

TO WORKINGMEN

By HENRY GEORGE

I AM ONE OF THOSE who believe that it is possible for workingmen to raise wages by an intelligent use of their votes; that this is the only way in which wages can be generally and permanently raised—the only way labor can obtain that share of wealth which is justly its due. And I am one of those who believe that this is the supreme object that workingmen should seek in politics. In seeking to raise wages, to improve the condition of labor, we are seeking, not the good of a class, but the good of the whole. The number of those who can live on the labor of others is and can be but small as compared with the number who must labor to live. And where labor yields the largest results *to the laborer*, where the production of wealth is greatest and its distribution most equitable, where the man who has nothing but his labor is surest of making the most comfortable living and best provide for those whom nature has made dependent upon him, there, I believe, will be the best conditions of life for all—there will the general standard of intelligence and virtue be highest, and there will all that makes a nation truly great and strong and glorious most abound.

To give labor full freedom; to make wages what they ought to be, the full earnings of labor; to secure work for all, and leisure for all, and abundance for all; to enable all to enjoy the advantages and blessings of an advancing civilization—we must break down all monopolies and destroy all special privileges.

To the man who thinks the matter over there can be no question as to what answer best accords with the interests of workingmen. It is possible for the few to become rich by taxing the many, but it is not possible for the many to become rich by taxing themselves to put the proceeds in the hands of the few.

Labor cannot be hurt by freedom. The only thing that can be hurt by freedom is monopoly. And monopoly means the robbery of labor. What labor needs is freedom, not protection; justice, not charity; equal rights for all, not special privileges for some.

Wages do not really consist of money. Money is the mere flux and counter of exchanges. What the man who works for wages works for are commodities and services for which he pays with the money he receives in wages. Necessarily, therefore, to increase the price of the commodities he buys with his money-wages is to decrease his real wages.

However prosperous this country may be when viewed through the rose-colored spectacles of the millionaire, and however high wages may be from the standpoint of those who think that the natural wages of labor are only enough to keep soul and body together, there will be no dispute among workingmen that this country is *not* prosperous enough and wages are *not* high enough. Whoever may be satisfied with things as they are, the great mass of American citizens who work for a living are not satisfied and ought not to be satisfied. Monstrous fortunes are rolling up here faster than they ever did in the world before; but the great body of the American people get but a poor hand-to-mouth living, and find year after year passing without anything laid by for a rainy day. Our rich men astonish the rich men of Europe by their lavish expenditure, and the daughters of our millionaires are sought in marriage by European aristocrats of the bluest blood; but the tramp is known from the Atlantic to the Pacific; the proportion who are confined in prisons and lunatic asylums, the proportion of our women and children who must go to work is steadily increasing. And the proportion of men who, starting with nothing but their ability to labor, can become their own employers, or can hope out of the earnings of their labor to maintain a family and put by a competence for old age, is steadily diminishing.

---Passages taken at random from a four thousand word article in the *Standard*, and reprinted in the *Land and Labor Library*, June 30, 1888.

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