WILEY

Review

Author(s): C. V. Butler

Review by: C. V. Butler

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 114 (Jun., 1919), pp. 238-241

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2959918>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 03:25 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley, Royal Economic Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Economic Journal*

of borrowing, and political Labour; but space forbids to give even a cursory account of the discussion of these subjects. There are, besides, great portions of these volumes on which nothing has been said. The subjects of immigration, wages, and prices receive exhaustive treatment regarding the different periods. Even "The Recrudescence of Bushranging" obtains its separate chapter. A living interest attaches to the chapters on "The Question of the Chinese" and "The Introduction of Coloured Labour into Queensland"; and the treatment of a "White Australia" is only disappointing because it fails to urge the lesson, "Be fruitful and multiply," as a corollary to the accepted Australian view on the subject. A concluding chapter on "The Federation of Australia" might have been omitted, as it covers ground adequately dealt with elsewhere.

In rising from the perusal of these weighty volumes written by a strong sympathiser with Australian democracy, wherein, assuredly, nothing is set down in malice, if no attempt is made to extenuate past blunders, the reader's last thought will perhaps be the good fortune that has attended the country at more than one crisis of its history. This may have helped to breed the optimism which seems indigenous to the soil and race. In the clear air and genial climate of Australia the answer of a self-confident and energetic race to the warnings of economic history will probably still be, even in times of stress, "*O passi graviora dabit deus his quoque finem!*"

H. E. EGERTON

Women in the Engineering Trades. By BARBARA DRAKE.
(Fabian Research Department and George Allen and Unwin.
1917. Pp. 143.)

MRS. DRAKE in this report, based on an inquiry by the Fabian Research Department and the Fabian Women's Group, has told part of a story of extraordinary interest in the history of industry and of wages in Great Britain. Although the incursion of women into the engineering trades had not by 1917 quite reached its highest point, yet most of the difficulties which accompanied it had emerged, and their analysis is perhaps of more pressing interest during the present ebb of the tide than it was a year ago.

After a useful description of the position of women in the metal trades before the war, the report contains an outline history of the processes of labour dilution in munition work, covering the

Treasury Agreement and the arrangements made by the A.S.E., with the neglect of the unskilled worker; the passing of the Munitions of War Act in 1915 and of its first amendment in January, 1916; and the successive women's wages orders issued under that Act. Then follow forty pages on the position of women in the trade, with a necessarily incomplete sketch of the problems of hours and conditions of work; and finally there come recommendations for the after-war period, with "minority reports" by successive members of the Committee of Inquiry: Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Mrs. Ewer, and Mr. Mellor; Mr. F. S. Button; Miss Macarthur and Miss Lawrence. This latter part is the most valuable. The difficulties of writing contemporary history are notorious, and the report gives a breathless impression true in many ways to the period, but not helpful to the reader. Further, the author sees and portrays with such vividness the worker's point of view and the deficiencies of employers and of departments in dealing with the problem of the woman munition maker, that she does not do justice to the equally "human" obstacles to the enforcement of any consistent policy in the constant though varied opposition from the skilled workman to dilution in all its forms.

The whole story is primarily one of wages; and, if an economic moral were needed, it might turn on the need for very much clearer thinking in the country as a whole about principles of payment, and for much more information about actual wages and earnings, than even the war period produced. If the country was to have munitions, it must dilute skilled labour with unskilled recruits, male and female; if the artisan's standard wage rates were to be protected, he must have safeguards for these rates stronger than those supplied by collective bargaining; if women on skilled or unskilled "men's work" were to have special protection, other women employed on munition work must in fairness and in the interests of output have protection for their standard of living. It was by these progressive stages, in the midst of intense pressure for output, and with little support either from pre-war organisation or from any consistent opinion among employers, employed, or the country at large, that the Government was committed to the interpretation of the two delusively simple shibboleths of "equal pay for equal work" and "a living wage" for the women on "men's" and on "women's" work respectively. Hence, in part, the difficulty of their application.

With regard to the establishment of a "living wage," the report insists strongly on the dilatoriness of its enforcement and

on its incomplete adjustment to changing prices. It does not enter into the production difficulty caused by a hasty introduction of a flat minimum (or standard) rate for "women's" work, but it draws a fair moral as to the influence of collective bargaining, as shown by the comparative attention paid to the claims of women on "men's" and on "women's" work respectively.

In discussing at greater length the Government's interpretation (described as "crude and disingenuous") of the principle of equal pay for equal work, the report makes detailed recommendations on the future position of the woman substitute. Thus a woman employed on men's work shall, it is urged, receive both the time rates or the piece rates "customarily paid for the job," unless the employer is able to show, to the satisfaction of the trade union or joint committee concerned, that one of the three following qualifying conditions is present. (1) That the woman needs training. The main report would allow a definite probationary period at less than standard rates; but Mr. Cole and his co-signatories in a minority report dissent, on the ground that the employer should bear the cost of training. (2) That "a re-adjustment has been made in the process of such a character as would customarily lead to the employment of a different class of labour." In this case of definite evolution in the industry a lower rate—that of the unskilled or semi-skilled man—is again suggested; although the woman taking the much-discussed "part or portion" of a skilled man's job, through the mere subdivision of processes, should be secured his full rate of pay. The minority reports again urge that any reduction should be subject to the "most careful watching" and to detailed collective bargaining. (3) "That in order to meet the separate needs of female labour a change or changes have been made in working conditions increasing the cost of production to the employer." In this case the only deduction recommended is that of the bare cost to the employer, with the maintenance of a minimum rate for women. Here, again, two of the minority reports urge strongly that no such reduction should be permitted, although Mr. Button (of the A.S.E. and the Committee on Production) grounds his opposition to the main report on "the favoured position it proposes for women."

The report brings out forcibly, despite its very apparent bias, the extreme difficulties, some genuine and some factitious, in the introduction of women into a highly organised and exclusive trade, and in the interpretation of "equal pay." It is worth reading for this alone, quite apart from its practical suggestions, and for the moral already deduced of the need for much better

thinking about wage problems than they receive from the normal citizen.

There is a good appendix by Mr. H. E. R. Highton on the position of dilution on the Clyde in August, 1916.

C. V. BUTLER

Scheme for a State Bonus. A Rational Method of Solving the Social Problem. By E. MABEL AND DENNIS MILNER, B.Sc., A.C.G.I. (State Bonus League, 1 Victoria Street, S.W.1. Pp. 16. Price 3d.)

THE authors of this pamphlet propound a scheme for an equal distribution of 5s. (pre-war) per head per week for all persons, to be provided from a pool maintained by everyone contributing 20 per cent. of their incomes. The demerits of such a proposal are too obvious to need enumeration.

But the psychology and ethics of the recognised economists need a fresh examination, and in many respects Mr. and Mrs. Milner's sociological views deserve careful attention. "The community should help all alike, not only those who have failed to help themselves." "No one should be driven by the threat of destitution into accepting work which is underpaid, unhealthy, or even dangerous. Therefore destitution must not exist." "The guarantee of the primal necessities of life will abolish the chief excuses there may be for begging, petty theft, the under-feeding of children, etc." "It will always give the fallen man a chance to rise." "Persuading people to work is an educational problem. Starvation must not be used as an educative force, for it only makes inefficient workers. Even the slave-owner gives his slaves food and shelter before applying the whip. Of the wisdom of maintaining people in health by proper nourishment before attempting to induce them to work there can be no question." "There is abundant evidence that those who live in want and the fear of want are cramped in their spiritual outlook, and the few who are virtuous would be so under any circumstances." "Our scheme makes men and women, rather than materials, the basis of Reconstruction."

C. E. COLLET

Co-operation for Farmers. By LIONEL SMITH-GORDON. (London: Williams and Norgate. Pp. 248. 6s. net.)

THE wheels of co-operative propaganda for British farmers certainly want greasing. The movement still drives "heavily,"

No. 114.—VOL. XXIX.

R