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EDITORIAL

The Possibilities of Surplus Wealth.

Surplus wealth is a lever which may be used to obstruct or to promote material prosperity. It may reduce labor to the verge of starvation, to anarchy and revolt; or it may elevate labor to a condition of co-operative industrial brotherhood. If the passive factor of production, the planet and its riches—consisting of farms, ore bodies, city lots, and all other forms of natural resources—be subject to private monopoly, then surplus wealth will flow toward such opportunities for investment. It will do so for the greater safety, the more certain profits, and the less need of attention. But such investments depend for returns on tribute wrung from labor, and progressively they make for lower and lower wages in proportion to products. If, on the other hand, the community were to absorb monopoly values into the common wealth, surplus wealth could only be invested in promoting the activities of the active factor of production—labor. This kind of investment would progressively make for higher and higher wages in proportion to product, and thus for more and more surplus wealth. Increasing pressure of this kind would tend first to elevate wages to the highest economic point, the full earnings of the wage receiver, and then resolve every industry into a form of co-operation in which the employees would be the stockholders and thereby their own employers.

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