

person who expends or employs the labor; a piece of land owes its value, so far as its value is affected by the causes I am now considering, *not* to the labor expended on the land, but to that expended on something else—to the labor expended in making a railroad or in building houses in an adjoining town, and the value thus added to the land belongs not to the persons who have made the railroads or built the houses, but to someone who may not have been aware that these operations were being carried on—nay, who perhaps has exerted all his efforts to prevent their being carried on. How many landlords have their rent rolls doubled by railways made in their despite? It never occurred to Mr. Cairnes that he had here given, quite unconsciously to himself, an unanswerable argument, *ex absurdo*, to prove the injustice of the appropriation of the land. If the land had not been confiscated no such absurd or unjust result could have followed. The value imparted by labor to the land, exactly like "the bale of cloth, the house or the machine," would belong to the persons who expended or employed that labor, that is to say, *to the public, by whose industrial exertions it had been created.*

Lastly, the vast accessions of value which the land is constantly receiving from the proceeds of that "self-imposed tax" which the nation levies of itself in the high prices it pays for the "raw products of the soil," together with the increased productiveness of the soil itself, go all, as Mr. Cairnes is forced to confess, "neither to profits nor to wages nor to the public at large, but to swell a fund ever growing, even while its proprietors sleep—to the rent roll of the owner of the soil."

#### **Private Property in Land the Real Robber of Labor.**

Thus the appropriation of God's gifts in the land led naturally, and as a matter of course, to the appropriation of an enormous amount of the wages and earnings of the nation, which, in the designs of Providence, kept constantly dropping into the land, accumulating on the land, and adding to the value of the land; not for the enrichment of the landlords, but for the support of the public burdens of the state. Now a system of land tenure which thus despoils the people of a nation of a vast amount of their earnings, which transfers a valuable property which they have created by the patient, painful and self-denying efforts of their labor, to a class who do not labor at all, and make no sacrifices whatever, can, I think, be fairly characterized as a system of national spoliation. The hard-working, industrious masses of the nation are taxed *twice*, and for an enormous amount each time. They are taxed first for the benefit of the owners of the soil, to supply them with all the comforts, the enjoyments and the luxuries which they desire, and they are taxed again to the amount of eighty millions annually for the government and defence of the country. With two such

enormous drains on the productive industry and labor of the country, I cannot share in the astonishment which Mr. Cairnes feels at finding that, notwithstanding the increased productiveness of British industry, "the rate of wages, as measured by the real well-being of the laborer," has not improved to any material extent, while it may be doubted whether the rate of profit has advanced at all.

#### **The Only Hope for Labor—"Back to the Land."**

If the English operatives could only retain for their own use and benefit the vast sums which, under the existing system of land tenure, go on the one hand to the owners of the soil, and the sums that an economical system of taxation would save for them on the other, their material comforts and enjoyments would be multiplied a hundred fold. Under the existing state of things their condition is utterly incapable of any improvement in the future. Political economists can see no possible way in which English operatives can permanently improve their condition, except they have recourse to that revolting and unnatural expedient of voluntarily restraining and limiting their numbers. "This then," says Mr. Cairnes—the limitation of his numbers—"is the circumstance on which, in the last resort, any improvement at all of a permanent kind in the laborer's condition turns." If the self-commissioned apostles who preach this new doctrine only warned the people against the consequences of reckless and improvident marriages, I would join and go with them heartily. But when they advise them (as they seem to me to do) to increase and multiply according to the requirements of trade, and in such proportions as they may be wanted in, for the benefit of their *betters*; when they advise them to increase and multiply *only* when trade is prosperous, prices are high and commerce flourishes, I am heartily opposed to them. These teachings appear to me not only unchristian, but revolting and unnatural; and their wickedness is only surpassed by the astounding ignorance of human nature which they reveal in men who ought to be better informed. The British workman has no need to have recourse to such an unnatural expedient for the purpose of improving his condition. The chief, the fundamental obstacle he will have to overcome, will be found in the existing system of land tenure. British operatives and capitalists, of all men living, appear to me to have the largest and deepest interest in as thorough and radical reformation in the system of land tenure in our country as well as in their own. Trades unions, therefore, instead of wasting their energies and resources in a fruitless struggle with capitalists, would do well to turn their attention in this direction. They have made a wide field here for their efforts, and their labors here cannot possibly be fruitless. The rallying cry of capitalists and laborers ought then to be—"BACK TO THE LAND."