

THE SIX-HOUR SHIFT AND INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY

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The six-hour shift and industrial efficiency by Lord Leverhulme & Henry R. Seager

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LORD LEVERHULME & HENRY R. SEAGER

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BY
LORD LEVERHULME

BEING AN ABRIDGED AND REARRANGED
EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S *SIX-HOUR DAY*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HENRY R. SEAGER

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



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FOREWORD

PROGRESSIVE American employers are little troubled to-day by lack of capital. Also they very generally understand how to embody capital in plants and equipment that are technically up-to-date and efficient. It is not these factors that limit production but rather the failure of employees to put forth their best efforts.

There are various explanations of this failure. Some employers say that the workers have deteriorated. Others place the blame on restrictions on output deliberately decided upon in the belief that the less work each does the more employment there will be for all. Whatever degree of truth there may be in these or other explanations, it is obvious that the root cause lies in the workers' *indifference*.

Outside of the factory, American wage-earners are alert and intelligent enough. The trouble is that as factory employments have become more and more minutely subdivided, the tasks to be performed by each worker are no longer very interesting in themselves, and the consciousness of partnership with the employer in the common enterprise which might save the worker from degenerating into a human automaton is too often lacking.

This unfortunate situation is not peculiar to American industry. British employers deplore the unresponsiveness of the British wage-earner as bitterly, and apparently with as good reason, as do American employers that of the American wage-earner.

Happily all British employers are not mere fault-finders. The great merit of the chapters that follow is that they deal with this central problem of modern industry, the indifference of the worker, not negatively but constructively. They

describe practical measures by means of which this indifference may be overcome. These measures are not the vague proposals of an academic student of the labour problem. Most of them have been actually tried out by Lord Leverhulme in his great factories, and their success is registered in the well-being of his employees in the famous model city, Port Sunlight, and in the recurring dividends of Lever Brothers, Limited.

Lord Leverhulme's remedy for the defects of modern industry may be summed up in one word, *co-partnership*. By this he means an attitude on the part of the employer that is truly and consistently that of an elder partner towards junior partners. He has no illusions about the preparedness of employees to assume at once a large share in the responsibilities of business management. There must continue to be a business head. Discipline must still be maintained. But the point of view must be that of leadership, not of mastership.

To the extent that the employer will regard and treat his employees as partners in the business, Lord Leverhulme feels confident, from his own practical experience, that the employees will respond by developing on their side the partnership attitude. And he believes that this relationship of partners, if honestly adhered to, may be expanded by gradual stages into outright co-operation, in which the capital of the common enterprise is owned jointly by the employees, including the original employer, and in which all share in the management.

Up to this point Lord Leverhulme's proposals differ little from those of other progressive and democratically minded employers. His striking departure is in his serious advocacy of the Six Hour Shift as the productive period of maximum efficiency. To attempt to summarize his reasons for advocating the Six Hour Shift would be to weaken the force of his argument. He urges it in part because of his sympa-

thetic appreciation of the viewpoint of the junior partners, the employees. Even more he sees in it the indispensable condition to that leisure for continued education in adult years which he deems essential to the development of the latent capacities of the workers and the realization of their fullest efficiency. For he makes it very clear that his advocacy of the Six Hour Shift is not due to any exaggerated notion of the value of increased leisure for its own sake. It is based rather upon his conviction that in the long run it will be found to be the work period leading to maximum *per capita* production.

Should any reader conclude that advocacy of such extreme curtailment of the average work day must betoken some visionary twist in a mind otherwise sane and practical, it may be well for him to begin with the final chapter of this book. In it Lord Leverhulme pays his respects to Socialists and other extremists and shows his firm grasp of the reasons in human nature and in human history for the superiority of an industrial system based on freedom of individual enterprise. Having convinced himself that the author is both clear-headed and hard-headed, the reader may turn to the earlier chapters with confidence that the same qualities are dominant there also. Only in these earlier chapters he will find them re-enforced by an insight into human nature and a vision of human potentialities which make Lord Leverhulme something more than a great industrial leader. He is a veritable prophet of a new and better industrial age.

Because these chapters are based on the actual experience of a successful employer; because they are inspired by a sympathetic understanding of the desires and aspirations of Anglo-American wage-earners; and because they propose remedies equally adapted to the American as to the British situation, they are commended to the attention of all who feel dissatisfaction with present industrial conditions.

The preparation of this new and abridged American edition has been entrusted to Mr. Frank Tannenbaum. He has been careful to make no alterations in the text of the original essays and addresses but has limited himself to the rearrangement of the material and the renaming of some of the chapters so as to make clearer their contribution to the development of the author's argument. The materials used are the addresses and articles which appeared originally under the title of *THE SIX-HOUR DAY*.

HENRY R. SEAGER.

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