

SETTING WAGES

By T-BONE SLIM

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Bankers and burglars have a very snotty way of dipping into other people's business—and something should be done about it. Both use practically the same method of peaceful penetration—one under the cover of darkness, the other under cover of broad daylight, from, say, 10 o'clock to 3 p. m. or a. m. as the case may be—the burglar seemingly prefers to work between 10 p. m. and 3 a. m. . . .

One depends largely on sleight-of-hand, magic and high explosives to gain a livelihood; the other uses no explosives, other than words of that description and relies wholly on the art of persuasion and sleight-of-tongue to produce the necessary "melons" as he says, for his "wife and kiddies".

I may be wholly wrong when I say "they have much in common"—writers will make such careless statements in the fervor (heat) of their inspiration, even going so far as to make two successive statements that conflict, from the word go—as to that I can comfort the b. and b. by saying this is not the first time such a grave error finds its way into immortal annals of the times. Writers should read the Preamble of The Industrial Workers of the World more carefully and study in particular the material in regards the statement "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common". How can they have, when one has and the other hasn't? To have anything in common one of them would have to use very strong, powerful imagination, work himself into a trance, hold the spell the rest of his life lest he wake up and find himself a busted plute, a panicky panhandler.

Yea ho, as I was articulating, the bankers and burglars dip into people's business in an uncalled for manner, but we will not go into the question as to their value to society, in so far as their primary occupation is concerned. We will proceed to divide them and concern ourself strictly with the unhappy custom of the banker neglecting his melon patch to the extent of setting the wages for people who are obliged to work—bankers appear to be especially anxious about that matter and worry days and weeks in trepidation and cold sweat convinced that if they do not set-em the wages never will be set.

Naturally the melon patch suffers severely from this inattention and I see chain banks carrying off the choicest ripe ones.

Don't get the idea that the bankers deliberately step out on the pavement and deliver the verdict of their deliberations (35 cents an hour). Oh, no, a certain amount of ceremony is necessary to make it look respectable and to keep the banker's back from peeling violently and all of a sudden. The chamber of commerce is called together:

"What are we gonna pay those roughnecks this year?"

"Mr. Honorable President," stutters the barbwire-magnate, "I can't think of anything bigger than 35 cents." Mr. Butter and Egg, of the Sacred Grocery Stores Corp., rises to point of order: "Thirty-five pennies is too much. I make a motion we pay them \$3.50 a day and let the farmers work 'em 11½ hours."

"We pay 'em?" hiccoughs the butcher, "We pay 'em what do you mean, we pay 'em. Why not let the farmers pay 'em?"

"Set down, Mr. Baconbutts, you're out of order, you're drunk."

"Mr. President, I quite agree with Mr. Baconbutts," opines Otto Flivver, the manager of the Sun-Blistered Trail Garage Co., (he owes the butcher \$1.87 he hopes the butcher will have the decency to forget), "I quite agree with Mr. Baconbutts, not only in letting the farmer pay 'em but also in letting the farmer set their wages."

Pres.: "Why Mr. Flivver, I'm surprised at you! as long as you've been dealing with farmers you ought to know they are teetotally incapable of setting anything except a hen—you must have been hitting up the butcher's jug, too; set down. Let's hear from Mr. Aloysius Cadwallader Skads, president of our Wurst Rational Bank; capital \$147,000.00; surplus, \$140,000.00—what's your pleasure, Mr. Skads?"

Mr. Skads: "Gentlemen, I want to be absolutely fair, in fact liberal, and although I think \$3.50 a day is an awful big pile of money to pay one man for a day's work I feel we ought to let the goodness of our heart well forth and place our faith in the Lord that those rough-necks will spend it well if not wisely . . ."

Butcher: "I agree with Cad Skads . . ."

Chairman: "Set down, you're slopping over."

Butcher: "We ain't got no business setting them wages, but we have to give 'em something—enough so they can buy a little chuck steak for the jungles while they're washing up—I don't want 'em bumming me all the time, I've got a soft heart, last week while one of 'em was bumming me in front another on ran off with a full jug of green rye at the back, damn 'em, I'm in favor of giving 'em \$4.00 a day."

"Mr. Baconbutts, set down, you're out of order — — — you didn't lose this week's jug, did you?"

"I did not, I found a new hiding place, puffedly safe and—that reminds me if the honorable chamber will excuse me and Mr. Flivver I'll go and tend to my customers."

(Otto Flivver and Rasher Baconbutts depart arm in arm singing "Throw out the life-line.")

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Can you imagine, here's a bunch of men (outside the butch) that never did a tap of work in all their lazy life having the presumption to set the wages for actual working men—a banker that would last less than one hour on the end of a pitchfork and less than half-hour shocking; and, it appears, the working men are incapable in the setting of their own price on the labor power they sell. Nobody in all this world speaking for them but a drunken butcher and, possibly, the I. W. W. Labor