

## INSTEAD OF STRIKES

By Arthur H. Weller, J.P.

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Men strike because they want higher wages, better conditions, or to resist a reduction of wages. In other words, because they believe they are entitled to a larger share of the wealth they help to produce and the social services they supply. They face temporary pain and loss in the hope of permanent improvement.

### WHY STRIKES FAIL

Sometimes a small increase of wages is won or a reduction avoided. More often the men are beaten, and the privations due to the strike are added to their other miseries. In any case the settlement leaves the men still feeling that they are not receiving justice, and in due course another strike follows—with similar results. While the struggle lasts, the strikers' chief difficulty is the unemployed, from whose ranks "black-leg" labour can be recruited. When the strike ends the same unemployed keep wages down to the poverty level. That is not their fault, however; it is the unavoidable result of their being more men than jobs. Before the general strike more than 200,000 miners were unemployed, besides many others. Strikes will continue to fail and wages to be low until the demand for labour is equal to the supply.

### A BETTER WAY

That men have a right to strike is not disputed, but that there is a better way is boldly asserted. Strikes will occur until the workers' grievance is removed; until then the same weary round of struggle, suffering and disappointment will continue to afflict them and the community. If there were no unemployment, higher wages would be paid and strikes would go out of fashion.

### IDLE LAND MEANS IDLE MEN

Employment depends upon access to land. If no land were allowed to be used, no food, no houses, no coal, and no manufactured goods could be produced—we should all be unemployed. Because the landowners demand high prices or impose impossible conditions, less land is used productively than is necessary for the requirements of the people, and consequently some of us are unemployed and many are poor. The essential first step towards the abolition of unemployment is to destroy the power to hold land in town and country out of good use.

### THE COAL INDUSTRY

Labour and capital are employed on some mineral lands where coal-getting is laborious and costly, and wages and profits are low. In a recent year 500 such pits were closed and only 96 were opened or reopened. In other places coal is more easily obtained and wages and profits are comparatively high. If all the pits in use were like the latter, the recent trouble would not have arisen and coal would be cheaper.

In various parts of the country are vast untapped coal deposits, where many men could be employed, and where wages and profits would be good. In the Humber area alone recent research has revealed the existence of sufficient coal to supply the whole country for about a hundred years, and at a Royal Commission inquiry it was previously declared that in the then known coalfields there was coal enough to last for nearly 500 years. But these opportunities for production and employment are withheld from use. Sir Richard Redmayne, Chief Inspector of Mines, in his evidence before

the Coal Industry Commission, mentioned cases brought to his notice of either absolute refusal to lease mines or the demand of prohibitive and unreasonable terms. If labour and capital had access to the unused mineral lands there would be no need to work unprofitable pits and no unemployed miners. But so long as the legal owners of the country's natural resources retain the power to hold land out of good use, so long will unemployment, low wages, strikes, and bad trade continue. Industrial peace and prosperity can only come through the destruction of unjust legal privileges.

### THE REMEDY

The remedy is simple and practicable. The landowner should be required to pay the community a tax similar to the "dead-rent" which they demand from the tenants of their mineral lands, and which has to be paid whether coal is produced or not. The tax should be levied on the selling value of all the land, whether used or not, and the proceeds used in relief of other taxes. A dead-rent makes it unprofitable for production to stop; a tax on land values would make it unprofitable if production did not begin. The community has a moral right to derive revenue from a tax on land values, because those values are created by the community.

### PRACTICAL POLITICS

The taxation of land values (national and local) is within the realm of practical politics, and a first instalment will be placed on the Statute Book when the public sentiment in its favour becomes articulate. The public appropriation of the communally created land values would also lighten the burden of taxation on industry, and in that way still further stimulate production and employment. The opening up of the natural resources by a tax on land values would lead to the abolition of involuntary unemployment with all its dreadful consequences, and in those circumstances not only would industry flourish, but all engaged in it would be economically free men and women. This question does not only concern those connected with the coal industry, but also every useful member of society who gives equivalent service (or is willing to do so) in return for what he receives from others.

There is no poverty in Tonga and here is the reason. In 1880 the then King George Tabou, made an order refusing to alienate or permit to be alienated, a single acre of land in the kingdom except upon lease. The said lands being owned by the nobles of the country, the white man was compelled to come in on the same basis as the humblest citizen of the country. So not many of him has come and the Tongans still preserve their independence and economic wealth. Every adult male arriving at the age of 18 years is entitled to lease eight acres of land at a nominal rental, a few cents per acre, upon which he can support himself and family in reasonable comfort and that's all there is to it.—*DAILY ARGUS, Mount Vernon, N.Y., 25th March.*

BY HENRY GEORGE

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