

**ROBERT CLANCY**

Production in the U. S., we are told, today is four times per capita what it was a century ago. This is usually presented as a boast.

You're in a game of chance when dealing with statistics, but I'm willing to play.

The population of the United States in 1855 was about 25 million. As population increases, productive power should normally increase at a greater pace.

I think it is modest enough to say that a population of 50 million should produce four times what 25 million can produce—or twice as much per capita. And that 100 million people should produce four times as much as 50 million—or 16 times as much as 25 million; that is, four times as much per capita. With a population of over 160 million, there should be a showing of at least six times as much per capita as with 25 million. So we are really behind schedule today.

The above has to do only with increase of population—economies resulting from division of labor, etc.—and does not consider invention, use of machines, etc.

We are told that 100 years ago, manual labor accounted for 90 per cent of the production, and machines only ten per cent. With the enormous advances in technology made since then, the proportion is just about reversed today—90 per cent of production is done by machinery and ten per cent by manual labor.

If we can assume the same rising proportion of production with the increased use of machinery (as with increased population), then we should have about 80 times as much production done by ten men today as was done by 90 men 100 years ago.

This means that one man today should produce 720 times as much as his forefather did. We must multiply this by six to figure in the benefits of increased population—so production per capita today should be 3,620 times as much as a century ago.

Why, then, is it only four times as much (if, indeed, it is truly that much)? There are three possible explanations. The theory of diminishing returns with increased applications of capital—a theory belied, I think, by the results of automation; or, we can rattle the bones of Malthus; or, we can look to social and economic maladjustments that are in our power to remove.