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Eugène Tartaret, *[For the Reduction of Working Hours]*¹⁵

[...] The purpose of reducing the number of hours of work is to assure the material and intellectual development of the workers, to allow them the free exercise of their civil and political rights.

In modern society, work should no longer be punishment, servitude, or a mark of indignity; it should be a duty imposed on all citizens.

If work is to be really the exercise of a common duty, it should be carried out under conditions that guarantee workers their health, the satisfaction of their needs and those of their families, and protection against the pain and misery of old age and disability.

Under present conditions, does work meet the goal set by the *International*?
– No.

Work as practiced under the pressure of competition is a struggle to the death among workers, people against people, individual against individual. Everywhere exploitation produces antagonism and servitude of the workers.

Production bears the weight of enormous charges, imposed by excessive taxes, to pay exorbitant salaries to officials whose main occupation is to keep workers subjugated to capital.

Exploitation, fostering and maintaining competition by lowering wages, forces workers to work long hours. In some very painful occupations – construction, digging, etc. etc. – the workers tire quickly and receive no training.

¹⁵ This report was prepared by the committee on reduction of the workday of the Brussels Congress (1868). It was read in the session of 12 September 1868, by the Parisian cabinet-maker Eugène Tartaret [unk.], who was also a delegate to the Lausanne Congress (1869). Part of it was published in B1868. The complete text is in PI, I: 385–7.

Finally, wherever the workday is not limited, the worker becomes physically and intellectually exhausted. From a citizen destined to learn, carry out responsibilities, and exercise civil and political rights, the worker is turned into a pariah, a slave indifferent to progress and incapable of learning anything. Tired of his pain and his misery, the worker puts up with exploitation and servitude without daring to protest such injustice. And how would he learn, how would he resist? He doesn't have the time.

This initial goal of reducing work hours is therefore indispensable, because without it, the task of organizing international solidarity, proposed by our Association, would be hopeless. (...)

The necessary increase of production and lowering of prices must be achieved [not by forcing workers to work longer hours, but rather] through the use of appropriate raw materials, the professional training of workers, and the wise use of machines.

But the intervention of machines further complicates the unfortunate situation of the workers, because the machines belong exclusively to the owners of capital.

It is sometimes objected that the worker at the machine will play a passive role, as nothing more than the *operator of the machine*. It is also said that in certain occupations the worker will no longer do anything but regular and uniform operations, which will limit his knowledge of the industrial process as a whole. But we are not afraid that this will happen.

Machinery is inert and is a human creation; it cannot function usefully without cooperation and without intelligent direction.

If man's industrial role is diminished through a reduction of working hours, justice is served, because man has not only work to do, but also a family to support, children to educate, civil and political rights to exercise. If machinery when first introduced harms workers through excess production and a forced unemployment that impoverishes them, this is because, as the International has recognized, it is not owned by the workers, who can acquire it only through solidarity.

Machinery, a fruit of human intelligence, must serve man as a means of emancipation and must not be a cause of ruin. If it produces too much, it

should run for less time, and its human operator will benefit from the reduction of work hours.

This reduction of work hours should bring man wellbeing, intelligence, and freedom. [...]