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**ARCHIVES IN
TRADE UNION
HISTORY AND THEORY**

The Eight Hour Day

Tom Mann

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INTRODUCTION

Tom Mann first encountered trade unionism at the age of sixteen. An apprentice engineer in Birmingham, he worked sixty hours a week.

"I became conscious of some kind of activity amongst the men, particularly the 'Society men', which neither I nor my boy workmates could make much of. As the weeks passed, we overheard mention of the "Beehive", the trade-union paper, which, however, I have no recollection of having seen at that time. Then we heard of meetings being held. We youngsters had not so far been counted of sufficient importance to be consulted, or even informed, till we learned that the men were negotiating with the firm about the Nine-Hour Day. The next bit of news was indeed exciting. We learned that every person in the firm, men and boys, was summoned to a meeting. This was the first meeting of the kind I had ever attended. The proceedings did not last long. The business consisted of a report from the committee that had been negotiating with the firm for the nine-hour day, or fifty-four hour week, instead of the ten-hour day . . . It was proposed that all men should continue to start work at six in the morning, and leave at five in the evening instead of six; also that there must be "penalisation of overtime." This, I gathered, meant that the men would refuse to work overtime unless there was more than the ordinary time rate for it. All the proposals being endorsed . . . negotiations were . . . completed, the firm granting the conditions. How truly pleased I was I need not trouble to add, and how thoroughly all enjoyed the dinner held to celebrate the event . . ." (1)

Here, in a personal testimony, we can see something of what Marx meant, when he spoke, earlier, of the victory of the ten hour day as the "first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle-class succumbed to the political economy of the working class." (2)

The "working class political economy" is clearly prefigured in Marx's *Grundrisse*:

"True wealth is the developed productivity of all individuals . . . Then no longer labour time, but free time, is the measure of wealth. Using labour time as the measure of wealth places wealth itself on the foundation of poverty . . ." (3)

For Tom Mann, for whom even one hour of freedom a day meant the opportunity to enter new worlds at night school, the lesson was learned early. As soon as he had mastered the socialist ideas he encountered in the early 'eighties, he applied himself to developing, in practice, these insights. The crusade began with his first pamphlet, published in 1886, entitled *What a Compulsory Eight-Hour Day Means to the Workers*. This crusade was, in Alan Hutt's words, "the linchpin of the "New Unionism" and reborn socialism, in short of the whole modern Labour Movement which arose in the 1880's and 1890's." (4) Not only was the Gasworkers' strike directly concerned with working hours: but the first Mayday demonstrations were organised around the eight-hour day, and the political campaign on that issue played a major role in demonstrating the inappropriateness of the established trade union alliance with industrial liberalism, since quite clearly liberal business interests were not easily reconcilable to still further conquests by the "political economy of the working-class."

In this sense, Tom Mann had found a key to the unspringing of the hold of outworn ideas upon the working-class movement. His slogan was not simply a "minimum" demand, as opposed to a "maximum" programme of socialist reorganisation of society. The campaign he generated took on the form of a challenge, not merely to the pockets of individual employers, but to the given *system* of social organisation. The demand for an eight-hour day was itself a *transitional* demand, leading on directly to new political alignments as a result of the transformation it brought about in working-class understanding of social reality.

In later years, Mann became the foremost pioneer of the reborn workers' control movement, basing himself upon the same strategic intuitions. With such mobilising strategies, socialists could afford sinuous and enterprising politics, exploring experimentally both direct action and conventional institu-

tional campaigns, integrating both in a joint offensive, and evaluating their separate and combined effects always in the light of the results in awakened socialist consciousness.

This pamphlet, *The Eight-Hour Day by Trade & Local Option* was first published by Green, McAllan & Fielden, of London, EC, in 1892.

Ken Coates
December 1970

- (1) Tom Mann, "Memoirs", Labour Publishing Co. 1925, pp 13-4.
- (2) "Marx Engels Selected Works", FLP, Vol I, p 347.
- (3) "Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie" quoted Marcuse, "Soviet Marxism", Routledge, p 258.
- (4) "The Hours of Labour": The Marxist Quarterly, Vol 2, No. 1, Jan 1955.

THE EIGHT HOUR DAY

Tom Mann

THE WORKERS' DEMAND.

The result of much discussion during the past few years, as to the effect likely to follow upon the reduction of the hours of labour, has made it clear that to reduce the working hours in this country to a maximum of 48 a week, would materially increase wages, by providing work for many who are now in enforced idleness, thus reducing competition for employment. This would make it possible for those workers who are underpaid to obtain advances, because the abundant supply of labour would be lessened, and thus new demands would be made for commodities, resulting in a large increase in production, cheapening of commodities, and increased aggregate profits.

The demand we, as workmen, now make is for

LEISURE, NOT IDLENESS.

Leisure to think, to learn, to acquire knowledge, to enjoy, to develop; in short, Leisure to Live.

THE DEMAND JUSTIFIED BY ECONOMICS.

Economic ignorance has in times past caused us to believe that our duty lay in the direction of producing much and consuming little; this is a fatal error. Those who consume least are the most ignorant, the most useless, the most animal-like of all. A large consuming capacity on the part of every section of workers is fully justified by sound economics. The agricultural labourer, with 10s. a week, must vegetate like the plants - his low purchasing power does not admit of healthy, hearty social intercourse. At times he yearns for concerts, for theatres, for light-hearted joviality; would be delighted to be well-dressed, and have his wife and children well-dressed; would like even a fortnight's holiday to see some other part of the country than the few fields and farmyard he is familiar with; but, ah! he has no money, and he might as well wish himself lord of the manor as wish to ever gratify these simple and legitimate tastes.

It is quite true that, if he had money enough, and spent it on clothes, and furniture, and books, and concerts, and holiday-making, he would be helping others to get equally good conditions; but the farm labourer of England, poor wretch, is hemmed in, chained to a ten times accursed poverty, and he can neither help himself to good things, nor his fellow workers. We will say nothing of what he may do for the landlord at present.

AN EXAMPLE TO OTHER TRADES.

Much the same is true of the men working in and about the coal mines. Fixed to the miners' village, with an occasional run to the nearest town, the pitman's family gets familiarised to the scenery of the pit bank, engine house, pulleys and frame, the throbbing of the winding engine, and, at night, to the burning of the waste-heap. The miner, like the agricultural labourer, is chained. But the miner is, at last, about to burst the chain asunder; he has learned the value of sectional organisation, and now has actually federated most of these sectional unions into two large federations for the country, with a prospect of, ere long, all men in and about the pits being under one banner. 430,000 men already on their feet, and now demanding an eight hour day. Will they get it? Certainly. But how? There's the rub; and my object in writing this pamphlet is to contribute some little to the discussion of

HOW TO GET THE EIGHT HOUR DAY

rather than to point out its advantages; and being amongst those who have tried to think the question out, I am satisfied that the way to Freedom lies through the eight hour door, feeling assured that a daily or

weekly limit of working hours is possible of application to all employees.

At the Trades Union Congress held at Liverpool last year, a resolution was carried in favour of obtaining an eight hour day by "Parliamentary enactment," the lost amendment declaring, in decided terms, in favour of the eight hour day, but to relegate the question to Parliament " would indefinitely delay this much needed reform." Subsequent events have shown that there is a great waste of energy going on by the "legalists" combating the "voluntary" advocates, and vice versa, in a manner that makes sport for the Philistines rather than enhancing the cause both sections have at heart, and we are now entitled to ask: Is there not

A MIDDLE COURSE

that can be adopted, which will command at once the endorsement and support of both sections?

Briefly stated, the argument of

THE VOLUNTARY MEN,

or those who favour the obtaining of a reduction of working hours by trade union effort only, not supplemented by legislative enactment, is as follows:- Parliament is hostile to labour's interests, is composed of men who do not understand, and have no desire to understand, labour's requirements, and cannot, therefore, effectually legislate for labour; besides, those sections of workers who have obtained reductions of working hours to the limit now asked for, and even below it, have obtained the reduction entirely by voluntary trade effort, which has developed in them a sturdiness of character superior to that of their fellows who clamour for legislative assistance.

THE LEGALISTS

point with scorn to the fact that only a very small section of miners have successfully reduced working hours; that many others have tried to do so by means of their unions, but have in the majority of cases failed; that some two millions only are enrolled in trade unions, out of an adult working population of nine millions; that a trade unionist is still a citizen and has the fullest right to make use of the legislative institution in labour's interests; that to refuse to make use of Parliament, is carrying out a policy calculated to drift into anarchism, and that it is foolish to attempt to make these great changes by negotiations between employers and workers, resulting in strikes and lockouts, when the same end can be achieved more quickly by law.

Such, in effect, are the arguments most commonly used on either side, but of course there are many others of a similar character. These sections are continually combating each other, and thus bitterness and strife are engendered which it were more dignified to avoid. Fortunately, there are those who recognise expediency as the deciding point in this matter, and who, whilst they uphold all that is sturdy, manly, and true, in the arguments of the voluntary men, are fully alive to the desirability, fitness, and economic soundness of voluntary effort being supplemented and clenched by legislative enactment.

That a middle course is required, the following returns of the voting of the members of the Amalgamated Engineers just to hand - April 1891 - will indicate.

The financial reserves of this one union amount, roundly, to a quarter of a million; their numerical strength is 69,064 members, 62,500 of whom are in the United Kingdom; among these the votes have just been taken, with the following results:-

			For	Against
For an eight hour day	...	...	8,149	1,290
For a 48 hour week	...	...	8,007	1,118
By legal enactment	...	...	3,275	4,901
By trade union effort	...	...	6,546	1,251

It will be seen that the total number whose votes are recorded for and against an eight hour day or 48 hour week, is 18,674 out of 62,500 in the United Kingdom, or less than one-third of the actual members; that is due to the fact that only one-third of the members on the average, are present on any one night, but there is no reason to suppose that the proportions would be materially altered if every vote were recorded. Of those recorded 16,256 are favourable either to the eight hour day or 48 hour week, and only 2,408 against these proposals, or a majority in favour of nearly seven to one.

But when we come to the method of how to obtain it, opinions are much more divided, there being two to one in favour of trade union effort as against legal enactment.

Does not this show clearly that, so far as the engineers are typical of the other trades, neither by legal enactment nor by trade union effort are we likely to secure the reduced hours, and therefore a middle course is absolutely necessary?

Five years ago the discussion of this question had scarcely assumed a definite shape. The position taken up by its advocates then, was to declare generally in favour of an Eight Hours Bill for all trades, and this served the purpose of arresting attention, and enabling the eight hour men to demonstrate the fact that eight hours' work as a maximum was possible and desirable.

We have now reached the stage when vague generalities must be replaced by definite particulars, calculated to command the respect and attention of those who are fully conversant with our complex industrial system.

The working hours of most mechanics of this country are nominally fixed at nine a day, though two-thirds of the workers work an average of eleven hours a day, and the remaining third thirteen hours. But this statement needs qualifying by a reminder of the startling and saddening fact that one-thirteenth of the working population is always in enforced idleness, which means that we have now of our adult working population some

700,000 OUT OF WORK,

600,000 of whom are men, three-fifths having families depending upon them. A sufficient cause, indeed, to hasten on the immediate application, wherever possible, of a reduction of normal working hours.

To tabulate

THE VARIOUS METHODS

now before the country for reducing working hours, they are as follows:-

- 1st. Those who demand an Eight Hour Bill to apply to all trades and industries throughout the country, but are willing that a start should be made in all Government establishments, followed up by eight hours for railway men and miners.
- 2nd. Those who demand that it shall be left entirely for the workers to obtain it through their trade unions and labour organisations without any legislative assistance whatsoever.
- 3rd. Those who contend that the demand for an eight hour day, or 48 hours a week, shall be first made by the majority of any trade, who shall have the right to make known to the Secretary of State their desire for working hours being fixed by law, and the Secretary of State to be empowered to give effect to their wishes. This is legislative enactment by trade option.
- 4th. Those that contend that the least objectionable, most practicable, and, therefore, most expeditious method of obtaining reduced hours is, that Parliament shall pass an Act empowering local authorities to administer the same as follows: That when three-fifths of the adult workers in any trade in the district over which the local authority has jurisdiction, request that their working hours be fixed at a maximum of eight hours per shift, or 48 hours in one week, the local authority, being satisfied that the demand is rightly made, shall notify the employers in that district that in three months from the date of the application having been made, the law will be enforced, under a monetary penalty for every person employed contrary to the provisions of the Act.

This is local trade option, the initiative in every case being taken by the workers engaged in the trade or calling, no action being taken by the authorities until requested so to do by three-fifths of the adult workers engaged in the trade.

LOCAL TRADE OPTION

method that commends itself to me, for the following reasons:-

- (a) It is free from the objections lodged against No. 1 - the Bill of universal application which would force the eight hour limit upon those who had not asked for it, and would not make allowance for those trades where the difficulties of applying the limit are very great, and where in the opinion of the majority of workers and employers at

present engaged in these trades, the limit, if applied suddenly, would prove disastrous. That there are such trades is well known; and, although the Universal Bill men may wish to treat them with impunity, that does not settle the matter, nor can it be said to be statesmanship of a very valuable kind, that would ruthlessly and needlessly ride rough-shod over the desires of an important minority of citizens.

- (b) It is free from the objection lodged against No. 2 - the narrow trade union method - as it fully recognizes the wisdom and desirability of supplementing trade union effort by legislation. It upholds, every solid contention that is advanced by the old trade union or voluntary effort section, by insisting that the demand shall be made by the workers themselves in each trade or calling, and that they must show their desire for the limiting of working hours by a three-fifths majority, which throws the educational and organising work on to the shoulders of the trade unionists, who, by the local trade option method, will not be asking the State to do for them that which they might do for themselves; but will simply be working by what they conceive to be the better of several methods open to them.
- (c) It is free from an objection very rightly lodged against No. 3 - trade option (without local) method - which is that if the workers in any trade - say engineering - in London are thoroughly educated up to the eight hour demand, and manifest much interest and keen anxiety to get the same as the result of years of agitation and organisation in their ranks, and if a similar number of men in other parts of the country, say Glasgow, where organisation is less complete, and the desire for shorter hours is less marked, that the London men who have organised and educated themselves, must wait years for the beneficial change, because in other districts there is little or no interest in the subject. This cannot be looked upon with satisfaction, nor is it in accordance with common sense. Trade option coupled with local option carries with it no such disadvantage, but on the other hand, it is in complete accord with the independent spirit exhibited by the more enlightened and sturdy of British workmen, who are alive to the necessity of a Governmental controlling hand, but who also insist upon the fullest possible recognition of local autonomy consistent with harmonious working throughout the country.

This voluntary effort method, supplemented by legislation, should command the support of the vast majority of those who have been advocating the reduction of working hours, either as trade unionists or "legalists," as practically all the voluntary men believe in the State machine, even to the extent of sending their own workmates to manage it - as in the case of the Northumberland and Durham miners, whilst the "legalists," or at least those who have become conspicuous, are members of one or other of the trade organisations.

A PECULIAR FEATURE

in the mental make-up of not a few of the determined "legalists" of to-day is the fact that only three or four years ago they were opponents both of an eight hour working day and of trades unionism. Something more far-reaching than an eight hour day was wanted, and even should the workers, in their ignorance, condescend to accept an eight hour day, it would block the solution of the "social problem." The eight hour men persisted, with the result that its former opponents on advanced lines have proved their capacity to learn by becoming advocates of the same themselves, and a revival took place eventually in the ranks of the trade unions; but the advanced men had already to their satisfaction sealed the doom of unionism. There might be a "flutter," said these critics, but as to trade unions ever being worth a serious thought as a means for solving industrial questions, was not admitted. However, the unions grew, old and new alike, and the one million-and-a-quarter of members of two years ago have increased to the two millions of to-day, and, behold! among them are to be found the cynics of eighteen months ago, and these gentlemen are not only members, but it is to be feared, in some instances, are mischievous members, by encouraging a policy that teaches, in effect, that the unions are valuable only in proportion as they are made vote-controlling institutions.

VALUE OF A TRADE UNION.

Now, there can be no objection to a trade organisation encouraging its members to take a lively interest in municipal and parliamentary questions that affect the cause of labour; on the contrary, it should be an important item in the programme of every union; but the union itself, as an institution, is of the highest value to the State. Those who imagine that unions are simply wage-regulating machines,

and serviceable only as such, make a serious mistake. To hundreds of thousands of workmen in Great Britain they are far and away the most valuable of all institutions for gathering knowledge, for imparting information, for discussions of detail matters in connection with labour that require constant attention, and upon which the very existence of our industrial well-being depends, and it is in this capacity that the unions are eminently capable of rendering valuable assistance, yes, positive guidance to their own members, and outsiders, as to the changes that may with advantages be made in our complex industry system. It is, therefore, pre-eminently a question for them to decide as to how far we may with advantage make changes in curtailing working hours. Of course, care must be taken that the opinions of officials are not taken as the opinions of the members, but we may safely leave members to deal with their officials, as although for a time a reactionary policy may be endorsed by officialdom, contrary to the desire of rank and file, the officials that would be unwise enough to resist progress will be superseded by others more sympathetic with the times.

THE PROPOSED PLAN CLEARLY DEFINED.

To again state that which is proposed as the local trade option method. It is,

- (a) That an act be passed fixing the maximum working hours at eight a day, or eight and a half for five days, and five and a half for the sixth (or made up in such other method as may be agreed upon), but not to exceed 48 hours a week, overtime to be a punishable offence, both for employer and worker, except in cases of special emergency, such as "breakdowns, &c.," or in the case of agricultural labourers, when special provision would be made for harvest-time.
- (b) That the administration of this Act shall be left with the County Council, Town Council, Local Board, or such other local authority as shall be clearly specified by the Act.
- (c) That it shall be left with the adult workers of either sex, engaged in any trade or calling, to obtain the clearly expressed opinion of those engaged in the trade as to whether or not they wish for the Act to be applied to them, and that in the event of three-fifths being in favour of the same, their request be sent to the local authority responsible for the administration of the Act, which, being satisfied that the request is genuine shall immediately notify the employers in the district that the provision of the Act will be put in force at a date of three months from the time application was made to them by the workers.

ADVANTAGES OF THE SCHEME.

The special advantages this method secures are:-

- (a) It affords better opportunity than any of the other methods to each section to make as much or as little use of law as they think desirable.
- (b) It admits of the thorough carrying out of the principle of local autonomy, and leaves those who know most about each trade to be the judges as to when and how the working hours shall be fixed.
- (c) It affords the advantages of legislation to those who appreciate the same, and admits of the industrial change taking place gradually, beginning immediately with those trades where the stated majority is favourable, and thus deprives the opponents of the shorter working day of one of their principal arguments, as to the dislocation brought about by a sudden jump all round.

OBJECTIONS TO THE SCHEME.

In opposition to the trade option method with local application, it is contended that we shall intensify the differences that already exist between different localities rather than remove them by such a scheme, and engineers have asked, "How can we have Leeds and Bradford dealt with under this proposal where the class of trade is the same, when, to reduce working hours at Leeds, and not at Bradford, or vice versa, would certainly create discord of a serious nature?"

This same argument could be used with equal force by every trade that is termed national, and the reply is, that the trade unions in which, at least, important sections of the men are enrolled - and which will, undoubtedly, take the initiative in these matters - would advise the members as to when

and where the application should be made, and as regards the engineers, there would be little difficulty in classifying their trade, and the districts in which it is carried on.

Thus, the Eastern Counties are mainly devoted to the production of agricultural engines and machinery, whilst the Tyne, Wear, Tees, Hartlepoons and Clyde are specially devoted to marine engineering and shipbuilding; Lancashire and Yorkshire are largely at work on cotton and woollen machinery; again, Crewe, Swindon, Doncaster, and other railway centres are engaged on locomotives; Birmingham, Manchester, and Sheffield employ many thousands on tools and war implements; each class of trade is practically complete within itself, and the unit of area as regards the union's efforts should be the entire district, or districts, in which a particular class of trade is carried on.

Thus, with the makers of machinery for farming, it would be necessary to deal with the towns of Lincoln, Ipswich, Grantham, Colchester, Gainsboro', and other places where this trade exists. The union could supervise operations, and make a simultaneous demand in each of these centres.

For the shipbuilding centres the same could be adopted, and thus uniformity of action secured wherever the same class of trade prevailed. So that instead of being more difficult of application, the local option clause would give the necessary elasticity, admitting of adjustments being made far easier than by any other method yet proposed.

It is quite evident that

TRADE CANNOT BE LOCALISED.

and on behalf of the Scotch jute mills it has been contended that we cannot pit town against town; but it has been shown in the example given, by classifying the engineering trade, that we could effectively meet the requirements of that trade. So with the jute mills of Forfarshire, viz., Dundee, Forfar, Arbroath, Kirriemuir, Brechin, and Montrose, simultaneous action could be taken. Already many of these workers are organised, and their unions are gaining in strength every week, and by means of their union the difficulties alluded to could be overcome.

At the Congress last year no men were more opposed to legal enactment than the cotton-spinners and weavers of Lancashire and Yorkshire, one of their contentions being that the competition of India is so keen that they ought to be allowed to decide for themselves when and how they shall obtain reduced hours. The argument is a sound one. Why should they not? Let those trades who are ready for the change set the pace, and the cotton and woollen workers will soon follow on, and all the quicker by having freedom to adopt their own time and method.

The boot and shoe trade could be similarly arranged for by means of the unions. One class of work is carried on at Bristol, another at Northampton, and a mixed trade in London; but the unions are quite capable of classifying the trades and the districts.

The tailoring could be covered in the same way, and so on with every trade throughout the country.

TAKE THE MINERS' CASE.

In Durham and Northumberland the coal hewers and stone-men - about 60 per cent. of those engaged in and about the mines - work seven hours from bank to bank, but the remainder of the workmen and boys work eleven hours, that is the pit begins at six in the morning, and works right on till five at night, and a large proportion of the 40 per cent. of men who commence and finish at these hours, have no break for meals the whole day. Thus it is not true that short hours cover the whole of those at work in the Northumberland and Durham coal-fields. But the decision of the men alluded to, so far as it has been given expression to at Trades Congresses, is decidedly against legislative action. I have mixed with these miners a good deal, and am of opinion that the 40 per cent. who work at least 10½ hours a day would be very glad indeed to have their hours reduced by legislation or otherwise, and this belief exists with the members of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, whose working hours vary from eight to eleven a day. This federation is distinctly favourable to legislative action, but so far it has been unable to obtain it. An Act is asked for forbidding more than eight hours' work from bank to bank, and this is opposed by the workmen M. P. 's of Durham and Northumberland, as well as by the mine owners and other capitalists. Would it not be well for the members to favour the local option method, and thus secure at once the co-operation of Durham and Northumberland, who would undoubtedly vote with the Federation men to get legislation for themselves, providing it did not cover the Northumberland and Durham men, who do not want it? How was the last 10 per

cent. advance obtained by this great Federation? By the Bristol Miners' Association as part of the Federation, and representing fourteen collieries in Gloucester and Somerset, deciding in favour of five per cent. down and the other five in three months. That forced the pace, and right from Monmouthshire to Yorkshire the advance was conceded in a week; the employers being forced to give it because one locality led the way. If we had local option in the matter of fixing hours legislatively, it is very probable that similar results would follow and if Durham and Northumberland really prefer to have nothing to do with legislation in this matter of working hours, let them have their way. Should those who now have the shorter working day be unable to retain it without legislative enactment, they may be relied upon to change their opinions rather than their hours of work, and it is a pity to find men like Mr. Pickard, on the one side, and Mr. Burt, on the other, continually endeavouring to convert each other when by different tactics both might have their way, and thus have energy to devote to other purposes. Nothing can please the enemies of labour better than to find labour leaders opposed to each other, and it behoves us all to adopt that course best calculated to leave the fullest freedom for all to enjoy their own opinion, when this can be done consistently with labour's interests receiving due attention.

THE DOCK AND RIVERSIDE WORKERS.

In connection with the various ports of Great Britain and Ireland, we have some 200,000 men employed about 70,000 of whom are engaged in the Port of London. There is probably no other class of men in the country whose occupation is so precarious. A small proportion have, of course, regular employment at regular wages, but, as a class, the stevedores, coal porters, riggers, dockers and lightermen, are subject to more disappointments than any other body of workers in the country. Many thousands who have followed up dock work all their lives never know what they will be able to earn during the week. A man will set out for work on a Monday morning, and after spending four or five hours holding himself ready for work, learns there is none that day; this is oftentimes repeated the whole week through, and in slack times it runs on for months, when there is not a stroke to be obtained; and yet while this is going on, in the same port, hundreds of men will be working overtime, commonly making 80 or more hours a week, and the men who have been hanging on, when they get a start, are frequently called upon to work most excessive hours for a short time, and being hard up they always try to do it. We want a maximum fixing, beyond which no man shall be allowed to work, both in his own interest and that of his fellows. It is a shameful thing that in London there should be, as there always is, men at the docks and wharves working 60 to 80 hours a week, and others not working at all. It would be difficult to fix a daily limit at such work, but it would not be difficult to fix a weekly limit, and if we had an Act of Parliament which could be applied by the local authorities, we could very soon do much towards steadying the employment of thousands of men whose lives are now half wasted by lack of system that prevails in this matter of working hours.

Confining our attention to London, it might be added that, in addition to the regulation of hours by fixing a weekly maximum, it is in the highest degree necessary that the trade of this, the first port in the world, should not be left to the tender mercies of competing dock companies and wharf proprietors, with conflicting interests, operating disastrously to the labourers by the want of anything approaching uniformity. But it is high time the London County Council seriously considered the practicability of taking entire control of the dock and wharves, and conducting the trade of the same interests of the community, and employing workers, as far as possible, on a uniform plan, respecting their employees as citizens of no mean city, regulating the number of men to meet the exigencies of season trades, with as little hardship to the labourer as possible, instead of the present plan of dispensing immediately with the services of every man possible one month, and going bull-rush at it the next.

THE PORT OF LONDON FOR THE PEOPLE OF LONDON

must be pressed on by every workman who realises how much might be done to steady the labourers occupation, if the port were controlled by one competent authority instead of by 150 authorities, as at present.

To again refer to the Trades Congress of last year, held at Liverpool, it was regretted by many that such unanimity should prevail as regards the desirability of an eight hour day, or 48 hours a week, and that such strong differences of opinion should exist respecting the method to be adopted to bring this about.

This year's Congress is to be held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a city where the workers are well organised, and in the heart of the district where the "voluntary effort" men and "legislative enactment

advocates" alike are very earnest and decided in defending their respective views.

Are we again to witness similar division to that of last year? It will be a shame and a disgrace to us all if this is allowed. In order to test the feeling of a number of trade unionists, the following was submitted to and accepted by them, as a resolution containing the idea I have tried to convey, and I simply give it here so that members of trade societies may raise the question in their branches, and thus bring the subject before their members:

"That this Congress is of opinion that the most expeditious and practical method of securing an eight hour working day, or 48 hour week, is by trade union initiative supplemented by legislative enactment, locally applied, whenever and wherever three-fifths of the adult workers in any trade or calling desire the same, and we hereby instruct the Parliamentary Committee to frame and introduce a Bill on trade option lines (for local administration) at their earliest opportunity, and we call upon all trade unionists and friends of labour to press the same forward by every means in their power."

This might secure unanimity of action, which would very soon result in our securing the passing of the Bill. It is argued by some that it would be as difficult to get such a Bill passed as to get a universal eight hours Bill for immediate application. This I do not believe for two reasons: first, because the local option method admits of a gradual change to suit the requirements of the localities, which would thereby remove much opposition now shown to a universal Bill; and second, because by forcing it on more, we should get the support instead of the opposition of those who object to legislation in their own trade, but who respect the wishes of those engaged in other trades differently circumstanced.

But I advocate this method for one other important reason, and that is, that local autonomy in these matters is right in principle, and beneficial in practice, whereas to encourage the notion that Parliament is an all-wise institution, and capable of dealing with the details of our complex industrial system is wrong in principle, and bad in practice; but we need not necessarily run to the other extreme, and refuse to make use of Parliament for those purposes that it can serve as no other institution can, by its power to ratify, enforce, and, where necessary, to unify the expressed desire of the majority.

THE LAND QUESTION

According to the official statistics, we import food stuffs into this country to the value of £140,000,000 a year, and it appears to be generally thought that the land of this country is incapable of supplying us with these food stuffs. We have heard so much about farmers being unable to cultivate at a profit that many have become impressed with the notion that it is really all over with this country from a food-producing standpoint.

And yet, upon investigation, one finds that one-fourth of the land of the United Kingdom is lying idle, producing nothing, while on those portions properly cultivated as a large a crop can be obtained as from any land in the world.

The system of large farms in this country has proved a failure. Rent is a first charge upon the landlord's rent, or the crops would be the landlord's. In bad years, this pressure of landlordism upon the farmers has been so severe that, in order to have the cash for the rent, they have been compelled to retrench somewhere, and, although to discharge the men was certain to ruin the farmer ultimately, they have, year by year, discharged the farm labourers, until the land is now absolutely labour starved; four men only are employed where at least six are required if good results are to be obtained. Three quarters of wheat per acre only are produced on land which, with proper cultivation, will yield six to seven quarters. The labourers being thus discharged, have been compelled to leave the villages and make for the towns, and in this way at least

200,000 FARM LABOURERS

have been driven from the villages, by this process of retrenchment on the part of the farmers to meet the £60,000,000 a year demanded from them by the landlords.

Many have thought that it is because machinery has been introduced on the land that these farm labourers have made to the towns; that is a minor cause. Machinery is not largely used on land in this country. The difficulty has been brought about by the private ownership of land, and the owners pressing the cultivators for rent; driving them into a corner, from which they have been, in many cases, unable to extricate themselves.

In consequence, it is now difficult to let large farms, and a return will certainly be made to the small

farm system again. But more important still is the fact that the labourer is now claiming the right to cultivate land on his own account. He sees that if he can get an acre or acre-and-a-half he can easily cultivate this in his broken time, and that it will be worth 4s. 6d. or 5s. a week to him each acre he cultivates. But his difficulty is to get it. To be of service it must be within a mile of his cottage, as otherwise he cannot reach it to put in his odd time. It must also be obtainable at a fair rent - by fair here is meant fair when compared with that the farmers pay for land of a similar quality. Instances can be given where the farmers pay 30s. per acre, and for exactly the same quality the labourer is charged 80s. per acre.

THE ALLOTMENTS ACT

of 1887 is an incomplete and unworkable affair, nevertheless it is the recognition of a vital principle, viz., that under it the labourers have the right to make application to the rural sanitary authority for any piece of land that may suit their purpose for allotments, and the Act empowers the rural sanitary authority to purchase this land and let the same to the labourers. We have here the municipalisation of the land actually in process. Unfortunately, landowners often refuse to let, and litigation ensues, and the cost of the land is run excessively high by the legal costs and by an additional 10 per cent, above value, which the Act empowers the owner to charge, so that so far very few allotments have been obtained under the Act, but it has caused many farmers and owners to come to terms by a mutual arrangement with the labourers, and many hundreds of allotments are now being cultivated by labourers in their odd and broken time.

And here comes the value of the eight hours to these farm-labourers. There is no reason why the proposed 48 hours a week should not apply to them. They work now about 11 hours a day (Saturday included); but if they organize as they are now doing, they will, with the aid of their fellow trade unionists in the towns, be able to obtain the Saturday half-holiday and a weekly maximum of 48 hours. The daily limit could not rigidly be applied, and the necessary elasticity would have to be arranged for to provide for harvesting, but this is only some five or six weeks in the year.

When, by means of trade unionism, they are able to make a firm stand, and demand, through the proper channels, the establishing of parish councils - which will simply be an extension of the Local Government Act - and obtain the reduced working hours, then they will be able, by means of their parish council, to obtain what land is necessary, conveniently situated, on fair terms, for allotments, and they will be able to supply the towns with the necessary food stuffs, including fruit, eggs, and dairy produce; they will be able to live in comparative comfort themselves, as they will no longer be wholly dependent upon farmer or squire.

A few years' successful cultivation of an allotment will enable a man to go in for small holding of from ten to thirty acres upon which he will be well able to keep his family, and of course give up working for the farmer, and thus again will England become a food-producing country of the first order, and the countrymen supplying the food requirements of the towns will, in turn, make large demands for clothing and furniture, &c., for themselves. There are in the United Kingdom at least 15,000,000 acres of uncultivated land, all capable of profitable cultivation, according to the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Agriculture; this must be brought under cultivation, and the land now labour starved be properly worked, and by these means employment will be found in abundance for a peasantry four times as numerous as that we now have, and the people of the British Isles will be able to obtain butter without fetching it from Denmark. Whilst I lay especial stress upon the reduction of working hours as set forth in this pamphlet, I would guard readers against supposing that reduced working hours alone will rid our towns of poverty, and, therefore, we must go deeper still. The land question, as it affects both town and country, intimately affects our every day life, and must receive adequate attention. Till this is done the labour problem can never be solved, and our brightest hopes now are raised by the fact that at last townsmen and countrymen are beginning to see that their interests are identical, that they must work together for a common object, that villagers can help townsmen and vice versa, and that if we refuse to be pitted against each other, as we have been in the past, that then there are grounds for believing the day of our deliverance from poverty is at hand, and that peace and plenty will yet be ours.

In conclusion, I would urge upon all, but especially upon trade unionists, to be sensibly jealous of wasting their energy - the work of life is difficult enough without our combating each other. Let us not forget that ours is the cause of BROTHERHOOD, and that our actions must fit with our phrases.

We are striving to realise the ideal that Thomas Carlyle yearned for, that John Ruskin has preached and worked for, and which the poet Burns bids us pray for:-

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a'that,
That sense and worth o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree and a' that.

For a' that and a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a'that.

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