied class. Marx did not intend the survey to merely represent a collection of facts: rather, the working class was to draw strength and knowledge from understanding its own working and living conditions. This would help it to solve the tasks leading to its emancipation.

Conceiving of his 'Enquête' in this way, Marx deliberately set it in contrast to the social surveys of his time, which were

⁶³ "It is certainly a splendid thing that a union of socialist groups is being formed alongside the workers' party... But one must ensure that the [latter] association, whose basic lines were drawn up in Marseille, only admits workers. Only workers, but all workers of course. For the idea is to put the ruled class against the ruling class, create a rupture between the France that produces and the France that merely consumes... The basis of the workers' association will be a community of suffering, whereas that of the socialist union will be a community of demands." – Our translation, *L'Egalité* of 21 January 1880.

carried out by the French state and by scientific organisations or philanthropists on its behalf. The strong charge he levels at the French state in the introduction is indicative of this: he accuses it of having commissioned inquiries in various fields when political upheavals called for it, but never any serious investigation into the condition of the working class. The introduction furthermore describes the monarchical English government's commissioning of social surveys and its policies on workers' protection legislation as a model to be followed. In view of Marx and Engels's fundamental criticism of English social legislation and their exposure of social grievances in England, for which they had accused the state as being partly responsible, these remarks in the introduction were bound to come across as a mockery of the French Republic.

And indeed, while in England the state had parliamentary inquiry panels and civil servant factory inspectors draw up comprehensive reports on the working conditions of factory workers, especially women and children, socio-political inquiries carried out directly by the state were a rarity in France.⁶⁴ In 1848, the Comité du Travail of the Assemblée Constituante commissioned the first social survey of agricultural and industrial work conditions, whose findings were viewed as completely inadequate by public opinion.⁶⁵ The questions were too general and theoretical, thus failing to give any genuine idea of the actual conditions. The second major state enquiry on working conditions, undertaken in 1872 by a parliamentary inquiry panel and addressed to the

⁶⁴ See Hilde Rigaudias-Weiss, *Les Enquêtes Ouvrières en France entre 1830 et 1848*, Paris 1936.

⁶⁵ See *Dictionnaire de l'Economie Politique*, 1854 and Audiganne, *Memoires d'un ouvrier de Paris 1871-1872*, Paris 1873, pp. 39 et seq.

presidents of the chambers of commerce and prefects of the individual departments, stood out for its detailed account of the history of labour relations in France since 62 BC, yet its description of the contemporary social living conditions of the working class left much to be desired. Nonetheless, the investigation exhibited signs of great progress: it contrasted reports by officials and industrialists with the contributions of various workers' delegations to the World's Fairs in London (1862), Paris (1867) and Vienna (1873), which served as witness testimony, so to speak – and it granted the workers' criticisms much space in the report. The commission had set itself the task of identifying the influences that had given the workers socialist ideas. It wanted to understand what feelings and ideas of the workers the socialist movement leaders had been able to draw on, and ultimately investigate changes in the development of French industry.

Apart from such isolated inquiries conducted by the state itself, a number of investigations were carried out on behalf of the state or by state institutions. The Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques became the commissioning body for a whole series of such research projects.⁶⁶ The first person to be commissioned by the Académie to investigate the social conditions in French industry was the physician Villermé. His independently conducted enquiry, *Tableau de l'état physique et moral des ouvriers* from 1835, compiled important details about

⁶⁶ The Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques was created by the French Revolution. Suppressed by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803 because of its "revolutionary aspirations", it was only re-established after the July revolution. The Académie then changed its character completely and became a conservative, pro-state institution, which Cavaignac demanded in 1848 should participate in the defence of the social principles under attack.

the situation of industrial workers in the cotton, wool and silk industries outside Paris, serving both Buret and subsequent surveyors as a source for their own research. Buret's study *De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France*, published in 1840, was also carried out under the auspices of the Académie and won an award there, even if the jury did not agree with Buret's fundamental criticism or with his demands: unlike Villerme, Buret openly sided with the workers. Of all the writings published by the Académie in connection with the revolution of 1848, Villermé's *Associations ouvrières* and Adolphe Blanqui's survey *Les classes ouvrières en France pendant l'année 1848* deserve particular mention.⁶⁷ On the occasion of Villermé's death, his text, in which he takes a stand against the workers' associations, was described by Naudet as a 'crusade in defence of a society threatened by socialism'. Similarly, the economist Blanqui was asked by the Académie to use his survey to contribute to the restoration of the shattered order. He himself described the objective of his investigation as an attempt to demonstrate the following: if real misery exists in France, this misery cannot be separated from human weakness – and moreover, it is everywhere mitigated by the progress of morals and institutions.⁶⁸

Around the same time as the surveys encouraged by the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, a number of similar inquiries appeared. They were partly launched by social organisations (charitable societies, welfare associations,

⁶⁷ "Modest treatises were published, but the people did not buy them. Even the petty bourgeoisie read them with a certain mistrust – for the names Thiers, Dupin, Cousin, Bastiat, etc. reminded them of the partisans of the monarchy who had just been banished." (La Grande Encyclopédie)

⁶⁸ Adolphe Blanqui, pp. 9–10.

mutual aid associations etc.) and saving banks, while others were undertaken by philanthropists and humanitarian doctors independently. These efforts aimed to show the charitable effect of social institutions of all stripes, from savings banks to pawnshops (*Monts de Piété*) to the collective resettlement of workers to the countryside, for which the state and the municipalities demanded support. Like the publications of the Académie, they were at the same time directed against the ascending workers' movement and its socialist theories, against all attempts of the working class to emancipate itself, and against cooperatives and trade unions. Apart from Villermé, we shall only cite the most important of these reformers and philanthropists: Baron de Morogues,⁶⁹ Baron de Gérando,⁷⁰ Villeneuve-Bargemont.⁷¹ The most important among them was probably Vidal, who was also closest to socialism.⁷²

The purpose of both the official and private enquiries was to alert the government to the consequences of rapid industrialisation and unbridled competition in the first third of the nineteenth century. Like the utopians, the philanthropic reformers (to whom all the cited authors of surveys, with the exception of Buret, belonged) saw the bad sides of ascending

⁶⁹ De Morogues: *De la misère des ouvriers et de la marche à suivre pour y remédier*, Paris 1832; de Morogues: *Du Paupérisme*, Paris 1834.

⁷⁰ De Gérando: *De la bienfaisance publique*, Paris 1839; de Gérando: *Le visiteur du pauvre*, Paris 1824;

⁷¹ Villeneuve-Bargemont: *Economie politique chrétienne, ou Recherches sur la nature et les causes du paupérisme en France et en Europe, et sur les moyens de le soulager et de le prévenir*, Paris 1834. The motto was: "One must commend patience, modesty, work, sobriety and religion. The rest is only deception and lies." – see the *Résumé* of the *Enquête Villeneuves*, vol. 2, pp. 590 et seq.

⁷² Vidal: *De la répartition des richesses*, Paris 1846.

capitalism – that is, the hardship and misery of the industrial workforce. The workers, especially their wives and children, who were the most vulnerable to the excesses of the factory system, inspired pity and disquiet in them. Consequently, they depicted the social and especially moral effects of the immiseration of the proletariat – but the causes of misery did not occur to them, nor did the idea of eliminating them. In their plans, suggestions and reform schemes, they appealed to both classes: they advised entrepreneurs to be more considerate in their zeal for production and workers to lead a more morally upright life and reduce the birth rate. Moreover, they pleaded to the state to improve social conditions, introduce reforms in the field of private and public charity and pass state legislation on factories. A characteristic example of the nature of these surveys is the objective of Gerando's book set by the Académie de Lyon: "The aim is to determine the means by which true need is recognised and to ensure that alms benefit both those who give them and those who receive them". Vidal, by contrast, aptly criticises the humanitarian reformers (though his criticism could also apply to some of his own proposals): "The pauperists and philanthropists have carefully analysed the effects of misery and described them in detail. Then they have advised alms and charity to the rich and patience, devotion, moral restraint and thrift to the poor (that is to say, austerity for people who do not even earn the bare necessities of life)."⁷³

Since the organisers of these studies had no intention of changing the existing economic system, but only wanted to alleviate social misery as much as was possible within the framework of that system, their interest in exposing social ills

⁷³ Vidal: *De la répartition des richesses*, p. 461.

had its limits. At times, they even felt that it was desirable to conceal the real situation, namely when there was a danger that the workers would no longer be satisfied with welfare and palliatives and instead act on their own initiative to improve their situation. The interest of surveyors before Marx in describing the real social conditions went as far as the existing social order was not challenged and it seemed advantageous to pacify the workers, who were deemed vulnerable to the influence of socialist theories. Thus, the rapporteur of the official survey of 1848, which had been commissioned under the pressure of the revolutionary events, exhibited an overtly hostile stance towards the workers.⁷⁴ The findings of the survey were completely inadequate since the priority of its organisers was not the elimination of social misery, but the stabilisation of the shattered state institutions (“le besoin de stabilité des institutions”). And so, the enquiry found that the condition of the workers was quite acceptable. The objective of the 1872 survey clearly delineates the limits that the organisers had set themselves for their investigation: “The need to research and learn about the needs of workers in order to meet them within what is just and possible”. On one side, a barrier dubbed the “measure of the possible” – i.e. reforms that could be attained by the government – kept the surveyors in check, while on the other, there was their intention to study the causes of working-class sympathy for socialist ideas as well as their traction. A closer relationship between industrial and

⁷⁴ In his *Memoires d'un ouvrier de Paris*, Audiganne makes a criticism of the enquiry that he describes it as the prevailing opinion of workers in the surrounding neighbourhoods: “The rapporteur, Monsieur Lefebvre-Durufflé, let slip a marked antipathy to the uprising.... There was an obvious lack of justice to the report” (p. 39, 45/46)

agricultural labour was recommended as a result of the survey: this would distance the workers from socialist influences and help to raise their morale. Furthermore, it was argued that labour peace, which according to the investigation appeared to have been shattered in some places, could only be restored by reinforcing the patriarchal stance of the entrepreneur and increasing his sense of responsibility towards his workers.

Nor were private surveyors, whose objectives were limited by their conservative Christian or liberal views, interested in a truthful depiction of social conditions.⁷⁵ Audiganne, who himself had authored a number of studies on the situation of workers, tried to find the causes of the inadequacy of all these surveys: "... It is not the fault of the surveys, which by their nature ought to shed more light on all the questions covered than any other investigation. The error stems from the method followed in carrying out the surveys or from ulterior motives that had crept in".

II

Marx's 'Enquête Ouvrière' differs in three respects from previous investigations of social conditions. First, as is clear from the statement of its purpose, and from the questions themselves, it aimed to provide an exact description of actual social conditions. Secondly, it proposed to collect information only from the workers themselves. Thirdly, it had a didactic aim; was meant to develop the consciousness of the workers in

⁷⁵ See e.g. Blanqui, *Des classes ouvrières en France*, Paris 1849, p. 207: "The family disintegrates very rapidly when it comes into contact with the polluted air of the cellars of Lille or the attics of Rouen. It is better to throw a discreet veil over these sad dwellings than to make closer investigations here..."

the sense expounded in Marx's social theory.

Marx also intended that his 'Enquête Ouvrière' should diffuse among the general public a knowledge of the working and living conditions of the workers, and he had, therefore, some ulterior motives in undertaking his study. At the same time, however, his socialist views imposed upon him the obligation to depict as faithfully as possible the existing social misery. He assigns to social investigation the task of aiding the workers themselves to gain an understanding of their situation. For philanthropists the workers, as the most miserable stratum of society, were the object of welfare measures; but Marx saw in them an oppressed class which would become master of its own fate when once it had become aware of its situation. With the development of industrial capitalism, not only the misery of the proletariat, but also its will to emancipation increased. In his preface to the questionnaire Marx describes the 'Enquête Ouvrière' as a basis for "preparing a reconstruction of society".

However, it is not only in its aims that Marx's 'Enquête Ouvrière' differs from the private and official investigations that had preceded it, but also in the manner in which it was carried out. Earlier surveys, even if they had the intention, could not discover the real character of social evils, because they employed inadequate means to collect their information. They were addressed almost exclusively to factory owners and their representatives, to factory inspectors where there were such people, or to government officials (as in the case of Villeneuve-Bargement's inquiry).⁷⁶ Even where doctors or philanthropists

⁷⁶ [Villeneuve-Bargement, *Economie politique chrétienne ou Recherches sur la nature et les causes du paupérisme en France et en Europe et sur les moyens de le soulager et de le prévenir*, 3 vols. (Paris: Paulin, 1834)-Ed.]

who made such surveys went directly to working-class families, they were usually accompanied by factory owners or their representatives. Le Play, for example, recommends visits to working class families “. . . with an introduction from some carefully selected authority”; and he advises extremely diplomatic behaviour towards the family members, including the payment of small sums of money, or the distribution of presents, as a recompense. The investigator should “. . . praise with discrimination the cleverness of the men, the charm of the women, the good behaviour of the children, and discreetly hand out small presents to all of them.”⁷⁷ In the course of a thorough critical examination of survey methods that appears in Audiganne’s account of the discussions in his circle of workers, it is said of Le Play: “Never was a more misleading course embarked upon, in spite of the very best intentions. It is simply a question of the approach. A false viewpoint and a false method of observation give rise to a completely arbitrary series of suppositions, which bear no relation whatsoever to social reality, and in which there is apparent an invincible partiality for despotism and constraint.”⁷⁸ Audiganne indicates as one of the common mistakes in the conduct of surveys the pomp and ceremony which is adopted by investigators when they visit working-class families. “If there is not a single tangible result produced by any survey carried out under the Second Empire, the blame must be assigned, in large measure, to the pompous manner in which they were conducted.”⁷⁹ Marx and Engels also described the methods by which workers were induced to

⁷⁷ *Les Ouvriers Européens*, Vol. I, p. 223.

⁷⁸ Audiganne, *Mémoires d'un ouvrier de Paris, 1871–1872* (Paris, 1873), p. 61.

⁷⁹ Audiganne, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

give testimony through social research of this kind, even to the extent of presenting petitions against the reduction of their working hours.

Marx's questionnaire, which was addressed directly to the workers, was something unique. The article on social surveys in the Dictionary of Political Economy observes bluntly: "Those who are to be questioned should not be allowed to participate in the inquiry."⁸⁰ This justified Audiganne's criticism that "... people judge us without knowing us."⁸¹

Marx asks the workers alone for information about their social conditions, on the grounds that only they and not any "providential saviour" know the causes of their misery, and they alone can discover effective means to eliminate them. In the preface to the questionnaire he asks the socialists for their support, since they need, for their social reforms, exact knowledge of the conditions of life and work of the oppressed class, and this can only be brought to light by the workers themselves. He points out to them the historical role which the working class is called upon to play and for which no socialist utopia can provide a substitute.

This method of collecting information, by asking the workers themselves, represents a considerable progress over the earlier inquiries. It is, of course, understandable that Marx had to restrict himself to this method. Apart from the political and educational purposes which he wanted to combine with his investigation, his method of obtaining information directly from the workers was intended to open the eyes of the public and of the state. From the point of view of modern social research

⁸⁰ *Dictionnaire de l'économie politique* (Paris, 1854), p. 706.

⁸¹ Audiganne, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

in this field, the restriction of such an inquiry into working conditions to the responses of workers themselves would be considered inadequate. This method of inquiry is still vitally important in modern social surveys; but the monographs that were to have resulted from the 'Enquête Ouvrière' would need to be complemented, and their findings checked, by statistical materials, and by the data available from other surveys.

The didactic purpose of the 'Enquête Ouvrière' arises, as will be shown later, from the arrangement and formulation of the questions; but it is apparent also in the preface, and especially in the title that Marx gives to the monographs which it is proposed to write on the basis of the replies to the questionnaire; he calls them *cahiers du travail* ("labour-lists") in contrast to the *cahiers de doléances* ("grievance-lists") of 1789. The specific character of his survey is shown by his coining of this new term, which is connected with a living tradition of the French workers, the petitions of the Third Estate. But while the *cahiers de doléances* put forward trivial demands in a servile manner, the *cahiers du travail* were meant to contain a true and exact description of the condition of the working class and of the path to its liberation. Moreover, the accomplishment of this program is not to be left to the goodwill of a king; the workers are to struggle forthrightly and consciously for their human rights. It is not by chance that Marx also refers in this context to the "socialist democracy," whose first task is to prepare the "cahiers du travail." The workers, who have to wage a class struggle and to accomplish a renewal of society, must first of all become capable of recognizing their own situation and of seeing the readiness of individuals to work together in a common cause.

The *cahiers du travail*, as I have noted, were not only to provide a better knowledge of working-class conditions, but were also

to educate the workers in socialism. By merely reading the hundred questions, the worker would be led to see the obvious and commonplace facts that were mentioned there as elements in a general picture of his situation. By attempting seriously to answer the questions, he would become aware of the social determination of his conditions of life; he would gain an insight into the nature of the capitalist economy and the state, and would learn the means of abolishing wage labour and attaining his freedom. The questionnaire thus provides the outline of a socialist manual, which the worker can fill with a living content by absorbing its results.

Several of the questions are formulated in such a way—for instance, by the introduction of valuations that the worker is led at once to the answer which the didactic purpose of the survey requires. Thus, Marx refers to the misuse of public power when it is a matter of defending the privileges of entrepreneurs; and a subsequent question asks whether the state protects the workers “against the exactions and the illegal combinations of the employers.” The contrast is intended to make the worker aware of the class character of the state. Another example is provided by the case where workers share in the profits of the enterprise. The respondent is asked to consider whether business concerns with this apparently social orientation differ from other capitalist enterprises, and whether the legal position of the workers in them is superior. “Can they go on strike? Or are they only permitted to be the humble servants of their masters?” (Question 99). It should be said, however, that only a relatively small proportion of the questions seek to influence opinion so directly.

It is far more significant, in relation to the two aspects of the survey, that Marx was successful in setting out the

questions in a clear and practical manner. They are easily intelligible and deal with matters of direct concern to the worker. The simplicity and exactness of the questions in the 'Enquête Ouvrière' represent an advance over earlier surveys. Audiganne had observed quite rightly that these surveys asked questions that were far too comprehensive, abstract, and complicated, and compromised the answers on important issues by introducing irrelevant questions.⁸² For the same reasons, the various private investigations could provide no better picture of the real social conditions and attitudes of the workers.

The content of the questions posed in the earlier surveys, as well as their aims and techniques of inquiry, corresponded very closely with the interests of employers. For example, the question whether workers were paid wholly in cash, or whether a part of their wages were given in the form of goods or rent allowances, was asked both in the government survey of 1872 and in the 'Enquête Ouvrière'; but in the former case it was asked from the point of view of the employers, in the latter from the point of view of the workers. In the official survey, payments in the form of goods are treated as a "supplement" to wages, but Marx regards every form of wage payment other than in cash as a method of reducing wages.

Since Marx's survey does represent an advance over earlier attempts, it is all the more surprising that very few replies to

⁸² For one example among many, see Ducarre, *Rapport sur les conditions du travail en France* (Versailles, 1875), p. 195: "What is the physical condition of the working population in your district, from the point of view of sanitary conditions, population increase, and expectation of life?" It is easy to imagine the prolixity of the replies.

the questionnaire were apparently received.⁸³ Two reasons may explain this failure: first, the scope of the questionnaire, and second, the circumstances of the time. Even today, it is not easy for the average worker, in his spare time, to answer a questionnaire containing a hundred questions; and it was all the more difficult in a period when workers were being asked to do this for the first time. Their ability to write and to express themselves was still limited; they read very little, and their newspapers were published in small editions, as well as being hampered by the censorship. Second, the French labour movement was still in the period of depression that followed the Paris Commune. Had there been at that time an independent labour movement, the survey could have been carried out much more effectively. It was, indeed, because of the backwardness of the labour movement and of the working class generally,⁸⁴ that Marx gave his survey the didactic purpose of awakening the workers to a realization of their condition. Thus Marx's survey had at the same time to create the circumstances in which an inquiry could be carried out. One could only evaluate its real success or failure if, say, a similar survey had been conducted again a few years later.

The structure of the questionnaire derives from the combination of its two objectives. It comprises four distinct sections: workplace health and safety; working hours, women's and children's work; wages and unemployment; organisation and struggle. The questions follow the worker through his entire

⁸³ It has proved impossible to find even the few replies that did arrive, in spite of an active search for them.

⁸⁴ The reports compiled by workers on the occasion of the Vienna Exhibition (1873) show clearly how far the workers at that time were influenced by utopian ideas and by the views of employers.

working life and show him how the different aspects of his everyday life are connected and what general laws they are subject to.

The first questions deal with the geographical location of the enterprise, its machinery and the degree of division of labour. This is followed by the statutory control of occupational health and safety, which in the last instance is the responsibility of the state. Question 17 concerns whether there is a state or municipal institution to monitor the hygienic conditions in the factory, or whether the employer is legally obliged to compensate the worker in the event of an accident. The following questions about child labour and child rearing likewise focus on the existence and actual application of laws (39, 40). The inadequacy of legislation to protect workers is highlighted. Why can employers circumvent or simply ignore laws? The worker learns the reasons for this from the two subsequent questions: what penalty awaits the entrepreneur in the event of a breach of contract, and what penalty awaits the worker (48, 49)? Based on many small personal experiences and those of his colleagues in the workplace, the worker, having now become aware of the general significance of these daily conflicts, begins to understand the 'class character' of the state. And if answering these questions has not yet made him grasp the bigger picture, Marx confronts him with the disinterested or hostile attitude of the state towards the worker especially questions 92 and 93.

In this way, Marx wants to undermine the workers' confidence in the existing state. At the same time, he tries to challenge theories of the state that had gained a foothold in the working class at the time, opposing both Bakunin's anarchism and Louis Blanc's belief in the 'omnipotence' of the state.

A particularly long section is devoted to discussing the social

position of the entrepreneur. First, the worker is told that the function of the capitalist entrepreneur remains the same even in a joint-stock company. The next questions are designed to highlight the fact that the entrepreneur, although responsible for safety measures, would probably rarely compensate workers suffering an accident “while working to enrich him” were it not for state coercion (22, 23, 26, 27). Indeed, he speaks of the entrepreneur’s “domination over wage labourers” and examines the operational and penal regulations that serve to secure his domination. Noting that the state intervenes against workers’ attempts to form associations – they did not gain the right to create trade unions until 1884 – but tolerates secret employer associations, Marx asks whether there is any knowledge of such employer associations and describes their function in the class struggle.

Next, Marx addresses the “exploitative function” of the entrepreneur, providing an inductive bridge to his theory of surplus value. The answers to these questions are to show to what degree the process examined by this theory is perceptible to the worker and actually recognised by him. First, Marx lists a series of measures that increase the absolute surplus value by extending the working day: shorter lunch breaks (33, 34, 35), overtime for cleaning of machinery (43), night work (36, 41), overwork due to cyclical or seasonal upswing (42, 52). There is also mention of the fact that factory workers are compelled to do additional work on the side if low wages, which are common in rural areas, are not enough to make ends meet (11). Efforts to maximise relative surplus value by increasing labour intensity are also addressed in two questions (78, 79). Further ways of cutting wages are dealt with in detailed questions on penalties for lateness (44) and various cheating practices in the

calculation of piecework wages (56, 57). Marx then points out that it is actually the workers who are lending the entrepreneur their respective wages in advance: as they are waiting for their pay, they often have to take out loans at high interest rates (e.g. at pawnshops) (58), and if the company goes bankrupt, they can lose large amounts of money in this manner (59). There are also very detailed questions concerning the wages of other family members and the wage systems applied. (53–57, 62–66). Some questions about household budget expenditure once again draw attention to loans, taxes and extra charges enforced by the entrepreneurs (69, 70). Such enquiries are used to clarify the concept of real wages, for it is here that losses of income become most visible to the worker (71). The end of the section deals with the impact of the crisis and with old-age unemployment (73–75, 77, 80, 81). Marx wants all these questions to warn the worker against the illusion of a harmony of interests, as well as against utopian schemes and reform proposals.

If the worker has travelled this far along the path indicated by Marx, he will have grasped to what kind of social order he has fallen victim. Consequently, a question arises for him: what can I do to improve my situation and liberate the workers? This last section of the questionnaire addresses the methods that workers can use to liberate themselves. The first question here concerns the existence of *sociétés de résistance* – surrogate trade unions of sorts, set up to provide financial support for strikes since the creation of trade union organisations was forbidden. Thus, trade unions are recommended to the worker as the first means of leading his struggle for emancipation. He is then prompted to report on any strikes that may have been organised, about their nature and causes (83–87). At this juncture, the worker is expected to come to understand the role of the *prud'hommes*,

which were state institutions created to ensure industrial peace and which were composed of representatives of both employers and workers. In Marx's view, this arbitration system is an obstacle to the independent organisation of the workers' movement and its struggle. Question 89 underlines the importance of the solidarity strike in support of a movement in a related industrial sector. The following questions (90–94), which deal with the violent state response to workers in the event of labour disputes, are evidently meant to convey that purely economic strikes over wage demands will ultimately have to be raised to the level of political strikes. To conclude the survey, Marx criticises the support, pension and savings banks set up by employers, as well as the producer cooperatives and the system of workers' profit-sharing (95–99). His rejection of these institutions has already been mentioned earlier. Here, Marx takes on Proudhon, Blanqui and Louis Blanc. His endorsement of trade unions is aimed on the one hand against Proudhon, who considers strikes and workers' associations illegal and unacceptable, and on the other against Blanqui, who calls for the constitution of a conscious minority to lead the political struggle. Marx, in contrast to him, emphasises the need for comprehensive workers' organisations and economic struggles to defend the interests of the oppressed class. Finally, he objects to Louis Blanc's producer cooperatives because of their collaboration with the state and employers and because of their utopian character. Marx's rejection of bourgeois attempts at reform is also aimed against the surveys of his predecessors, namely the philanthropists who recommended administrative improvements for the bourgeoisie as a remedy against the misery of the working class. In place of reforms to protect the existing order, and instead of the organisation of society according to schemes dreamed up by the utopians,

Marx advocates the organisation of the proletariat as a class that necessarily emerges from historical development and that will ultimately bring liberation. The 'Enquête Ouvrière' serves the realisation of this goal too.

The Text of the Questionnaire

No government—whether monarchical or bourgeois-republican—has dared to undertake a serious investigation of the condition of the French working class, although there have been many studies of agricultural, financial, commercial and political crises.⁸⁵

The odious acts of capitalist exploitation which the official surveys by the English government have revealed, and the legislative consequences of these revelations (limitation of the legal working day to ten hours, legislation concerning the labour of women and children, etc.), have inspired in the French bourgeoisie a still greater terror of the dangers which might result from an impartial and systematic inquiry.

While awaiting the time when the republican government can be induced to follow the example of the English monarchical government and inaugurate a comprehensive survey of the deeds and misdeeds of capitalist exploitation, we shall attempt a preliminary investigation with the modest resources at our disposal. We hope that our undertaking will be supported by all

⁸⁵ [Hilde Weiss notes that this was, to her knowledge, the first German translation of the 'Enquête Ouvrière'. The first English translation of the questionnaire and of some passages from the prefatory statement was published in T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, editors, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*.—Ed.]

those workers in town and country who realize that only they can describe with full knowledge the evils which they endure, and that only they—not any providential saviours—can remedy the social ills from which they suffer. We count also upon the socialists of all schools, who, desiring social reform, must also desire exact and positive knowledge of the conditions in which the working class, the class to which the future belongs, lives and works.

These “labour-lists” (*cahiers du travail*) represent the first task which socialist democracy must undertake in preparation for the regeneration of society.

The following hundred questions are the most important ones. The replies should follow the order of the questions. It is not necessary to answer all the questions, but respondents are asked to make their answers as comprehensive and detailed as possible. The name of the respondent will not be published unless specifically authorized, but it should be given together with the address, so that we can establish contact with him.

The replies should be sent to the director of the *Revue Socialiste* (Mon sieur Lécluse, 28 rue Royale, Saint-Cloud, near Paris).

The replies will be classified and will provide the material for monographs to be published in the *Revue Socialiste* and subsequently collected in a volume.

Andrew Rothstein, Communist Party of Great Britain (1933)

Andrew Rothstein provided this foreword to the first English edition of Marx's inquiry, published by the CPGB in London in 1933. An introduction from the Soviet Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute included in the pamphlet has also been reproduced below.

Foreword

It is very appropriate that this little masterpiece by Marx should be discovered on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of his death. For, after all the countless volumes and pamphlets which have been devoted to “exploding” Marx, millions upon millions of workers in Great Britain and other countries are now “discovering” him for the first time. The deepening world economic crisis is rushing the capitalist world towards new wars and new revolutionary struggles. Seventy-five years after the “Communist Manifesto” first appeared from Marx’s pen, and just as if the learned professors, politicians, economists and other capitalist propagandists had never existed, tens of millions of people are learning by bitter experience the truth of Marx’s description of crises:

“The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over the crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.”

Don't the words of the “exploded” and “obsolete” Marx fit the capitalist world to-day like a glove? Of course they do – just as the successful laying of the foundations of Socialism by the Soviet Union during the first Five Year Plan, and the beginning of the struggle to achieve a classless society as a result of the second, are justifying every word of the brilliant statement later on in the “Manifesto”:

“If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class; if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production; then it will, along with these conditions have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the

free development of all.”

But Marx was not only a student and a theorist of immense genius. Many of his opponents have attempted to relegate him to the sphere of armchair philosophers. Nothing could be more false or ridiculous. Marx was a practical everyday fighter for the working class – from the time of his revolutionary activity in 1847 and 1848, onwards through the long years of life in England, when his mail was crammed every day with letters from Socialists and working men all over the world, asking for his advice and guidance. These he gave with inexhaustible energy and clarity on all subjects – the most humdrum questions of bread and butter, trade union tactics and so forth, to the most abstruse problems of economic and philosophical theory.

The Workers' Enquiry is a magnificent example of Marx's work.

It shows him, first, as a *practical fighter*, busying himself with the everyday working conditions of the proletariat, and encouraging all class conscious workers and Socialists to do the same. 1880 came at a time of revival in the French labour movement, after years of savage reaction and repression which followed the bloodthirsty suppression of the Paris Commune of 1871. All kinds of theories and recipes were floating about and clashing in the Socialist movement. Marx was fighting for the building up of scientific Socialism, bound up with the class struggle of the workers. He set the example himself in the *Enquiry*, by insisting that “these statements of labour's grievances are the first act which Socialist democracy must perform in order to prepare the way for social regeneration.” It cannot be without interest for British workers that the vast and intimate knowledge of factory conditions which this “armchair philosopher” displayed was based, first and foremost, upon his intense study of British industry – both in the British Museum

Reading Room and by meeting thousands of workers – while preparing to write “Capital.”

The *Enquiry*, next, is a splendid illustration of Marx’s method, which always remained true to the principle that the emancipation of the proletariat must be the work of the proletariat itself. The questions aim from the first at making the worker think over his conditions and the true causes which bring them about. Therefore they start from the simplest facts of factory life, intended to bring home to the worker under capitalism how the very conditions of employment mean that he is exploited by the capitalist. The capitalist is not a kind “provider of employment,” as the bourgeois politicians and newspapers constantly make out, but a ruthless and greedy exploiter. From working conditions the *Enquiry* goes on to hours, suggesting how these, too, contribute to the enrichment of the employer – by insufficient holidays and mealtimes, by non-observance of child labour laws, by overtime during good trade, by the cleaning of machinery during working hours, by fines for latecoming, etc. Wages (section III) illustrate the same point – through seasonal employment, trickery over piece rates and fines for bad quality, “credit” to the employer by delays in wage payments, prices of necessities rising faster than wages, machinery creating more and more values, while the worker gets insufficient even to secure him against starvation in old age, etc.

These questions gradually widen the worker’s horizon, until he is forced to consider his own problems as *part of the general problems of the working class, in its struggle against the capitalist class, whose organ is the capitalist State*. In this respect the *Enquiry* is a striking illustration of Marx’s determination, as a true revolutionary, never to allow immediate problems to hide the great ultimate issue of “class against class,” but rather to throw

light upon it from an endless variety of angles. This appears even in the first section, in questions 9, 17, 36; in the second, in questions 39 and 40; and in the third, in questions 48 and 49, 59, 69, 74 and 75. In section IV the class struggle comes out into the open. The worker recalls his experience in strikes, and the solidarity of workers in other industries: he is reminded of the employers' reply – by class associations to crush the workers: and the partiality of the capitalist Government which he noticed earlier now comes forth as open support of the capitalist class, in the last resort, with all the forces of the State – troops, laws, factory Inspectors, etc.

In the light of the facts and thoughts suggested by the *Enquiry*, how idiotic and how base are the various quack remedies for capitalism suggested by the-opportunists of every school – those who aim at “humanising” capitalism, and bringing about the workers' freedom without overthrowing the capitalists! This is the conclusion Marx drives the worker to draw, not only from all the previous sections, but also from a skilfully-drawn-up series of questions (88, 94-99) at the end of section IV. In Marx's day the French Socialist movement was full of advocates of the policy of *class collaboration*, who peddled various “magic” remedies among the workers (gradual reform of capitalism through legislation, friendly societies, pension and welfare schemes, co-operative guilds squeezing out the employer, profit-sharing, arbitration, improvement of workers' conditions through rationalisation and better machinery, better conditions through better trade, etc.). Although their remedies were different, they were all agreed on one point – that the workers must not unite to overthrow the capitalist class. Against these false friends Marx fought like a lion all his days. The *Enquiry* is a remarkable case in point.

Lastly, it is an excellent sample of Marx's style, which was determined by the class for which he wrote. Simple, lucid, crisp and to the point, it called a spade a spade, and wasted no time on sickly sentimentalities or high-flown verbiage. In this Marx was at one with all great revolutionaries. Like them, too, Marx did not pretend to be impartial, and above the battle, although this particular occasion might have seemed very suitable for a "dispassionate study." Marx was on the side of the workers, and passionately: questions 27, 56, 58, 59, 75, 80, 99, etc., are illustrations.

Perhaps a few words are necessary in conclusion as to why we publish such a document as the *Workers' Enquiry*, now over fifty years old. The main reason is that the questions it asks might have been written to-day. Not only has the nature of capitalist exploitation remained the same in substance, it has become worse in degree. There is still the same need for rousing the working millions to a knowledge of the true cause of their misfortunes – all the more because, by the side of the ruin, misery and chaos of capitalism, there rises to-day the splendid reality of a new world, ruled by the workers, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. There is still the same need for fighting the opportunist deceivers of the workers – all the more because they have to their discredit such colossal treacheries as the support of capitalist Governments during the War of 1914-1918, the crushing of the Socialist Revolution in Germany and Hungary in 1919, the betrayal of the British General Strike in 1926, and others without number.

Communist Party locals could do worse than test their knowledge of workers' conditions by the standard of these 100 questions. Workers study groups and classes, factory cells, and revolutionary groups in the unions, will find the *Enquiry* a

splendid basis on which to start explaining to their fellow workers and to themselves the nature of capitalist exploitation. Sections of the Friends of the Soviet Union can show to the workers, point by point, how the working class in the proletarian dictatorship in the U.S.S.R. can reply to Marx's questions in a sense the very opposite of what has to be replied under a capitalist dictatorship, as in Great Britain. And if the study of this little gem of Marxist thought stimulates the reader to find out more of Marx and Marxism, that alone will make the present booklet well worth while.

Andrew Rothstein.

Introduction

On April 20th, 1880, the French Socialist journal "La Revue Socialiste" published a *Workers' Enquiry* which came from the pen of Karl Marx, as can be seen from a letter of Marx to Sorge, dated November 5, 1880. The *Enquiry* was also printed by the journal as a separate pamphlet, and widely circulated in France. The Institute has no information at present as to its results.

Since that time it has been forgotten, and has not been translated into any other language or re-published in France. Yet it is one of Marx's last works, written in the closing years of his life. Its contents make it of great interest for the international working class movement at the present time.

THE INSTITUTE OF MARX, ENGELS, AND LENIN.

New International - A Workers' Inquiry (1938)

The following introduction to the inquiry was published by the American Trotskyist paper New International (Volume 4, Number 12, pp.379-81) in December 1938.

This little work, a product of Marx's last years, first appeared in France, in 1880. It attained a comparatively wide circulation at that time, but subsequently disappeared from sight for fifty years. It has never before been published in this country. It retains, we believe, a variety of interests for us today. In the first place, it is a convincing commentary upon the neo-revisionists now flourishing who try to tell us and the world that Marx was a rabbinical metaphysician spinning out a deductive picture of society from the depths of an Hegelian imagination. We see from this series of questions how Marx's decisive point of reference was not a set of abstract categories but the concrete incidents in the daily lives of the workers. "Exploitation", "surplus value", "rate of profit", are here traced to their living source. Secondly, we may observe the simplicity and directness of Marx's approach to the actual problems confronted by the workers; again, a comment upon those who today find Marx

a “great theorist” but so lacking in “an understanding of psychology”. Thirdly, the indirect effect of the questions indicates what Marx meant when he said that the emancipation of the workers must come from the workers themselves. The whole aim of the questions is to make the worker aware of his own predicament in capitalist society, to cut through the fog of illusions and habitual responses and fictions which prevent the worker from understanding his social world, and by thus making the worker conscious of his predicament giving him a chance to solve it. With the changes in industrial production during the past half-century, certain of these questions in their given form have, of course, become archaic. But no one would find difficulty in modifying them in such a manner as to bring them up to date. And no one will doubt what the truthful answer to them would reveal, more shockingly and brutally today by far than fifty years ago: the incalculable, hideous cost that the masses of humanity pay for the continuance of the rule of capitalism.

THE EDITORS.

T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel's Introduction (1963)

The inquiry was published in Bottomore and Rubel's 1963 text – Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy.⁸⁶ The authors' introduction has been reproduced below.⁸⁷

Marx's Enquête Ouvrière: Introductory Note

In a letter to Sorge on 5 November 1880, Marx wrote that he had drawn up for Benoit Malon's *Revue Socialiste* 'Questionneur' (sic) of which a large number of copies had been distributed throughout France. 'Shortly afterwards Guèsde came to London in order to prepare in collaboration with us (myself, Engels, and Lafargue), an electoral programme for the workers, in connexion with the approaching general election.'⁸⁸

The questionnaire was first published in the *Revue Socialiste*

⁸⁶ Bottomore, T.B., and Rubel, M. (1963) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, p. 210–211.

⁸⁷ See Hilde Weiss, "Die "Enquête Ouvrière" von Karl Marx", in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, V/1, 1936, pp. 76–98.

⁸⁸ Briefe an F. A. Sorge und Andere, Stuttgart, 1906, p. 170.

on 20 April 1880. In addition, 25,000 copies were reprinted and distributed to all the workers' societies, to the socialist and democratic groups and circles, to the French newspapers, and to anyone else who asked for it. These copies were undated.

The text of the questionnaire is introduced by a brief preface which recalls the investigations into the conditions of the working class undertaken by the English government, and recommends a similar course of action to the French government. It exhorts the workers of town and country to reply to the questionnaire since only they can describe 'with full knowledge the evils which they endure', 'only they, and not any providential saviours, can energetically administer the remedies for the social ills from which they suffer. The appeal was also addressed to 'socialists of all schools, who, desiring social reform, must also desire exact and positive knowledge of the conditions in which the working class, the class to which the future belongs, lives and works.'

The preface declares finally that 'the replies will be classified and will provide data for a series of special articles to be published in the *Revue Socialiste* and afterwards collected together in a volume'.⁸⁹

The questionnaire is in four parts and has altogether 101 questions. The first part concerns the nature of the occupation and the conditions of work; the second concerns working hours and leisure; the third concerns the terms of employment, wages, and the cost of living; and the fourth concerns the working-class

⁸⁹ In fact, no results of the enquiry were ever published. The issue of the *Revue Socialiste* for 5 July 1880 mentioned that very few replies had been received, and asked its readers to send in their replies as quickly as possible. There was no further reference to the inquiry in subsequent issues and the *Revue* itself ceased publication in 1881.

struggle for the improvement of conditions.

Ken Lawrence - A Workers' Inquiry by Karl Marx (1973)

Ken Lawrence wrote this introduction to the Freedom Information Service's publication of the inquiry in 1973.

A Workers' Inquiry, Karl Marx. Freedom Information Service, Bewick/ed

The questionnaire that follows was written by Karl Marx not long before his death. As such, it is the most recent example of Marxism as practiced by Marx himself. Woven into the text are two concepts which are of special concern in the 1970's.

First is the meaning of class consciousness, and how it is influenced by Marxists. In this questionnaire, which superficially resembles a modern sociological exercise, the questioner makes an active and deliberate intervention into the consciousness of the worker being questioned.

Each question asks not for an opinion, but a fact. The answers are concrete. By the time a worker has answered the entire list, she or he will have faced a mirror of her or his own exploitation, and its mechanisms, in great detail.

Thus, using the current jargon, “consciousness raising” will have taken place, not through proselytizing or haranguing by the Marxist, but through the accumulated answers to questions which educate both the worker and the interviewer. The totality of answers provides an accurate mosaic of the proletarian reality, which, in the process of its discovery, lays the groundwork for the overthrow of capital.

Second is the meaning of socialism to Marx. He says in his introductory remarks:

These statements of labor’s grievances are the first act which socialist democracy must perform, in order to prepare the way for social regeneration.

Thus, for Marx, it is socialist democracy - what Engels called “the invading socialist society” - which makes the revolution and overthrows capitalism, not “the revolution” which creates socialism.

Ken Lawrence

May 28, 1973

Nabarde Kargar - Workers' Struggle (1976)

Marx's inquiry was published again by the Iranian group Nabarde Kargar (Workers' Struggle), in London, in 1976. The following text is a brief introduction written by Nabarde Kargar, emphasising the relevance of the questionnaire, almost a century later, to workers' situations in Iran. It has been translated from Farsi.

Workers' Inquiry Karl Marx

Dedicated to: the true revolutionaries who strive to study the Iranian working class and spread scientific socialism.

Worker's Struggle

The workers alone truly understand their own suffering. Only workers, and not divine intervention, can cure the social ills to which they have fallen prey.

Karl Marx

Marx produced this questionnaire in his final years. This is

the first Farsi (Persian) translation of the questionnaire, made available to those who champion the Iranian working class. This pamphlet can be a useful guide to those who wish to diligently study the living and working conditions of the Iranian working class and turn factories into barricades for political struggle. It seeks to reveal the realities of exploitation within the working class, and provides a roadmap for a Marxist analysis of this class to whom the future belongs. In his introduction to the first German edition of *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Engels writes:

In order to establish a solid foundation for socialist theory and its critiques, and to end emotional illusions associated with it, we must have detailed knowledge of the proletariat.

The questions here are designed to enlighten the respondent about the extent of exploitation that the working class faces.

Working closely with workers, especially the industrial workers in Iran, and mobilising them through the spread of scientific socialism, is one of the most important duties of the proletarian thinker at this stage.

In “The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats”, Lenin writes:

The Russian social democrats must not become divided. They must concentrate all their efforts amongst the industrialized proletariat, those who have an increased intellectual and political capacity and are high in numbers in the political centres of the country. Hence creating revolutionary unity amongst factory

and city workers is the most vital duty of social democracy.

Isolation from workers and disagreements on theoretical issues is a considerable threat to political movements, which can even change the direction of the struggle.

The questions in this pamphlet can be used as a criterion to assess existing literature on the Iranian working class.

Escalation in conflict necessitates solidarity with the working classes in order to bring down the corrupt Pahlavi regime. This writer hopes that this article will serve this purpose, and become a roadmap for the Iranian resistance.

March 1976.

Postscript: Discovering Workers' Power

Clark McAllister

No Politics Without Inquiry!

In almost all the struggles documented above, workers' inquiry took place amidst hostile political environments, with numerous capitalist inquiries simultaneously undertaken into the labour-process to suppress worker organising. Some of these aimed to take control of the workplace (and the class-struggle) away from workers and place it in the hands of employers, while others tried to guide workers into moderate trade unions and bureaucratic organisations. Others still identified militant workers and removed them from society, often with brutal force, in order to prevent the working-class from realising and advancing its wider interests against exploitation.

The most significant processes of capitalist inquiry, however, is explicitly referenced in the appeal launched by *Przedświt* in 1866:

Even though they rule the world today, capitalists never stop looking for ways to increase their power. Today they are investigating how to improve the tools

of the trade, tomorrow they will be exploring ways to replace workers with machines; the next day they will be looking for new markets for their products – or rather, for the products they have appropriated – and so on.

As *Przedświt* emphasise, capitalists are constantly trying to escape from their reliance on the human commodity labour-power, because labour-power can only be the extension of *living labour*: embodied in the free-spirit of the worker, who might not consent to being bossed around all day and exploited. In order, then, to escape from workers constantly threatening the stability of the capitalist system, employers seek to “improve the tools of the trade”, “exploring ways to replace workers with machines.”

Unfortunately for them, labour-power is the most important commodity in circulation: the beating-heart of capitalism itself. It cannot be abolished without the abolition of capitalism, as labour-power is the only commodity capable of producing *surplus-value*, the source of both profit and capital. This is achieved through the particular capitalist organisation of work, where the cost of labour-power (and the fact labour-power *has* a cost), the wage, is cheaper than the value of the commodities workers themselves create in the process of production.

In order to balance this intolerable dependence of opposing classes, employers seek to refine the methods of exploitation in the labour-process, to monitor and control workers, so far as they need us, and limit our autonomy in the workplace. This renders the conditions of sale for ‘our’ commodity, labour-power, more beneficial for capital. It is necessary for employers, as the *Przedświt* workers’ inquiry emphasises, to therefore

conduct their own inquiries, “to never stop searching for ways to increase their power.”

The most significant example of this is the phenomenon of *Taylorism*, dubbed by Harry Braverman as “the explicit verbalisation of the capitalist mode of production”.⁹⁰ In the 1880s, Fredrick Taylor, an industrial engineer and factory foreman, inquired into workers’ behaviour on the shopfloor, taking careful note of strategies of resistance and reporting these to the bosses. Not only did Taylor’s efforts facilitate increased company control over workers, but he helped to devise strategies for physically limiting workers’ autonomy and power in the workplace. This rendered the physical organisation of labour-power more and more restrictive for workers, and ever-more valuable for employers. As Taylor argued, promoting the complete subordination of labour to capital, of the worker to their employer:

It is only through enforced standardization of methods, enforced adoption of the best implements and working conditions, and enforced cooperation that this faster work can be assured. And the duty of enforcing the adoption of standards and of enforcing this cooperation rests with the management alone... All of those who, after proper teaching, either will not or cannot work in accordance with the new methods and at the higher speed must be discharged by the

⁹⁰ Braverman, H. (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Monthly Review Press: 60.

management.⁹¹

This was perfected with the introduction of labour-saving machinery, giving rise to the modern assembly-line, where the speed of production could be centralised and controlled independent of the will of workers. This became the paradigmatic method of capitalist production into the twentieth century. While workers could not be replaced wholesale by machinery, they could at least be subordinated to it. Not only did such developments render a greater share of value for capitalist industrialists – who could reduce their labour costs considerably – but Taylor's efforts, far from constituting neutral 'scientific' inquiries, represented a clear political attack on workers. Leading to a new generalised technical composition of the working-class (workers' organisation in production), with little to no autonomy in the workplace, such a degradation was lauded by Taylor as the emergence of a "new man", eternally at the service of the cult of work.

In spite of these efforts to control workers, the capitalist use of labour-power is a dangerous, explosive endeavour, no matter how it is organised. Embodied in our muscular energy and encompassing our stolen time, Marx called labour-power the *peculiar commodity*. It is peculiar, not only because it is the only commodity capable of producing value-as such (and, moreover, *variable amounts* of value, given varying organisations of work), but also because of the political character of the working-class. Even the assembly-line, and the massive changes this brought to the industrial workplace at the turn of the twentieth

⁹¹ Taylor, F. W. (1919) *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers: 83.

century, has been continuously used by workers to their own advantage. The new technical composition of the class actually granted workers increased disruptive capabilities. This was noted by Italian Marxists of the *workerist* tradition, who utilised workers' inquiry during the 1960s: a period of intense social change in Italy, with a new migrant workforce engaging in ever-developing forms of mass-production. As Ed Emery has noted, it is generally at times like this, at "points of fracture, crisis, restructuring, dislocation of capitalist development etc that these Inquiries come about. And the Inquiries see themselves as a prelude, a precursor and a precondition of politics."⁹²

By inquiring into the activities of workers themselves, rather than proceeding from a priori assumptions over 'correct' forms of organisation, workers' inquiry brought the Italian militants closer to the working-class. It opened up a space for Marxist strategy to proceed from class-struggle, rather than from outside – allowing socialist politics to proceed from the working-class perspective.

Inquiries of this sort are needed again, now more than ever. Today, having witnessed decades of neoliberal restructuring, the working-class remains largely fractured and disconnected. To many in the UK, the struggles of industrial workers in the 1970s and 1980s – from the Winter of Discontent to the Miners' Strike – represented the last pitched battles between labour and capital. Today we are faced with a service-oriented economy with decreasing union membership and declining pay and conditions. Many on the socialist left have abandoned the class-struggle altogether, turning their attention exclusively

⁹² Emery, E. (1995) 'No Politics Without Inquiry! A Proposal for a Class Composition Inquiry Project, 1996-7', *Common Sense* No. 18: 5.

to parliamentary issues, working within the bourgeois Labour Party, or to the myriad of activist causes and social movements. As important as these struggles are, they neither address nor aim to challenge the fundamental exploitative relation which structures capitalist totality: *wage-labour*.

Our so-called service-economy might have blurred the lines of struggle considerably. But the fact is: there are more workers in Britain than ever. There are more factories – meat-packing plants, food-processing factories etc. – more offices, more construction work, logistics, and transport; more cleaning, more packing, more picking, more driving. There are millions of unorganised workers in supermarkets and warehouses – or, if there is organisation, it appears largely invisible to those outside the workplace. There are huge migrant workforces, often located on the fringes of cities, engaged in extremely low-paid and highly exploitative manual labour. The new composition of the class has not been sufficiently grasped by socialists, as sufficient attempts have not been made. As Emery said, inquiries are vital at periods of disjuncture and fragmentation: inquiry is a precondition of politics. Inquiry now, more than ever, is necessary: for the rebuilding not of abstract socialist influence, but of concrete working-class power.

Today, the militants of Notes from Below, as well as comrades across the world, engage in the practice of workers' inquiry in order to advance this effort, continuing the project started by the workers movement and articulated in the works of Marx throughout the 19th century. Beginning from inquiries into the situation of the class-itself, which also allows us to understand the strength and composition of capital, the method of workers' inquiry provides a compass for those who seek "to tear the direction and control of the class struggle from the brain of

capital and put it once and for all in the fists of workers.”⁹³ To this end, the reader is referred to the Class Composition Project – an ongoing collaborative workers’ inquiry through Notes from Below – with the optimism that we continue our efforts at building and re-composing a working-class power that dares to be reckoned with.

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