

## My Own Shop

Exploitation of Negro Women Workers.

By George W. Gentile.

Exploitation of the severest sort is prevalent in the shop where I work. When I think of the amount of personal injuries the workers here sustain, it makes my blood boil. For, aside from that of exploitation thru the payment of but a small part of our product, there is a heavy penalty we workers pay in the shape of maimed and severed fingers, due to the dangerous machinery.

Whatever we workers may think about the color line, the boss is perfectly oblivious to it. He hires and fires indiscriminately the whites and the negroes alike. Likewise does he exploit them with equal impartiality. Here, at least, the Negro workers are on the same "social" plane as the whites—both of us are equally victimized by the wages system.

The Negro workers in my shop number about a dozen, all girls and women. They receive the stupendous wage of \$12.00 per week. How they exist on this sum we must leave to the "welfare" committees and "social betterment" clubs to figure out. These girls work with machinery and scarcely a day passes without an injury to one or more of them. Especially are they liable to the loss of their fingers thru contact with the swift, automatic knives. Sometimes it is but one finger, many times two, and when we realize that severed fingers never "grow out", we begin to know the cruelties these workers suffer thru out their lives with mangled hands.

Of course we have a workers' compensation law; that is we have a mockery of one. It is mostly sham and pretense, as all industrial insurance is under capitalism. In New York state we are supposed, under this beneficent law to receive two-thirds of our wages when laid up by accident. But this is only true of those workers receiving a wage, two-thirds of which is equal to not more than \$20.00 weekly. Workers receiving a bit more than \$30.00 weekly, which is far below a living wage, when laid off with a crushed limb or other accident would have to exist upon even less than this unlivable wage. One can imagine how much misery is heaped upon a family of a worker whose wage is say, \$12.00 weekly.

### Ignorance Enslaves.

I attempt to show these workers how they are exploited, but I have learned that the workers are their own worst enemies. To attempt to teach them how they are enslaved is to run the risk of getting the reputation of being a Bolshevik, which means in an unorganized shop, the loss of your job, or at least becoming a marked worker for the boss to discriminate against. Of course I take this chance many times tho I am often silenced by the sneers and contempt of these same slaves who chop off their fingers for the bosses profits.

These workers are underpaid to such an extent, that they cannot afford to buy literature with which to enlighten themselves. But I am doing as I believe many others are doing, furnishing the literature out of my own pocket. The Toiler is doing its work here as elsewhere and if we had more Toiler distributors the vanguard of the revolutionary workers would not long be held back by the loadstone of ignorant workers as now. I consider it the duty of every radical worker to supply his associate workers with revolutionary literature, whether these workers are white, black, yellow or any other color. We are all slaves under capitalism and as long as the boss can't tell us apart when he exploits us, there is no reason why we should draw the color line.

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