

**WHAT WE  
WANT AND WHY**

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What We Want and Why by Mrs. Philip Snowden & J. H. Thomas Robert Williams

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**MRS. PHILIP SNOWDEN & J. H. THOMAS ROBERT WILLIAMS**

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*by*

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## WHAT WE WANT AND WHY

By the Rt. Hon. J. H. THOMAS, M.P.

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I THINK I can honestly say that the primary thing we want is a thoroughly efficient railway service. Everything would follow in the wake of that, and nothing of all the other things we want will be achieved without it.

There is nothing that does not depend upon transport facilities. Whether it be pleasure we consider, or the bare cost of living, or trade competition with other countries, the best possible facilities in transport play a fundamental rôle.

There are many ways, as I shall show presently, wherein vast improvements can and must be attained, but before touching on the mechanical side, I want to place first in the things we want in order to reach to full efficiency, the blessed word 'peace.' We want peace in the railway world. Not peace at any price. It is because we would not have

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peace at any price that there has been what strife we have experienced. Peace with justice—that ought to be possible. It is possible. I am optimistic enough to think that it is within reach if not exactly within sight. If you come to think about it you can never get peace without justice. A peace that is forced against any one's interests, whatever side has to make the necessary sacrifice, must, in the end, create dissatisfaction and unrest. And peace and unrest cannot live in the same house. Compromise is good only in as far as it allows breathing space to make a just and permanent arrangement.

It is not true that the men or their leaders desire strikes. They realise even more readily than the public who use the railways that strikes are terrible disasters.

It is a little irritating to hear and read—particularly read—the wisecracks who estimate the costs of strikes and point out that this side or the other are looking for more in cash than even if they win they could get back in umpteen years. Surely that ought to prove that both sides are not fighting on a purely cash basis always. For our part I can easily maintain

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that wages have always been only a part of principle in any struggle in which we have partaken. And as old Euclid said, the whole is always greater than the part. The irony of this surface observation of a portion of the Press is that it is a truth that no one can deny. But the thing goes deeper invariably.

Take an instance, quite a hypothetical one, but typical of most. We may say that a certain section of our workers ought to have a bigger wage. That is not a mere money matter, though it may seem to be. It is a principle in equity, and economics—because though a certain section of our critics may laugh at my claim, it is a fact that those who lead the Labour movement are not strangers to the science of economics, and understand the claims and the necessity of finance. What lies behind our fight is the principle of seeing that capital does not swamp labour and that labour has a definite charge on industry, whereas the policy has for too long a time been for capital to take all it can get—all it can get including the lowest it can persuade the labourer to take and still carry on.

What we want, then, is a recognition on the