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The Living Wage

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by

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A Report submitted to the National
Administrative Council of the Independent
Labour Party

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On how to start a Homecrofting Group

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Our discussion has not been all speculation. We have spoken of an industrial country with a genuinely separate money system, and that is an ideal which does not yet exist. But the other independent group of which we have spoken, the island of semi-self-subsisting unemployed with its local currency, is in being although on an almost microscopically small scale. I have ventured to offer this last, or the principle of it, as a serious proposal for the relief of distress; and it seems incumbent on me to state in terms more exact and concrete than I have yet done, how I conceive that a working circle of the kind could be called into existence. I propose, therefore, to consider briefly three contexts in which the principle expounded could be applied.

(A) HOW A HOMECROFTING GROUP CAN BE EVOLVED OUT OF AN ORDINARY WORK CLUB OR SOCIAL SERVICE CENTRE

In the original *Spectator* experiment in Homecroft housing for weekly wage-earners,¹ the worker and

¹ See pp. 16-18 above.

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his family were only given the means of producing food for themselves. Their work illustrated self-employment in its simplest form. The 'croft' simply lay around the 'home', equipped with its spaces where fruits and vegetables 'could be grown, with its poultry-run, tool-shed, goat-stable, &c., the whole constituting a perennial larder round the house which the family could keep replenished by working in their spare hours in a semi-recreational way.

The proposed Homecrofting Group may have to remain for a long time just this family, only providing some of the necessaries of life; the members being dependent for the remainder upon whatever remnants of wage, dole, or other money income they may possess. Their aim will be to emancipate themselves gradually from dependence upon money, by deriving more and more of the needful from their own direct labour.

They will begin, therefore, simply as a nucleus of people who have somehow been inspired to try to save themselves by joining hands and serving one another in the family spirit.

This may seem to some a stumbling-block. Can anything be expected to be permanent which requires so much altruism as this to initiate it and keep it going? The ultimate solution of the difficulty is the currency. But there is no need to hasten to that point. It is right to remember, even if nothing more could be said, that the long period of industrial

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depression in this country has not been without its moral quickening, one result of which is that the actual giving of services to one another by the unemployed is by no means unheard of today. And when I see the little homecrofting household doing this very thing habitually, the members giving service according to their ability, the stronger toiling at the heavier tasks and the weaker doing the light ones in order that the family cupboard may be filled with its winter's store, I must confess that it lends a new significance to all the rumours of voluntary work by the unemployed that are now echoing about the world. The first answer to the question whether the unemployed would give their services freely enough to get a Homecrofting Group started must be that they are giving their free services now in great numbers for objects much less important to themselves.

But this is not offered as a full answer to the question. For the novelty of a great moral adventure wears off, as many a weary social service leader knows. You cannot get from a random collection of people the sustained disinterestedness which is possible in a family. Nature sees to the family, but she has no interest in the artificial group. The only way to keep the family spirit alive in the group is by justice in the distribution of the calls for service. And distributive justice requires a currency.

At the beginning, in any group which was well led,

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the spirit of service might be abundant, even overflowing. The labour the members engage in would be interesting work. The variety of experiments that are possible and the excellent hand machinery which can now be obtained would be a standing incentive to self-forgetting industry, especially if coupled with youthful ardour. It could all be voluntary. Set an enthusiastic boy to learn the knitting machine, for instance, and we may reckon with fair certainty that so far from needing to be goaded to his task he would soon be dunning the other members to give him work. Similarly let a hand-mill be installed for grinding flour, let an expedition be arranged for gathering nuts, let a jam-making or wild-berry-picking party be suggested, let any one of the innumerable enterprises which strengthen the position or heighten the comfort of the group be conducted in the proper spirit, and Nature herself would see to the response. For a long time the mere ability to clean and dye a piece of wool, for example, and spin it into yarn by the old authentic craft methods, or by the new methods, would have the self-sustaining interest of a game. The mere pleasure in the eyes of those who had brought the wool to be worked and saw prospect of good socks for a few pence would be abundant reward. To those who prefer it this would be an entirely feasible way to begin.

Still, the well-springs of enthusiasm do not gush for ever. Sooner or later, the clear consciousness of the facts would arise. The members' contributions

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could never be all alike. Some would be giving more time than others to the common fund. The time of some would be intrinsically more valuable than that of others. Even the most loyal of the members would want some record of their service kept. This record could grow into a currency, and only if it is allowed so to function will the new community have the stability which the institution of the family enjoys.

To invent a currency is at first sight a formidable undertaking. Really it is no very difficult or complicated matter. A currency is nothing but a record of service, and it can be evolved from a literal record by merely modifying the paper on which it is written.

The literal record itself would be easy enough to make. When the group is first launched, each man could be given a book or sheet in which to make entries of his achievements; faithfully recording each job that the leader has asked him to do for another member or for the common pool; specifying what was done, for whom and when and where; a book which he can show to the leader every week. Let the man who has been white-washing another member's ceiling, for instance, show how many hours he spent; let him who has mended a watch show his time similarly. There would be some satisfaction even in an entry in a book. If the leader was tempted to call upon the same man for service too often, it would be easy for the man to show his crowded book, and ask that recourse be had to some other member who had less

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service to show. This would be the beginning of a technique for justly distributing the calls for service amongst the members of the group.

But the system must not stop there. The record must grow into something more tangible, simple and usable. The book entry might, for example, be regularly translated into something which could be counted out into the man's hand.

Arrangements for this could be in charge of the leader. For him it would be the easiest of tasks regularly to turn the recorded labour-time, as he reads it off from those entries, into a money of account. Stationed at his desk he could review the sheet in which each worker shows the week's services he has rendered, a sheet giving in every instance the date, nature of work, time taken, &c. "Ten minutes of your time?" the leader might then say to him, pointing to the first item in his record, 'that will be six.' And for this job he will count out to the man six *of something or other* taken let us say from a drawer at his elbow. And so with every job in the man's list. To another man for ten minutes of twice as valuable time, he would count out twelve from the drawer, and so down his list. Similarly with the other men.

But what are those things? In spirit a mere confirmation of the men's entries, a better record of the work done, a tangible receipt given to the worker in the shape of uniform slips of paper which he could put into his pocket and keep; printed in ones, fives, twenties, hundreds and thousands, in different col-

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ours for convenience of holding. At Cheltenham we supply the men with a special purse for keeping them.

Thus can a voluntary service group be made to grow into a Homecrofting Group, if only the spirit of service is there to begin with. It is not the only way of beginning. It is not the way the Cheltenham Group began. But it is one way. Any ordinary unemployment centre or work club where there are tools and equipment and the men have the idea of a joint effort to benefit one another, can organize itself along these lines by merely proposing that every man keep a book, and that every man try and have some voluntary service for other people to show in it. Then paper tokens can be given to every man according to his record.

Yet this does not complete the story by any means. It must be carefully explained to every member that these tokens are only a different kind of record; that they are of no use to anybody; but yet that members should keep them. *'For this drawer out of which they come at present is one day going to be locked. After that there will be no more. And then they will be of use.'*

And duly, at a certain convenient date, but only after a number of gifts of various kinds of useful commodities have been collected from friends of the scheme and accumulated in the premises in a kind of shop or pool, each ticketed so-many tokens, and after a convenient number of tokens have simultaneously

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got into the hands of the members—the drawer is literally and visibly locked. From this moment the principle of distributive justice has taken possession, and the Homecrofting Group is born. When any one now wants a footstool mended or a rag rug made, or his children's boots repaired and comes to the leader asking for it as usual, he gets a certain slightly stiffening moral shock. Things are not quite on the same easy footing as before. The individual is now presumed to have become a man and put away childish things. He is expected to make his requests, not in the way of an infant asking his mother for something in the nursery; but in the manner of a grown man who, when he asks for something, is conscious of having also something to offer. He is told by the leader that he may have the shoes done as before. But, as he of course knows, the cobbler must have tokens for doing the work. Hitherto they had come out of the drawer. But the drawer is now shut. He himself must supply them. If he has been working, he will have a supply. If he has not a supply he has not been working.

This is justice supervening upon a régime of loving-kindness. It is a severer but a better life. There need be nothing harsh about this justice. Even a lazy member may still be given what he asks if he wants it badly. It is merely a matter of some one's being generous. And arguments may be used to evoke the generosity. 'All the work was free not so long ago'; 'we are still, in a manner, a family'; and so on. I have

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seen quite a good deal of free giving away of tokens from member to member in such circumstances.

It is important to notice that this generosity can come equally well from a friend outside the group. He only needs to make a gift; for example to place a suit of old clothes in the pool or shop. The leader can then at once unlock the drawer and hand out the equivalent of the suit to the suppliant member in tokens.

For all that is needed in this system is that the total number of tokens held by the members should be well covered by the goods in the pool. Even if a man were growing onions for the pool, and had nothing to offer to the leader for all the months they were in the ground, the leader would be able to unlock the drawer and give the man a little every week on the strength of the future crop. He could then sell the onions to other members and get the tokens back. But this last item belongs to a system of which we have had some definite experience, and the place to speak of it will be under the third heading of this Appendix, on how to go down into a distressed area and begin homecrofting from scratch.

(B) HOW TO START A HOMECROFTING GROUP AT A SCHOOL

Ever since the publication of the Hadow Report, the educational authorities of this country have made a strenuous effort to introduce something different

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into the higher education of boys and girls at school who are not destined for the professions.

Hitherto all who continued their school life into the higher forms, found themselves being trained in the great vestibule which leads to the University. The problem of the Hadow Committee was how appropriately to continue the education of the mass of working people's children and give them the kind of training which would be a preparation for their own life. The hard fact which faces us now is that in thousands of cases, their own life is the life of unemployed persons. If any kind of training can give them the art of self-subsistence, surely it is the instant duty of the nation to provide it.

Now this is possible, and there is hardly a town of any size which could not make a beginning. It only needs a few acres of fertile land, with hutments, garden tools, and plant for conducting lessons in weaving, boot repairing, sock knitting, the cutting of firewood, the making of briquettes, the grinding and baking of flour, the care of small live-stock, the manipulation and preparation of live-stock for purposes of food; in everything, in a word, that is needed to enable the boys and girls themselves to earn and learn at the same time, to supply their own families with some necessaries by their labour, while receiving lessons in life and work assuredly different from those dispensed in the vestibule to the University. Learning how to make some shift in after days to live without wages if wages are not to be had, is both a possible

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and a most highly educative process, and it could be part of every post-primary school curriculum.

The system would be one of relays of visiting pupils, who could be assembled on the scene of their labours every morning, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays all included; each relay being there for perhaps one month in three. This could be organized without depriving the individual pupil of any of his holiday-time. And a relief system could similarly free the teacher.

The teacher's task would be an interesting and adventurous, though doubtless not an easy one, With the assistance of the right type of caretaker, who should be a man with knowledge of land and animals, it would be easy to begin quite gradually; only vegetable growing being undertaken at the first. The aim should be the eventual production of all the main necessities of life. Each boy and girl should receive tokens in proportion to his work, on the principle indicated in the previous section and to be described fully in the section which follows. With these in their hands at the end of each day, the children could wander round the common pool and buy out of it and take home to their parents as much as their earnings entitled them to. The system should aim at paying for itself, except for the dead weight of salaries of which the public funds would probably not expect, at any rate in the beginning, to be relieved.

The Board of Education themselves have encour-

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aged the idea of instituting some genuine difference between the higher education provided in the 'Modern Schools'—to use the name suggested for these new institutions by the Hadow Committee—and that of the traditional Public or Secondary School. 'It will indeed be nothing short of a calamity,' says Educational Pamphlet No. 60, 'if the end of the Modern School is an anaemic reflection of the present Secondary School.'

In this connexion the official emphasis is laid on practical, as distinct from theoretical, training. But it is now becoming clear that the mere un-systematic agglomeration of so-called practical subjects, drawing, sewing, domestic science, school gardening, woodwork and the like are nothing different from what has always been, and they are nothing specially interesting. They are waiting to be welded into a life-saving system with an economic basis and a bearing on the desperate problem of the world into which the children are going. Nothing can be more tragic than the present state of the higher forms of our schools when the last school-day arrives and companions part, one to continue the Shakespeare and the Caesar at the University, and the other perhaps to go down into some coal-pit to ask if this is what he was trained for. Can we wonder that there is discontent, when we prepare everybody for life at the top of the ladder and leave the great majority to spend their days at the bottom? Surely it were better to give to all without exception the preparation

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necessary for facing life at the bottom, and let those who are going to rise, rise. The one subject of which everybody of this day should be master is communal living without wages. The training is strenuous, as will be seen from the next section. It demands some facing of the weather! But it is so interesting that we may well believe no healthy youth or maiden in whatever rank of society born, would fail to become absorbed in it if it were competently presented.

What the concrete occupations of the children ought to be at the Homecroft Centre can best be gleaned from the discussion of our concluding topic, namely:

(C) HOW TO START A HOMECROFTING GROUP DE NOVO, AMONG THE POPULATION OF A DISTRESSED AREA

First of all, a little 'evangelization' must be done.

Assemble a good meeting of working men of the district and their families and tell them that there is hope.

Even at a time when there are no wages there is something they can do. They can 'get together and make their own things'.

But it involves producing their own food; so all who do not know the land must learn it.

Indeed the group is primarily for allotment men — ~~others~~ only so far as they are willing to learn, and not too many learners.

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The group is to be a little community and there must be give and take all round. It will be impossible to see that no one man ever has a stiffer job than another; although inequalities will be avoided as far as possible. People must be eager and willing to give their service freely.

The game is to 'make ourselves all one family'.

There will be a family cupboard, a 'common pool', to which all of us contribute.

What we put into the pool is not *money*, but *things*. We will contribute things to eat and to wear and to use; things which we grow for ourselves and make with our own hands.

Each member will contribute what is in his own line; and then he will be entitled to walk round the pool and draw out other things which he needs.

And on our scheme, as will be explained presently, he can only draw out the equivalent of what he has put in. That is the fairness of it.

But we will not be making for the common pool all the time. There will be a great deal of other work to do. That is why everybody must be willing. There might be fencing needed for our land, making of roads, erecting a hut in which to hold the pool, canvassing outside support for the scheme, collecting gifts of used clothing, writing letters, keeping books, and so on. That sort of work is done for the pool in the end, but nobody takes it out. Claims on the pool cannot be given for work that no one is going to

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take out. If two men erect a fence no one is going to draw the fence out of the pool. If others put up a hut no one is going to draw the hut out. And so on. There are a large number of things that must be done for nothing. Our basis is in voluntary labour. Anybody not willing to work had better not join.

All this unpaid work however is only to give a start; it is only to keep down capital expenses.

And it will not wholly keep them down. It will not eliminate them. Men might go to a wood and cut the posts for a fence if they got permission. But they could not make the wire. We shall have to pay money for many materials, e.g. road materials, fencing materials, building materials. We shall also have to buy machines—a machine for making our socks, a machine to grind our flour, a stitching machine to stitch our boots and so on. We can hardly escape those expenses.

If all this can be done on subscribed money good and well. But if it is done on borrowed money we shall have charges to meet year by year for interest and redemption, perhaps 9 per cent per annum. And this interest and the rent will always have to come from somewhere. We shall also need money to pay for fertilizers, seeds, wear and tear of tools, tools themselves, and the like. And here we must ask where the cash revenue is to come from to meet those standing charges?

Our revenue should come out of the overflow of our pool.

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We shall try to grow more potatoes than we need, and sell some; make more jam than we need, and sell some; knit more socks than we require, and sell some; and so on. We are in trade only to this extent.

And in all the selling we shall take care not to undercut trade prices.

The first steps then are:

- (1) rent a piece of fertile land;
- (2) erect a hut (perhaps 30 ft. × 12 ft. 6 in.; height, 7 ft. 6 in. to eaves, 10 ft. 6 in. to ridge);
- (3) partition off 7 ft. or 8 ft. at the end of the hut as an office;
- (4) lay in a stock of gardening tools;
- (5) measure out the land into lots of 1 chain for each family to begin with; but contemplate allowing each family to take perhaps another chain later; and then let each man start on his land in the fall of the year.

It must be clearly understood from the beginning that everything which grows upon anybody's plot is in the common store. No man's produce is so sacred that another man may not have any of it. There must be division of labour in the growing; and when the harvest comes all may pick from any part of the field. There will be rules, of course.

A man's growing crops do not belong to him as an individual. All that belongs to him are his claims on the pool. He has claims on the pool, opposite all he contributes to it, whether garden produce or other

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things. These claims are in his pocket and belong to him. What he contributes is not his. It is in the family cupboard, and he cannot raid the cupboard. He must produce his claims, surrender them, and take away what he wants in a regular manner.

If a man's whole crop is in the pool automatically, how many claims will he have? How many will he be entitled to? How will the amount be decided?

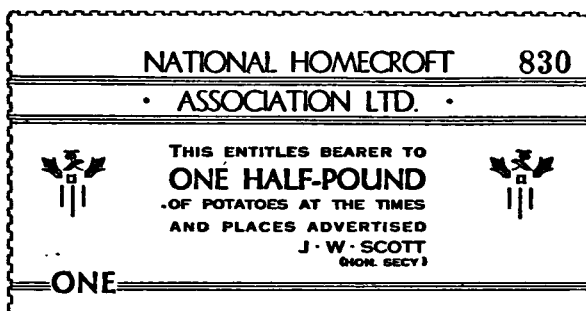
The answer. Every man's plot has a number, and his name and number are written at the top of a page in a book kept at the office.

Everything which is picked from off his patch of ground is weighed and booked to his credit on the page. At the end of the year (28th November) his page shows everything that has been taken from his plot in the year, i.e. since last 28th November; and the number of claims it is equal to is written opposite each item.

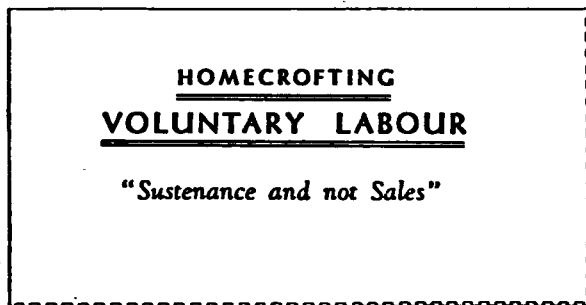
A claim is a small piece of paper called a 'unit'. These units are about $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. printed on the face and back as illustrated on page 198.

The manager will have numbers of these in perforated books ready to tear off. Homecroft units may be of any design however; and every group should have its own design, distinct from all others. At least the name of the group should be printed very clearly on the face side. They should be of different denominations; ones (buff); fives (yellow); twenties (white); hundreds (brick colour); and thousands (blue). There is no imperious necessity that this

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Specimen Homecroft Unit, face side



Specimen Homecroft Unit, reverse side

colour scheme should be adopted; only, this happens to be the one used by the Homecrofting Group at Cheltenham; and it would be an enormous gain if when exchanges became common between group and group, the same colour always denoted the same number of units however the design or size of the units in the various groups varied. What is supremely

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important is that Homecroft units should never be confused with money. They should be as distinct as possible from it, in size, colour and design. And no money figure should be mentioned on them. The reason is that the unit becomes more valuable as the group becomes more prosperous. A fixed money figure therefore is misleading. It is only disappointing to the men if something which is not $\frac{1}{2}d.$ and will not be taken in the shops as $\frac{1}{2}d.$ bears $\frac{1}{2}d.$ printed on its face. A fixed quantum of labour time would do.

It would be disaster if these units became money. Theoretically they could become money in either of two ways; (a) being made of something so like money that people were deceived (which would of course be illegal); or (b) by the Government recognizing them and declaring them legal tender.¹ If either of these events happened, homecrofting would become at once impossible. It is not necessary to explain why at this point. It will become quite clear from the foregoing. Our potatoes or minutes must not be money.

Each unit, then, is one half-pound of potatoes. We must return now to the man's page in the book.

His potatoes, as they come out of the ground to be stored in the pool, are all weighed and entered (under his own inspection) before being passed into the pool. Similarly the cabbages, the carrots, the peas, &c. All are weighed as they are picked; and they are entered in the book at their proper worth in units; that is, at their worth in half-pounds of potatoes.

¹ See pp. 108-10.

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How do we know their worth in half-pounds of potatoes? How do we decide how many half-pounds of potatoes a stone of peas is worth; how many a cauliflower is worth; or a used suit of clothing or a second-hand pair of boots?

We do it by reckoning a half-pound unit as $\frac{1}{2}d.$; and then taking a moderate shop price—indeed, a rather low shop price—as the price of the article in question. Whatever number of halfpence it would be in a very low-priced shop, we simply label it that number of units. It is quite easy to do.

A price list showing the number of units per pound at which everything is reckoned hangs on the wall. The man himself can consult it and see how many units per pound the various vegetables are as they come off his plot; and he can thus check the clerk as he books everything.

And how does the man get his units? When does the clerk tear them out of the book and give them to him?

First of all, the clerk has not got the book. That is in the hands of the manager, locked safely away.

The units for all the men have to be asked for, by the clerk, every week. Every group should have a clerk.

He receives them from the manager's hands and distributes them to the men every Saturday morning.

The men receive their units in this way, so-many per week every week in the year.

How many do they receive per week? This, it must

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be pointed out, is the only piece of speculation that the system contains. The number has to be calculated.

By the end of the year we wish each man to have had two-thirds of his crop. And years vary enormously in the degree of their abundance.

We therefore speculate conservatively; we calculate for a scarce year, knowing what a normal year is.

We divide two-thirds of the normal potato-yield of the patch in question in an *average* year into 52 equal parts; and that is the number of half-pounds per week which the man receives. Or rather, he receives about two-thirds *of that*. For we might have a year that is below average. A safe number would be, perhaps, 25 units per chain of land per week. These are only the man's *weekly* units for husbandry. They are not all the units he receives for that work. And he also receives units for other work usually.

These are the weekly units which he receives for his contribution of potatoes and vegetables. He may also be contributing other things. We should hope so. Every man should have one extra job at the least. If so he will receive extra units for it. The way to develop the system is to have every man contributing something to the pool over and above the food he contributes.

When the end of the year approaches the man can reckon up how many units he has had for husbandry during the year. He sees from his page in the book, for how many units two-thirds of his total crop has been disposed of. (If it has been disposed of *out*

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of the pool for units, he sees how many units it fetched; if it has been disposed of *to a merchant for cash*, he sees how many halfpence it fetched; and he knows that each halfpenny is a unit. It is to be noted here that any small potatoes which go to feed the Homecroft pig or any loose cabbage-leaves that go to the rabbits or the hens are not booked at all. They fall into the class of that voluntary labour which is expected from everyone. But any fruit to be made into jam is booked at its scheduled price, similarly any onions to be made into pickles, any flax used for spinning, any parsnips for wine or the like.)

The man can now compare the total units he has received by instalments for his crop with the total units for which two-thirds of his crop has been disposed of, and see the difference.

He will find that he has not had two-thirds of the crop in units. He will know how much he is short. And he will receive the difference in his hand.

This means that he will have a larger bonus if he has a good crop, and a smaller if his crop is poor.

The important point about this scheme is that the member's total reward in units will be proportionate to the work he has done for the pool. His claims upon the pool will be as his contribution to it. That is the fairness of the system.

This bonus may sometimes have to be divided between several men. Perhaps the plot has been cultivated by two people jointly all through the year.

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Or perhaps the man who started it may have obtained work, and have had to drop it, his successor having cultivated it since. Perhaps several men may have been on the same patch in succession. The bonus in that case will be divided amongst the cultivators, to each according to the length of time for which the plot was under his care.

This dividend or bonus may either be given all at once, or given in the form of an increase in the man's weekly units throughout the next following year. A loss could be made up for by a reduction in the weekly moiety in the same way. (It is best for a man to take it as a rise in his weekly allowance since otherwise he must take away his potatoes, and he may have nowhere to put them.)

So far then the requirements for a Homecrofting Group are land; a clerk (who is one of the men themselves) and a manager; a shed and tools; a weighing machine; a book of units; a record book in which to enter the crops; a record of the units advanced against the crop of each plot and to whom advanced; and a price list hanging on the wall. Let us now observe the working of it.

Each man begins drawing weekly units against his future crop from the day he joins the group.

The men accumulate the units in their pockets till the first crops are ready. Then they begin to surrender them, and draw out the produce as they want it. But they have never at any time units beyond

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two-thirds of the crop. So one-third of the total units represented on the field, except for the margin of inevitable wastage, can be recovered (in the form of halfpence) from the merchant. (The merchant, of course, will not necessarily offer $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per half-pound. He will give only a wholesale price. That is understood.)

Out of this cash must be met seeds, manures, rent, interest, &c., as far as it will reach. If it does not reach far enough the proportion, one-third, which is reserved for this purpose, must be increased. We must aim at not needing to be subsidized. It has still to be found out how many men must be in a group in order that it may pay its way by selling only one-third of its products. Sales are always secondary.

Consider now the position during 'the year one' of the scheme. We may say it began on 28th November when the field presumably was mere grass. What were the men doing with their weekly units until the first crop came?

For the pool was empty as yet. They could not draw from it.

Every effort should have been made during those early months however to have something in it, so that the men *could* be surrendering some of their weekly units as they went along and drawing out things which they needed.

Well-wishers could give gifts of used clothing. The clerk could ticket these at appropriate numbers of

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units as he dropped them into the pool. Similarly with boots, tins of cocoa, anything useful that might be presented.

An amateur hairdresser might be found amongst the men. (The specialists should all be found amongst the group as far as possible.) A knitter who can work a machine or learn it may be found; or one who might be able to wash and launder clothing, one able to repair boots and shoes, and so on.

All this extra work should be done on the premises, so that the business as a whole may develop in the direction of becoming a kind of 'omnibus producing company' with all its operations concentrated; so that incidentally it may become a haunt of the men, and recreative and other amenities may be introduced; always however on a scale that does not interfere with the major recreation, namely the running of the establishment itself. Too early introduction of too much of a diversive character might arrest the economic development.

The units paid to a member for other-work done for the pool should always be covered by the units surrendered by whoever draws the particular piece of work out of the pool. Similarly with cash paid for the material in it. A jar of jam for example should *fetch* a margin more of units and cash than it *costs*.

If the materials cost only units and no money (say 2 lb. of onions have been taken from the field and are appearing in a bottle of pickles) then the two workers, the one who grew the onions and he who made the

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pickles, should have between them two-thirds of the total units surrendered by the member who takes out the article from the pool. The number which goes to the grower is easily arrived at from the price list. A certain number of units per jar must next be allowed to the man who 'lays them down' in pickle. The cost, in units, of the finished product is thus arrived at. Half that cost must be added; then the product is ready to be ticketed at this amount and set upon the shelves.

The product whose materials cost only units are a limiting case, practically never occurring. Thus in the case of a jar of pickles the vinegar costs money. Vinegar cannot easily be made by the men. Nor can the jar.

The money spent on anything, like the units spent on it, must always be recovered from the person taking the product. Thus most products in the pool are ticketed so-much money 'and' so-many units.

How much money? And how many units?

The amount of money and of units to charge for the different products placed in the pool, or the various services rendered in the shed, can always be arrived at on the same principles. One 'tickets' boot-repairing jobs, for instance, by hanging up a price list showing the money and the units chargeable for every separate repair. There are in fact only some 16 typical repairs altogether which can be done upon leather boots and shoes. The units charged for each repair should be about twice the number given to the

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member who does the repairs. The number this member receives for his work is one unit for each $\frac{1}{2}d.$ usually paid to the trade for doing the particular job. When the number of units to be charged is thus arrived at, the amount of money to be charged should simply cover the expense of the materials used. The Cheltenham Homecrofting Group charge as follows for boot and shoe repairing:

	CHARGE MADE TO CUSTOMER	<i>Units paid to Repairer</i>
<i>(1) Sole and Heel</i>		
Men's	1/5 and 30 units	17
Ladies'	1/1 ,, 28 ,,	16
Youths'	1/1 ,, 28 ,,	16
Children's	9d. ,, 20 ,,	11
<i>(2) Sole only</i>		
Men's	11d. and 25 units	14
Ladies'	9d. ,, 20 ,,	11
Youths'	9d. ,, 15 ,,	8
Children's	6d. ,, 11 ,,	6
<i>(3) Heel only</i>		
Men's	6d. and 8 units	4
Ladies'	4d. ,, 8 ,,	4
Youths'	4d. ,, 6 ,,	3
Children's	4d. ,, 5 ,,	2
<i>(4) Extra for Hand-Sewing</i>		
Men's	25 units	14
Ladies' and Youths'	20 ,,	12

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(which have had to be bought) and (b) units to cover (i) the units booked to the credit of the cultivator upon his page, (ii) the units paid to the jam-maker for his work (perhaps one unit per 2-lb. pot) and (iii) the margin.

Everything attempted must be covered in the same way. Almost never are things produced for units only. And if money has been spent money must be charged to replace it. Of course the aim must always be to reduce the money and increase the units.

There is indeed one way of evading the need for charging any money even where the product has cost money; but it leads to too much outside marketing. This is to sell so much of the particular type of product or service to the public at a profit that the takings will cover the raw material for whatever of this kind goes into the pool. Then the ticketed price could be the unit price plus one unit for each $\frac{1}{2}d.$ of money.

What lines of production may be ventured upon? Every group must make its own venture. This is just the unexplored territory. It will vary in various places. It will vary even more with the size and skill and management of groups. If all that is thinkable were practicable the system would triumph. Perhaps thinkable, in various possible localities and circumstances, would be (besides boot repairing, vegetable and potato culture, hairdressing and sock making) clothes mending, firewood, coal from out-

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crops, picking of wild fruit, jam and jelly making, wild nuts and possible products from them, washing, goat-keeping for milk, rabbits for meat, home-produced eggs and bacon, flour grinding from home-grown wheat, bread baking, cloth weaving and clothes making—ultimately, if the group were large enough, machine boot making and furniture making, possibly even machine spinning from home-produced wool, production of linen, soap, honey, wine.

The consideration which determines whether a group can undertake any given line is whether the money charge to cover the raw material is within the price charged in the shops for the finished product. It is of no use charging 9*d.* and 10 units for a pair of socks if a pair of the same quality can be bought in a shop for the ninepence alone!

The logical reply, when this happens, is to extend the group until it can produce the raw material itself. If the price of the yarn in the sock is too much, the plan is to begin earlier and only have to charge the price of the wool in the yarn. Thereby we may replace say a charge of 9*d.* and 10 units by a charge of 3*d.* and some larger number of units.

The above statement is concerned only with the question what things can be produced. The further question remains, what capital is required to start a group and on what conditions it may reach such a point of development that it will not need to be subsidized but will clear its own expenses? On this the

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only possible answer at the present stage must be speculative. We can however state the terms of the problem.

Given a certain number of men, say 25, and a list of the products they could make and the services they could render for themselves by working along home-crafting lines, we have to ask *how much less money they would need* in order to provide themselves with these things than they now require in order to buy them.

Let us say that as a group they can produce:

- (a) potatoes and vegetables from the origin,
- (b) boots and shoes from the leather,
- (c) bread from the origin,
- (d) bacon from the origin,
- (e) socks from the yarn,
- (f) clothing from the yarn.

We have then to ask four questions:

- (i) What the land required would cost per annum in rent.
- (ii) What the capital sunk in plant would cost per annum in interest and redemption.
- (iii) What wages in money per annum are required.
- (iv) How much the annual cost of the raw materials would be.

The only data available being those from a group of *ten* men producing *another range* of goods and

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	£	s.	d.
Allow £11 10s. for emergencies and say the capital is £200, costing (in interest and redemption charges) per annum	20	0	0
Land, 25 acres, part ordinary arable and part 'allotments', rent per annum	50	0	0
Wages of superintendence (say) annually	100	0	0
	£170 0 0		
Total per man per annum (exclusive of cost of raw materials)	£6	16	0

On the above estimate each man would be able to obtain his family's potatoes and vegetables, boots and shoes, bread, bacon, socks and clothing (in large part) for an annual sum of £6 16s. plus the cost of the raw materials they contain. Each man would have to produce for sale an output realizing an annual sum of £6 16s. plus the cost of those raw materials. He will find himself in those necessities if, besides being a member of his Homecrofting Group, he can sell, annually, labour representing that sum.

How much labour must he sell to produce the same things for his family without the resources of the group?

The data are difficult to obtain. But from the state-

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ment in the *Week End Review* for 1st April 1933, of the food that is necessary for a family of four, as calculated by their experts, we derive the following:

	£	s.	d.	
Bread per annum	5	12	8	
Bacon „ „	6	5	8	
Vegetables „	6	1	4	
Total				£17 19 8

Rowntree's book on Poverty, a standard work for its time, gives the following as the average expenditure of a poor family of four, on clothing in 1902 :

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Clothing, per annum	3	14	0				
If we balance this low figure by adding for boots, per annum	2	10	0				
We obtain a total for wear of					6	4	0
Making an annual total for all these necessaries of					24	3	8
Or for 25 families of four, an annual expenditure of					604	11	8

The necessaries costing annually according to this calculation £604 11s. 8d. are made obtainable for £170 plus the price of the raw materials in them.

Otherwise expressed, what costs £24 3s. 8d. per family is being obtained for £6 16s. plus the price of the materials. Whereas the breadwinner of the family

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formerly had to work for £24 3s. 8d. in the ordinary way to obtain these necessities, it is now enough if £6 16s. plus the price of the raw material is worked for in the ordinary way. Only a fraction of the labour now needs to be pressed upon the ordinary market to obtain these necessities which would have had to be marketed if the Homecrofting Group did not exist.

In the above 'raw materials' include seeds and manures, leather, pig-feed, and yarns for knitted wear or tweeds. Whenever the yarns can be manufactured the money cost of those items shrinks to the price of the raw wool.

It is too early to make the above figures other than highly speculative. But even if they be found enormously too favourable, it must be remembered that twenty-five men are a minimum. As the numbers participating increase, as power machines become installable, and as more things can be produced from nearer the origin, the pace at which returns overtake expenditure becomes a rapidly accelerating one.

Even if extreme smallness of numbers should occasionally prevent an enterprise like this from yielding a financial return, one ought in common fairness to take into the credit side of the account the healthy nature of the occupations to which these men would be introduced, the profound education in the useful arts they would receive, the acquaintance with the soil, and with animal and vegetable life and all the elemental conditions of human existence; and with these considerations in view, compare this way of

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helping the unemployed with such other ways of helping them as have so far been found possible. If this is done I think the claims of the Homecrofting Group will be found abundantly comparable with any of those more exclusively educative and recreative movements which are at present familiar to us.

A final note of warning must be inserted. A group's production must be for its own consumption. It must aim at having a maximum variety of things in its pool for its own use. A man may if he cares sell some of his claims on the pool to a neighbour and buy certain things for himself out of a shop with the money. There is no objection to that. It cannot go too far so long as the pool contains a variety of goods and the variety consists chiefly of the necessities of life. *But if the men ever drift into the practice of making only one thing for the market instead of many things for their own sustenance they become once more an ordinary business; and are as liable to unemployment as ever when general trade becomes slack.*

In commencing a group the co-operation of the Authorities must always be obtained so that the men's unemployment benefit may not be interfered with. The money value of the weekly units at the first is so small that there is usually no difficulty in making a beginning.

In conclusion, it must always be remembered that while the system contains great possibilities, it is as yet a virgin track, entirely unexplored. Only one

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Homecrofting Group is in existence—that at Cheltenham—and it is only in its early stages. Every group is a new experiment.

★

These last words were barely in print when an event occurred which shows how rapidly such words may go out of date; the announcement of no less than a gift of £30,000, made to the cause of self-subsistence for the unemployed by a believer in it. I can hardly close this book without a word of appreciation. It is difficult to know whether to congratulate Lord Nuffield most upon the scale of his giving or the exquisite placing of the gift. It is risky to prophesy; but if anything we have been urging here is true, this money should do something which gifts of the kind very seldom do—make a little history. This is not merely because the donor has placed it in the hands of a social worker of genius, Mr. Peter Scott of Brynmawr, but because Mr. Scott appears to have caught sight of that which, as we believe, can alone really effect his great purpose, and the results are showing. The unemployed under his new scheme are already, it is reported, in a group making for themselves the necessities of life and exchanging them on the basis of the amount of work done by each participant. Whether the technique being followed in effecting the exchanges is the one we have been advocating I am not informed. But whatever be the technique of exchange, the substantial fact is that the people's standard of life, according to reliable accounts, is being

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raised by 10s. to 15s. per week. The system is either the Homecroft one or something as good.

Lord Nuffield's gift can hardly but have reverberations. It is like the coming of age of a new principle. All the serious agencies working for the unemployed will have to come to it, even the Government Commissioners for Distressed Areas. Wages will not return; and largesse cannot go on for ever. The public will tire of amusing the unemployed. They themselves will tire of being amused. Only the prospect of getting economically on their feet again will ever stir their blood. And this cannot be done on the old lines. To put them in wages, except for the brief duration of a boom, is only to put other people out. The hope lies in a new economic formation based on the triple idea of a limited group, a common pool and an *ad hoc* currency to mediate exchange; a formation which is still virgin soil for the economic pioneer, but which once achieved for the unemployed not only does not harm those who remain in wages, but by providing a new set of buyers actually helps them to maintain their standards and keep their posts.

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