

Reduced facsimile of advertisement appearing in "The Listener" of 25th February, journal of the B.B.C. There were seven weekly broadcast talks (numbered I to VII) on "The Problem of Unemployment" from the National Transmitter, London. This EPILOGUE by Henry George was numbered VIII by us and made a fitting conclusion to the series.

## The Problem of Unemployment—VIII

EPILOGUE — By HENRY GEORGE

(Author of "Progress and Poverty")

PUT to anyone capable of consecutive thought this question. . . . Say to him: "Here is a little village; in ten years it will be a great city—in ten years the railroad will have taken the place of the stage-coach, the electric light of the candle; it will abound with all the machinery and improvements that so enormously multiply the effective power of labour. Will, in ten years, interest be any higher?"

He will tell you, "No!"

"Will the wages of common labour be any higher? Will it be easier for a man who has nothing but his labour to make an independent living?"

He will tell you, "No; the wages of common labour will not be any higher; on the contrary, all the chances are that they will be lower; it will not be easier for the mere labourer to make an independent living; the chances are that it will be harder."

"What, then, will be higher?"

"Rent; the value of land. Go, get yourself a piece of ground, and hold possession."

And if, under such circumstances, you take his advice, you need do nothing more. You may sit down and smoke your pipe; you may lie around like the lazzaroni of Naples or the leperos of Mexico: you may go up in a balloon, or down a hole in the ground; and without doing one stroke of work, without adding one iota to the wealth of the community, in ten years you will be rich! In the new city you may have a luxurious mansion; but among its public buildings will be an almshouse.

In all our long investigation we have been advancing to this simple truth: That as land is necessary to the exertion of labour in the production of wealth, to command the land which is necessary to labour, is to command all the fruits of labour save enough to enable labour to exist. We have been advancing as through an enemy's country, in which every step must be secured, every position fortified, and every by-path explored; for this simple truth, in its application to social and political problems, is hid from the great masses of men partly by its very simplicity, and in greater part by widespread fallacies and erroneous habits of thought which lead them to look in every direction but the right one for an explanation of the evils which oppress and threaten the civilized world. And back of these elaborate fallacies and misleading theories is an active, energetic power, a power that in every country, be its political forms what they may, writes laws and moulds thought—the power of a vast and dominant pecuniary interest.

Look over the world to-day. In countries the most widely differing—under conditions the most diverse as to government, as to industries, as to tariffs, as to currency—you will find distress among the working-classes; but everywhere that you thus find distress and destitution in the midst of wealth you will find that the land is monopolized; that instead of being treated as the common property of the whole people, it is treated as the private property of individuals; that, for its use by labour, large revenues are extorted from the earnings of labour. Look over the world to-day, comparing different countries with each

other, and you will see that it is not the abundance of capital or the productiveness of labour that makes wages high or low; but the extent to which the monopolizers of land can, in rent, levy tribute upon the earnings of labour.

. . . . In the new settlements, where land is cheap, you will find no beggars, and the inequalities in condition are very slight. In the great cities, where land is so valuable that it is measured by the foot, you will find the extremes of poverty and of luxury.

To shift the burden of taxation from production and exchange to the value or rent of land would not merely be to give new stimulus to the production of wealth; it would be to open new opportunities. For under this system no one would care to hold land unless to use it, and land now withheld from use would everywhere be thrown open to improvement.

The selling price of land would fall; land speculation would receive its death-blow; land monopolization would no longer pay. . . . Everywhere that land had attained a value, taxation, instead of operating, as now, as a fine upon improvement, would operate to force improvement. Whoever planted an orchard, or sowed a field, or built a house, or erected a manufactory, no matter how costly, would have no more to pay in taxes than if he kept so much land idle. The monopolist of agricultural land would be taxed as much as though his land were covered with houses and barns, with crops and with stock. The owner of a vacant city lot would have to pay as much for the privilege of keeping other people off it until he wanted to use it, as his neighbour who has a fine house upon his lot. It would cost as much to keep a row of tumble-down shanties upon valuable land as though it were covered with a grand hotel or a pile of great warehouses filled with costly goods.

Consider the effect of such a change upon the labour market. Competition would no longer be one-sided, as now. Instead of labourers competing with each other for employment, and in their competition cutting down wages to the point of bare subsistence, employers would everywhere be competing for labourers, and wages would rise to the fair earnings of labour. For into the labour market would have entered the greatest of all competitors for the employment of labour, a competitor whose demand cannot be satisfied until want is satisfied—the demand of labour itself. The employers of labour would not have merely to bid against other employers, all feeling the stimulus of greater trade and increased profits, but against the ability of labourers to become their own employers upon the natural opportunities freely opened to them by the tax which prevented monopolization.

With natural opportunities thus free to labour; with capital and improvements exempt from tax, and exchange released from restrictions, the spectacle of willing men unable to turn their labour into the things they are suffering for would become impossible; the recurring paroxysms which paralyse industry would cease; every wheel of production would be set in motion; demand would keep pace with supply, and supply with demand; trade would increase in every direction, and wealth augment on every hand.

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ADVT.—This is not the report of a wireless address. It is a reprint of passages from the world-renowned book PROGRESS AND POVERTY, by Henry George. The remedy advocated is to tax land values and take taxes off trade and industry. Hundreds of British municipalities are behind this land value policy and the Government is pledged to introduce it this Session. The new Shilling Popular Edition of PROGRESS AND POVERTY is obtainable from the publishers at the special price of 1s., post free. To promote its study, cash awards amounting in all to £200 (including two of £25 each) are being offered for the best essays written upon it. There is no entry fee. The Henry George Foundation, Publishers, 11, Tothill Street, London, S.W.1, will send you (for 1s.) the book and particulars of the Essay Competition.