

## HOW TO INCREASE NATIONAL WEALTH BY THE EMPLOYMENT OF PARALYZED INDUSTRY.

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It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither over-wearisome nor over-anxious. Turn this claim about as I may, think of it as long as I can, I cannot find that it is an exorbitant claim.— *William Morris.*

ON the 18th of last May, while in a small restaurant on Fifth Avenue, in Chicago, my attention was attracted by a large number of men who had congregated on both sides of the street in front of the office of the *Chicago Daily News*. In answer to my inquiry, a gentleman at my side explained that these men were waiting to see the "Want" column of the *News*, in the hope of being able to secure work. "It is an old, old story," he continued. "Day after day crowds of men gather here and anxiously wait for the *News* to appear, as this paper contains more 'Want' advertisements than any other Chicago daily." I waited until the boys rushed from the office with the newly printed papers, and saw the men hurriedly buy copies. I noticed how scores upon scores of eyes searched the "Help Wanted" columns, and how, one by one, they started in quest of work. I noticed the countenances of the weary watchers. Among them were to be seen almost all types of faces, but all, save one, were anxious, careworn, or stolid. I shuddered as, standing inside the restaurant unobserved, I beheld this sight of appalling misery and national shame. The faces of these men have haunted me ever since. Hunger was there, hate was there, despair was hovering over more than one countenance. There were wan, dull eyes, wolfish eyes, and eyes eloquent with mute appeals for kindness. There was the hunted look of a beast at bay, and the craven expression of a broken spirit. One only among the throng seemed able to be merry, though his thin face and worn clothes indicated his wretchedness. The tragedy of these lives remains with me. I know that this awful condition is unnecessary. I know that a little

more conscience, a little more love, a keener sense of justice, and a little honest concern for the rights of men and the enduring welfare of the state, a settled determination to overcome this condition and place the good of the people and the cause of justice above a shortsighted policy of selfishness, would change the whole aspect of things, now so ominous, so menacing, and so essentially unjust. This panorama of exiled industry, seeking vainly for employment, may be witnessed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

I am not of that number who can regard these spectacles with indifference, nor can I feel, as do some others, that because the present order is essentially unjust in its practical workings it is well to turn a cold shoulder to movements calculated to arrest the downward drift of life and lessen the unfathomable misery of the poor in order that the crisis may be hastened. For while I believe that the present order is as surely outgrown as was feudalism in the sixteenth century, and though I believe most profoundly that this order must pass away or civilization perish, as have perished the civilizations of former ages, yet I also appreciate the fact, which to me is very important, that the only way to bring about the revolution peaceably is, first, to educate the brain and touch the conscience of the people; and, second, to check the growing bitterness and hate in the hearts of our unfortunates by giving them employment and treating them with justice and humanity. If a crisis is precipitated, fed by blind hate and a bitterness born of a consciousness of injustice long endured, it will assume the form of an uncontrollable storm, a blind, passionate outburst, in which the guiding influences of reason, judgment, and conscience will be absent. It will spread devastation in all directions, destroying the innocent as well as the guilty. If, on the other hand, we push forward an intelligent educational agitation, appealing to the judgment, the conscience, and the sense of right in the people, and at the same time supply means for maintaining self-respecting manhood among the unemployed until this waiting time is over, our civilization will move onward without the crash or shock of force, the destruction of property, and the loss of life incident to all struggles in which physical force and blind passion dominate. It is necessary to examine this problem on the

side of human dignity and on the side of national life. The question of utility, though of far less concern in its ultimate effect on conditions, has also an important place in the discussion.

Only under conditions which are fundamentally unjust, and only where the finer sensibilities of man have been blinded and deadened, could it be possible to witness the spectacle of millions of men and women begging for work, and begging in vain, in a nation of fabulous wealth and almost boundless resources ; and yet such a condition prevails in our republic to-day. It is, therefore, time for every patriotic citizen to lay aside all partisan contentions and face this great question as we would face any great danger which suddenly came upon the nation, not as partisans, but as patriots ; not as warring factions seeking victory for some special body or party, but as men and women who have the welfare of the race at heart, and who appreciate the gravity of the situation. It is the eternal law of recompense that when justice is long denied and the rights of man are systematically ignored, though the sufferers may Samson-like crush themselves in the ruins of the temple, yet the temple and its inmates also must fall. Or if by some chance the ruin comes not through the strength of the burdened ones, it will nevertheless come with unerring certainty, and not unfrequently through the very excesses of those who have hardened their hearts against the cry of justice.

Such is the interdependence of the units in national life that a wrong committed against one injures the whole people ; and when that wrong is inflicted upon a large number of the units, and is of long duration, its fatal effects become very apparent. You cannot crush a finger or a toe without causing your whole body to suffer in consequence. You may disregard the hurt, you may ignore the wound until mortification sets in, but the result means death or the loss of one of the most valuable members of your body. It is precisely so with national life ; for such is the divine economy, such the inevitable law of progress, that only by conscious recognition of human brotherhood, and of the rights and obligations which it implies, can any nation or civilization move onward and upward without those great periods of depression and decline which too frequently end in total eclipse.

Shortsighted, indeed, is that policy which places gold above manhood. When lust for gain stifles the voice of conscience, and the cry of the disinherited is heard throughout a land of marvellous wealth, a nation is confronted by a deadly peril which calls for a supreme effort on the part of every man and woman of conviction.

It is useless to close our eyes to the fact that the rising tide of bitterness is turning into hate, and that hate darkens the eye of judgment, obscures reason, and deadens conscience. A few years ago, when I wrote a brief paper on the menace of the unemployed, I was assured that the deplorable condition then present was temporary, that in a few months at most it would be a thing of the past, and that therefore it was not a problem calling for the intervention of the government; but to-day there are far more unemployed than there were then. The problem is assuming gigantic proportions, and the instincts of self-preservation second the demand of humanity in calling for immediate measures for the relief and the maintenance of self-respecting manhood. Whenever a workingman becomes a tramp or sinks into the social cellar, as tens of thousands are now doing, the nation suffers a real injury. Present conditions call for prompt action. The unemployed must receive that succor which will in no conventional sense be charity, but which will elevate instead of degrade. And this can be done by the state allowing those armies of men who now unwillingly represent unproductive labor to become armies for increasing the wealth of the country, by extending the productive area of the nation's domain, and by providing against the ruin which constantly menaces tens of thousands of industrious people in such a way as to stimulate business in all its ramifications by placing in circulation the equivalents for the work performed and the wealth earned. The ancient Romans understood the importance of having great works substantially built. The mighty highways which centred in the Eternal City, and the great public works which contributed so much to the comfort and happiness and grandeur of Rome, while not constructed with a view to affording employment to the unemployed, were wise measures for the benefit of the state, and it is safe to say that no expenditures were more serviceable or contributed more to the greatness and

essential wealth of the empire, save the money spent in the patronage of education.

The ancient Peruvians went further. They argued that the happiness, welfare, and prosperity of one was the concern of all. They banished poverty by giving every person productive work, and by their system transformed every foot of tillable land into productive gardens, enabling them to support in affluence an immense population, only a small fraction of which could have subsisted under conditions such as prevail with us. In our country to-day we have vast areas of useless land, only waiting to be transformed into tillable acres second in richness to no land in the country. To-day we have necessary work in the way of internal improvements which is imperatively demanded, and which, but for the slothfulness and indifference of our government, would be performed, thereby enormously increasing the wealth of the nation; while the performing of the same would give productive employment to millions of idle hands.

A striking illustration of the criminal neglect and shortsightedness of our government was seen this last spring in the devastation created by the floods in the Mississippi Valley, rendered possible through the inadequate levee system. Here the losses to crops and in stock killed are said to have been considerably over twelve million dollars, to say nothing of the enormous outlay which will be required to patch up the levees and make the devastated farms again habitable. This great loss would have been averted had the government acted upon the suggestions which I made some years ago in a paper on "Emergency Measures for Maintaining Self-respecting Manhood," in which it was shown that a permanent levee was practicable, and could be built in such a way as to resist the floods, reclaim many hundreds of thousands of acres of rich land, and protect millions of dollars' worth of property which is now under a yearly menace through danger of floods.

In this enterprise, which I shall again touch upon, we have a striking illustration of a practicable work which would immediately increase the national wealth far beyond the outlay required, while it would also change an army of idle consumers into an army of wealth-producers.

But as I wish to consider this question more at length a lit-

tle later, I now pass on to a brief notice of the vast tracts of land in the West, which have not yet fallen into the clutches of land syndicates, and which for a comparatively small outlay by proper irrigation could be transformed into garden spots. Take, for example, the State of Nevada. Here we find immense tracts of arid land, representing millions of acres, which to-day are unproductive for lack of moisture, but which, wherever irrigation has been introduced, have been transformed into wonderfully productive garden land. Mr. William M. Smythe, in the *April Forum*, has given some very interesting facts in regard to the agricultural resources of Nevada, from which we summarize the following:

The most painstaking and systematic inquiry, however, ever made with regard to the extent of her water supply resulted in the conclusion that at least 6,000,000 acres of rich soil could be irrigated. The commission of 1893 reported twenty lakes and sixteen rivers of importance, which with minor streams and springs could be made to irrigate upward of 5,000,000 acres; and artesian wells would bring up the total to the figure above named. It should be borne in mind that the splendid agricultural prosperity of Colorado and Utah is based upon a cultivated area of only about 2,000,000 acres. It seems, then, that, so far as her agricultural capabilities are concerned, Nevada might sustain at least as many people as do Utah and Colorado put together, at their present stage of development. The products of the irrigated lands of Nevada are the fruits, the vegetables, cereals, and grasses of the temperate zone, and, in the extreme southern portions, the more delicate products of the semi-tropics, such as figs, olives, pomegranates, almonds, Madeira walnuts, and, in sheltered places, even oranges. When we add that Nevada, like all parts of the arid plateau, is distinguished for pure dry air, an extraordinary amount of sunshine, and consequently a very high degree of healthfulness, it can be scarcely maintained that the state is destitute of attractions.

What is true in regard to the possibilities of Nevada is true of large areas of land in other Western States and Territories. It must be remembered that irrigated land can be relied upon to yield bountiful crops with practical regularity, as the water-supply is ever present, while for most persons the fine pure air in these high regions is peculiarly healthful and invigorating. Thus the great West still offers millions of acres of exceedingly productive land which can be transformed into gardens and made to increase the national wealth by untold millions if the government will treat these tracts as any wise or thrifty private owner would treat them. If the government or the various commonwealths would take all the available land which can be

irrigated and give to the unemployed work at fair wages until the great desert tracts become fertile areas, the national or state domain would be enormously increased in wealth at a relatively small cost through the wise employment of the now paralyzed hand of industry.

Returning to the question of the Mississippi river, let our national government build a permanent levee, which, like the great highways of ancient Rome, should be built to endure for generations.

"There are," says ex-Governor Lionel Sheldon, "over twenty-three million acres exposed to overflow from the mouth of the Ohio to the Gulf of Mexico. The productive power of these lands is not excelled in any part of the world, and by proper cultivation they would annually add many hundreds of millions of dollars to the national wealth and afford profitable employment for several hundreds of thousands of people."

Eminent engineers who have examined the levees under the auspices of the Mississippi river commissioners, agree that the problem is one which can be successfully solved if a sufficient amount is appropriated for so gigantic an undertaking, which would require substantial uniformity in the width of the channel of the river by building spurs and dikes at points where the Mississippi is too wide, the proper riveting of the banks wherever caving is likely to occur, together with the building of permanent levees of a height and strength sufficient to confine the waters in the channel. It is stated that since 1865 the cost of repairs has amounted to considerably over forty million dollars, yet owing to the fact that this work is of a temporary character the benefits which would be derived from a permanent levee are lost, and every few years the floods necessitate fresh expenditures of vast sums of money. Hence this patchwork policy is shortsighted and in the long run the most expensive. The carrying out of a comprehensive plan for permanent improvements by the erection of impregnable levees and the governing of the currents by dikes and spurs, would give us a territory, now absolutely useless, which would annually add hundreds of millions of dollars to our national wealth.

The great arid plains of the West and the levees of the Mississippi are merely examples of internal improvements of a

perfectly legitimate character which could be undertaken most properly by the general government, under Sec. VIII of the Constitution, which authorizes the "raising of revenue to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and the *general welfare* of the United States." By such internal improvements as those mentioned above the nation's wealth would be increased to a far greater extent than by the amount of outlay required for the completion of the work, while these enterprises would at once give productive employment to our millions of out-of-works, and this army of employed would put into immediate circulation large sums of money which would at once stimulate business through all its ramifications and bring about the long-hoped-for good times.

But at the very threshold of the discussion we are met with the declaration that we have no money in the Treasury with which to carry on these great projects. Before answering this objection I wish to point out the fact that we have millions of dollars to spend for a useless navy, a navy which in the hands of our senile government does not protect the life or the property of American citizens, a navy which is a constant and an enormous expense. While almost unlimited sums can be raised for the building and equipment of battleships, we have not a dollar to aid honest industry to maintain self-respecting manhood by engaging in works which would add immensely to the real wealth of the nation.

And, again, before pointing out how this money could be raised, I would call attention to the fact that this cry is by no means a new one. It was raised, and with much more show of foundation, during the dark hours of the early sixties, but the great Civil War exploded the fallacy. One would think that in the presence of the stupendous facts connected with the conduct of our Civil War, even if the question of the value to the state of an independent, contented, and prosperous manhood should be left out of consideration, the shallowness of the objection would be so apparent that it would have no weight with thoughtful persons. Let us not forget that there was a time in the history of our country when the Treasury of our government was empty, a time of great national peril when gold had fled across the seas or into the vaults of the bankers and



usurers, as it ever flees in time of danger, when public credit was greatly impaired by the presence of war within our borders and a strong probability that even if the national government escaped overthrow a large number of the States would become an independent nation. In this crisis we had men in charge of the government who were statesmen, men great enough to rise to the emergency of the hour. Now, if we were able under such conditions to carry to a successful termination the most expensive and memorable civil war of modern times by the aid of the greenback, surely there would be no risk in resorting to a similar medium of exchange for the carrying on of a work which would immediately add to the nation's resources and free from the bondage of involuntary idleness a large army of men who are now a burden to society and a danger to stable government.

If, however, the fiction by which bondholders enslave the people still holds such power over our legislators and the public mind that the menace of the growing army of unemployed, the injury to the state by the enforced degradation of her children, and the continued unproductivity of both soil and industry must go on unless a concession is made, it would be wiser to make the concession than to let the crime against manhood continue. I therefore suggest that bonds on the land to be reclaimed be issued to the amount of the national notes used for these great works in redeeming the now useless land. The bonds issued against these lands could be cancelled as the lands were sold. I do not for a moment hold that this is necessary. I only advance this suggestion in case the prejudice fostered by selfish and interested classes might otherwise defeat a work of such inconceivable importance.

The inevitable result which would follow such wise, statesmanlike, and humane proceedings on the part of the government may be briefly summarized as follows:

Through this judicious, far-sighted, and enlightened course the government would, first, so strengthen and intrench herself in the hearts of the people that armories and militia would be little needed against the menace of lawlessness *within our borders*, while this wise solicitude and care for the welfare of her citizens would make millions of persons, who to-day have

little or no love for a nation which is indifferent to their manly cry for work, loyal defenders of the flag. By such a broad, wise, and just course the United States would do more than she could in any other way to render herself impregnable in time of danger. Second, by affording millions of her citizens the opportunity to engage in productive work she would utilize a vast amount of idle energy in adding to the permanent wealth of the nation, and the state would be fulfilling the noble function of government to promote justice, increase happiness, and ennoble citizenship. She would be restoring hope and the spirit of independent manhood to her children, and so would prevent a great increase in beggary, in degradation, and in crime, which must inevitably follow unless present conditions are radically changed. From an economic point of view the government would be far richer through the amount saved from what otherwise would be required to provide prisons, poorhouses, and court expenses. Third, it would add vastly to the nation's wealth in increasing by untold millions the annual product of real wealth, while it would also supply homes for millions of home-seekers. Fourth, it would bring prosperity to America.

Let us suppose three millions of those now idle should be thus enabled to engage in productive work, there would then be placed in circulation each week from five to ten million dollars more money than there is now, and it would be paid out in small amounts, so that the bulk of it would instantly go into general circulation. The men would not only purchase for their own needs, but would send a part of their earnings to their loved ones, who would thus be able to do what they cannot now do—buy coal, wood, groceries, and, indeed, life's various necessities. The prices of the farmer's crops would naturally rise, and he in turn would be able to increase his buildings and purchase more machinery. The increased demand for clothing would raise the price of wool and cotton, while it would start up the factories without any resort to artificial measures, such as levying a tax on imported goods.

The difference between present hard times and low prices and good times and high prices would be illustrated in this way: To-day millions of our people are idle, a load and an expense; they cannot buy what they need at any price, for they have

nothing to buy with. Millions of others have to curtail in every way, frequently doing without many needed things, for times are such that it is impossible for them to do more than barely subsist. Now, the millions who to-day buy nothing, because they have nothing to buy with, under these provisions for internal improvements would soon be buying regularly, because they would have the wherewithal to buy. They would gladly pay the farmer, manufacturer, and merchant more than what they now ask because they would have something to buy with, while to-day they have nothing; and those other millions who are curtailing expenses to the last degree would gladly pay the increased amount, for all lines of productive business would receive an impetus from the great addition to the circulating medium put forth as a result of the productive work being carried on. Now, our tariff taxes may put up prices for the favored classes, but they thereby increase the burdens of all save those who are enabled to gain added wealth from the taxes imposed on the millions who are yet able to buy, while the small increase in the demand for work, so long as millions are unable to buy what is made, would make but little impression on the vast army of unemployed.

*A tariff tax is a burden to the millions, stimulating prices artificially, and benefiting chiefly the very wealthy.* But the plan for internal improvements here outlined would give all able-bodied men productive work which would benefit the nation far more than the amount of the outlay involved, and afford time for the general work of education, by which justice and equitable conditions could be brought about, to proceed. Those who love peace, those who would see mankind elevated and the wealth of the nation preserved and increased, should favor this great palliative movement for maintaining self-respecting manhood, for enriching the nation's resources, and for insuring prosperity in the quickest and most healthful manner possible.