



# WILEY

---

Recent Parliamentary Papers

Author(s): C. F. B.

Source: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 30 (Jun., 1898), pp. 273-276

Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Royal Economic Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2957375>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 05:05 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](mailto:support@jstor.org).



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

lacking mandates. The most satisfactory point about it was precisely the fact that such a discussion on the ground of social reform from such divergent standpoints should prove a feasible thing, and should thereby open the door to the possibility of an *entente*. The theory of the necessity of a social class war has been on the wane for some time in the teaching of Social Democracy. It would now seem as if it might eventually be given up in practice.

BERN ; May 1st, 1898.

A. ONCKEN  
(Correspondent of the  
*British Economic Association*)

# RECENT PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS.

*Report by Miss Collet on Changes in the Employment of Women and Girls in Industrial Centres.* Part I. Flax and Jute Centres. (Labour Department.) [C. 8794.]

THIS sequel to the report on the statistics of employment of women (1894, noticed in the *ECONOMIC JOURNAL*, vol.V., p. 48), deals with the conditions, varying with place and time, of special industries. Part I. presents a comparison of the wages of women, the relative numbers of men and women and other incidents at different epochs in the East of Scotland, the North of Ireland and Yorkshire. For instance, since 1833, the wages of adult women in spinning mills have risen about 70 per cent. in Dundee, and 100 per cent. in Belfast.

*Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Procedure and Practice, and the Methods of Valuation followed under the Land Law Acts and the Land Purchase Acts (Ireland).* [C. 8734.]

THIS is a thoroughly businesslike document. Differing from the great majority of recent reports it is strictly confined within the terms of the reference ; there is no minority report ; there is not even a single qualification or reservation by any of the members, and most important of all, the recommendations are definite and practicable, many of them not requiring further legislation but merely administrative changes. So happy a result is plainly due to the small number of members and their acquaintance with the several aspects of the subject under consideration. The same cause also explains the rapidity of work, the report appearing in less than seven months from the date of the Commission's appointment, though a good deal of time was required for preliminary arrangements.

After a brief description of the constitution of the Land Commission, in the course of which regret is expressed that no cases have ever been

heard in the first instance by the chief commissioners, the method of fixing judicial rents by sub-commissions and county court judges is described, as also the course of appeals and re-hearings. The first important recommendation is that the jurisdiction of the county courts in respect to land cases should be abolished, a proposal justified by the statement that "the important facts are never ascertained by the court except through the report of the valuer employed as the eye of the court. The judges do little other than register the findings of their valuer" (p. 11).

In respect to the assistant commissioners who also sit as court valuers the commissioners "believe that as a whole they have striven honestly and to the best of their ability" to perform their duties, but the difficulties of the task proved too great to allow of accuracy and uniformity in their work. There is, besides, a cloud of suspicion, excited by the selection of the sub-commissioners from the class of landlords or tenants as well as by the temporary tenure of many of these officers, which is most undesirable. The remedies proposed are: (1) to give fixity of tenure to all the commissioners and valuers, who should be required to devote their whole time to their official duties, and to possess suitable qualifications tested by examination. (2). More efficient control and supervision by the chief commissioners who should supply instruction and advice and be empowered to make inquiries into the details of the proceedings of the assistant commissioners. The system of re-hearings by the chief commission (or so-called appeals) is declared to have produced "almost universal dissatisfaction, since in most cases the decisions merely register the decision of the court valuers (who too often follow the opinions of the sub-commission), and the reasons for the decision are not given." To meet these evils it is proposed that in each case two court valuers should be employed who should make an independent inspection, act as assessors on the re-hearing, and be liable to examination in court.

More important still is the method of valuation which involves a difficult economic problem viz. the conditions determining value. The commissioners regarding the matter from the legal side distinguish between the "technical" and "popular" lines of evidence, or as might be said between "what the value ought to be" and "what, if restrictions were removed, the market value would be." The former has been adopted as the criterion in fixing Irish rents, i.e. the opinion of (presumed) experts as to the amount that a solvent tenant ought to pay for a holding, based on the estimated production of the land together with the cost of obtaining that production and the range of prices. This method, the report remarks, "assumes the desire of making a money profit out of the occupation of land as the sole motive of such occupation" (p. 18).

Many other influences do in fact operate "and some of these are motives by which a prudent and intelligent man may be influenced" (p. 19). That it was, moreover, the intention of the Legislature that

all reasonable influences should be taken into account in the determination of fair rents is evidenced by the direction in the Act of 1881, to "consider all the circumstances of the case, holding and district."

In this connexion a definition of the crucial term "fair rent" is offered. "The gross fair rent," we read, "is the annual sum at which, after all the circumstances of the case, holding, and district have been taken into consideration, the holding in the landlord's hands might reasonably be expected to let from year to year to a solvent and prudent tenant who desired to derive a benefit from the occupation of the tenement, not from its sale" (p. 21).

A natural comment from the economic standpoint is the omission in this, and indeed in all the current discussions of rent, of any reference to its position as a differential return. Rent, economically considered, arises out of a "producer's surplus," but to estimate the amount of this surplus it is essential to have a standard of "cost" (or rather "expenses") of production, including in that expression the farmer's profit. The fixing of rents by authority involves the fixing of agricultural profits.

Amongst other matters the Report negatives the idea that the tenant has any "occupation interest" distinct from his improvements, a doctrine which, though confirmed by the best legal authority and said to be acted on by the majority of the valuers, is hard to reconcile with facts familiar to every one in Ireland.

In considering this question the Commissioners are led to express the opinion that the earlier judicial rents "were fixed higher than they would have been if the Land Commission had been endowed with the gift of prophecy" (p. 25), and that the fall in Irish rents is paralleled by that which has taken place in England. Various circumstances, such as the high price of tenant rights, the prosperity of farmers, and the increase of capital show, on the other hand, that no substantial injustice has been done to the tenants.

The practically less important, but equally difficult question of the "true value" of the tenants' interest next receives consideration, and it is shown that here a different course has been taken by the Land Commission, evidence as to the market value of the tenant's interest being used against the landlord to enhance the price that he has to pay on pre-emption. The "true value" has been legally decided to consist of (1) "the value of improvements" and (2) "reasonable compensation for disturbance." Some improvements in the method of procedure in such cases are suggested in the interests of both parties.

The concluding sections of the Report deal with the delays and difficulties experienced in carrying out the Land Purchase Acts, the result in part of the over stringent rules as to advances of money by the Treasury, and in part to the needless formalities required.

But perhaps the most valuable recommendation in the whole report is that of an alternative method of fixing rents under which the lay assistant commissioners would act rather as disinterested friends of

the parties and try to promote a settlement without litigation. This would be a return to the proposal of the Bessborough Commission (C. 6779, p. 22), and would save a great deal of the cost which is so great a burden on both landlords and tenants.

C. F. B.

#### OBITUARY.

##### GLADSTONE.

IT would be superfluous in these pages to record the facts of the great life which has just ended, and the moment is not opportune—*al subito Sparir d'un tanto raggio*—for a critical discussion of Mr. Gladstone's economic policy.

#### CURRENT TOPICS.

THE new species of Trades Combination which consists of a union between the employers and employees in particular branches of production, as described in a recent article in the *ECONOMIC JOURNAL* (vol. vii, p. 306), continues to flourish. The interests of the two parties have been thus solidified in a great number of manufactures—metallic bedsteads, fenders, china electrical fittings, coffin furniture, and many other varieties are enumerated. Five hundred manufacturers and twenty thousand workpeople have adopted the plan. We take these particulars from an article which the author of the new movement, Mr. E. J. Smith, contributes to the current number of the *Economic Review*. He adduces facts and arguments designed to prove that the movement both commands and deserves success, is not only financially sound but morally beneficent.

THE substitution of vertical for horizontal planes of cleavage, to use a metaphor which Jevons has made familiar, is doubtless favourable to cohesion. The combination is not so much exposed as an ordinary trade union is to the shock of a strike or lock-out. It is not so liable as an ordinary combination of employees is to be broken up by the defections of unscrupulous individuals. A manufacturer attempting to lower prices without the sanction of the combination would be restrained by the refusal of his men to work for him. Some check to production indeed may be apprehended if individual manufacturers are restrained from selling at prices below a standard which has been fixed "in the interests of all concerned," in Mr. Smith's words,—“based not upon the experiences of any one maker, but on the united experiences of all, and the consensus of opinion throughout a whole trade.” As we understand the proposal, if an employer enjoys some exceptional advantage in production, he may benefit himself by obtaining more