

A Matter Of Definition.

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IN the April Journal Laborer asks why I do not reply to his question, "How Does the Capitalist Aid In Production?" Let me try again. The capitalist is he who furnishes the capital. We will suppose a very primitive form of production — digging potatoes. If Mr. A digs with his hands he uses no capital in producing his wealth — potatoes — but only land and labor. If, however, he uses a hoe, his labor is rendered much more effective. A hoe is capital, and Mr. A. is both capitalist and laborer if the hoe is his. If he is a sensible man and wishes to dig as many potatoes as possible with the least exertion he will use the best hoe (capital) he can get.

Again, Mr. B. wishes a suit of clothes. He, or somebody for him, shears the sheep with the implements made for the purpose (capital), cards and spins the wool with capital, cuts the cloth with capital (shears), and sews with capital (needles and thread). Could he do the first thing towards getting a covering for his body without capital? Then does not the capitalist, who may be and often is the laborer also, aid in production if, as I maintain, capital is wealth used to aid production? If, however, Laborer defines capital as wealth used to oppress labor — which is an impossibility, as wealth of any kind never did and never can oppress — then, naturally, Laborer would wonder how capital can aid in production and cannot see the force of my examples.

I have several times before defined my use of capital, as I had supposed, so clearly that he who runs might read; but I will repeat it and ask Laborer to please take particular notice when I repeat my definition, which is "*Wealth used to aid production.*" Wealth, I will also again define as "Labor products having value." Accepting my definition. Laborer must see that he who furnishes capital must aid in the production of wealth.

In ordinary parlance we speak of the "capital" of a company or a corporation as

being a certain number of dollars; but in economics terms must have a certain definite meaning, and in order to discuss intelligently, or with any degree of satisfaction on either side, there must be some agreement as to the meanings of the terms used.

Allowing, for the moment, that my definition of capital is wrong, what term would Laborer use in speaking of "wealth used to aid production?" That wealth — spades or other tools, machinery, etc. — is used and in the nature of the case must be used, if we would not go back to the most primitive form of producing with our naked hands, is an indisputable fact which Laborer cannot gainsay. He could not make shoes without leather, awls, thread, etc.. neither could he weave cloth without a loom. He can neither build a house without stones, brick, wood and nails, nor cook his food without a stove, fuel and cooking utensils. Therefore, while capital is not a primary factor in the production of wealth, being itself a product of labor, it is a secondary and a very necessary one if, as I said above, we would not return to most primitive conditions. Why should we discard anything which assists labor or makes life easier and pleasanter, and at the same time injures no one?

If Laborer objects to my definition of capital what name, then, would he give to what I call capital?

Again we disagree in a matter of definitions in the use of the words "rights" and "equal freedom." A "right" in this sense is a just claim and also in the case cited by Laborer where he says: "I have a right to acquire the earth under present laws but Mr. Rockefeller and several others have equal rights besides having more business ability."

No amount of "business ability" gives any one a right to "acquire the earth," neither does any statute law that was ever passed. Neither "business ability" nor statute law can make a wrong right. In speaking of a right I mean moral right, not legal. Unfortunately they are not synonymous terms.

Everyone, whether black or white, wise or ignorant, large or small, has an equal right (just claim) to the use of the earth which was put here for the use of all, and which could not be produced by the most intelligent scientist who ever lived or ever will live. Having all of us this equal right to use the earth — not to own any part of it —

no one can justly "acquire" any in the sense I understand Laborer to use the word, statute law to the contrary notwithstanding.

If Laborer "chooses to rob his neighbor" he can rob him only of that which his neighbor owns, namely; wealth. In that case Laborer takes what does not belong to him, but does belong to his neighbor. He therefore commits an aggression and the government should step in and stop a continuance of such acts. Laborer could not "steal the earth" because no one owns it, but he could deprive someone of his power to exercise his right to use it — a very different thing — which would also be an aggression.

Laborer confuses right and power, evidently, when he says: "This principle (of equal freedom) allows everyone to do everything they will if they allow others the same privilege, which amounts to everyone doing everything they want to *if they can*," etc.

"This principle" allows nothing of the kind. It limits everyone's right to swing a club, for example, or fire a gun or throw a sharp knife wherever he pleases provided (and here is an important point) no one is within his reach to be hurt, and provided no one's property is injured. Robinson Crusoe had a right to throw a club or stones in any direction he pleased until Friday appeared, then his right was limited by Friday's right to the full use of his body unharmed by Robinson's club or stones.

I surely will not protest if this doctrine is pursued to its ultimate consequences, for it is a correct principle and must therefore be good in practice. Any seeming failure in its "ultimate consequences" is due to other causes. Certainly the examples Laborer cited are a decided violation of the law of equal freedom.

I am not prejudiced in favor of this law as stated by Herbert Spencer simply because he stated it. but because it appeals to my reason and conscience In a way that no other statement of the kind does. I will gladly give it up and accept a better rule of conduct if Laborer or anyone else can formulate one. The one thing we want — or ought to want — to get at is what, for lack of better phraseology. we call equal freedom; that social condition in which everyone is allowed the greatest freedom consistent with that of his neighbor.

Does Laborer ask me to prove what I say as anyone would prove a mathematical

problem? Then I would answer that there are some things which need no proof, such as love, honor, integrity, etc. Would Laborer question why or how we should love our neighbor? Then I would reply, ask your own better self.

So is it with social righteousness. In order that communities may live in peace and harmony, in order that everyone's rights may be recognized, certain fundamental principles must be accepted by the majority, at least, and for anyone to question these seems to me to be as much a waste of time as to question why a man loves his wife and child.

In discussing morals, whether they be social or individual, certain principles have to be taken for granted; such as the equal right of all to life, the right of ownership anyone has in what is justly his, this precluding the right of anyone to take away a part of it without his consent; and the right of everyone to live out his own life as seems best to him provided he does not aggress on anyone else seems to the average person to come under the head of an axiomatic truth which it is not necessary to prove.

My advocacy of a "partial return to handwork" is based on a belief that the machine crowds out or suppresses all the originality, the love of the artistic and the ambition in men. Where does one go to find men and women who look disheartened, down-trodden and unambitious if not to the big factories? Can a man who merely feeds a machine eight or even six hours a day for six days in a week, or a girl who automatically runs a sewing machine the same length of time, be expected to be other than like his or her machine to a greater or less extent? Contrast it with the work of a wood carver, for instance, or some one who has constantly to use intelligence and skill in his work, and the result will prove that I am right.

Work is indeed "a means, not an end" and while it sounds very alluring to say that "socialists would give the hands enough rest to allow the brain a chance to do something." I would say instead, let us give both hands and brain work to do. The result of the small measure of manual training and Lloyd which has been introduced into the schools of many of our large cities are sufficient to show what a great need there is for work which uses both brain and hands, and which calls for the employment of intelligence and ingenuity.

Go into the average home and see the furnishing and then judge of the lack of artistic training. Gorgeous flowered carpets, rugs with impossible lions or baskets of flowers, furniture such as is turned out in factories by the thousand whose covering is discouragingly ugly, gilt chairs hardly strong enough to hold a small child, much less a man or woman; all these make one wish that the training of our coming generation could be in the direction of the beautiful.

It is true that the decorations on furniture made entirely by machinery may be mathematically exact, while that which is hand-carved is inexact; but a hand organ may play in exact time, yet who would prefer such machine music to that of even an ordinary performer?

When William Morris wanted to set up housekeeping in England fifty years ago he could not find one article of furniture that was not too ugly for him to live with and he was compelled to make his own. His work has left its impress in America as well as in England and there seems to be more of a demand in these days for really artistic furnishing. The moth and dust-breeding upholstered furniture and carpeted floors are slowly giving way to substantial wooden chairs which will last for generations, and rugs which can be shaken often.

It is true, at present only the wealthy can afford hand-carved furniture, but that they are demanding it shows a change in the right direction. Later everyone can carve his own furniture when his time and strength are not all consumed in making a living.

Just as no chromo can be as beautiful as a painting into which the artist has put his best thought and feeling, so with the more necessary things of life, even to the food; one sees or tastes the mind of the maker.

If Laborer does not advocate the equal wages how would he "trace the value of his product" under socialism?

Wages are determined by what a man can earn working for himself on the best land he can get for nothing, less than that he would not accept and more no employer would give. It is quite conceivable that a large employer would find it impossible to tell to a cent what each employe produced, but that is not the point. If we had free conditions so that everyone could, if he wished, employ, himself, then no one would

work for another for less, all things considered, than he could earn working for himself. This alone is what fixes wages.

Under free conditions we should have few, if any, square pegs in round holes except possibly temporarily; but everyone would do the work for which he was best adapted, and this condition would be a natural, not an artificial one. Men would be carpenters, machinists, lawyers, artists or tailors because that was the work they were best fitted for, not because they were forced by circumstances or by a government into work they disliked.

Let us trust nature, which we can do only by removing all restrictions and allowing everyone to live his own life as seems best to him, not by trying to force men to be good or industrious. Freedom will always win in the end.

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How Does He Aid?

In "A Reply," by F. A. Burleigh, page 27 of January Journal, I have looked in vain for a reply to the question I had repeatedly asked: How does the capitalist aid in production? As she has entirely ignored this most important question I take it that she does not care to attempt a thing in which all others have failed. Single Taxers must make this plain or admit that laborers would still be robbed under the Single Tax as they claim capitalists will flourish under that system.

My opponent, like many individualists, believes in the formula of Justice laid down by Herbert Spencer: "Every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man." This at first appears to be a beautiful principle but when put to the test proves to be "nonsense upon stilts."

From the contents of this same ninth chapter of "Social Statics" (unrevised) one would judge this to be a "pure, definite, entire and unlimited law," and my opponent will not protest if this "doctrine is pursued to its ultimate consequences."

According to F. A. B. the sole function of government should be to enforce this principle of equal freedom. This being a "fundamental principle," let us "stick to" it.

Under this principle I could commit every crime known if I would allow every one else the same privilege and no law could be made to infringe upon my right, for this is a "pure, definite, entire and unlimited law" and we must not "abate and modify and moderate" it.

On the other hand the government should see that my "rights are not aggressed upon when I choose to rob my neighbor, if this principle is to obtain. I could steal the earth if no other one of its inhabitants, each having an equal right, would happen to get ahead of me.

I have a "right" to acquire the earth under present laws but Mr. Rockefeller and several others have "equal rights," besides having more "business ability."

This principle allows every one to do everything they will if they allow others the same privilege, which amounts to every one doing everything they want to if they can and no one would need to regard civil law if they would allow others to disregard it, it would be as Ritchie says in his book, "Natural Rights," if this principle be "taken as the ultimate basis on which the fabric of law and government is to be built up, would either compel a complete abstinence from all action on the part of every individual that would be one way of every one having an equal right to do everything, or it would mean the equal right of every one to do everything in the sense of Hobbs, i. e., the war of all against all."

I do not think as does F. A. B. that a partial return to hand work would give us a "new and thinking race of men and women." Work is a means, not an end, and socialists would give the hands enough rest to allow the brain a chance to do something.

Socialists in general do not believe with Bellamy that an equal wage would be the best form of payment — that would be pure communism. But it may be a relief to the ultra-individualists to know that even Edward Bellamy proposed in his book "Equality" to give those not satisfied with his plan, land and tools with which to work out a better one. Under socialism no one could have any incentive to oppose improvements.

If F. A. B. would take the trouble to investigate she would find that the division of labor in manufacturing is such that a man could not trace the value of his product,

even while making "crochet needles," and the only practical way 'to get this value is first to get socialism. If A. M. does not criticise F. A. B.'s theory of value I shall be tempted to take that liberty.