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## THE REMEDY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

By JOSEPH FELS and JOHN ORR.

Reprinted from "The Socialist Review."

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While the activities are proceeding in quarters where there is little desire to look for an effective and final remedy, it is well that those who think such an achievement not only possible but absolutely essential, should discuss and prepare some far-reaching scheme. The articles by Dr. Russel Wallace, which appeared in the June and July numbers of the Socialist Review were interesting and valuable as efforts in this direction. The remedy he advanced is worthy of the most careful consideration. The remedy which we suggest is based partly on the same principles as his. Dr. Wallace took the principles laid down in a book with the interesting and comprehensive title: Poverty and the State; or Work for the Unemployed: An Inquiry into the Causes and Extent of Enforced Idleness, together with a Statement of a Remedy Practicable Here and Now. The book was written by Mr. Mills of Liverpool. We have not read it, but we are indebted to the author for the instruction conveyed in his sub-title. He assumes that there is such a thing as enforced idleness. We agree with him. This seems to us to be the whole evil, and the discovery of its causes the whole problem. With this discovery in such a case the remedy will present itself.

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imprisonment by the Supreme Court of Scotland. They had lived for years on some islands of the Outer Hebrides, with too little scope for employment, and seeking for some escape from this position they decided to settle on a neighbouring island, which was only inhabited and cultivated in a very small part of its area. Having taken this step without the consent, and against the wishes of the proprietor, Lady Gordon Cathcart, she put the law in operation against them, and they were interdicted by the Court of Session. Having disregarded this interdict, they were removed to Edinburgh, and imprisoned. They chose this course in preference to others that offered, because, as one of them said, they "had grown sick of waiting, and would prefer imprisonment father than go back to Mingulay to starve, or to be driven to the United States." They had planted two acres of land with potatoes, put a few cattle to graze on the island, and l uilt themselves huts a little better than those they previously ccupied.

All their aspirations and actions were in the direction cf employing themselves, of improving their conditions, of roducing some wealth, of enriching themselves, or, at least, of putting a greater distance between themselves and the abject poverty in which so many of them are wont to Ive. But they encountered formidable, and even insurrountable, obstacles in carrying out their aims. On December 18th, 1906, Lady Cathcart's local factor addressed a letter in the following terms to a crofter: "I am informed t at you are building a house in Garrygald Grazing, and if t at is the case I hereby request you to stop immediately and t) remove any material which you may have on the ground, and to restore the ground as near as possible to its former state. If you persist in building, the erection will be pulled down forcibly, or Lady Cathcart's agents will take immediate action against you, as house-building by cottars in the vicinity of Castlebay is to be no longer tolerated." Here, unemployment is secured by a very effective law-a law which has courts and prisons to support it.

But leaving this instance, somewhat remote as to the place where it happened, and not impressive by its magnitude, let us recall once again the case of Bethesda Quarry,

where Lord Penrhyn threw 2,800 men out of employment, and kept them out for three years. In 1902, when the men showed a laudable desire to employ themselves in the quarry, the Government sent down a company of soldiers to keep them out of the quarry, and out of work. Protests were made all over the country, and in Parliament, but Lord Penrhyn ignored some and defied others, according as he found it convenient. The law sanctioned his action, and

the army was ready to confirm it.

The following is another case which refers to another form of employment, and a different kind of land. In the Glasgow Herald, of June 7th, 1905, it was reported that a demonstration of miners was held in Castle Park, Blantyre, near Glasgow, on the previous night, to protest against the action of those responsible for the closing down of Bardykes Colliery, which had thrown 700 men out of employment. The landowner had made a demand for higher mineral royalties from Messrs. Merry and Cunninghame, the coalmasters, and as the latter had been working at a heavy loss for two or three years they were obliged to close the mine. On May 1st, 1908, the following report appeared in the same paper: - "At a time when unemployment is causing so much concern in the country, the intimation that the Summerlee Iron Company, Coatbridge, will shortly re-open the large colliery which is situated on the estate of Bardykes, will be welcomed by the mining community of Mid-Lanark, and more particularly in the districts immediately interested-Uddingston, Blantyre, and Cambuslang. may be recalled that the colliery, which was sunk nearly thirty years ago by the Clyde Coal Company, was shut down a few years ago and completely dismantled, as the result of a regrettable dispute between the lessees, Messrs. Merry and Cunninghame, coalmasters, and the proprietor regarding the payment of mining royalties. From 600 to 700 miners were at that time thrown out of employment, and the village of Bardykes was demolished. . . . The shafts are sunk to a depth of 224 fathoms, and there is sufficient coal in the workings to keep the colliery going steadily for at least the next thirty years, and the daily output will exceed 1,000 tons per day."

The last instance we shall adduce is from London. On July 29th, 1907, the site of the Old Bailey, London, was put up for auction in three lots, to be let on a building lease of ninety-nine years. The first lot went off at a ground rent at the rate of £4,520 per acre; the second went off at the rate of £5,593 per acre; the third went to a figure at the rate of £5,651 per acre, and was withdrawn. In this last case the builder was willing to pay a high ground rent each year, and to spend perhaps £20,000 in erecting a building. There were plenty of men in the building trade out of work, but because the landowner held up the land, they were kept in enforced idleness.

It would be easy to go further and to cite other cases, but it would be superfluous. On every estate throughout the length and breadth of the land this policy is pursued. The State has made a present to a comparatively small number of individuals of this power to throw men out of work. Successive Governments have framed laws, the direct and inevitable effect of which is to cause unemployment. Employment cannot be had except on the land and about the products which labour extracts from the land, but governments have made the use of land conditional on the will of the landowners. If any member of this class requires assistance to enforce his will, the civil law, the criminal law, the police, the army and the navy are at his service.

In the light of these facts and instances, therefore, every one of which points to a common cause, it is almost mpossible not to see the remedy. To us it seems absoutely futile to go on planting labour colonies so long as the nost powerful agency in the community is engaged in rooting them up every day. All over the country the ruins of abour colonies are to be seen, where men and women used o co-operate; and the places where they would establish new working colonies are even more numerous. Indeed, we see no reason why social reformers should not pitch their ideal much higher in this respect in creating labour colonies, and set themselves to make every acre of land in the country part of one large, united, co-operative colony. For example, if we return to the instances mentioned at the beginning of this article, we might regard the workers affected in each

case as co-operators in an almost universal scheme. Taking the case of the Old Bailey site, we know that the wages of masons, bricklayers, carpenters and joiners in London are 43s. 9d. per week; the wages of plumbers and plasterers are 45s. 10d.; of painters 35s. 5d. to 37s. 6d. There is a large number of them in London eager to engage in building, and to receive those wages. With that money they would go to the grocers, the bakers, the butchers, the tobacconists, the tailors and shoemakers; they would make an effective demand, which would draw goods from all parts of the world. They would call on the tea growers and merchants of India, Ceylon, and China to serve them, the swaggering farmers of Australia and New Zealand, and the wool merchants and manufacturers to give them woollen goods, the lordly shipowners and railway directors to convey them. These good things and more they would do, but the land is shut up against them, and all is at an end. They are unemployed; their hands are in their pockets, and their minds in the anguish of hell. As often as they are allowed to work, the miners, quarrymen, farmers and ploughmen are always co-operating with the tailors, shoemakers, grocers, bakers, and with the railway employees and sailors who carry the products between them, but when these men in the primary industries are thrown out of work, all others engaged in the processes of manufacture and exchange fall idle.

This, then, is the point of view from which we approach unemployment; that it is an evil caused by the misdirected and unjust activity of the Government, which has a universal scope. Having bestowed its most important function or right on private individuals, there is no way in which the mischief can be healed, except in the resumption of that function or right. With all due regard, therefore, for the views of speakers and writers who pronounce against panaceas and simple, easily-understood remedies, we would emphasise and insist on this point. Unemployment does not originate in heaven—or even in hell. Its source is neither remote nor obscure. It is in Westminster, in the laws which issue thence, and run over the whole land, commanding thousands of civil servants, policemen, soldiers and sailors to place all their forces at the service of the man

who has the desire and the legal title to sever the connection of his fellow men with the land. However busy governments may be in promoting philanthropic legislation, the administration of these perverse laws and systems, built up with the greatest patience through centuries, forms the chief part of their work, and nullifies all their benevolent efforts. These laws prevail from one end of the land to the other. The remedy consists in the Government retracing the steps it has taken, in resuming gradually, steadily, and with regard to the whole land of the country the power which it has alienated from itself.

This policy would be as effective as it is simple. By establishing the common principle of requiring the land-owner to pay to the Government the value which public services have given to his land, we should furnish him with an incentive to use that land. As it is, those men are entirely ignorant of the unused benefits which are in their possession. If those benefits were sought out and valued, and payment of their value made a condition of their enjoyment, the effect would be wonderful. There is nothing which moves a man so inevitably as a demand for money.

Lord Dudley gave a striking example of this a few months ago. He had just returned from the West Indies, where he owns a considerable estate. Asked his opinion of Jamaica, in an interview, he replied: -- "It is a wonderfully productive place. There is hardly a thing which will not grow there. As a matter of fact, I have 10,000 acres in Jamaica which came into our family in the female line about the year 1744. Of course, these properties gave sugar; but when Emancipation came along, there seemed to be an end to all of that, and they have never given anything since. I have always rather laughed at our Jamaica estates, fancying they could not be worth much as they never gave anything, and, of course, as they never required any money, I have never troubled very much about them." Here we have one of those greatly privileged, and therefore deeply wronged, individuals impeaching the world at large for its failure to remind him that he owned very valuable estates, the cultivation of which would benefit himself and the whole world. It would be a simple thing, and very beneficial, to

make such land require some money from its possessors, just as much as is the measure of its value.

Let us learn from the landlords how to solve this problem. They have framed a law to prevent unemployment being caused by other people. In Professor Bell's Lectures on Conveyancing, the law with regard to mineral lands is laid down thus: "The subjects let may be worked more or less largely, and the landlord should be paid accordingly. But at the same time, provision should be made for securing that the subjects shall really be worked, and not allowed to lie in the ground. For accomplishing these objects, the tenant is taken bound to pay a fixed rent of specified amount, or, in the landlord's option (to be annually declared), a lordship or royalty of a certain proportion of the gross or net produce, or of so much per ton of minerals raised and sold. The obligation for the fixed rent is intended to prevent the tenants from neglecting or ceasing to work; and the obligation for the royalty is intended to secure to the landlord his fair share of their working."

But what does it avail, if landlords themselves are permitted with impunity, and often with apparent advantage, to do these things which they will not allow others to do? The whole land of the country is in their hands, and for no reason, or for a bad reason, they can keep vast areas of land idle. What is required is that in the above law the word "community" should be substituted for the word "landlord," wherever the latter appears, and that the landlords should be brought within the scope of this salutary principle with which they control and stimulate others. Let the Government extend the principle and exercise this control with regard to every kind of land in the country. If the Government assumed this function, and made it the chief part of its business to ascertain the value of every piece of land, and to exact that value from the individual in possession, a large demand for labour would follow. The landlords themselves would require to do some work, and the disinherited labourers, getting an entrance to their own heritage, would bid farewell in large numbers to the capitalists who had bought the right to work at a large price.

No better system than the present could be devised for

promoting unemployment. When Lord Penrhyn reduced the output of Bethesda Quarry by 55,300 tons a year, when he threw thousands of families into poverty, he was encouraged in this course by a reduction of £14,686 in the assessment of the quarry for county rates. No example can illustrate more clearly the false relationship that exists between the State and the individual. His action was indefensible on any reasonable or moral grounds; but our systems of land tenure and taxation, instead of checking such ı mistaken and injurious action, support it. All social evils urise from the fact that the community has conferred its own proper functions and rights on individuals, and nothing vill remedy those evils except a reassignment of those functions to those by whom they ought to be exercised. In the matter of unemployment, the first indispensable step is to provide for the separate valuation of land and improvements, to make it possible for the community to exact the value of land from individual holders, and thus to keep a constant pressure or stimulus on them to use that land to its fullest capacity. Such a measure will secure the best form of Socialism, and at the same time the best form of Individualism. It will subject the individual will to the common vill, the only condition under which individual freedom is possible.

This remedy for unemployment differs from all others. It does not wait until men have been a week, or a month, out of work, and then pick them up. It provides for the prevention of unemployment. Why should men be demoralised by the degrading experience of begging for the right to work? Why should the State buy the right to work from private men? The present position is fast becoming untenable, and those who are in earnest about the matter have a unique opportunity of advocating a wide, statesmanlike proposal. To remove the barriers which surround every opportunity for producing wealth, to whip the dogs out of every manger, this is the duty of the Government, which it should be forced to perform.

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