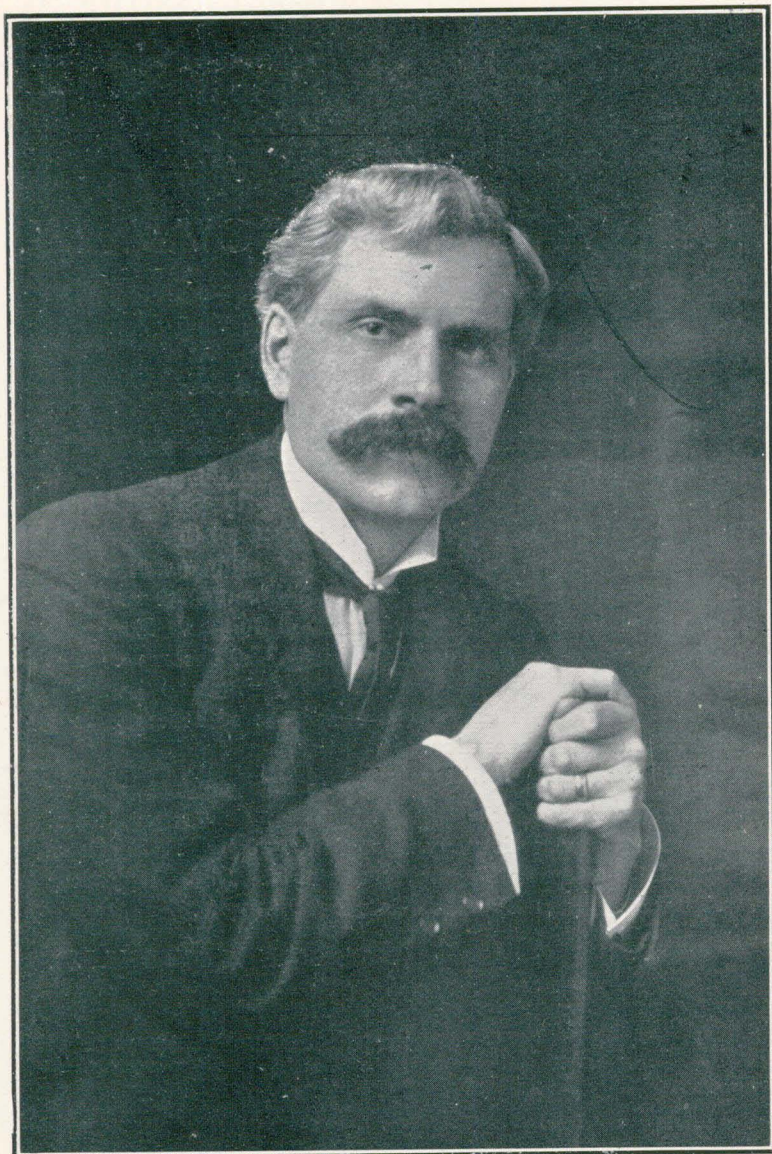


# WAR AGAINST POVERTY.



*Copyright photo]*

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

[*Lena Connell.*

By W. C. ANDERSON; MARGARET BONDFIELD; G. LANSBURY, M.P.;  
MARY MACARTHUR; J. R. MACDONALD, M.P.; BERNARD SHAW;  
BEATRICE WEBB; SIDNEY WEBB, LL.B.

*THREEPENCE.*

# WAR AGAINST POVERTY.

---

## POVERTY—A DISEASE.

Poverty is nothing but a disease of the State, caused by a failure of the machinery of distribution to provide nourishment for everybody entitled to it. So soon as the State becomes intelligent it will remedy this, not by doles of the nature of either public or private charity, but by a re-adjustment of that machinery so that each may be possessed of sufficient wealth to enable him to live a full life of enjoyable usefulness. Everyone who is unable, on account of insufficiency of income to live this full life is, in some shape or form, a weakness to the State, and has either to be carried on the backs of others or is a source of racial degeneration.

We have reached the time when this problem can no longer be overlooked or put on one side. It is *the* problem of the time and is becoming a matter of life and death. It cannot be explained away, and it cannot be excused. It destroys every theory and every policy which does not destroy it.

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.



BERNARD SHAW.

# WAR AGAINST POVERTY.

---

## POVERTY AND POLITICAL SANITY.

---

One day, at a meeting of a Public Health Committee of which I was a member, we had to deal with a case of a girl who had broken the law. She was a young thing in her teens, who had come up from Esher, where her parents lived, to make her living as a domestic servant in London. She caught scarlet fever; and being ill and terrified and alone, she very naturally flew back to her mother in Esher. When I say flew, I speak poetically: aeroplanes had not then been invented; and if they had she could not have afforded one, even if it had been the most suitable vehicle for a scarlet fever patient. She took a bus and she took a train. And in thereby exposing her fellow passengers to the infection of her disease, she broke the law, which it was our duty to enforce by prosecuting her and inflicting pains and penalties on her.

On behalf of the girl Common Sense asked "What was the poor girl to do?" The official answer was that she should have notified her condition to the authorities in proper form, and applied for an ambulance for her safe removal and conveyance. Now this may have been a very proper course for a village girl lost in London to take; but that it was at all a probable one, or a reasonable one to expect from a child who had never been carefully instructed in the provisions of the Public Health Acts and was not on familiar terms with Town Clerks and Medical Officers of Health, was more than we could bring ourselves to pretend.

We showed signs of weakness. In fact, we were obviously on the point of shirking our duty when a lady member, contemptuous of male sentimentality, asked us how we should feel about it if one of our own children had been in that bus or that train. This intimidated without convincing us. We solemnly decided that we should wait until the girl was quite well again and able to bear the shock, when we should send down a sanitary inspector to Esher to tell her that she had done a very, very wicked thing, and that if she did it again the vengeance of the law would be unchained by the justly incensed Health Committee.

You will note, gentle ratepayer, that though you pay through the nose for the administration of the Public Health Acts, in this case, as in most others, you got nothing for your money, because the Act was not enforced, and might just as well not have existed. And if the girl, after her terrible warning by the inspector, had returned cured to London, and caught small-pox next month, the very same thing would have happened again. Perhaps it did. "What was the poor girl to do?"

I will tell you another true story. That Health Committee once did what Mr. Lloyd George intends his Insurance Act Committees to do. We enforced the existing law to compel landlords of insanitary rookeries to put them into decent and healthy order. Yes, we did—once. We did not do it twice; and neither will the committees from which Mr. Lloyd George, in the innocence of his heart, expects so much. When we forced the landlords to convert houses which were fit only for very poor and very dirty people, into houses fit for decent people in regular employment at comparatively good wages, the landlords very naturally and properly turned all the poor and dirty people into the street, and got in decent tenants. The ejected people hung about the streets for days, and at last had to be dispersed by the police. One old man died. And after that, dear ratepayer (you who always vote for Economy), that law ceased to be put into force, though you still have to pay the officials and keep up an expensive office for administering it just as if it were being carried out to the letter.

The moral and the mischief of both these cases is the same. What was the matter in the girl's case was not her lawlessness, her selfishness, nor even her scarlet fever, but her poverty. If her family and friends had been well enough off to take proper care of her the case would not have arisen. If all the other families had been well off, there would have been no such thing in England as scarlet fever. The ratepayers made elaborate and costly provision for dealing with her ease; and there was a committee of quite good-hearted ladies and gentlemen to see that she got the full benefit of this provision; but her poverty beat them all and wasted the provision.

In the other case, again, what was the matter was not the cruelty and greed of the landlords, but the poverty of the tenants. Turning them out and putting the houses into healthy order did not cure their poverty. They all—except the one who died on the spot—took their poverty and their dirt somewhere else where the authorities were either not so particular, or had already learned their lesson. The difficulty would never have arisen in Park Lane. Why? Because the tenants in Park Lane are not poor.

Legislation to mitigate the effects of poverty is waste of time and money. It is worse : it is destructive of liberty. It is the sort of legislation that prevents you from building a better house for yourself, because if you were allowed to do so somebody else would abuse that liberty to build a worse house for somebody else. The only legislation that is not a snare nowadays is legislation to abolish poverty. If half the money you pay to prevent parents from stealing food for their hungry children were spent on the forcible feeding of those children, we should save the other half and be a healthy nation into the bargain. The children would not resist. Instead of which you restrict forcible feeding to rich ladies who *do* resist. And you call yourself an intelligent ratepayer. *I* call you a lunatic. Do not be angry with me. I have worked at this question of your political sanity for over thirty years. Have you ever thought about it for five minutes?

BERNARD SHAW.

---

## WHY WE MUST HAVE COMPLETE NATIONAL PROVISION FOR SICKNESS.

---

Half the cost of pauperism is said to be due to sickness. More men are without wages to-day (and therefore more women and children are short of food), because the breadwinner is temporarily sick, than because he is unemployed through lack of work. Each day's sickness and incapacity for production of the whole nation costs the nation at least six million pounds sterling. At present the whole nation is sick—on an average of all classes and all ages—for about ten or twelve days in each year. Sickness thus costs us, annually, more than enough to pay the whole of the Rates ; more than twice what we spend on Education ; more than the whole cost of all the Navy.

**And nearly half of all this sickness could be prevented.**

If preventable, why not prevented ?

We demand from the Government a Complete National Provision against Sickness, on the lines of prevention :—

- I. The opening of the new County Sanatoria, not to Tuberculosis alone, but to other ailments in which proper treatment at the incipient stage is efficacious (such as cancer, varicose veins, rupture, chronic bronchitis, &c.).
- II. The amendment of the Insurance Act so as to  
(a) include wives and children ; (b) relieve from direct



SIDNEY WEBB, LL.B.

personal contribution the casual labourers and all earning less than a pound a week; (c) secure Government guarantee for the promised benefits; (d) enrol the Deposit Contributors in County Societies; and (e) exclude the Prudential and all other profit-making companies from any connection with the Act, dissolving the sham "approved societies," which they have formed, and merging their membership in Friendly Societies, Trade Unions and the New County Societies.

- III. Universal provision for the ailments of children of school age, by the establishment of School Clinics under the Local Education Committee, as at Bradford and elsewhere—neglect of children's ailments meaning subsequent breakdown.
- IV. The abolition of the Poor Law Medical Service, with its "deterrent" methods, its stigma of pauperism, its unsuitable Workhouse Sick Wards; and the transfer of all sick persons unprovided for under the Insurance Act to the Local Health Authorities.
- V. The establishment of a Unified Medical Service, properly paid by salaries (including both full-timers and part-timers), in which both the Poor Law and Public Health services would be merged; working in connection with the Insurance Act on the one hand, and the Hospitals and Sanatoria (Voluntary or County or Municipal) on the other.

There is no Wealth but Life: there is no Life but Health.

SIDNEY WEBB.

---

## CHILDREN AND POVERTY.

---

The discussion of minimum conditions of life and leisure for men, women and children is just now of the utmost importance, especially with regard to children. No one who is at all acquainted with life in the industrial centres can be satisfied with the conditions under which tens of thousands of children are brought up. Not merely are they denied fresh air in their homes; to a very large extent it is denied them even in the streets. Such a thing as pure food is practically unknown; and milk is in the nature of a luxury, even for the babies. As for education, we have yet to learn what the word means. It is surely not education to crowd into a class room 40 or 50 boys or girls,





*Copyright photo*

GEORGE LANSBURY, M.P.

[A. Barrett.]

of varying ages and at varying stages of mental development, and attempt to cram exactly the same kind of things into each one's brain! Of course much has been done through the elementary day schools, and much has been done through housing schemes to destroy slums and the effects of slums. But is it not true that by the erection of huge buildings called "model homes," we have recreated them, not only in the suburbs, but on the sites of those we have destroyed? But with it all the working classes appear to be content, and the only step that will count in the long run is one that will arouse a wholesome disgust in the minds of the fathers and mothers.

I have not much faith in the free feeding of necessitous school children as a way out of our difficulties. Neither am I much in love with school clinics as a way of salvation. But for the time being, both are essential. We have left the children so long and allowed conditions to get so bad that only this kind of action can rescue the present victims. Were my children necessitous, or in need of medical treatment, and therefore differentiated from all other children in the school, I should feel disgusted with the whole business. But the poor are fleeced and robbed, and we are teaching them to be content with state palliation of the ills which accompany the fleecing and robbery. I repeat, then, that it is essential to arouse in the minds of the workers a detestation of their poverty and a determination to demand such conditions of life as will enable them to bring up their children with chances as bright as those of the children of the rich. We want them to demand a standard of life equal to that of the richest in the land. If all our talk about minimum conditions means anything, we should urge the workers to demand no worse conditions than we should demand for ourselves.

Therefore I hope that this campaign against poverty will resolve itself into a fighting demand for a really high standard of life, instead of sinking down into a mere attempt to palliate existing evils. These will be palliated, no doubt. But we have to abolish landlordism so that the child of the worker shall be able to get fresh air and decent conditions. The standard of education that we must set up must not encourage "cram," but must bring out of the child all that is best and brightest in it. Education must not cease just when the child is able to take advantage of it, but should be continued just like the education of the rich man's child. I am certain that if the Socialists and Syndicalists, the Trade Unionists and Free Labourers were for two short years to stop their quarrels and unite, as they all might unite, in a unanimous effort to win for our children these conditions, victory would very soon be ours.

GEORGE LANSBURY.



*Copyright photo*

W. C. ANDERSON.

[A. Barrett.]

## THE EIGHT HOURS DAY.

---

The general case for the shortening of the hours of labour is very strong. Every doctor whose practice takes him to working-class homes knows that overwork is hurtful to health. Long hours in stuffy and overcrowded workrooms will sow the seeds of tuberculosis faster than sanatoria can root them out. Even where there is no actual disease, the effect of constant overstrain is wholly bad. Men and women working under these conditions lose their freshness and vigour. They do not enjoy sufficient rest and recreation to repair the drain upon their energy. They resemble the financial position of one who regularly spends more than he earns. The harm that is being done them is apt to show itself in a sullen or irritable temperament. Unless the evil is stopped, collapse in one form or another is sure to come in the end.

When a man's vitality is being gradually sapped by unremitting toil, he is hardly likely to make the best type of citizen. What time or inclination will he have for reading or thinking, or kindly social intercourse? How can he be expected to follow closely or intelligently the affairs of municipality or state, so as to lend a hand in the wise shaping of local and national politics.

The need for a shorter working day grows all the greater because machine industry tends to become more and more specialised and monotonous. When a workman is only allowed to perform a very minute part of an industrial process, he will find the work after a time irksome and uninteresting. In addition to this, the constant introduction of new inventions into trades like that of printing, boot-making, engineering, leads to a speeding-up which makes much heavier demands on the physical and mental resources of the workman. If long hours undermine physical health, if labour in many industries becomes harder and duller, if new machinery is adding enormously to the total output of wealth, if it is desirable that the workpeople should have time for recreation, self-culture and political knowledge, there is clearly a case for a shorter working day, and the workpeople of Europe have long made the Eight Hours Day an essential part of their programme.

W. C. ANDERSON.

# WHY WE MUST ABOLISH THE POOR LAW.

---

We must insist on the abolition of the Poor Law, and the whole Poor Law system,

- (a) Because, by the unanimous judgment of both Majority and Minority of the Poor Law Commission the present organisation has failed, and is so unsatisfactory that it needs to be entirely swept away ;
- (b) Because, with modern developments of Local Government, a Poor Law system has become unnecessary ;
- (c) Because this now redundant and unnecessary Poor Law system is extravagantly costly, involving an annual expenditure exceeding eighteen million pounds a year—largely wasted !
- (d) Because the Poor Law system is demoralising to the character of most of those who come in contact with it ; because it deliberately “breaks up the family ;” and because it is, at present, the greatest of all discouragements to thrift, industry and self-reliance ;
- (e) Because the Poor Law system fails with regard to every section that it touches ; it is unsuited to deal with infants ; it is improper for children of school age ; it is inadequate and unsatisfactory for the sick and the feeble-minded ; it is cruel for the aged ; and it admittedly fails utterly with the able-bodied.

The whole idea—the whole method—of the Poor Law is wrong. It does not seek to prevent destitution ; indeed, it is not allowed to try ! All that it aims at is to prevent pauperism, that is to say, applications for relief. It does this, even with an unemployed man or a sick woman, by making the conditions under which the relief is given shameful and degrading. Infants die of neglect, little children grow up stunted and starved because the parents know that if they ask for relief they will be branded as paupers unfit for citizenship ; that at best they will receive from the relieving officer a grudging grant of a few shillings a week to drag on a miserable existence, and that at worst they will be thrust into the workhouse, their home broken up, the man sent to break stones in the workhouse shed, the woman separated from her children and forced to associate with imbeciles and prostitutes, the children kept in the workhouse nursery or sent to the Poor Law school. But whilst it cannot prevent, and only adequately relieves, the

distress of the deserving poor, it pampers the vagrant and the wastrel, the in and out prostitute and the children neglected by drunken parents. Thus, the Poor Law is at once too good for the bad, and too bad for the good.

Before we had any other local governing bodies, the Board of Guardians, with its general "relief of destitution," was doubtless a necessity. But since 1834 Parliament has created a series of new public authorities, and has charged them with responsibility for particular sections. In fact, Parliament has "taken out of the Poor Law" one section after another until, literally, there are now more than twice as many people maintained from the rates and taxes outside the Poor Law as inside the Poor Law.

What we must now insist on is the definite and express adoption of the Principle of Prevention, instead of mere relief. It is already the business of the Local Health Authority, in co-operation with the Local Insurance Committee, to prevent sickness, and to search out and adequately and promptly treat all cases of neglected sickness (including infancy). It is already the business of the Local Education Authority to prevent child neglect; and to search out and properly provide for all cases falling below the prescribed National Minimum of Child Nurture. It is already the business of the Local Lunacy Authority to prevent the spread of Mental Deficiency, and to search out and provide for all cases of neglected lunatics and feeble-minded. It is already the business of the Local Pension Authority to provide for the aged over 70 who are in need. It is already the business of the Local Distress Committee—in co-operation with the Labour Exchange and the Unemployment Insurance—to do what it can for the able-bodied unemployed. We must add to these existing Authorities (which are all Committees of the County or Borough Council) a National Authority charged actually to prevent the occurrence of unemployment, and to "decasualise" the Casual Labour Market in so far as this is possible; and to provide both training and maintenance for those for whom the Labour Exchange cannot immediately find situations.

Why, when the whole field is so completely covered, continue to brand some men, women and children as paupers, instead of treating all alike as citizens? The Poor Law must be abolished because it has become redundant.

BEATRICE WEBB.



MARY R. MACARTHUR.

## THE LEGAL MINIMUM WAGE.

---

I think the legal living wage for all workers will be won in the near future, and it will certainly mark a great step forward in social legislation. Already in this great struggle the first outposts have been captured. In the case of the miners the principle of the minimum wage has been admitted, though many points of detail are far from satisfactory. The Trades Boards Act has made it possible to extend minimum wage legislation to every sweated industry, and a considerable number of badly-paid workers, including the women chain-makers of Cradley Heath, has received substantial advances in wages as a result of the new departure. But little more than a beginning has been made. We must make minimum wage legislation thoroughly effective, and we must place it as a shield over every wage-earning man and woman.

The conditions of large numbers of workers, especially women workers, are scarcely creditable to a rich nation. They earn such low wages that decent civilised life is impossible. Their purchasing power is so poor that unemployment spreads in a vicious circle. The very first reform should be a levelling-up of wages, the fixing of a standard below which no worker should be allowed to fall. This will give the workmen and workwomen a stronger footing in all their future battles for redress. Trade Unionism has done much and will do much to improve conditions, but Trade Unionism will be enormously strengthened if it has behind it the power and protection of the State.

MARY R. MACARTHUR.



# EFFICIENCY A CAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

---

One of the most undeserved taunts thrown at the wage workers by members of the employing and leisured classes is that they are not intelligent enough to understand and welcome more efficient methods of production.

The worker believes in efficiency, in the most up-to-date organisation, machinery, and labour-saving inventions utilised for the benefit of all. He claims joy in work in return for faithful service. Few would assert that these reasons for industrial efficiency are in the minds of those who plead for it to-day. Under existing conditions the workers are intelligent enough to know and fear the results of the new method of increasing wages by a considerable reduction of the sum total of wages paid. The smooth working of the industrial machine of which he is a suffering and easily replaced part fills the average workman with terror.



MARGARET BONDFIELD.

He is more important than the system which enslaves him. Until he can subordinate this monster to his service he must fight it, for only by so doing can he keep alive the will to live in freedom.

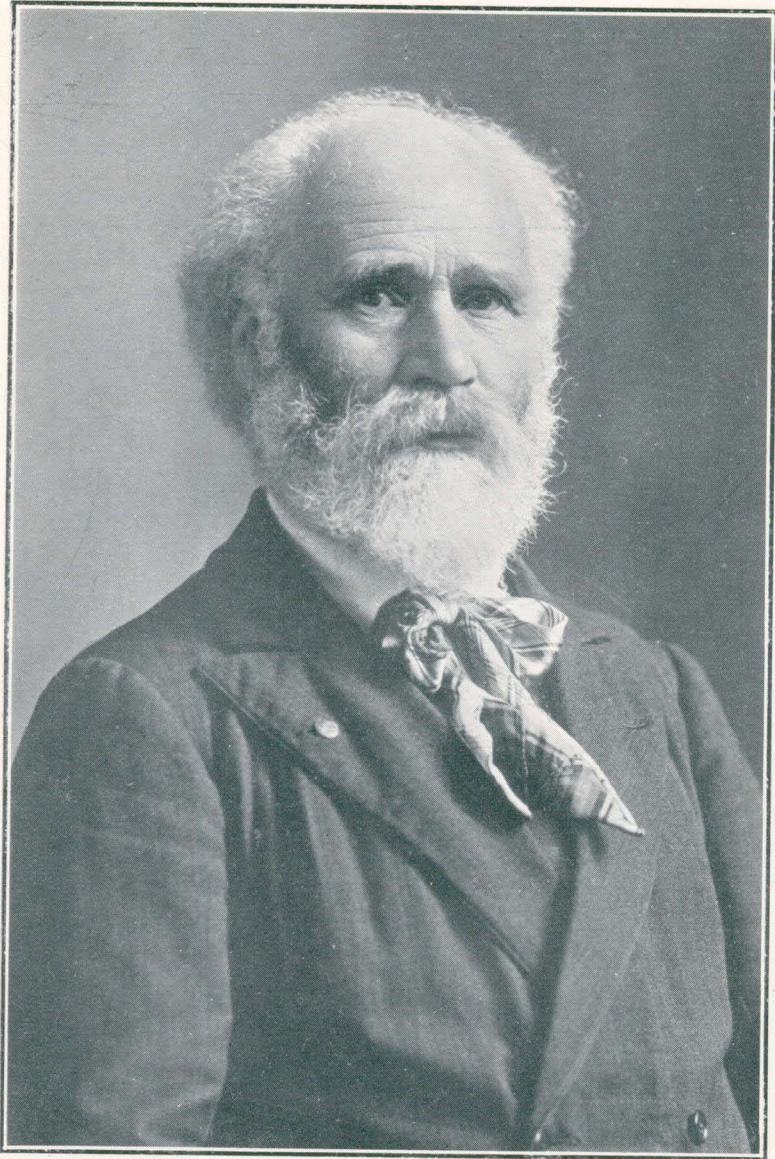
It is rather the owners and controllers of the industrial machinery who become grotesque in their assertions of superiority if all it enables them to do is to drain the fibre and energy of the employed and by every turn of the efficiency screw to increase unemployment.

Dislocations of trade caused by the revolt of workers badly housed, badly fed, irregularly employed and always within sight of destitution, can only be cured by giving them a sense of security, a standard of comfort which will promote a feeling of responsibility, and by making political power effective and education real, give them corporate control of the means of life.

In this task, the manual workers need the help of trained intelligence. Highly skilled craftsmen, investigators, statisticians, theorists, the controllers of unearned income, statesmen, above all, those of the far vision, the poets, all are needed, so that the blind forces of revolt may develop a system of industry in which there is neither unemployment nor overwork, but full Life for the whole people.

MARGARET BONDFIELD.





*Copyright photo*

J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P.

[J. Russell & Sons.]



G. Bernard Shaw, phot.

Emery Walker Ph. sc.

Beatrix Webb