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Lohnsystem und Löhne in der Brauindustrie: Tarifverträge by Emil Wolff

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Parliamentary representative of West Ham in 1892; and that the suggestion, to which reference is made on p. 340, for the disfranchisement of municipal employes in the United Kingdom has never received any serious support. P.A.

6.—*Lohnsystem und Löhne in der Brauindustrie: Tarifverträge.* Eine Abhandlung über moderne Lohnprobleme und Lohnpolitik. Von Dr. Emil Wolff, Syndikus in Hannover. viii + 168 pp., 8vo. Berlin: Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1912. Price 4 marks.

This interesting study of wage and other conditions in the German brewing industry, based on an examination of 63 wages agreements covering 430 breweries scattered throughout Germany, falls into two distinct parts. In the first the author, after some general discussion of the movement of industrial wages generally, in relation to price changes, proceeds to set out the principal results of his analysis of the brewing-trade agreements, to examine the legal rights of the parties under them, and to estimate their merits and demerits as a system of settling wages. The section (pp. 33—36) devoted to the last-mentioned subject is instructive, chiefly because it undoubtedly represents the opinions held by a large number of German employers. It is contended that the agreements are, from a legal standpoint, of no advantage, and, as regards the conduct of industrial enterprise on both the administrative and financial sides, positively disadvantageous to the employers. Dr. Wolff seems to regard the advance of wages and all efforts to raise them with grave suspicion; he dwells on the fact that an all-round increase of 1 mark per workman per week would lay on German industry the same burden as was laid on the whole nation by the Imperial financial legislation of 1909, apparently assuming that the economic effect would be the same in each case. And he finds in the rise of wages a potent cause of the recent advance in the cost of living, on the ground that the former carries with it an increase in the cost of production of commodities, and consequently in their price to the consumer. The space at our disposal does not render it possible, even were it necessary, to do more than indicate these theories, which are not likely, we imagine, to win any general acceptance, and we may pass to the more purely statistical portion of Dr. Wolff's work.

The rates of wages paid under the various agreements, and the hours and other conditions of labour, are examined in detail in the second section (pp. 36—106), which is followed by a statistical appendix of 51 pages; in this place we cannot do more than indicate a few of the results. The breweries are divided into three classes, according as the employes (i) receive, in addition to money wages, a fixed amount of beer which cannot be commuted for cash (35 agreements out of 63); (ii) receive a fixed weekly addition to wages in lieu of beer (17 cases); and (iii) can take beer or a monetary equivalent at their option (11 cases). In the second group there is, however, often the modification that the employé can spend the cash equivalent on beer for his own consumption during working hours at the normal reduced rate; and, on the basis of returns

from a number of breweries, it is estimated by the author that, approximately, 50 per cent. of the cash equivalent is so spent. It is characteristic of Dr. Wolff's attitude towards the whole wages problem that he thinks this fact—namely, that the workman is content with his money wages *plus* one half of the cash equivalent for his allotted quantum of beer—is conclusive evidence that his money receipts are sufficient to maintain him and his family at the standard of living regarded as satisfactory in their social class and locality. It must be assumed, he says, that in spending half of their cash equivalent on the consumption of beer during working hours, they are not neglecting the interests of their families; a somewhat debatable proposition.

The amounts of beer assigned vary with the particular occupations. As regards the brewers and maltsters, who form about 28 per cent. of the total number of persons directly employed in the breweries, the weekly allowance of beer averaged 28·6 litres, in the cases where it could not be commuted; in the cases where it is entirely commuted the cash equivalent averages 5·24 marks per week; where it is commutable, the cash equivalent averages 4·64 marks per week. On the assumption that in the two latter groups only half the weekly cash equivalent is taken, and on the basis of 300 working days per year, the ranges of yearly money earnings are in the three groups: (i) 1,554 to 1,749 marks; (ii) 1,531 to 1,676 marks; (iii) 1,546 to 1,741 marks. As regards the labourers (*Hilfsarbeiter*), who form about 15 per cent. of the total number of employes, the ranges, similarly calculated, are: (i) 1,296 to 1,458 marks; (ii) 1,268 to 1,381 marks; and (iii) 1,272 to 1,497 marks. These figures exclude earnings for overtime, &c., which are considerable. The predominant hours of labour in breweries working under the agreements examined by Dr. Wolff are $9\frac{1}{2}$ (in thirty-four instances); in only six cases were they as low as 9, and in only two cases more than 10. The actual period of attendance at the breweries (*Arbeitsbereitschaft*) was in twenty-eight cases $11\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and in twenty-two cases 12 hours.

Finally, attention may be directed to Dr. Wolff's suggestion, if we understand him rightly, that the comparative standard of living attainable by the pursuit of various occupations can be best measured by a comparison of the average rate of earnings therein with the "ortsüblicher Tageslohn" (that is, the rate of earnings of the poorest class of unskilled labour, as calculated for the purposes of the Insurance Acts) in the localities where the occupations are carried on; it being assumed that this "ortsüblicher Tageslohn" represents the existence-minimum. In the particular case before us, the average of the local rates (reckoning 300 working days per year) for all the localities to which the brewing agreements relate, was 907 marks: the average rate of monetary earnings for the brewery labourers was 1,361 marks, and increased for the other classes of workers employed inside the breweries up to 1,637 marks for the brewers and maltsters; that is to say, the average monetary earnings of brewery workmen ranged from 50 per cent. to 80 per cent. above the existence-minimum for their localities. P.A.