

and freedom from outside interference, to be begun at once with instruments already at hand, or readily procurable as required.

Why, then, do not these men begin to drain that swamp at once?

For the old, old reason. The landlord bars the way. Somebody owns that swamp, or has a "vested right" in it, or in some of its surroundings, and either wants cash down (and a lot of it) before he will permit a stroke of work to be done, or else will grant permission only on the condition that, after a certain interval, he may appropriate the whole concern.

And so it is all the world over. Privilege of some sort bars the way and demands backsheesh, before labour can exert itself.

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### FOOD.

But—and now we come to the crux of the whole question—is Food a third factor of production? Is it an instrument or a final product?

It is urged that when we say labour is limited by capital, we mean by capital, not tools and raw materials, but food, the food required to keep the labourer going.

Nearly all economists seem to agree that the food of the labourer is an instrument for carrying on the general work of production, and represents part, and the chief part, of the cost of the work; not merely relative cost (cost to the employer) but absolute cost (cost to the community).

Let us make sure that we are not disputing about mere words. What is really meant by the statement that labour is limited by food, and that food is the instrument and cost of labour (all three statements being bound up together)?

That *population* is limited by the food supply (procured or

procurable from day to day) is obvious enough. Man cannot exist without food.

But what is stated and what is apparently meant is much more than this.

For observe that it is the labourer's food only which is represented as the instrument and the cost of the work. The food of the landlord, who simply permits the use of the land, and lives on the rent, is not so reckoned; nor is the food of the capitalist, who simply permits the use of the instruments of production, and lives upon the interest. The reason given for the distinction being that the food consumed as rent and interest is not consumed in doing the work, but represents a surplus derived from the work, while the food consumed as wages is consumed in the doing of the work, and has vanished before the completion of the work; whence it is assumed as a self-evident truth that it is a deduction to be made from the product, or set against it. It is thus cost, not to the employer only, but to the community.

I venture to dispute the whole theory.

I shall try to make clear—

1. That food is not an instrument, but a final product. It is what people work *for*, not what they work *with*.

2. It represents (and all wages with it) not the cost, but the profit of the work, the labourers' share of the product, just as rent and interest represent the landlords' and capitalists' share, and these two are never represented as cost of work. Indeed, economists themselves describe the produce of labour as being divided between the landlord, the capitalist, and the labourer (the labourer characteristically being placed last).

It is true that wages are often paid for labour which is absolutely, and in its nature, unproductive, but so also are rent and interest charged for land improvements and appliances, which are put to absolutely unproductive use. It is true, also, that even in productive occupations the work often fails of its ex-

pected result, yet none the less the wages have been paid ; but so also none the less will the rent and interest *have* to be paid. But I am only stating my case now ; I shall prove it presently.

3. Labour is not limited by food, but given land and people willing to work, work can go on till labourers fail or land gives out ; neither of which catastrophes are at all likely to happen.

The whole misconception has arisen from looking only through the employers' spectacles ; from the custom of regarding our industrial system as a vast machine, of which the capitalist is of necessity the engineer, by whose will, and under whose guidance, the machine moves ; while the labourer is merely an instrument in his hands, like the horse and the steam-engine ; an instrument requiring to be supplied with bread, as the horse is supplied with oats, and the engine with fuel, not for the purpose of satisfying its wants, but of producing that profit to the capitalist, without the prospect of which he will employ neither horse, nor engine, nor man. Capitalists' profit is thus made the keystone of the universe, so to speak. The work of the world is carried on, not to satisfy the necessities of the workers (that is only an incidental result), not to contribute to their freedom and happiness (that is quite unnecessary), but only to enable an investor to make so much per cent.

We have taken the artificial and local state of affairs for the essential and universal, and have landed ourselves in a conclusion which is as immoral as it is absurd. To unravel the tangle we must reduce the matter to its simplest elements. We must go back to industry in its beginnings, and trace it out from thence.

Three men breakfast together. Then A digs, B plays cards, C goes to sleep. The breakfast is no more the instrument or the cost of A's digging than of B's playing cards, or C's going

to sleep. There is no cost in any of the proceedings, and the only instruments required are—for A a spade, for B a pack of cards, for C nothing.

It is quite immaterial whether A, B, and C are independent parties, or whether C is a capitalist and employs A to dig and B to gamble for him while he sleeps. The relations of the parties to each other would be different, the essential facts would remain unaltered.

Again, suppose two men, of whom A has two days' food supply, B has none. Then A can do one or other of four things :

He can consume the whole supply in two days, doing nothing, and leaving B idle and hungry. Then the whole supply will have been consumed, and no work done. Or he may give half to B on condition of B's doing a day's work for him, he consuming the other half and doing nothing. Then the supply will have been consumed, and one day's work done. Or he may share the supply and both work. Then the supply will have gone, and two days' work be done. Lastly, he may consume the supply himself in two days, working all the time, but leaving B idle and hungry. Then, as in the case before, the supply will have gone, and two days' work be done. But there will be this difference, that in the last case there has been a man idle for two days, and so two days' work will be lost to the community. It is in this only, in the loss of work, that loss comes in anywhere. For, in any case, the two days' food will have been consumed, and consumed equally whether work was done or not. No less is consumed if no work is done, no more is consumed if two days' work are done. The food, therefore, is no part of the cost of the work.

Employment of labour, by capital and advance of food, presupposes the existence of the food. What the community wants, then, is not that this food shall be "saved," but put to its proper use of feeding somebody ; only that those who con-

sume it shall produce something or do some useful work while they are consuming it, and that they shall do so as soon as possible.

The food is produced only to be consumed, and will disappear equally whether it is consumed to-day or to-morrow, whether it is consumed by A or by B, or be left to rot. So far from its being a loss to the community, it is an actual gain that it has been consumed by a labourer doing useful work, rather than by a capitalist doing nothing, or consumed in one day by two men working productively, rather than in two days by one man, for in the former case there will be just double the useful work done by the end of the day.

The game which the savage kills, and the roots he digs up are, obviously, the reward and not the instrument or the cost of his labour. So with the city labourer : the breakfast which he earns is also the reward and not the cost or the instrument of his getting it, none the less that it is already produced by other people, for he has to work in order to get it. Nor would it affect the argument if he got the food first on condition of doing the work afterwards. Wages are the reward of labour, whether paid in advance, or deferred till completion of the work.

Our savage, having secured his breakfast, can work or not, as he pleases. If he does not, he is likely to have no dinner but in no case is his breakfast an instrument for getting his dinner. It is true that if he has not had a breakfast (or some previous meal), he may not have strength to seek his dinner. It is therefore in so far a condition precedent to his getting his dinner, just as his having had a father and mother was a condition precedent to his getting (or wanting) a breakfast. It is a link in the chain of causation that has brought about his present condition of existence and vigour. But his breakfast will no more be an instrument for getting his dinner, than were his parents an instrument for getting his breakfast.

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But suppose that in seeking his breakfast he kills a deer that will last him for three days. Then the whole three days' supply is the reward of his morning's labour, and for three days he can be idle if he likes; but as it will involve no more consumption to work than to be idle, all that he produces by his labour, if he chooses to work, will be the reward of that labour *without any deduction*. And work to a certain extent he must. For the deer he killed is not, properly speaking, a *final product*. He cannot, like a boa constrictor, swallow the carcass as it lies. It is only a mass of raw material for further labour; an instrument by which (or out of which) he can obtain flesh for food, a skin for clothing, and bones and sinews for arrow-tips and bow-strings. The garment (if he makes it) will be the reward entirely of his labour, just as the meat was, and as the arrow-tips will be. And if instead of making them himself he gets another savage to make them for him on condition of sharing in the deer meat, then the meat which that savage receives will be the reward of *his* labour; no matter whether he receives it in advance, or has to wait till the work is finished.

Here we have our whole industrial system in a nut-shell.

The capitalist, it is said, maintains the labourer by advancing him food (the capitalist and the employer being assumed to be the same person).

1. The capitalist makes no advance to the labourer of any sort. What advance there is is from the labourer to the capitalist, for work precedes payment. There is an exchange of services: work for wages; and the labourer supplies the work before the employer supplies the wages: the work and wages being supposed equal in value. But they are not equal! The work done is worth more than the wages paid, otherwise there would be no profit for the capitalist, without which profit he will not employ.

It is objected that the inequality is, on the whole, the other way ; for though the work may be worth more hereafter, it is worth less now, being generally incomplete and often inconvertible. It may consist of a tree felled or a strip of land ploughed, which the capitalist can neither use for his own enjoyment nor dispose of at a profit.

Still he is so much the richer.

So much of a desired work has been done, and so much the less remains to do. Say that  $\frac{1}{10}$  of the desired work is done, then the capitalist is as much advantaged as a traveller who has completed  $\frac{1}{10}$  of his journey ; as a mortgagee who has paid off  $\frac{1}{10}$  of his liabilities ; he is 10 per cent. better off.

However, let the services exchanged be assumed to be equal. The point that concerns us is : first, that what advance there is is from the labourer to the capitalist, not from the capitalist to the labourer, as work usually precedes payment ; and secondly, that the work done by the labourer represents (in productive employments) as real an addition to the existing sum of wealth as did the production of the food which he consumes.

A tree felled, but unsaleable, represents as distinct an addition to the stock of wealth as do the boards sawn out of it, which are readily saleable. The saleability has nothing to do with the matter. Both are incomplete products. Both are necessary preliminaries to (say) the building of a house, and society is the richer by so much useful work done.

2. What the capitalist supplies is not food but money. He has not, except in rare cases, the food to supply. The man who really supplies the food is another labourer, another man who lives by work, a baker or butcher ; and the capitalist is merely a go-between, and by no means a necessary one. If he were to disappear to-morrow, the other two men would come together and exchange together. Labour would feed labour. The baker, having lost his capitalist customer, would still have

his bread to sell, and would want a thousand things, which only labour could supply, consequently he would apply to the labourer; while the labourer would be only too glad to do what he could in exchange for the bread. No doubt if the capitalist were to disappear suddenly, the whole industrial structure would be violently dislocated, and much suffering would ensue before the two survivors came together satisfactorily. But this suffering would be due not to the absence of a capitalist go-between, but to the sudden dislocation of existing arrangements, no matter how caused. Sooner or later the two men would come together satisfactorily.

3. The food supply of the community (not merely of the labourer, but of us all) is not, except to a comparatively small extent, drawn from a pre-existing pile as seems always to be assumed. It is the result mainly of a continuous process of production. While A is working for B, C is producing the food that is to feed him.

Admitting that a large part of the food supply consists of grain which was grown last harvest, a still larger part is being produced from day to day. The meat is being fattened off and killed, the cow is being milked, the butter is being churned, the eggs are being laid, the vegetables are being grown and gathered, from day to day. Moreover, the sugar and tea and foreign produce of all sorts, though they were grown and worked up some time ago, are being imported from day to day, and their importation is as much a part of the process of food supply, that is, of the feeding of the people, as was their growth and manufacture. Moreover, even as to the wheat, people do not eat wheat but bread, and bread is being baked from day to day. The harvesting of the grain was only a stage of the process, like the ploughing and sowing, like the grinding and baking, like the countless acts of cultivation and preparation, transport and exchange required before the baked loaf could be placed in the hands of the person who is to eat it.



The feeding of the people is a continuous, never-ceasing process.

To say that our present existence (not the labourer's only, but all society's) is due to the results of past as well as present labour, is a very different thing from saying that the labourer is fed by the capitalist.

Labour is fed by labour; by that continuous process of *present* labour, which, if intermitted, would render all the results of past labour useless, *and* bring the whole community face to face with immediate starvation.

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SUMMARY.

- 1.—The Third Factor of Production consists solely of the instruments of production (tools and raw materials), themselves the product of labour, and does not include food.
- 2.—To constitute an instrument, and be effective as a factor of production, the article in question must be productively effective, *directly and in itself* and not vicariously, by exchange.
- 3.—The productive power of a community depends, *ceteris paribus*, on the number and efficiency of those instruments that it possesses.
- 4.—The greater part of the so-called "accumulations of capital" are not factors of production at all; consisting, in part, of mere claims on the industry of others—no matter how originating—and in part of final products, which, however useful for enjoyments, are of no use for further production.
- 5.—Labour is not limited by instruments, but only assisted by them; land and labour being all that are necessary to enable work to continue.