

CHAPTER VIII  
DISEMPLOYMENT

*"Why stand ye here all the day idle? . . . Go ye also into the vineyard."*—ST. MATTHEW, XX, 6, 7.

*"Unemployment is more than a misfortune for those who are overtaken by it; it is a curse. . . . [It] is both an affront and a corrosive poison to his personality. And for the infliction of that insult and injury we are all guilty so far as we acquiesce in an ordering of life which has this consequence."*—THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, *The Church and the Workless*.

UNEMPLOYMENT, in varying degrees of severity, was a usual experience in the years before the Great War. Since the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles, the social plague of involuntary unemployment has raged with unprecedented violence. Most politicians now seem to regard it as an incurable social disease. Insurances, "doles," "bread lines," soup kitchens, public assistance (a new name for poor law relief) may and do somewhat mitigate the sufferings of the workless and their dependants; they at least save them from absolute starvation; but they are not a cure for unemployment, and, by alleviating some of its effects, they serve to distract attention from its cause. Tariffs, once belauded as a sure means of finding "work for all," have, as has already been shown, merely aggravated the trouble. Social centres for recreation may help to keep the out-of-work folk from brooding too much on their plight, and training in reconditioning centres (described by one of the Ministry as "concentration camps") provide some of them with useful distraction, and prevent them from becoming unemployable; but these efforts promise no solution of the problem of getting millions of unemployed back to work again. A suggestion, recently revived, that women should be excluded from the labour market in order to give the men a better chance of finding work would merely send a large number of women to join the queues at the Labour Exchanges, and would

scarcely affect the total number of unemployed.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the presence among us of millions of citizens whose resources have been reduced to a mere pittance, means such a reduction in the effective demand for staple commodities, as, coupled with the heavy fiscal burdens on industry entailed by a virtually bankrupt Insurance scheme, and by the Tariffs, threatens the continuance, if not even the increase, of unemployment in the manufacturing and distributing trades. The evil effects of continued unemployment in breaking down the morale of the workless, and in sapping the vitality of their underfed wives and children, cannot be reduced to statistics. The Committee against Malnutrition states that the death-rate from tuberculosis in Merthyr Tydfil has increased by 40 per cent in three years.

So, to the "gloomy Dean," late of St. Paul's, it seems almost certain that we shall be unable to find food or work for our present population!<sup>2</sup> If this Malthusian dignitary can spare time from his study of Plotinus to read a 17th century pioneer of political economy, he may become less pessimistic about the future of a country of which at present he seems to despair. "There need be no beggars in countries where

<sup>1</sup> The figures issued periodically by the Government do not tell the whole truth about the extent of unemployment. To the number of *registered* unemployed must be added a large number of those whose claim to benefit has expired, and who, with their savings and the resources of the pawnshop long ago exhausted, now swell the statistics of poor law relief; whole classes, such as agricultural labourers, domestic servants, share fishermen, children (estimated at 200,000 or so) who have left school but are still under 18 years of age, and the "black-coated workers" (estimated roughly by Lord Elton in the *News Chronicle* at 300,000) do not come within the Insurance scheme. It has been officially stated (House of Commons, April 9th, 1934) that the total number of working days lost by the *registered* unemployed in 1933 was 760,000,000. The total number of unemployed in this country is probably not far short of the population of Denmark. A terrible picture of the results of long continued unemployment in the County of Durham is shown in an illustrated pamphlet, *Places Without a Future*, reprinted from the *Times* of March 20th, 21st, 22nd, 1934. Conditions in the South Wales coalfields are at least as bad. See also ANDREW MACLAREN, *The Truth about the Depressed Areas* (English League for the Taxation of Land Values, March, 1935.)

<sup>2</sup> DEAN INGE, *England*; new edition, January, 1934. On the Malthusian theory, see HENRY GEORGE, *Progress and Poverty*, Book II.

there are so many acres of unimproved improvable land."<sup>1</sup>

The failure of modern governments and political parties to deal effectively with the problem of unemployment is due to the fact that they doctor the symptoms of the social disease, instead of seeking and extirpating its root. Some of their remedies actually make things worse.

One supposed "remedy" for unemployment, which finds enthusiastic advocates in all the political parties, and in the United States and France as well as in Britain, calls for examination. On the surface, it is very attractive. Let us take in hand great and useful public works, they say, and so find work for the unemployed. New roads, new bridges, new town halls, new "Lidos," and so forth!

A new Thames bridge was proposed at Charing Cross, London. It was to cost £16,865,000. Mr Andrew MacLaren, M.P. for Burslem, on a Select Committee of the House of Commons, elicited the fact that no less than £11,122,000 of the estimated cost was to go in purchase of land, easements and permanent rights. If the scheme had been carried out, only a little more than one-third of the total cost would have to cover the provision of labour and materials. Nearly £17,000,000 would have been added to tax and rate burdens, and the one certain result would be that the holders of land, in the neighbourhood of the bridge and its approaches, would receive a huge "unearned increment."<sup>2</sup> Under another scheme, for the improvement of the congested traffic centre at the "Elephant and Castle," South London, the local landlords were to get £1,458,000, in order that £512,000 might be spent on works, including work for the unemployed.<sup>3</sup>

"During the past 12 years the Middlesex County Council has spent £5,000,000 on buying land and making arterial roads, and increased the value of adjoining land by not less than £15,000,000, enabling owners to charge the very

<sup>1</sup> SIR WILLIAM PETTY: quoted by W. R. LESTER, M.A., in *Unemployment and the Land*, p. 12. The "beggars" of his time were mostly unemployed folk tramping in search of work, whose poverty was treated as a crime to be visited by severe punishment.

<sup>2</sup> *Land & Liberty*, July, 1930, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* January, 1931, p. 2, quoting Mr Herbert Morrison, M.P., Minister of Transport.

people who made these millions for using their own creation."<sup>1</sup>

A Liberal M.P. estimated that of the £10,000,000 recently spent on public works in Wales, half had gone to the landlords.<sup>2</sup> The Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Liverpool City Council reported on 36 schemes for the relief of unemployment in that City, estimated to cost £1,312,551 and to employ 162 men. "It would appear that it is costing Liverpool more than £8,000 to place one man in [temporary] employment. This, of course, does not account for the indirect employment these works provide."<sup>3</sup> Mr Hannen Swaffer is enthusiastic about the progress of Blackpool under the "Municipal Socialism" which has supplied the town with a promenade over six miles in length, at a cost of £1,500,000, with a municipal aerodrome, a great park, a large rose garden, golf links, bowling greens, and tennis courts, as additions to its attractions for holiday visitors. But he also tells us that "land bought in 1924 at £40 an acre is now worth £200," and that "a building plot near the park now costs £600."<sup>4</sup> A recent official circular states that "there is a large reserve of labour available," *i.e.*, a large number of unemployed.

Clearly, expenditure upon public works affords no permanent solution for unemployment. At a cost out of all proportion to the results, it provides temporary work in some trades for a limited number of unemployed, with the inevitable result of an increase of rent, rates and taxes, which creates new unemployment in other trades.

We are in search of some method of placing every citizen, who is willing to work for his living, within reach of employment at useful, productive work, such as a self-respecting man may do, feeling that he is not only earning his livelihood, but is also doing something to add to the common wealth. Under modern conditions, there is a bewildering

<sup>1</sup> H. G. CHANCELLOR, "The Only Way Out of Unemployment" (1934), p. 8. See also Councillor BOGGON'S Speech at Middlesex C.C., reported in *Land & Liberty*, January, 1930, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> HANNEN SWAFFER, in the *Daily Herald*, August 11th, 1933. Mr Swaffer added that the logical remedy, of course, is land reform on the Henry George pattern.

<sup>3</sup> GEOFFREY MURRAY in the *Times*, April 4th, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Herald*, June 9th, 1934.

variety of possible jobs, the names of many of which are known only in certain trades or localities, or to the students of technical dictionaries. But they all fall under three main headings.

(1) The first, and economically the most important, are the *primary* or *extractive industries*. The cultivator of land produces (draws forth, extracts) from land many kinds of food for man and beast (cereals, grasses, roots, tubers, pulses, vegetables, sugar cane or beet, fruits, nuts, etc.) or grows rice, cotton or flax, or taps tropical trees for rubber, or breeds and feeds stock for the production of meat, milk, butter, cheese, eggs, hides, horn, wool, hair, bristles, feathers, etc. From land the miner extracts coal, peat, iron ore, copper, lead, spelter and other useful metals, building stone, brick-clay, chalk, flint, gravel, sand, fire-clay, china-clay, salt, potash and other chemicals, mineral oils, etc. The hunter traps wild animals for their flesh, furs, feathers, ivory and so on. The fishermen, from land covered with water, draws forth fish for food, and incidentally provides seal-skin, whale oil, spermaceti, medicinal oil from the livers of cod or halibut, whale-bone. Upon the land, the lumberman cuts down timber for the use of the builder, cabinet maker, miner (pit props, etc.), paper-maker, charcoal burner, and many other tradesmen. It is clear at a glance that the raw materials of our foods, clothes, houses, furnishings, books, newspapers all come from land, and that the raw materials for all our manufacturing industries come from the same source.

(2) So the *secondary* or *manufacturing industries* depend for their raw material upon the primary industries, which, in their turn, depend absolutely on access to land, *e.g.*, the farmer supplies the raw material (wheat) upon which the miller, the baker, the manufacturers of a great variety of prepared cereal foods exert their labour. The miner supplies the coal and iron-ore which are the raw material of a large number of industries which may work them up into anything from steel girders or big guns to watch-springs or needles. The building, furnishing and clothing trades are equally dependent upon land products for the materials they work up.

(3) Dependent upon and co-operating with the other two classes of workers are the *distributive* or *carrying industries*, viz., transport and "shopkeeping," wholesale and retail. They provide for the carrying of the raw material from the farm or mine to the factory or mill, from the factory to the shop, from the shop to the consumer. The carter who takes the grist to the mill, the railway servant or motor-man who carries the sacks of flour from the mill to the baker, the man or boy who delivers the bread to the customer are all dependent upon labour that has previously been applied to land.

The "black-coated" workers, no less than the manual labourers, owe their employment to the activities of the primary land-users. If, for instance, building materials are scarce and dear, the architect and the quantity-surveyor and many other black-coated workers, as well as the bricklayer and the carpenter, are likely to find times bad. When ships are carrying full cargoes of the products of industry, the officers and the sailors of the ships and the labourers at the docks find employment good, and the clerks who make out the charter-parties and bills of lading are busy also.

Moreover, the secondary and distributive industries themselves require direct access to land for the sites of their factories, mills, warehouses, offices, railways, goods yards, engine sheds, receiving offices, garages, canals, harbours, docks, and what not.

If the landlords of a country could refuse to industry all access to land, all industry would come to a standstill. Even if such access is partly denied, terrible consequences may and do follow. So long as landholders are free from taxation while they hold land idle; so long as every good use of land for productive or distributive purposes involves the imposing of new burdens of rating and taxation upon the users and their products, so long will these consequences inevitably follow.

Let us consider in detail an actual instance.

In 1926, about a million miners were shut out from their normal employment of extracting from the bowels of the earth the coal, upon which our domestic comfort so much depends, and the iron-ore which, with the coal, is the life-blood of a multitude of industries. Their work was to win

the coal in places where they often had to crawl on hands and knees to their work, to spend seven hours in stifling heat and dirt and semi-darkness, in danger of life and limb all the time, liable to special industrial diseases, such as *silicosis* and *nystagmus*. A full week's work in the Staffordshire district brought 45s. in wages, subject to deductions (for explosives, tools, etc.) often amounting to a quarter of the full wage; but very few of them got more than five days' work a week; many only four; and many colliers with families had less than 30s. a week to live on. Most of them were in debt.<sup>1</sup> The sympathy of their fellow-countrymen with them in their struggle against the worsening of conditions, already too grievous to be borne, by an increase of hours and a decrease of pay, was all but universal.

The spectacle of a million unemployed men in the mining villages was tragic enough in itself. But it was only the opening scene in a far greater tragedy of unemployment, which unfolded itself day by day as the direct and indirect consequences of the mining stoppage made themselves manifest.

As might be expected, the effect upon the manufacturing industries, which depend upon large supplies of coal, or of coal and iron, was rapid and disastrous. Blast-furnaces, iron-foundries, coke-ovens, rolling-mills, engineering works, boiler-makers, shipbuilding yards, tin-plate, hardware, cutlery and other metal works, brickmaking and cement industries, cotton and hosiery mills, etc., etc., closed down or were at best worked on short time. In the face of an enormous demand for rubber, the workers in the industry were reduced to half-time. Gas and electricity supplies were threatened. Coal for domestic use was drastically rationed, and the public was warned to be careful in the use of gas and electric light. The transport industries necessarily suffered also. Coal was no longer available for export to other countries, in exchange for their products. The shipping industry suffered, as well as the industries specially engaged in the manufacture of goods for export. Train services, both for passengers and goods, had to be cut down, and railway

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Rev. JAMES V. WILSON, Sneyd Vicarage, Burslem, in *Church Times*, June 11th, 1926.

workers could only be guaranteed half a week's work each. On the 26th day of the stoppage, the *Times* correspondent in the Northumbrian coal-field wrote :—

The gradual exhaustion of the home supplies of coal is having a paralyzing effect on other branches of industry. The Tyne is practically deserted by shipping, with the result that teamers, trimmers, staith-men,<sup>1</sup> tugmen, pilots, quayside labourers, stevedores and a hundred-and-one varieties of odd job men have joined the ranks of the unemployed.

Building operations were held up, because of the difficulties of manufacturing and transporting the heavy materials which they require.

In these, and in many other ways, the spending power of the enormous number of workers within and outside the mining industry, and consequently the demand for the common necessities of life, was greatly reduced. Shopkeepers, who could not sell to their impoverished customers, could not buy from wholesalers and manufacturers, and there was less work for those who normally supplied their stocks, and less work for those whose business it was to make, warehouse, pack and distribute the goods. For instance, it was announced that the boot trade at Northampton was receiving few orders, and that the Shoe Operatives' Union was paying out double the amount of unemployment benefit that had been paid in the corresponding period of the previous year. A Co-operative Society in the Midlands, which had a large proportion of railwaymen among its members, reported a falling-off of £750 in its weekly sales. A watch-repairing firm in Clerkenwell, which drew most of its work from Northumberland and Durham, was practically out of work soon after the pits closed down. The miners, being unemployed through a trade dispute, were not entitled to claim the dole, but some of the effects of the stoppage on other trades were promptly seen in the addition of thousands of men to the live registers at the Labour Exchanges. Meanwhile, many of the miners, unable to live on their scanty dispute-pay, were obliged to appeal for Poor Law relief, and new burdens were cast upon the taxpayer and ratepayer by the multifarious troubles

<sup>1</sup> Staith : a provincial term for a wharf or landing-stage, especially a staging laid with rails from which coal wagons may discharge their loads into vessels.



arising directly and indirectly out of the closing of the pits.

Most people regarded this tragedy as due to a trade dispute between employers and employed, mainly important because it occurred in a "Key" industry and on a large scale. Whatever else it was, it was a dramatic illustration of the economics of unemployment, the moral of which is so clear that it is difficult to understand how anyone could fail to see it. The trouble which, in one way or another, affected the well-being of every member of the community, had its roots in the Land Question. Labour had been denied access, on terms which it was possible to accept, to certain areas of land in which natural deposits of coal, ironstone and limestone were lying, ready for man's use, and the inevitable consequence was DISemployment, partial or complete, not only in the coalfields, but also in the many industries which depend on supplies of coal and iron and in a large number of subsidiary and related industries.<sup>1</sup>

The trouble was discussed in a wordy warfare between the Miners' Federation and the Federation of Mine Owners, in terms of wages and hours and conditions of labour, complicated with questions of "reorganization of the industry," "uneconomic mines," government subsidies, and the like. The one question that was fundamental to the understanding, and therefore to the settlement, of an urgent national problem was discussed least of all.

Some of the land in Britain belongs to the State or to Municipalities; but by far the greater part of it is held by private persons or associations. In effect, the person who "owns" land, owns everything on it or under it "up to heaven *et usque ad inferos*." Most of the coal, iron-ore and other minerals is, therefore, under private "ownership" and control. It can only be worked by the "owner" of the land, or with his permission and on his terms. He certainly did not put the coal where it is; it merely happens to be under "his" land. He frequently, or indeed usually,

<sup>1</sup> The Miners' Federation estimate the cost of the 1926 stoppage to the country at £303,000,000, without taking into account many of the facts recorded above.—*The Position of the Coal Mines; The Facts* (1933), p. 25.

does not even know that it is there till some geologist tells him. It is then open to him either to mine the coal himself, which he sometimes does; or to lease or sell the land to a Mining Company (who then become the "coal owners" or "mine owners"), which is much more usual; or to let the coal lie where it is. In a country which depends so much on an abundant supply of cheap coal, it is of the highest social importance whether he does one or other of these things.

Suppose that he grants a mining lease. The lessee will require the use of a fairly large area of surface land for buildings, machinery, storage and spoil heaps, and for other purposes, probably including sites for miners' cottages. It may be, as we have all seen in the case of the recent development of the Kentish coal-field, agricultural land; but, as soon as it is needed for mining purposes, it is charged with a rent which is by no means agricultural. The lessee must sink a shaft in order to get down to the coal; the landlord exacts a rent for the shaft ("dead rent"). The lessee usually has to covenant to make good or to compensate for any surface damage<sup>1</sup> due to the working of the coal.

When, after a heavy expenditure of money and labour, the coal is reached, the lessee must pay a "royalty" of so much a ton on all the coal that is brought to the surface. It is usually necessary, in order to get the coal to the nearest railway or port, to carry it across land belonging to more than one landlord. For this accommodation "way-leave" must be paid.<sup>2</sup> As Nature, in turning prehistoric forests

<sup>1</sup> How serious such damage can be is shown by the investigations of the subsidences in the Quarry Bank district (Staffs) carried out by the English League (*Red Van Report*, 1897) in Lord Dudley's coal field.

<sup>2</sup> It was stated, some years ago, that Lord Tredegar, besides receiving £74,000 in royalties, was drawing £17,000 a year in way-leaves for the coal carried over the mile of railway which crosses his park ("Lord Tredegar's Golden Mile"). On April 16th, 1934, before the Railway and Canal Commission, the owners of the Chopwell and Garsfield Collieries (the Consett Iron Company), employing thousands of men, applied for and obtained relief from what Justice McKinnon called the "arbitrary price" imposed by their lease for a way-leave for their coal railway over certain land which they had to cross in order to get their coal to the Tyne shipping-places and to the L. & N.E. Railway. See also the

into coal-beds, took no account of the coming of landlordism, these strata often lie under more than one estate. This either gives occasion for more rent and royalties and wayleaves, and perhaps air-leaves and water-leaves, or it results in the mining company being compelled to leave unworked large quantities of valuable coal, within reach of its pits and workings and machinery.<sup>1</sup>

The miner's chance of getting any work at all therefore depends, in the first instance, upon the will or whim of the "owner" of the surface, and is subject to his exactions, in return for which the landlord renders no service, except the negative one of not refusing access to Nature's mineral gifts to those who are willing to expend money and labour in making them available for the use of man. The landlord's "fixed" or "dead" rent goes on, even when the mine is not working at a profit, or not working at all. He risks neither money nor comfort nor limb nor life, while the exploiter of the mine has to find the large capital required for the sinking of the shaft and the provision of the plant, to take his risk of making a profit, and to make himself responsible for any damage done to the surface due to his workings; and the miner has to give his strenuous labour at the coal-face, under conditions of extreme discomfort and danger to health and life. The Miners' Federation states<sup>2</sup>

references in the *Reports on the Depressed Areas* (November, 1934) to the burden of royalties on the mining industry, quoted in *Land & Liberty*, December, 1934.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Redmayne, H.M. Chief Inspector of Mines, in his evidence before the Coal Industry Commission, 1919, made some remarkable statements as to the ways in which landlords thus insist on the wasting of our coal resources, even when coal-fields are being worked. On this ground, Lord Gainsford, President of the Coal Industry Society, has suggested the nationalization of royalties. Captain Euan Wallace, a Conservative M.P. and member of the Government, emphasizes the serious difficulties caused in the Durham coal-field by "the multiplicity of ownership of royalties and the lack of real community of interests between the owners of royalties and the lessees of the mining rights," which stand in the way of mining valuable coal, now submerged or threatened with submergence, in "one of the worst areas as regards unemployment" (*Report on Depressed Areas*). Some interesting facts about royalties are given in *Land & Liberty*, May, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *The Position of the Miner; The Facts* (February, 1933), p. 23.

that, in the five years ending December, 1931, 5,065 persons were killed in the industry and 818,890 were injured ; and that, in 1932, one in every five persons employed underground was injured.

The only hope for the solution of the difficulties of this primary industry lies in concentrating attention on the exactions of the land monopolist. To attempt to "reorganize the industry" on its present basis would be to court failure; we cannot rebuild an edifice on such a bad foundation. The suggestion made by more than one Royal Commission that the royalty owners should be bought out at the cost of public funds is monstrously unjust, for it would be difficult to find any incident of landlordism less capable of defence than this imposition of a private tax on a prime necessary of national life which is so obviously a gift of Nature to the human race. Yet the Royal Commission sees that the "private ownership of this great natural resource is open to great objection" and that "it would have been very fortunate for the country if, three and a half centuries ago, when the judges decided that the minerals, other than gold and silver, belonged to the surface owner, the legislature had reversed that decision, and reserved the coal to the State."

The very serious troubles in the coal fields, which have been brought about by this legal decision, may have been one of the reasons why the "National Government," on April 19th, 1934, carried, in the House of Lords, the second reading of their *Petroleum (Production) Bill, 1934*, "to vest in the Crown the property in petroleum and natural gas within Great Britain," and for other related purposes. Ironically enough, the task of introducing it was entrusted to Lord Londonderry, "owner" of 5,808 acres of coal lands in the distressful County of Durham, and a stout defender of his coal-land monopoly which yielded him in royalties, during 1913-18, an average income of £14,684. It is evident in his lordship's speech that he and the Government, for which he was speaking, were introducing the Bill very reluctantly. But, he said,

"he had come to the very definite conclusion that, in this connection, [the rights of property] which might be said to exist over royalties, must give way to the interests of the country in securing

and ensuring the exploitation of a commodity on which so much of the national well-being depended, from the commercial standpoint as well as from the point of view of national defence." [N.B.—Lord Londonderry was Minister of State for Air.]

Apparently uneasy at the thought that this argument applied equally to coal, he added that the Bill—

"would prevent a development of an additional vested interest, such as those which had been *quite properly* (!) developed in connection with the coal and other mineral industries."

The rejection of the Bill was moved by Lord Dynevor (8,720 acres of coal land, from which his royalties, in 1916-18, averaged £9,321 a year). The Bill received the Royal Assent on July 12th, 1934.<sup>1</sup>

The mining royalties are a private levy on coal production. It is pertinent to ask by what distortion of our language a word which means "a right or prerogative of the sovereign" has come to mean "a share of profits paid to a landowner for the right to work a mine" (Cassell's *New English Dictionary*). The talk about "nationalizing" this private tax almost invariably implies the buying-out of the landlord's "rights" at the cost of the taxpayers, and this proposal is open to all the objections that have been urged against what is called "Land Nationalization." If royalties are still to be paid, they should be paid to the Sovereign, *i.e.*, to the State, as a recompense for the abstraction for private use of part of the mineral wealth of the nation. But, far better, they should be abolished, and substituted by a tax on the "ownership" of our mineral resources. Some of the Miners' greatest leaders—Frank Hodges, Herbert Smith and the late Robert Smillie—have protested against the payment of any compensation when the Nation resumes its just rights in the natural resources of its coalbeds.<sup>2</sup>

The ownership and exploitation of coal and iron ore, and indeed of all minerals, are a matter of universal interest. Mention has already been made of many groups of

<sup>1</sup> Three licences to bore for petroleum (two in Sussex and one in Derbyshire) had already been granted under the *Petroleum Production Act, 1918*; and these are exempted from the operation of the new Act.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, 1919. See *Land & Liberty*, June, 1919, and May, 1934, p. 59

industries to which coal is essential. The list might easily be extended. Coal, electricity (generated by use of coal), gas and oils (which can be distilled from coal) are the motive power of our railways, tramways, shipping and machinery. Dear coal means higher fares for passengers and goods. The process of distilling gas from coal, for lighting, heating, cooking and power, yields coke, and certain other by-products, formerly regarded as waste. One of them is coal-tar. It is used in the raw state for many purposes, *e.g.*, road-making; and it yields, under chemical treatment, dyes, drugs, disinfectants, naphthaline, creosote, ammonia, bakelite, fertilisers, saccharine, explosives (including the deadly T.N.T.) and a multitude of other chemical products, thus connecting the work of the miner, through the chemical laboratory, with the dyeing and textile trades, the sanitary services and the hospitals, agriculture, the War Office, etc., etc. New methods of distillation, now being tried out, promise to give us, as coal products, fuel oil (heavy and light), lubricating oil, motor spirit, smokeless fuel to cure the fog nuisance, and so on. Pulverized coal, with or without an admixture of oil, is already, in some cases, taking the place of oil, as a cheaper fuel for getting up steam. Given a fair chance, those who procure and handle coal might well emulate the feats of the Chicago pork-packers, who boasted that they utilized every part of the pig—except the squeak.

New avenues of productive employment would be opened to many who are now drawing the "dole." No doubt this can and will be attempted. But the most certain result of doing it, as of all industrial progress, would be, under our present land and taxation system, to increase the demands of the landlord and of the collector of taxes and rates. For such enterprises can only be carried out on land, and the necessary buildings would be subject to heavy rates.

It is generally recognized that some of the existing mines are "uneconomic": the coal to be got from them costs more than it will bring. So long as the leases last, even if the mines are not worked, the landlord can claim his "dead rent." The mine-owners, working at a loss, clamour for subsidies, or seek to reduce their wages bill. Is there

any real need to keep these mines going, either by reducing the miners' wages or at the cost of the taxpayers? Are we so short of available coal that we must, as it were, sweep up the last shovelful of coal-dust from our national coal-cellar? The Royal Commission on Coal Supplies<sup>1</sup> estimated the known available coal resources in our country, including only the coal, in proved coal-fields, which lies within 4,000 feet of the surface, at 100,914,668,167 tons, and this estimate is constantly being increased by discoveries due to new borings, sinkings and workings, and more accurate knowledge of the coal seams. Professor Jevons estimated that, at the end of 1925, no less than 194,355,000,000 tons of coal were still lying, workable but unworked, within reach of our present mining methods.<sup>2</sup> But many of the landlords under whose estates the coal lies will either not grant a lease at all or will only lease on unreasonable and extortionate conditions.

The owners of these valuable lands pay no rates or taxes in respect of the "ungotten minerals" that lie beneath them so long as they neglect to mine them or refuse to let others do so.

In face of the facts stated above, it is plain that import duties, or embargoes on foreign coal, quotas, reorganization of the industry and the like, do not go to the root of the troubles which caused the great mining stoppage and still continue to cripple the industry. Land monopoly is the principal trouble. Enormous deposits of coal are withheld from the labour of the miner. What would be the effect upon his economic position, and upon the welfare of the industries that depend upon coal and metals, if all our untapped mineral resources were taxed and rated on their value? This would be but to take a leaf out of the landlord's own book. For the "dead rent" which he imposes, when he does lease his mineral lands, is based upon what the mining of these ought to yield if properly worked, and is designed to act as a spur to get as much coal (and to pay as much royalty) as possible. The dead rent, which must be paid whether the mine is worked or not, ensures that

<sup>1</sup> 1903-5. *Final Report* (Cd. 2353).

<sup>2</sup> There seems to be reason to believe that practically the whole of Lincolnshire stands on a coal-field.

the landlord shall not suffer in his income by the failure of the mine-owner to exploit the mine properly. The taxation and rating of land values, falling upon the value of the mineral land, whether it is put to its best use or not, would ensure that the nation shall not suffer in its economic life through the landlord preventing the coal from being mined at all.

The relief of *all* improvements (industrial, commercial and domestic buildings, etc.) from all taxes and rates, and the concurrent application of the "dead rent" principle to the actual values of *all* land (mineral, agricultural, building, quarrying, etc.), would multiply the number of useful productive jobs indefinitely, not only in the primary industries, but also in the manufacturing and distributive industries which derive from them; and, incidentally, a home market would be provided for all the food, coal, etc., that would be produced under the spur of land value taxation.

As all jobs of useful productive work depend, in the short or long run, upon access to land, the one hope of diminishing and finally abolishing DISemployment lies in making better use of the land now in use, and in bringing into use the very large area of land that is now withheld from productive use. So long as unemployment on a large scale continues, there is little or no hope of permanently raising the wages of those who are in work, for the Trade Unions are helpless while there is a crowd of workless people outside the factory gate: people who must get work, or slowly starve, in body and mind, on the meagre doles of the Labour Exchange or the Public Assistance Committee administering the Means Test, and the "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick." With less unemployment and higher wages, the increased demand for goods will ensure better trade all round. The reduction of taxation on industry and its products will both lower the cost of goods and increase the demand for them, thus encouraging both production and exchange. With the taxation of land values carried to its logical conclusion, making some land free and all land cheap and available to those who wish to use it, other forms of taxation will be unnecessary, disemployment will be unknown, and the labourer, working



on his own account or in the employment of others, will get as his wages all that he earns.

The Minister of Labour, in moving the *Unemployment Bill*, on May 15th, 1934, stated that it was the 36th Act on that subject, and hinted at a future Consolidation Bill. The enactment of a stiff tax on land values would fulfil the purpose without the need for such legislation.