

"PAYMENT BY RESULTS."



"PIECE WORK AND TIME WORK."



BY
TOM MANN.



LONDON :

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With a Courtesans love to
Theodore Debs. Tom Mann
18.3.20

'PAYMENT BY RESULTS.'

from F. D. Thompson.

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WHILST this pamphlet was in the press the INDUSTRIAL COURT gave its award on the claims submitted by the Engineering Unions, when they demanded 15s. a week advance for adults and 10s. for youths and boys.

The award gives **6s.** a week advance on the time rates of men 21 years of age and over, and an advance of 15 per cent. on piecework prices; half the advance to become due on April 1st, and the remaining half on June 1st.

The advances on piecework prices are payable to all workers, irrespective of age, who are engaged on piecework.

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PIECE WORK AND TIME WORK.

BY TOM MANN.

In this pamphlet I propose dealing with questions bearing directly upon the engineering industry, and therefore upon the men connected with that industry. As a propagandist I am desirous of seeing advances made in the direction of CONTROL OF INDUSTRY by those engaged in it. I desire to see the triumph of CO-OPERATION as applied to all industry, and I desire to see this realised as speedily as possible. I propose to deal with the means of realising this ideal in a subsequent pamphlet.

For the present I intend dealing with that important question "payment by results," a subject that has occupied the minds of many engineers for a generation, and during the last twelve months has been forced to the front by the attitude of the employers in the engineering business.

I must state at the outset that I am not writing in my official capacity as Secretary to the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, but purely in my personal capacity as a member of that organisation. I hope the expense of printing and publishing this pamphlet will be covered by the sales; in any case, the A.S.E. will have no responsibility of any kind in regard to it.

I am fully alive to the fact that the subject to be discussed is one on which men take sides, not only definitely, but emphatically, and even bitterly. Perhaps because of this there is more reason why some of us should give clear expression to our views and freely participate in the interchange of opinion.

SECTIONAL STRIKES.

Many hundreds of strikes, large and small, have taken place in resistance to piecework in the history of the A.S.E., and the only occasion when I was one who came out on strike, with the rest of the shop, it was against piecework.

In the opinion of many members, to encourage piecework, premium bonus, or other method of payment by results is to violate all that is sacred in connection with the Trade Union movement.

Judging by lengthy experience, they declare that " payment by output " demoralises the man by encouraging the selfish side of his nature, it feeds his desire to get more at any cost to bodily health, it destroys good comradeship, it encourages the man to become utterly disregardent of his workmates, and feeds the avaricious and acquisitive side of his nature so that true manhood is lost.

Stories are related of overseers in the textile trade, who, finding that some young women weavers were not turning out as much as some others from similar looms, have so bullied them day after day, that in the effort to reach the maximum the young women have literally fainted, utterly exhausted, and humiliated (according to their outlook) to a degree that death itself would have been a happy escape.

A year or two ago, in South Wales, at a tinplate mill, the engine could be pulled up when the rolling mills were going full swing, and all the men on piecework. The firm had a new engine put in of greater power, to prevent this, and to encourage a greater output they cutely offered a £5 bonus to the millman who could pull up the engine by taxing its powers. One man was fool enough to try for it, and at the close of the day, with tongs in hand, he fell dead in front of the job.

Men are differently adapted, and equal output can never be attained, and it has been easy for bosses to play on the cupidity, the selfishness, and callousness of workers, till the best men have become so utterly disgusted with it that they have solemnly vowed they would never participate in it, and, if possible, would never tolerate it.

There is no need to recite instances to show that employers have encouraged the maximum output and then cut the rates, and that repeatedly in the most shameful fashion, the men in the trade know it too well, and it has been a chief cause in developing their hostility to the system.

PIECEWORK IN MANY TRADES.

Notwithstanding what has been said, it is a fact that in some trades payment by results is practically universal, and with the full concurrence of the workers. This is so in the cotton

trade and in textiles generally. Steel workers and tinsmith workers in the mills are wedded to payment by results, and some of these are not merely among the highest paid in the ranks of the workers, they are without doubt the highest paid of any class of workmen. It does not follow that those who do the most work get the most pay; but does that obtain anywhere? Of course, it is quite well known that scores of thousands of men in the engineering trade proper are also on piecework or some other system of payment by results.

It is equally well known that a large percentage of these express a decided preference for it, and many of them declare that they are not subjected to any objectionable behaviour from foremen, overseers, or others in charge. Some go so far as to say that they have not only a decided preference for this system, but that they would on no account turn to day work of their own will.

In these cases it is clear that the old-time scheming, forcing, pacing, and price-cutting to lowest limit does not obtain.

I have heard just within the last few weeks of some engineers who are on pay by results who are actually receiving less than the recognised time rate of wages. There is something radically wrong here, and at time of writing I am not able to explain same; but generally the men on piecework are getting from time and a-third to time and a-half, some probably get higher rates, but the difference in income is so marked that it goes a long way towards explaining the satisfaction expressed by many who work it.

OVERTIME.

In some districts systematic overtime is still in vogue, and many men who theoretically are wholly opposed to it acquiesce in it. The explanation is obvious: they want more money than is obtainable by an ordinary week of 47 hours on time rate.

The fact is that the minimum rate of 86s. for 47 hours' work, with the decrease in purchasing power compared with pre-war rates and prices, leaves a man seriously worse off than six years ago; the standard of home life is lower, the man's ability to share in social life has diminished, the struggle to maintain the family is more severe. And that standard that obtained in pre-war days, what of it? Was that satisfactory? It was so shamefully low that every self-respecting man was in a state

of feverish revolt against it, and was earnestly discussing the possible methods of forcing the situation to obtain something approaching decency.

PRESENT WAGES.

The minimum rate received by fitters and turners in the London area for a 47-hour week is £4 6s. This is so far below what is vitally necessary that the dissatisfaction in regard to it is universal. The average wage is probably about £5 a week. This also is utterly inadequate. The standard demanded by men worth counting, with the purchasing power as it stands now—March, 1920—is not a shilling less than £6 10s. a week. Less than this will not supply the reasonable requirements of a family, with a margin for the man himself to enable him to breathe with some measure of freedom, without which life is an intolerable drudgery.

I urge engineers to refuse to be content with any less standard than this. No sound reason can be advanced as to why they should; there are many reasons as to why they should not be content with anything less than this. To insist upon a high standard of life is the best evidence of good sense; to be content with, or even to acquiesce, in conditions which impose a mean standard is fatal to all true progress, individual and collective.

PRODUCTION.

Our productive capacity has developed amazingly during the present generation, and in engineering and shipbuilding, as much as in any industry; even those whose outlook does not go beyond the present capitalist system of society admit it, and, in some instances, openly avow it. Some time ago Sir ROBERT HADFIELD, of Sheffield, volunteered the statement that "as the result of more perfect arrangements in the workshops, including the application of more machine methods, the output per head in their engineering establishment had doubled in the space of three years."

In the extensive application of the best form of machine tools many engineering firms have revolutionised the shop methods, whilst the tool and machine-making firms are always engaged in revolutionising the methods of production in some industry or other.

Take the great change that is now taking place in engine power for ship propulsion. At the present time many of the principal shipping firms are having the new vessels fitted with oil engines, and many of the existing ones are having the steam engines taken out and oil engines put in. No boiler or boiler space is required, and less tank space for oil fuel than bunker space for coal fuel, and firemen on board are reduced to a fourth of the number.

MACHINES IN COAL MINES.

Again, within my personal knowledge, some of the biggest coal mines have recently been reorganised in all departments above and below, and instead of hand hewing by the miner, and hauling of tubs by horses, the mechanical coal cutter is applied and the mechanical coal conveyor, resulting in three times the output per man, or, instead of an average of three tons per day per man under the old system, it is nine tons per day per man under the new system.

In South Wales and elsewhere extensive preparations are being made for a still further reduction in the need for human labour in the development of power from coal, causing Lord LEVERHULME, as reported, to pointedly and correctly comment as follows: "Referring to the 'all-electrical' scheme, which proposes to use coal at the pit mouth, converting it into coke for use of steel works, using gas liberated for making electricity, and by-products into aniline dyes, medicines, and fertilisers, Lord LEVERHULME said it was estimated that the scheme would make unnecessary at least half of the labour of the United Kingdom.

"This scheme opened up an enormous field for investigation in industrialism that promised as great progress as had been made in medicine in the last century. He was convinced that in industrial methods each succeeding year would see less necessity for arduous toil. Men would be replaced by machines, and the machines would do the work more efficiently and with fewer mistakes. They would find at the same time that men working highly technical machines would be superior men."

This forecast is not much of a prophecy, the actual happenings of to-day entirely justify it. Anyone with opportunities for observation can see that this is so.

EFFICIENCY AND EQUITY.

In case any might wonder as to what my view may be in regard to the general application of scientific methods of production, I hasten to say I am entirely in favour of it. In all departments of industrial activity I stand for PRODUCING WITH THE HIGHEST EFFICIENCY, AND DISTRIBUTING THE PRODUCT WITH THE TRUEST EQUITY.

I am fully alive to the fact that these drastic changes, as applied under purely capitalist control for capitalist advantage, invariably mean the dislodgment of a number of workers from their means of livelihood, and often they are precipitated into starvation and misery, and so it will continue until the workers obtain control over industry to the extent of having wages guaranteed to every man connected with an industry, and any changes in the methods of production must never be allowed to affect the workers adversely.

Apart from other considerations as to the effects of piece-work or other plans of pay by results, there is no room for two opinions about the matter as to why the employers are so keen to have it prevail, the object being to get a greater output per man.

DON'T MAKE MISTAKES.

I take this opportunity of saying that, in my judgment, the rank and file in the engineering industry will make a great mistake, yes, a fatal mistake, if they accept of any such scheme, unless and until the workers can exercise such control over the conditions that no one shall be thrown out of work and deprived of an income as a consequence of greater output following upon such change of method.

At this stage I must deal briefly with the question of unemployment. I declare that unemployment, or the fear of unemployment, is the greatest curse that afflicts the workers in present-day civilisation. The explanation of the many disputes between union and union over questions of demarcation is found in the prospect or certainty of unemployment for one group or the other sooner or later.

Fitters and ships' plumbers, only differing slightly in general work, meet at certain points, when apparently nothing appears as a cause of difference other than a little variation in the size of piping; yet how often have serious and prolonged struggles taken place over such cases. Why is it? Are men such

dunder-heads as to quarrel like raw schoolboys over who shall do a job which both are fully qualified to do? Certainly not. The explanation is that they have organised in each case to conserve their interests as best they can, which includes keeping grip on such work as may fairly be included in their department of trade, and to let this slip out of their hands means a relatively larger number of them being unemployed as a consequence, and the bedrock cause of the quarrel is the determination not to have their home life jeopardised by being deprived of the opportunity of securing an income. As yet they have not struck on the right kind of joint control by exhibiting the right kind of solidarity, that is all.

SKILL AND SEMI-SKILL.

How acute is the question in hundreds of shops between skilled and semi-skilled. What unfriendliness it engenders! Why is it? Are the skilled men so stupidly jealous of those differently classed as regards skill that out of sheer pig-headedness or callous selfishness they constantly behave towards others as though they were inferior creatures? Certainly not! Again, it is the fear of unemployment, immediate or prospective, unless they keep grip of the machines and jobs they count theirs. And here, again, what is needed is such organised control over the work they each are engaged in as will absolutely make it impossible for either of them to be deprived of work or of income.

It is here we realise the limitations in our methods of organisation, and many of our best men take refuge in saying, "Ah, well! such dislocations as these referred to are the direct outcome of the capitalist system, and there is no cure short of a complete overthrow of the system."

Accepting the thesis that the capitalist system is destined to be completely superseded by a co-operative system, none of us know with any precision how far that is ahead; but we do know that we are burdened with unemployment now, and, notwithstanding the promises made by the employers that those men who left their firms to take part in the war should be restarted on return by the same firms, there are thousands still in want of work; and so far neither their old employers nor the Government have made, or can make, decent provision. Some unions are subjected to special criticism for not accepting Governmental and employers' responsibility. This aside, what is the basic cause of the difficulty? Why are not all welcomed

into the shops? Fear, immediate or remote, of unemployment, of no means of maintaining the home, and of becoming overwhelmed by adverse economic conditions, is the reason.

WHAT I AM DRIVING AT IS THIS.

EVERY INDUSTRY SHOULD CARRY ITS FULL COMPLEMENT OF WORKERS, AND CARRY THEM CONSTANTLY.

IF THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY SHOULD REQUIRE 10 PER CENT. OF THE EFFECTIVE WORKERS OF THE COUNTRY IT SHOULD CATER FOR THE ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS OF EVERY ONE OF THESE.

If—as is sure to be the case—there are fluctuations in the amount of work to be done, such fluctuations must not be met by discharging a percentage of workers, thus depriving them of the means of sustenance and precipitating their families into social distress. Such fluctuations must be met by the ADJUSTMENT OF WORKING HOURS over as much of the industry as may be desirable; if need be, of course, over the whole industrial field.

The Parliamentary Unemployment Bill, with its proposal of 15s. a week, is miserably inadequate, and engineers should refuse to give any countenance to it. The full wage is what must be demanded, and it will be obtained—or abolish the wages system.

I urge the reader not to pass this over lightly. Do not be fearful at the far-reaching character of the proposal, and do not put it aside as impossible until all industries are ready to act in a similar way. Already the building trades are giving very careful attention to this principle, and many other industries will soon be travelling in the same direction. To say it cannot be done is to say we are hopeless of any reasonable measure of industrial control.

Do not overlook the fact that the day has gone by when the unions were to be looked upon as mere stop-gap institutions, of no real value but to mitigate the evils of the capitalist system, and make it a little less harsh in its operations as regards the union members. We are out now for definite constructive work of the most practical character, but we must recognise that there is taking place a most important change in the form and character of our organisation.

WORKS COMMITTEES.

The place of influence has been the branch of the union, and for many years this was, and in many places still is, the chief agency for the ventilation of grievances and for the taking of action to remedy same. Now the power rests largely with the Works' Committees, and this movement is rapidly developing cohesion and efficiency. It is quite in accordance with modern development that this should be so. The Shop Stewards, properly representative of every section, leaving none outside of consideration, skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, and of either sex, demonstrating the unity of labour at any moment of time, and in every department of activity, are becoming a considerable force, and nothing but good tact and persistency are necessary for this influence to grow and to achieve.

It is by such means—Works' Committees and Shop Stewards—that control in the shops will be obtained. Without a measure of control, whether men work on time work or piecework, the conditions are bad. With reasonable control it may be that either system can be made endurable, not to say comfortable.

The employers' proposals, as submitted to the men's representatives at the York Conference, included the following:—

“ Any employer may introduce into his works, in agreement with his workpeople, any or all of the following systems of payment by results:—

“ (a) Straight individual piecework.

“ (b) Company or collective piecework.

“ (c) Individual premium bonus or any other bonus system.

“ (d) Company or collective output bonus.

“ Each workman's day rate shall be guaranteed, irrespective of his piecework earnings.

“ The piece prices, time allowances, or other bases of remuneration to be paid shall be fixed by mutual arrangement between the duly appointed representative of the employer and the workman or workmen concerned.

“ Piece prices, time allowances, etc., shall be such as to enable a workman of average ability to earn at least $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. (thirty-three and one-third per cent.) over his time rates, excluding war bonuses.

“Waiting time, standing time through temporary breakdown, and other causes over which the employers or workmen have no control shall be paid for at the day rate, and any time so paid for shall be charged against the price of the piecework job or the time allowance on the job.”

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There is no room for misunderstanding as to what the employers are after—IT IS INCREASED OUTPUT.

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There should be no room left for any misunderstanding as to what the workmen want and mean to have—IT IS INCREASED COMFORT.

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For my part, I would decline to give consideration to the employers' demand for resorting to a system of payment by results unless the employers are prepared to do two things, viz. :—

1. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE INDUSTRY AND UNDERTAKE TO ADJUST WORKING HOURS SO THAT VIRTUALLY THERE SHALL BE NO UNEMPLOYMENT; AND FOR ALL MEN TO RECEIVE WAGES FOR EVERY WEEK IN THE YEAR.

2. AGREE TO MERGE ALL WAR WAGES, BONUSES AND PERCENTAGES INTO THE BASIC TIME RATE, ON WHICH ALL CALCULATIONS IN RESPECT TO TIMES OR PRICES UNDER ALL SYSTEMS OF PAYMENT BY RESULTS SHALL BE BASED.

These are vitally essential conditions for securing a reasonable measure of comfort, and I STRONGLY URGE ALL CONCERNED TO DEFINITELY DECLINE TO ENTER INTO ANY CONDITIONS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF PIECEWORK OF ANY KIND UNLESS SATISFACTION CAN BE OBTAINED AS TO A GUARANTEED INCOME AND THE WIPING OUT OF WAR WAGES, BONUSES, ETC., BY MERGING ALL INTO A CONSOLIDATED FLAT RATE.

Should the employers refuse to agree to these conditions, then I seriously suggest that we should prepare for action and demand a SIX-HOUR WORK DAY.

With the amalgamation of many of the engineering unions we shall soon be in a position to do things, and it is surely high time something of a definite and practical character was done by engineers in their own interest.

It is humiliating to the last degree that the wages of the engineers should be so despicably low. A wretched time rate of 86s. a week! What other industry is paid so low? None! Good luck to the labourers and handy-men. See how many of them compare with the skilled engineer! In a number of instances their established regular weekly rate is higher than that of the engineer. Which body of men has had least advances during the past five years? The engineers. What body of men were especially responsible for all important work appertaining to the war? The engineers. What body of men is determined to demonstrate their refusal to continue under such humiliating conditions? **THE ENGINEERS.**

I take this opportunity of saying to the rank and file that for my part I should look upon it as participating in a serious social crime if we do not at once prepare to raise the standard of life. Our homes stand in need of it, our productive capacity justifies it, our service to the community entitles us to it, and nothing is lacking but clear-mindedness and genuine **WORKING-CLASS SOLIDARITY.**

Returning to piecework and its merits and demerits, I have examined with considerable care as to the actual views of those who are working under pay by output and by time. Roundly, 45 to 50 per cent. of our members are now working on pay by results, and fully one-half of these are distinctly favourable thereto; the other half would be if they had a rightful influence in deciding prices, which should not be interfered with except at definite stated periods, and then for the men on the job to have full share in their adjusting.

The workshop must change in one direction, and that is to become more comfortable. Bullying foremen and managers may count themselves as down and out; they will never again be tolerated.

But with all this, and I mean most seriously every sentence of it, I am undoubtedly for straightforward and honourable behaviour all the time and everywhere. If there are men who deliberately dodge work, such men are no help to the rank and file, and it is to our interest to at all times do the honourable and dignified thing. But that entitles us to claim and obtain conditions worthy of intelligent men.

The boilermakers and shipbuilders, and all sections of steel workers, work on payment by results, and now practically all the semi-skilled have agreed to accept the proposals of the employers. I do not know if they have secured adequate safeguards, I very much doubt it, and our men must take great care to on no account accept without adequate safeguards, and whether any form of premium bonus is worth consideration is open to serious doubt. The ballot papers have now gone out to the whole rank and file of the membership of the engineering unions as to whether they favour negotiation taking place with a view to adopting pay by results.

It is necessary to frankly face the issue; we must declare clearly and distinctly what our attitude is on this subject. Not only have the employers shown that they attach such importance to it that by some means or other they seek to force the issue, but also many of the members of those unions now lining up in the new Amalgamated Engineering Union, and many thousands in the kindred unions closely related to us, have very definite views on payment by results, and wish to know where we now stand.

Let us boldly face the situation, and in response to the employers' demand let us submit our views and the conditions under which we are prepared to entertain the subject; and let us refuse to concede that which is called for, except on terms that will safeguard our interests and carry us a few stages in advance of the position we now occupy.

PERFECT THE ORGANISATION.

On no account must we for a moment overlook the fact that we must continue to perfect the organisation. It is a considerable achievement that the following societies have at last agreed to merge into one common body with the elimination of sectional exclusiveness that this carries with it: The Steam Engine Makers, United Machine Workers, United Kingdom Society of Amalgamated Smiths and Strikers, Associated Brassfounders, Turners, Fitters, and Finishers, London United Metal Turners, Fitters, and Finishers' Society, Amalgamated Instrument Makers' Society, North of England Brass Turners, Fitters, and Finishers, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

It is also expected that the Amalgamated Society of General Toolmakers and the Electrical Trades Union will soon be part of the main body, and the time is not distant when we hope

the Ironfounders, Core Makers, and Dressers will also be in close relationship, and all this will make it easier not to come into conflict with other unions and federations of organised workers, but to establish working alliances between them and ourselves, so that working-class solidarity shall become an actual fact.

THE OUTLOOK BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL.

Notwithstanding gloomy predictions that come from some quarters, there are ample reasons for believing that we are now entering upon a period in which the chief characteristics will be the elimination of the causes of poverty by intelligent control of workshop conditions, the fusion of working-class interests, the breaking down of the barriers that have kept the workers separated by different economic interests in the shops and mills, the further triumph of mind over matter, and consequent greater production with less expenditure of energy, and, naturally following upon this, the opening up of facilities for a real education coming within the reach of all.

The course of life will be increasingly full of experiences, but no one should be afraid of that. Life simply consists of experiences; the greatest and best amongst us are not those who vegetate, but those who are most active; not those who shrivel up into a shell trying to escape every wind that blows, but rather those who fearlessly look out upon life, confident of their ability to meet it no matter what may come.

There are good grounds for believing we are now on the up grade. We have passed through the long, murky night, with its dark, dank, and dismal atmosphere, and the dawn of a better day is here. Let us prove our capacity to enjoy it.



