

LAND VALUES.

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THE UNEMPLOYED.

At the beginning of the Session the question of the Unemployed was again debated in Parliament on an amendment to the Address moved by Mr. Keir Hardie. The amendment ran as follows:—"And further, we desire humbly to express our regret that in view of the distress arising from lack of employment, your Majesty's advisers have not seen fit to recommend the creation of a Department and Minister of Labour, fully empowered, *inter alia*, to deal effectively, acting in conjunction with local administrative authorities, with such lack of employment mainly by the execution of necessary public works, afforestation, and, further, by encouraging an increase in agricultural pursuits."

To Mr. Keir Hardie and his Socialistic friends belongs the credit of demanding in Parliament that some action be taken in the direction of removing this ever-recurring evil; but though in this respect they stand out in strong contrast to that complacent press and public which comfortably assume that the existence of an unemployed class is part of the scheme of nature, it is the duty of thinking men to ask themselves whether

these proposals if carried into effect would provide any remedy for the trouble which it is sought to cure. Is it possible to absorb the labour of men and women at present unemployed by starting new works in this way, however useful they may be?

To answer this question we must first determine why these people are unemployed, and what creates the demand for employment. If we discover where the shoe pinches, we may also be able to find the remedy.

Let us picture a community whose wants are unlimited, and who are naturally anxious to satisfy these wants. At the same time let us suppose that they have the means at hand whereby these wants can be gratified, provided only they will exercise the power of labour with which they are endowed.

Under such circumstances it would of course be absurd to ask whether or not all the members of such a community could find employment. Given wants and given the means of satisfying them by work, and how could there be any lack of work? There could be no unemployed in such a community. Labour, the producer of all wealth, could never become a "drug on the market" while desire for any form of wealth remained unsatisfied.

Well, that in point of fact is exactly the position in which civilised States find themselves to-day—with a difference, and the difference is that the people of these States, unlike those pictured above, are denied access to the only thing on which they can exercise their labour except on terms dictated to them by a minority of their number. They are unable to satisfy their wants except by leave of others, which leave (when it is not altogether withheld) is only granted on condition that the worker forfeits a part of what he makes. Production is thus checked because labour is not able freely to exercise itself, and an unemployed class arises in consequence. For it should never be forgotten that supply and demand are but complimentary terms. No one can "demand" anything unless he has something to "supply," so that if supply is paralysed owing to labour and capital being in whole or in part denied access to Nature, it follows that demand is also paralysed to exactly the same extent, and hence inevitably trade stagnation. Restrict the power to supply and you also restrict the power to demand, whether the demand be for labour or for the products of labour. Trade is simply exchange of services, and land monopoly implies the possession of power by one man to withhold from others the opportunity of performing services, and so to cause trade stagnation and want of employment. On the other hand, let men have freedom to produce, and there could be no limit to the demand of labour.

With freedom of access to Nature, *i.e.*, without payment of rent to private persons for leave to produce, and the existence of unemployed labour or unemployed capital would be an impossibility too absurd to contemplate. Would it be possible to conceive of bees within the hive unable to find employment?

Every man in the satisfaction of his own wants clearly creates a demand for his own labour, and, what is more, the means of supplying these wants are at every man's hand, so that unemployed men anxious to work can only exist from one cause—private monopoly of land. This raises an obstacle in the way of their access to natural opportunities, preventing them satisfying their wants, and causing lack of employment.

As it chanced, this was clearly shown the very same day on which Mr. Hardie moved his amendment to the Address. On that day the papers published a telegram from Reuter's Australian correspondent to the effect that Mr. Watson, one of the leaders in the parliament of the Australian Commonwealth, had made the statement that men are to-day actually leaving Australia because, owing to the large estates, they cannot get land to work on.

Thus we see Australia, with her insignificant population and splendid natural resources, busily creating an unemployed class in the same way as we have done it here.

If what has been said above is true, it cannot be possible to create employment by any such means as Mr. Keir Hardie suggests. At any given moment there is in the circle of exchange but a given effective demand for labour. That and no more. As many workers are now employed as are demanded under existing economic conditions, and it is not possible to increase the number who can find work in any other way than by fundamentally altering those economic conditions which Mr. Keir Hardie's proposal does not even profess to do.

The starting of new works could only result in the diversion of the effective demand for labour from the channel in which it now flows to another. The direction of the demand would be altered, but not its quantity. The sum total of the "demand" would not be increased simply because nothing would have been done in this way to increase the "supply."

Must we then abandon hope of finding means through which the demand for labour can be increased and the unemployed class absorbed? By no means! The effective demand for labour can of a certainty be increased by increasing the supply of commodities, but this in its turn can be done in one way only—by throwing open to labour and capital that by means of which they can employ themselves—the land. It is this which the taxation of land values will effectively accomplish.

WM. R. LESTER.

MR. JAMES DUNDAS WHITE, M.A., LL.D.



Liberal Candidate for Dumbartonshire.

Mr. White was born at Rutherglen, where his early years were passed. He was educated at Rugby and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he obtained honours in law, and he was afterwards called to the Bar at the Inner Temple. He married a daughter of the Rev. R. Haythornthwaite. Besides following the profession of law, he is the author of a book on the Merchant Shipping Acts, which is now in its second edition. He read a paper at the Glasgow Conference of the International Law Association in 1901, and has also written on various legal and economic subjects. When at Cambridge Mr. White interested himself in politics, both as a student of social questions and as a debater at the University Union. He is an active member of the "Eighty Club," and has served on the committees both of that and of the London Reform Union. In July of last year he brought out a work entitled "Economic Ideals," which has been received with much favour. The first and most important chapter of this very readable and instructive book has been reprinted, with some additional notes, as a pamphlet, entitled "Land Law Reform, based on Taxing Land Values and Not Taxing Improvements." The pamphlet, one of the soundest in print on the question, has been well circulated throughout the country.

In knowledge and in platform ability Mr. White, in our view, is to be ranked among the foremost of Scottish Liberal candidates, and he has a quality too rare, unfortunately, among able politicians, and that is sincerity and faith in the cause of the people. As a careful student, he has examined the principles underlying the political conduct or proposals he advocates. He does not need to ask what question interests the electors most. He has made up his mind what they should be interested in, and has gone to them preaching his wholesome political gospel with courage, and in a most engaging manner. The large meetings Mr. White addresses never have the impression that he has come to ask for their votes. They rather feel all the time they are listening to a very capable teacher and guide on public policy. At recent meetings addressed by the candidate, the following resolution has been passed with much enthusiasm:—

"That this meeting condemns the introduction of Chinese labour into the Transvaal under conditions which are practically equivalent to slavery.

"This meeting also condemns the proposals to interfere with the discretion of the licensing authorities, and

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