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THE

UNEMPLOYED

by

JOHN BURNS,
M.P., L.C.C.

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BOOKS AND AUTHORITIES.

On the subject of provision for the unemployed, the following books, etc., among many others, may be consulted. By far the most convenient and accessible summary of information on the whole question of the unemployed, and the attempts made to relieve them, will be found in the special report (mentioned below) issued by the Labor Department of the Board of Trade, which should be read by every student of the subject.

a. Experiments.

ANON. ... An Account of several Workhouses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor. Second edition (enlarged). 1732; a.p.

EDEN, Sir F. M. ... State of the Poor: 2nd vol. 1797; a.p.

MEATH, Earl of ... Labor Colonies in Germany. Nineteenth Century, January, 1891.

MOORE, HAROLD E. ... The Unemployed and the Land. Contemporary Review, March, 1895.

WARNER, A. G. ... Some Experiments on Behalf of the Unemployed. Quarterly Journal of Economics, October, 1890.

b. Schemes.

BURN, Dr. R. ... History of the Poor Laws. (Latter part.) 1794; a.p.

CHILD, Sir Josiah ... Proposals for the Relief and Employment of the Poor. 1668; a.p.

CARY, JOHN ... An Essay towards Regulating the Trade and Employing the Poor. 1717; a.p.


c. Criticisms.

DEFOE, DANIEL ... Giving Arms to Charity, and Employing the Poor a Grievance to the Nation. 1704; a.p.

LOCH, C. S. ... Examination of General Booth's Social Scheme. Second edn. Sonnenschein; 1890.

d. General History.

ASHLEY, W. J. ... English Economic History and Theory. Vol. i., part ii., chap. 5. Relief of the Poor. Longmans; 1893.

WALLAS, GRAHAM ... History of the Poor Law. Co-operative Wholesale Society's Annual, 1894; Co-operative Union, City Buildings, Manchester. 4c.

e. Parliamentary Papers.

Report from the Committee on Poor Laws, 1817.
Poor Law Commission, 1834. Reprinted 1885; 2/6.

Annual Reports (Poor Law Commissioners and Board, continued as Local Government Board), 1835-93.

Report on Agencies and Methods of Dealing with the Unemployed, by Llewellyn Smith (preface by Mr. Giffen). Labor Department of the Board of Trade; Nov., 1893. 129.


THE UNEMPLOYED.

When in ordinary busy years autumn arrives and the leaves begin to fall; after the harvest has been gathered and the hop, fruit, and market gardens have given up their yield; when the nights draw in and the weather breaks, then begins to gather in the city and the town the advance guard of the workless army. As winter approaches they grow in numbers and persistency. Increasing education, political enfranchisement, and economic knowledge have engendered amongst them healthy discontent at their enforced idleness and poverty.

In times of bad trade and its accompanying exceptional distress, by meetings, processions, and deputations the unemployed now call public attention to their sufferings and their wants. In London the bolder spirits amongst them believe and practise what the moral cowardice of politicians and the lack of initiative on the part of local governing bodies have taught them—that is, to make a nuisance of their grievances. For, in the language of a noble politician, "the people are only in earnest when they pull down railings, break windows, and create riots."

Acting on this suggestion, it is not to be wondered at that a few desperate men should use threats and urge others to violence; or that the genuine distress of the unemployed should be exploited by individuals who simply use the workless as a means of pushing to the front views and interests for which they require publicity, and which are incompatible with a healthy agitation on behalf of the unemployed movement.

But if there have been loafers, cranks, and other contemptible persons using the unemployed for ulterior purposes, this should not blind us to the grievances of the genuine men who may attend the meetings and who are really desirous of finding employment.

Whether these are 10,000 or 100,000 men does not affect, except in degree, the responsibility of society for meeting their demands. And if it were true, which it is not, that these meetings are composed altogether of thieves and loafers who meet in thousands for predatory reasons only; then that would be additional and urgent reason why we should hasten all remedial agencies of a permanent character. Society should anticipate the loafing and thieving stage that casual labor too often produces, by providing work for willing workers—work that must be made more attractive, remunerative, and steady for the individual than is now the precarious life of the average laborer, through the gradations of which he descends to the unemployed, the dossier, the loafer, and the criminal—a curse to himself, a pest to all. The practicability of some remedy for all his troubles is dawning upon, yea is being felt by, the modern
laborers, even the hardened ones that have been imbruted by the fierce fight with poverty in the "casual" ranks. Ringing in my ears now is the hoarse whisper of a prisoner in the exercise yard of Pentonville—"Stick to the unemployed, John; work is our only hope." From the depths of the criminal habit into which poverty and want of work had plunged him, he saw instinctively the remedy for his failing, and the means of his rescue, and to find it is the duty of all reformers, present and to come.

The unemployed laborer to-day is not a replica of the out-of-work of a few years back. With the restless and ever-changing spirit of the times, he has altered greatly. His predecessor was a patient, long-suffering animal, accepting his position as beast of burden with a fatalistic taciturnity, looking upon his enforced idleness as inevitable, and with blind submission enduring his lot. His poverty and credulity were often exploited by rival politicians, his disorganisation used for the advertisement of fiscal nostrums; and when his distress had been gauged, tabulated, discussed, and partially relieved with charitable doles or "The House," a slight revival of trade disposed of him until the next winter or depression set in, when again the same philanthropic opiates were administered to keep him quiet. In the past he was, whenever possible, deliberately, yea scientifically, ignored. As part of the body politic he was never considered. Statisticians befogged him and each other as to the amount his class and the nation had saved whilst he was starving. Political economists pointed out the impossibility of relieving his distress by spending money in useful public works instead of useless pauper tasks, or sagely informed him that the depression from which he suffered was due to "vagaries of fashion in dress," whilst he was nearly naked, or to "spots on the sun," when he was enduring the pains and penalties of the nether kingdom. Mute, inarticulate, unenfranchised, he escaped observation because he had no vote, no political, no municipal influence.

The extension of the franchise, education, trade unionism, Socialist propaganda, the broad and rising Labor movement have altered all this. The unemployed worker of to-day is of different stuff. He has a grievance, and thinks he has a remedy. Laying aside his tools with reluctance, embittered by the belief that organisation could prevent his impending misfortune, with genuine sorrow he gives up his time-ticket, and feels, as he takes the last week's wages to his wife, that his little home may have to be parted with bit by bit, and with it the independence of character he loves, sapped by the greater or lesser stretch of enforced idleness that society disorganised imposes upon him with a cruel disregard of his claims. Having experienced the lot of the workless worker, I believe, with Carlyle, that "a man willing to work and unable to find work is, perhaps, the saddest sight that fortune's inequality exhibits under the sun." Pathetic it is to see the laborer, strong in limb, healthy in mind and morale, willing to work, but compelled reluctantly to be numbered with the ever-increasing legions that machinery, invention, competition, and monopoly recruit for idleness in this big city. But the first step necessary to a change is his own awakening, and that at last has come. His eyes are now open, and the Samson of labor
has pulled from them the bandage that class rule, apathy, and his own ignorance and drunkenness had placed upon him. He sees that the soil after its crops lies fallow and is fed. The trees, after their fruitful loads have gone, rest and recuperate. The rich go to other climes to rest, or hibernate in slothfulness at home. But he, the worker and producer for them all, is linked to an idleness that worries and fatigues: "his limbs are rusted with a vile repose." The opportunity of using them is denied him. The city his hands have helped to make rich and beautiful has nothing to offer him, not even the chance of further work—the little all he modestly craves, and in refusing which the community robs itself and leaves him poorer still.

But even more pathetic than the unemployed male worker and industrial nomad is the workless woman or girl in search of work in a city of great distances. Trudging from shop to factory with thin boots and thinner clothes; with little food, without the support that trade unionism gives to men, lacking the stimulant of association, isolated by her sex, with no organisation, often the victim of bogus registry offices, friendless and alone, she searches for work that slowly comes. Before her the workhouse or the street, she bravely suffers in silence, and has no alternative to starvation but the eating of the crumbs of charity or the loaf of lust. The industrial Andromeda that want of work has chained to life she loathes incarnates all the poignant sorrow and desperation of the merciless struggle for existence amongst the poor, against which virtue, honor, and labor fight often in vain.

Whatever the movement amongst the workers may be, whether it is the demand for legislative reduction of the hours of labor, now demanded by the miners, railway men, cotton operatives, and the Trades Union Congress, or the abolition of overtime, which all the unions are fighting for now, the inspiring motive at the bottom of them all is the problem of disposing of their unemployed, the slaying of the monster that the fruitfulness of their own labor has created. Disguise it how we will, hide it though we may, looming up is the great, the all-absorbing question for all countries and governments to face—how can the honest worker be provided with work uncontaminated with pauperism's degrading taint and charity's demoralising aid? The glib quotation of figures showing that official pauperism has decreased only insults the genuine worker who asks for work, so that it may be reduced further still. But even the official statistics, when shorn of all their complacent optimism, reveal the real nature of the problem. The fact that a cruel administration of the Poor Law, which mixes honest and criminal together, has reduced official pauperism from 46 to 20 per thousand, is cold comfort to the men who, by physical necessity or want of work, are compelled to be of the twenty. The growth of trade unionism, friendly, sick, loan, co-operative, and other agencies that the workers resort to in times of distress, is not recognised as a factor in reducing the distress which, in the absence of such agencies, the Poor Law would have to meet. Exploiting the ever-increasing repugnance amongst the genuine poor to pauper relief, the officials representing the laisser-
The middle class are determined to throw the support of the workless, that the rich and poor now sustain, on the poor exclusively, who voluntarily, taxed as they are, cannot carry further burdens.

Outside the official pauper class, as Mr. Charles Booth proves, there are hundreds of thousands of people whose standard of life and comfort, from the point of view of food, clothing, and house accommodation, is lower than that of the pauper or criminal, yet these people will not accept relief, but struggle on in the vain hope of work that never comes, and which, if it did, would find them too low to perform it. The fact is the virtue—or vice—of thrift and independence amongst the pick of the working classes, which well-fed reformers contend is applicable to all, is being abused and exploited. When the poor refuse Poor Law relief, it is construed as proof that its abolition is justifiable. When, as a better alternative, the poor man asks for work, he is told that that is pauperism in another form. When he becomes ill through neither relief nor work being offered or accepted, or, as a last resource, thieves and goes to prison, he has to be kept, after his health and morals have been shattered, till he dies. The fact is, the workless man has to be kept in one of three conditions: living on the rates as a pauper in a non-productive capacity, earning nothing and costing the country a large sum in officialism; as a criminal kept in prison—the worst possible fate for any man; or as a wanderer about the streets, sponging upon his fellows or the charitable rich, forced to live like a vagrant camel upon the hump of his own melancholy poverty, slowly getting physically exhausted, morally and mentally degraded, till the manhood is crushed out of him, and he becomes one of those fearful wrecks to whom death would be the greatest relief. I believe that the cheapest, best, and safest way of all to prevent the idle man, the potential loafer, pauper, or criminal, from being a burden is to provide him with work which will be his salvation and the community's gain.

But how is this to be done? It may not be so easy as many imagine, but certain it is that the solution of the question must be attempted by the adoption of proper measures, insignificant, perhaps, in themselves, but as a whole tending towards the industrial reorganisation of society.

In attempting to deal with this unemployed problem, it must be admitted that whatever is done under a competitive form of society can only be palliative and not permanently remedial. In fact, the commercial classes must be told, if they do not know it already, that to a great extent the existence of an unemployed contingent of workers is a necessary corollary of the existing almost unrestricted competitive system, in which production for profit by a class is carried on irrespective of the social consequences to the community and the producers. And whilst keeping in view and adopting all practical remedies, the fact must not be lost sight of that the basis of our social, economic, and industrial life is anarchic and unsound, and must be either slowly or suddenly revolutionised. The harshness of Capitalism has been tempered, however, in England for many years by the socialistic Poor Law, and by much voluntary charity for the relief of the distress incidental to the present form of wealth-pro-
duction and its alternating cycles of depression, poverty, and prosperity. The immediate question we have to discuss is how best can this money and existing charitable and relief agencies be concentrated, economised, and utilised for the prevention of further additions to the army of paupers, and the perpetuation of a pauper class. And before this question is answered, let us say, in the light of experience gained by the Mansion House Fund in 1886, that all charitable schemes for the relief of the unemployed who are able to work have only one end, and that end the demoralisation of the donors and the degradation of the recipients. Wherever money is, there the loafer, the lazy, and the undeserving will be found. Worse than this, when society suffers from a spasm of charity, is the creation of paid philanthropists by proxy who revel in the notoriety which their sense of vanity and love of patronage craves, who cannot give personal service, time, and attention—always the better half of charity—with the result that failure attends invariably their crude and immature schemes. For the weak, the sick, the physically unfit, food and sustenance must be found; but this should be undertaken by the proper authorities and existing paid officials in such a way as to confer no obligation or patronage, and then only as a means of helping the recipients to that condition of health and strength necessary to the performance of labor, and which when reached should lead to employment on useful work, the real and only antidote to all the ills that laboring flesh is heir to. That these authorities have not done their work well, and are unsympathetic, is a reason for alteration, but is no justification for all the quack remedies that neurotic Christians and fanatical faddists, combining universal brotherhood with incompetence and good salaries, try to impose upon us.

The provision for the aged, sick, and destitute, the finding of employment for the able-bodied, is not the work of religious proselytism or of the individual, however benevolently disposed. It is a collective, social, and municipal duty in which the minds, principles, energies, and organised sympathies of all men, absolutely non-religious and impersonal, should be embodied by and through governmental and administrative agencies that should consciously carry out the scientifically ordered benevolence and desires of the community. Strong men may be held responsible for carrying out the objects that the community decide upon; but in the end society will find that no single man nor any coterie of self-appointed cliques can cope with an evil that is universal, and which must be faced by society, through its elected institutions, organised and equipped for its removal. This brings us to the practical remedial measures that could be undertaken for the unemployed.

First, the present system of ascertaining the number of men out of work should be improved, or a new system established. Essential to all remedies is the truth. The only basis and method of enumeration, apart from the Poor Law, which is utterly useless for this purpose, is the Labor Department of the Board of Trade that gets its statistics from the trade unions, mainly the skilled. Even this limited work is inefficiently done, through no fault of Mr. John
Burnett, as the trade unions do not respond as they should, and nervously hesitate to give the exact numbers out of work for fear that their position should become known to the employers, who, they assume, would exploit their necessity by reducing wages or by some other encroachments. The figures given generally underestimate, because they give the members only of trade unions in receipt of out-of-work benefit, taking no notice of those out. They give only the average of all, and not the percentage of each trade, a method that gives no idea of the number out of work and the corresponding distress. Societies that do not give unemployed benefits are roughly estimated, whilst the unskilled and unorganised trades can only form rough calculations, often influenced by the social and political views of the enumerators. As for the women, there is practically no attempt to ascertain the number who require work, whilst their organisation is only a name. The result of all this anarchy and disorganisation is the frequent hearing of late, even from members and officials of trade unions, of absurdly high estimates of the numbers of the unemployed, some going so far as to say that there were more out of work than there were actually in the whole trade, and in the following week finding out their mistake and going to the opposite extreme. Then, again, we have charitable schemers, as of late in London, deliberately exaggerating the distress and want of work, in order to induce the credulous rich to subscribe to the particular charity they run. The fact is, outside Mr. Charles Booth, the Fabian Society, and a few trade unions, there are no official and reliable agencies for collecting statistics upon which reliance can be placed. Even the Poor Law authorities are without statistical data of any degree of accuracy relating to pauperism besides the unemployed.

The only way, after all, to obtain reliable labor statistics is to establish in every district council, parish, or vestry area a completely equipped Labor Bureau, situated in the Town Hall. There the unemployed should be able to register themselves, and the trade unions should be urged to regularly post or file, for official use if necessary, their numbers out of employment. The whole arrangements of simple tabulation and indication of where employment could be found should be done in a business-like way, by a competent official. The bureau should be the medium of communication between the men seeking work and the employers, and at the same time eliminate the loafer, to whom little consideration should be shown. If this is not done the continued disappointment of employers through his inability to stay at work will result in their losing confidence in the genuine unemployed, to the latter's detriment and to the discredit of the bureau. In spite of what some advocates of work for the unemployed may say, I contend, as a Socialist, basing my belief on an unequalled experience of the largest meetings of unemployed that have ever been held, and as spokesman on every occasion for deputations on this subject to Government departments in the past ten years, that until the differentiation of the laborer from the loafer takes place, the unemployed question can never be properly discussed and dealt with. Till the tramp, thief,
and ne'er-do-well, however pitiable he may be, is dealt with distinctly from the genuine worker, no permanent benefit will result to any of them. The gentleman who gets up to look for work at mid-day, and prays that he may not find it, is undeserving of pity. I have seen the most genuine and honest men at meetings mixed up with the laziest and most drunken scoundrels. These latter get together for a purpose: they have but one object, that is, pillage—an offence that in critical times would justify the punishment of the perpetrator at the hands of the men who had staked their all in the success of a genuine Labor movement, the success of which, after all, cannot be secured unless the utmost discipline is preserved; breaches of which in a military or revolutionary movement would meet with heavy penalties.

These Labor Bureaux would probably lead to the trade unions leaving their present meeting-places in public-houses and using alternately the rooms of the bureaux, or, as is being done, of the Town Hall, for their meetings: an advantage to labor that in the course of the year would save thousands of pounds now wasted by being spent in drink. Telephonic or other communication between district and district should be arranged. This might be conducted by a Central Labor Exchange, to be in conjunction with an Imperial Labor Bureau for Great Britain, utilising the 18,000 post-offices, ascertaining and exchanging the varying local industrial needs. The whole of these arrangements should form part of a Ministry of Labor and Fine Arts, constituted as, or better than, existing departments, and dealing in an organised manner with the industrial, technical, and artistic sides of the production of wealth that are now forgotten in the vulgar scramble for personal gain.

Till these Labour Bureaux are established, when exceptional distress occurs and private charity or public relief has to be disbursed, a committee should be formed in each County Council area, on which representatives of the trade unions, Charity Organisation Society, friendly societies, temperance and other bodies should sit, and, if possible, supplemented by a number of the guardians and vestrymen, whose local knowledge, together with that of the workmen, would be of great service in differentiating the workers from the loafers—a necessary and indispensable task. This committee should confine itself to disbursing relief in money or food only to those who through illness or inability to work should have relief, and who refuse to go into the workhouse because their distress was only temporary. The children who need it should be fed at the Board Schools, for whatever their fathers may have done, the children are blameless. The price paid for Ormonde would be more than sufficient to provide London's foodless children with good meals all through the winter. The ordinary cases of distress should be left to the existing authorities, and should in no way be interfered with by the committee, except in the case of providing work for the able-bodied willing to take it.

The advantages of this representative committee would be the amalgamation of all sorts of sympathies, and the furnishing of such a sufficient conflict of interests and opinions as would secure an impartial distribution of relief, and prevent the overlapping of various agencies
and imposture—advantages not always attaching to relief committees of one political, social, or religious view. This unofficial body would undertake temporarily the duties that should fall upon new District and Poor Law Councils that should soon be created on the broadest possible franchise for this and other purposes. If money is subscribed for the relief of the able-bodied, it should be handed over to the local authorities responsible for the cleansing, sanitation, and making of such public works as roads, streets, parks and sewers. The surveyor or engineer should be the responsible authority for the expenditure of this money, and as far as is possible the conditions of hours and wages current at the time should be rigidly observed. The men could be employed at fewer hours per day, or fewer days per week, than ordinarily, so that the aggregate wage earned should be no inducement either to malinger or refuse work elsewhere under ordinary conditions. If the amount of money is sufficient, then the work should proceed as if in that district no exceptional distress existed. The Poor Law Guardians should act in conjunction with this committee, and should hand over to the local authority that amount of money to be spent in useful work or non-paupering relief that would have been spent in other directions if no such public works had been instituted. At Paddington in 1886 a public committee co-operated with the Guardians and the Vestry and jointly subscribed money for work for 350 men, and gave employment to 133 women on needlework. The advantage of this course is that you distribute over all the men employed, without paupering them, that amount of money which all people in the parish subscribe through the rates, and you make the support of the unemployed a collective compulsory charge on the district that profits by the work they perform. The application for work should be restricted to local men with at least three months’ residence.

Work should be of public utility, not necessarily of immediate demand, but prospectively required.

The work should be such as would give simple employment to the class which is mainly influenced by depression—the unskilled. Ground work on roads, sewers, and recreation grounds is the best, as the bulk of the cost of these works goes in wages for manual labor.

Each locality to be responsible for its own unemployed, unless the extent of the works permit otherwise, and equitable arrangements are made with other districts. As in the case of the Common Poor Law Fund, the richer districts with no unemployed ought to contribute pro rata for work that poorer districts do in relief of metropolitan distress. The equalisation of rates would remove many objections now urged on the score of cost by poor districts. The Government could also lend money on easy terms, and in many cases make a contribution, but should leave the carrying out of work entirely to local authority.

The character of the work to be done is of course difficult to decide upon; as in many districts there are staple trades the skill and delicacy of which prevent hard and laborious work being undertaken easily by the men. But generally as was found on the £2,000,000 of work undertaken by local authorities in Lancashire in 1862 and 1863, as
told by Mr. Arthur Arnold in his excellent *History of the Cotton Famine*, and by Mr. Torrins and Sir Robert Rawlinson in their reports, the men soon adapted themselves to the work, which, when finished, was of lasting benefit to the community.

Public works in India, Ireland, and the colonies, even though some of the works in the latter may have been undertaken for political reasons, go on the whole to prove that it is better to spend £1,000,000 on useful labor than £2,000,000 in charity.

The later instances of the good effects of public works loyally undertaken in the right spirit by the authorities and the men are numerous. One of the best was at Chelsea in 1886, when £16,000 was spent in paving and laying out roads and streets. The work was of excellent character, equal to, even better, in quality and price than contract work; and for three months gave employment to over 200 men of many trades who soon adapted themselves to the work, and, with the parish, derived great benefit. In 1887 similar work on a smaller scale was undertaken with like success. At Paddington, in 1886, through the action of the committee above referred to, road-work was organised and a public recreation ground laid out. At Wandsworth many men were engaged in digging sand, foundations, and other ground work. Battersea, St. Pancras, and many other parishes, also the Metropolitan Gardens Association, carried out many useful improvements and in the best way relieved distress, discouraged loafing, and benefited the community by the works carried out. At Oxford, Norwich, Ipswich, Yarmouth, Eastbourne, and at Brighton similar work was done: 1,000 men were employed for some weeks on necessary roads; at Yarmouth and King’s Lynn general relief works were also undertaken, also at Southampton, Dudley, Walsall, and Stourbridge, in cleansing roads and similar work. Tynemouth employed some hundreds of men upon a public park, sea road, and sea banks. South Shields gave work to 400 men three days per week; and Sunderland to 1,300 men of all trades on foreshore works, of which the Local Government Board official states: “It is impossible to contemplate without a feeling of satisfaction the great improvement to the district that has resulted from the judicious employment of these men at a critical time.” And of Wales, where street improvements, parks, gardens, and foreshore works were undertaken, Mr. Murray Bourne, of the Local Government Board, says: —

Relief was no doubt considerable. The carrying out of such works at such a time possesses obvious advantages. The work is possibly done somewhat more cheaply than when labor is in demand.

For the less skilled men who are willing to work, London and all other towns can always find work for many who have strength enough to use a broom or shovel. The condition of our streets in summer is bad enough, and it is more than the insufficient permanent staff can do to keep them clean; whilst in winter the staff could be easily doubled, and if this were done when mud, snow, and dirt are much in evidence, from six to ten thousand men could find employment. If to this was added a crusade against dirt and filth in all the side streets, slums, and alleys with broom, whitewash, and disinfectant, in fact a vigorous enforcement of the new Public Health Act, work
would be justified and secured for a still larger number. The recent disclosures of Dr. Dudfield as to the filthy condition of cisterns provides, until they are removed, a source of employment for many; as also does the removal of dust and other refuse. “The man with the muck rake,” the scavenger of to-day, is not the dejected, semi-pauperised automaton that he used to be, working for less than the current wage, and one step from the workhouse. He has been enthused and organised, and, as Mr. Giffen testifies, has reduced his hours of labor 30 per cent. and raised his wages from 10 to 25 per cent. His calling is no longer what it was, and men who used to look upon road-sweeping as derogatory now cheerfully look for it as an alternative to the other work that through age, and for many other reasons, fails them.

The Battersea Vestry, beyond establishing 2s. as a minimum wage for their scavengers, have decided that no man under 40 years of age will be eligible for this class of work. This is a good step, as it throws the burden of the industrial fight, as it should, on the young and the unmarried, and gives to the older more municipal protection from the increasing intensity of competition, and, through the rates, throws upon the employer his share of the public duty towards the veterans of industry.

I have gone fairly into the matter, and believe if Mr. Fowler's recent circular is loyally adopted by the 14,000 local authorities throughout the country, as it has been anticipated by the London County Council, that there are many useful works that could be carried out in each district of general sanitary character, which, combined with repairs of roads, streets, and sewers, on the standard of Chelsea in 1886, would give a total of 24,000 to 30,000 men employment in London alone, or about 200,000 throughout the country.

And why should not this be done? When a busy man has an hour to spare, how does he occupy it? He tidies up, sets his rooms and papers in order; when a thrifty housewife has an opportunity of an additional cleaning it is undertaken. Why, then, should not each community utilise its surplus labor that must be kept somehow, and give to its cities and towns, its roads and buildings, that winter and spring cleaning they require?

Having dealt with the kind of work that the unskilled laborer can do, it is more important to discuss the best means of preventing the periodical displacement to which all workers are subject. I believe that by a reorganisation of the works of all public bodies, such as Town and County Councils, school boards, vestries, guardians, docks, port, harbor and sanitary authorities, and all State departments, it is possible to reduce enormously the number of men seeking employment at the beginning and end of each year. To do this the example of the Battersea Vestry, the London County Council, and many other public bodies must be followed, in abolishing contracts, which means casual labor, as far as possible. For the ordinary maintenance and repairs a regular, transferable staff should be kept employed direct, with no overtime except in cases of social urgency; and we should adjust all the special and extraordinary work to be done, such as ground work, repairs and alterations to parks, open
spaces, drainage, and other works, to the exigencies of the general local labor market. By this, employment would be thrown over a larger number and at the times when the labor market needed it most. For three years this has been done by nearly all the committees of the London County Council, which has also decided to have its own Works Department; the first scientific step yet taken for the unemployed question. To secure simultaneous, compulsory and uniform action, Imperial notification should be given. This should be done by a Local Government Board circular; and when the Labor Bureaux indicated a given percentage of unemployed, then public works should be started, and migration would thus be stopped. The great advantage of this method is that by local knowledge and experience the habits and character of the men are known—the laboring sheep are separated from the loafing goats.

Some exception may be taken to this method on the ground that painting and other season trades cannot be regularly employed. But this objection does not hold good to the extent usually imagined. The class of men who are mostly out of work in London in winter are painters and painters' laborers. In the summer the painters and kindred workmen are making ten, twelve, fourteen and often sixteen hours per day for six or seven months in the year. This is unnecessary, as there is no least reason why nearly all the inside work in connection with cleaning and painting the buildings belonging to public bodies, such as schools, asylums, hospitals, police stations, and public offices, also railway stations and other large buildings, should not be done when climatic conditions are unsuitable for outside work, leaving external work for good weather. I have not yet known a builder or contractor to refuse a contract for climatic reasons; and, with the exception of times of very severe frosts, he generally manages to carry out his work. Even the frost difficulty is got over in colder countries, such as Norway and Sweden; and it could be overcome here if prejudice and custom did not stand in the way. The fact is, custom, caprice and fashion have imposed upon all communities many cruel and absurd practices which entail overwork for short periods and lack of work at others. If the community is driven, as it is now, to find work for all and overwork for none, it must either voluntarily or compulsorily abandon the stupid practice of ordering its clothes twenty-four hours before they are required, and insisting that all its houses in the West End should be cleaned and painted in six weeks in the spring or six weeks in the autumn, by men working night and day. Let the community by law, or the men and masters by combination, say that the average working day throughout the year shall be the maximum working day. Society would soon adapt itself to the conditions. The work would still have to be done, and as there is no fear of the owners doing it themselves, one of the first steps towards the regulation of industry would be achieved.

Beyond this there is much that the Imperial Government can do. In all the departments there is much "extra duty" that ought not to be done by the regular staff at overtime rates, but which should be done by extra men. Overtime in the General Post Office alone is paid
for to the extent of £1,400 per week. This alone means the displacement of 800 men. In every postal district a proportional amount is paid. A reapportionment of work, the adoption of the shift system, would prevent overwork, and for a permanent, profitable service give a steady regular employment to several thousand more men who are better employed carrying letters than in receiving relief from the rates. The Postmaster-General, on my representations, has decided to discontinue the practice of giving supernumerary work at Christmas and other busy periods to inspectors and serjeants of police and army, and others receiving good pay and pensions, and to give it only to men whose normal occupation ceases in winter. In the arsenals and docks yards similar things take place. Although overtime is not so prevalent now as in 1884, 1885 and 1886, when 12,000 men worked 6,000,000 hours of overtime at Woolwich and Enfield, which, when extended over the period in question, gives an average of seventeen hours per week per man, and so doing deprived 2,000 of their fellows of work that was sorely needed—still there is too much of it. At Chatham, from April to August 1892, 4,000 men were working thirteen and a half hours per day instead of nine and a half. At that period, also, 1,800 men were working three and a half hours overtime per day; whilst at Portsmouth 1,200 men were working overtime on the Royal Arthur; and at Plymouth, Devonport and Woolwich the same thing goes on to a varying extent. Fortunately the Government in 1893 have seen the necessity of altering this, and have diminished overtime and put several departments on short time rather than dismiss men. This they should follow up by the eight hours day. There is no excuse for overtime with hundreds of workmen unemployed, as the shift system could be adopted if work is needed to be completed in a hurry, and the result would be better work and real economy in the end.

It would be interesting to trace the breakdowns through defective machinery to our ironclads; if it were done, it would not be favorable to the breakneck speed at which much of the work is turned out by contractors’ men working, as in 1886, 1887, and 1888, at 90 and 100 hours per week.

The railway accident at Thirsk, due to the deliberate underman ning of the working staff, simply for profit, by the directors, suggests a field into which many unemployed men might be drawn with advantage to all.

The unfortunate death of ten passengers has directed public attention to the overworking that prevails, and which was disclosed by the Scotch strike, the Railway Hours Committee, and the last report for December 1891, which shows no appreciable diminution in excessive duty.

But the public generally are terribly ignorant of the railway butchers’ bill that the companies pay in the killed and injured bodies of their servants for the undermanning and overworking that, in the majority of cases, are the causes of accidents amongst their servants and occasionally their passengers.

In 1891, 628 men were killed and 9,601 injured out of less than 200,000 engaged in the different grades on the railways; out of four
million engaged in factories, 420 only were killed and 8,527 injured; an excess for the railways of 208 killed and 1,974 injured with the twentieth part of the numbers that are engaged in factories.

Since 1874 up to November 1895 there have been 10,000 deaths and 45,000 injuries connected with railway rolling stock. This does not include the 1,422 killed and the 115,920 injured in other departments of the railways, and making in all about 12,000 killed and 160,000 injured in eighteen years. At shunting and kindred work in 1891, 160 lives were lost and 1,671 were injured. Taking an average of killed and injured over the 14,000 men engaged it will be found, on the standard of 1891, that over seven years 1,120 are killed and 11,690 injured, or 80 per cent. of 14,000 men in this department are offered up every seven years as a sacrifice to the long hours of those engaged and to the increase of the unemployed.

An eight hours day would reduce this preventible slaughter by 50 per cent., and if applied to the whole of the railways would absorb 100,000 men. This means a diminution of dividend of 1 per cent., but to a great extent this would be met by a reduction in taxation and other ways. It is not too large a price for the railways to pay for packing the House of Commons in the interests of their monopolies.

The tramways and bus companies, in spite of plucky strikes by the men, are still working their men excessive hours, and will continue to do so till the law prevents them. At the present moment the number of carmen and unemployed men accustomed to vehicular work is large, and the necessities of the passenger traffic in London that could be better served by two shifts of men are neglected, so that rival companies can ruin each other, and kill their horses and men by insane competition.

Fortunately for all, the County Council and other local authorities are taking possession of these monopolies, and their ownership will not only mean convenience to all and less obstruction, but a relief to the overstocked labor market in London.

It is very difficult to suggest remedies that will at once affect the workless women. Relief works suitable for men are not possible for them, although there is much work that each family in its own way could do to help those immediately around them.

For the mass of women and girls, in the interests of humanity, apart from a means of giving work to others, legislation should at once be adopted that would put a stop to home work and sweating. All home industries should be transferred to healthy workshops and factories, under public sanitary supervision and Factory Acts that cannot be enforced where domestic conditions lead to their evasion. The inclusion of laundries within the Factory Acts would extend the area of employment.

This, if accompanied by legislative reduction of hours for all women as well as men to eight per day, would for some time find nearly all with employment who desire it. The gradual raising of the age of children engaged in factories, and the gradual elimination of married women from factory occupations altogether, would help to the provision of work and the raising of wages and the standard of comfort both for men and women.
But whatever may be done of a gradual and tentative character in the towns or cities by public works or by reduction of the hours of labor will be permanently useless till the influx from the countryside is stopped, and machinery is made the servant and not, as now, the master of men. How this is to be done it is difficult to say, and apparently nothing but the justifiable appropriation by the rural authorities of the uncultivated land will do it. In the general interests of the country something must be attempted to prevent the land lying idle. Year by year the community looks on as field after field is added to sporting estates, and men give way to deer.

In many country districts peasants rot while the pheasants rule; and game is master where man is hunger's sport.

The creation of parish and district councils must stop this, and, let us hope, will furnish the laborer and farmer with the means not only of cultivation where now desolation reigns, but will provide the means for more attractive life on the soil, higher wages, and that steadiness of work that will stem the exodus to the towns, to the physical detriment of the nation, and to the addition to London's burdens and poverty which now goes on.

In the foregoing I have ventured as a municipal councillor to put forth suggestions that by their adoption will relieve distress arising from want of work. My practical experience convinces me that they can be adopted almost at once. Certainly some attempt for their introduction must be undertaken. The reason why I have confined myself to the practically possible is because I have no faith in the fiscal, charitable, or economic nostrums that are hourly preached for the redemption of mankind.

Of these, labor colonies are the least scientific. A labor colony presupposes male labor. What have the unemployed working women done to be thus ignored? It also means manual unskilled labor being mainly employed. From whence to be drawn? Not from the skilled trades that in the main are engaged on foreign work and most liable to fluctuation and depression, but from the laborers in the building trades, gasworks, agricultural labor, and other internal occupations of the manual labor class. The labor colony has no room for the spinner, weaver, lace-maker, jeweller, engineer, and others, the bulk of whose work goes abroad. It is intended rather for the relief of men whom I would rather see repairing roads, cleansing streets, reclaiming foreshores, purifying rivers and canals, pulling down unsanitary areas and rebuilding, emptying dustbins, general sanitary work, and other useful and reproductive employment on which they could use their labor to greater advantage to themselves and the community than on farm work, that is, supposing they would stay, which in ninety cases out of a hundred they would not. This is proved by the experience of all labor colonies, which shows that they can only be conducted by earnest, intelligent, unselfish men, enthused by the highest spiritual or social ideals, or by the most absolute discipline, on a prison labor basis, to which your out-of-work, who would leave his home and the town, would not voluntarily submit, and which, for different reasons, the honest unemployed would not tolerate. The fact is, labor colony advocates
assume the absence of home ties, associations and the strong and laudable desire in genuine unemployed men to be so situated in their temporary work in depressed times as would permit of them seizing the first opportunity to leave and return to their proper industries, conditions impossible in labor colonies. Men destitute of these qualities lack the essentials for continuous work, and generally would be a source of demoralisation.

The labor colony, as a remedy for the unemployed, is, I maintain, foredoomed to failure, and is nothing but the revival in another form of the hated casual ward with all its physical and moral iniquities. If municipalisation of agriculture is intended, that is something I can understand, but that for years is not likely to prove a remedy for the workless. Rather will it come after easier things have been undertaken and accomplished—the abolition of overwork, the reduction of the hours of labor, and the reorganisation of labor in every trade, that is now going on—too slowly, I admit—in the right direction by trade union, municipal and parliamentary action. And should the municipalisation of agriculture be undertaken on Socialist lines, its initial stage must be conducted not by the unskilled unemployed plus an in-and-out army of loafers, casuals, and wastrels, but by the best of labor attracted by those better conditions which would accompany such an undertaking started by people with brains along the lines followed by the L.C.C. in doing its own work. A pious wish to get the townsman into the country will not help us. The fact is, sentiment and personal repugnance to country labor is often the cause of rural depopulation, assisted, of course, by increased use of machinery, cheaper foreign food stuffs, and other causes. The argument that the produce of labor colonies should be used and consumed inside, and should not be sold to people outside, is absurd, and presupposes that the colony is sufficiently large to include the numerous trades that are required to supply the wants of a working-class population, and that the organisation should be such as could only be arrived at after years of experiment. It therefore fails to touch the problem of providing employment at once for those who are without. The labor colony products must be sold and exchanged outside if the colony is to succeed. If this is done, what will be the effect on the displacement of agricultural labor is shown by Mr. W. E. Bear, an agricultural authority, who says:—

Around Nottingham, where there is an excellent market for vegetables and fruit, small and large market gardens are numerous. The evidence of those engaged in the industry many of whom I visited in their homes or in the market, was generally depressing. They said that the market had become glutted in recent years, so that prices had become barely remunerative, and that rail rates were so high that the bulky produce of their gardens could not profitably be sent to distant markets. One reason of the depression given was that thousands of the working men of Nottingham had acquired allotments, on which they not only grew all the vegetables they required, and so ceased to be customers to the market gardeners, but also frequently had a surplus to sell, thus becoming competitors.

This being so, the establishment of labor colonies outside every town would only accentuate the unemployed difficulty, and lead to the permanent degradation of agriculture and its labor.

Agricultural laborers now at work will be displaced by the labor of the colonists, unless protection is adopted with its greater train of
evils; just as Salvation Army brickmakers are displacing honest brickmakers at the present moment, and prison, pauper, reformatory and industrial school labor is displacing and destroying several trades. Besides this objection, the cost of labor colonies must come from some source. The only one available is the consumer and producer. Is it not better that the cost of keeping the unemployed should be borne, not by spending money in creating superfluous farms and municipal workshops, but by slightly adding to the cost of production if necessary in all trades by absorbing the unemployed through the reduction of hours of all and the employment at all trades of their now surplus workers?

Any attempt at labor colonies, unemployed settlements, elevators, farm colonies, municipal workshops, and other social will-o’-the-wisps will fail, as they have always done. Man is even in social and political reform a gregarious animal, and loathes separation or isolation from his fellows, even for his own improvement. Into the mass of the industrial army the ragged regiments of the unemployed must be absorbed. Over trade, commerce, agriculture, and labor the cost, not of finding merely work for the workless, but rather of reducing the hours of all that are overworked, should be spread. It needs no change, is the simplest way, avoids friction, displacement and migration. In this way every consumer at home and abroad in the price of the product he buys will, through the added cost of shorter hours, pay equally with the manufacturer and producer for the maintenance of people that without these shorter hours would be unemployed, and the cost of which would be borne by the producers alone. Absorption of the unemployed by general reduction of hours, this followed by municipalisation of industry and nationalisation of monopolies, is the line of least resistance for all. It is regulation or riot, reduction or revolution. Whatever is undertaken must be boldly and promptly done by those concerned. But to even attempt the solution of this question, it requires the greatest political foresight and courage for all political parties who till now have always shirked the permanent solution of the unemployed question. In the next Parliament and for years to come it will be the chief question for discussion. The world moves on its belly; and politicians will find that the people have longer memories than formerly, especially when the possessors of the empty bellies have votes.

We are passing through a transition period. Laisser faire has been abandoned, and for the first time in the history of the human race the working people possess universally the power through elective institutions to embody in law their economic and material desires. Concurrently with the growth of personal independence is the desire for State aid and municipal effort when individual action is futile. The unemployed movement embodies the growing desire for useful healthy lives. It is the protest of Labor against charitable palliation of a social system that in all countries is breaking up, and must either by force or steady change, such as I have indicated, give place to the organised and collective domination by the people of their social life through municipal administration and political development.
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