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**THE CONTROL  
OF WAGES**  

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# The Control of Wages

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By WALTON HAMILTON ~ ~ ~ ~

*Professor of Economics, The Brookings School, and*

STACY MAY ~ ~ ~ ~

*Assistant Professor of Economics, Dartmouth College*

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Amherst College,  
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DEAR HENRY CLAY:

The psalmist has said that a book on wages is like grass which in the morning flourisheth and groweth up and in the evening is cut down and withereth. But he must have been looking through his glass darkly that day, for he did not really see how frail are the pages whereon it is written of what hire the laborer is worthy. For man can, by diligence and care, produce a grass which will the longer endure the rain, the wind, and the sun. Yet he seems unable, by taking thought thereto, to add a cubit to the brief life of a theory of wages.

Surely men enough have given themselves to fashioning "laws" of wages. If every tome meant increased understanding, we must long since have learned more than there is to know about the earnings of "labor"; for the annals of its exposition are full to overflowing. But explanations have come and gone to no good purpose; for more often than not the new has been no nearer than the old to a truth which is on speaking terms with reality.

Of the right of this passing volume to even so fleeting a life you can judge better than we. It is only what it pretends to be: a realistic attempt at a first analysis of the problem of making his hire worthy of the laborer. Its title, *The Control of Wages*, meets your dictum that a theory which is worth the getting can be found in an attack upon an important problem. We have not dubbed it with the sub-title, "Or, How to Improve the Conduct of the Demand Curve for Labor." In fact, in its pages you will look in

vain for "demand curves" (if there really are such things), "wages schedules," hypothecated feeling magnitudes, putative funds of labor and of capital, and the other paraphernalia of a "neo-classical" economics which were the playthings of our youth. It is useless to attempt to explain the omission. Those who have never tasted the joys and unrealities of a romantic economics will never miss these things. Those who have not yet put away childish things along with "firsts," "summa cum's," and the other impedimenta of juvenile erudition can never be reconciled to their absence. Whether our argument puts in their place anything that is new or wise or true or useful or good we cannot tell.

We only know that we can dedicate this book to you with the assurance that it has one value possessed by few of its kind. When its brief day is done, if it has one, and it goes to that limbo whence the obsolete returns only to plague students who are being subjected to the discipline of a dead economics, it will give place to its "better." May our argument provoke you to speed your coming book on wages to the end that this volume may be scrapped and we may know more of the truth about the contents of the pay envelope.

We would, if we dared, wish for your book on wages a longer life. But, despite its greater merit, it is likely to succumb as quickly as this to the fate which overtakes all theories of wages. The test of a teacher is in training up "cubs" who will make his finished work the crude beginnings of fuller studies. You, sir, are too good a teacher for even your best work long to withstand the creative efforts of your best pupils.

Will you accept this ephemeral offering as a tribute to your craftsmanship? Since you use good materials, fashion them into substantial articles, and leave upon your wares

## DEDICATION

vii

the delicate and artistic touch of your workmanship, we would fain write ourselves as of your company. But since we handle our tools none too deftly, are no accredited scribblers upon economic theory, and are engaged in an adventure which runs to the very edges of reputable belief, it must not be so. Accordingly we can only say that we should like very much to be able to sign ourselves,

Yours in the craft,

WALTON HAMILTON.

STACY MAY.

Henry Clay, Esq.,  
The Craft of the Economists,  
"The Manchester School,"  
Manchester, England.



## NOTE

A large part of the argument for "The Control of Wages" which is set forth in this book was tried out in "the classes for workers" in Holyoke and Springfield, 1920-1921; 1921-1922.

The argument was worked out in a series of conferences between Mr. Hamilton and Mr. May. In the actual writing Mr. Hamilton pencilled Chapters I-XI and XV, and Mr. May Chapters XII-XIV. The index was prepared by Miss Edna Cers.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE IMPORTANCE OF WAGES . . . . .	13
II THE CASE AGAINST CONTROL . . . . .	20
III THE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM . . . . .	29
IV WAGES AND "THE ACQUISITIVE ARTS" . . . . .	34
V WAGES AND "THE INDUSTRIAL ARTS" . . . . .	46
VI WAGES AND "THE ECONOMIC ARTS" . . . . .	63
VII THE RIGHT AND MIGHT OF LABOR . . . . .	82
VIII THE CONTROL OF PRICES . . . . .	91
IX THE LABOREE'S FREE INCOME . . . . .	97
X A THEORY OF WAGES . . . . .	103
XI TOWARDS A WAGES POLICY . . . . .	122
XII THE DIVISION OF THE VALUE PRODUCT . . . . .	137
XIII THE CONTROL OF TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY . . . . .	149
XIV THE CONTROL OF BROADER ECONOMIC FACTORS . . . . .	160
XV WAGES AND WELFARE . . . . .	169
A NOTE ON THE "ANNALS OF WAGES" . . . . .	175
INDEX . . . . .	181

## INDEX

- Accidents as a waste in industrial technique, 155
- "Business cycle,"  
as a cause of unemployment and a waste in industry, 166  
in relation to wages, 65  
its relation to a "militant" union policy, 134  
problem of elimination of, 66
- Coal industry, overdevelopment in, as a waste, 165
- Collective bargain,  
as means of securing share of "corporate savings" for wage increase, 71  
as means of securing wage increase, 86
- "Collective marketing," 75
- "Collective research," 75  
in technique, 72
- "Coming of industrialism," 15
- "Commodity" theory of labor and tendency toward uniform wage rate, 116
- Consumer, see "Strategy of trade unions"
- Consumers,  
and wage increase, 36  
organization of laborers as, 90
- Control of wage-determining factors, the case for control, 29
- "Controls" over factors affecting wage rate, 125
- "Corporate savings" and wage increase, 38
- Demand, changes in, as a cause of idleness of plant 166
- "Economic arts,"  
development of, 135  
improvement in, as source for wage increase, 63
- "Economic worth," determination of, as basis for standard wage rate, 118
- Efficiency of labor,  
increase in, as increment to wages, 46  
in relation to absenteeism, 50  
in relation to health, 47  
in relation to its utilization, 49  
in relation to morale, 50  
in relation to training and placing, 48
- Efficiency of management,  
increase in, as an increment to wages, 52  
in relation to marginal management, 54  
in relation to production for service, 55  
in relation to selecting personnel, 53
- "Empire of machines," 169
- Engineer, employment of, by labor, 157
- Equipment,  
idleness of, as a waste, 163  
overequipment as a waste, 165
- Equipment of industry,  
effect of rate of replacements on wages, 59  
improvement in, as increment to wages, 59  
marginal managements in relation to. 60

- Expropriation,  
 of income from natural resources, 41  
 of profits, 39
- Factory organization, improvement  
 in, as increment to wages, 60
- "Financial unification" of industry  
 to secure surplus for wage increase, 75
- "Free income,"  
 definition of, 97  
 in the feudal system, 101
- "Functional" defined, 112
- "Functional theory of wages," statement of, 107
- "General rate of wages," analysis of, 115
- Good will, earnings on, as an increment to wages, 37
- Government services as means of increasing "free income," 99
- Human needs, as a standard of efficiency, 162.
- Illness as a waste in industrial technique, 155
- Immigration,  
 and the tendency toward a uniform wage rate, 116  
 relation to wage, 88
- Income,  
 moral claim to, 83  
 sources of, 82
- Industrial arts, improvement in, as source of wage increase, 130
- "Industrial accountancy"  
 defined, 152  
 its use by labor, 157
- Industrial equipment, reduction in, as source of wage increase, 127
- "Industrial services" as means of increasing "free income," 98
- Inefficiency in management. see
- Information,  
 factual information concerning industry  
 central agencies for investigation during the war, 162  
 need for, 138  
 sources of, 139
- "Intangible assets," ownership by community as source for wage increase, 67
- Interest rate and wage increase, 38
- Inventions, change in method of, 56
- Investments,  
 income from, as an increment to wages, 36  
 limitation of return on, 68
- "Liquidation of ownership," in corporate property, 69
- "Living wage," classification of, as a necessary cost of production, 128
- Luxuries, decrease in, as source of lower prices, 93
- Management, lowering the quality of, as source of wage increase, 127
- Marketing, emphasis, as a waste in industry, 166
- Markets,  
 "collective marketing," obstacles to, 72  
 reorganization of, as source for wage increase, 71
- Middle Ages,  
 "free income" in, 101  
 source of income of laborer in, 14
- "Militant" union policy, its relation to the "unstable dollar" and "business cycle," 134
- "Militant" trade unionism,  
 its function in the wage campaign, 132  
 its limitations, 125
- Mobility of labor,  
 and competition, 118  
 and tendency toward uniform wage

- Monopoly profits as an increment to wages, 37
- Nationalization of industry, to secure surplus for wage increase, 76
- "Natural laws," 28
- "Natural rate of wages," theory of, refuted, 111
- "Natural resources," income from, as an increment to wages, 40
- Natural wage, 21
- Policy, wage, see "Strategy of trade unions"
- "Potential" welfare, 172
- Price increase, as source of wage increase, 127, 129
- "Price system," the, 169
- Prices,  
 control of, 91  
 decrease in luxuries as source of lower prices, 93  
 effect of irregularity on purchasing power of wages, 94  
 increase in, as an increment to wages, 35  
 sources of lower prices, 92
- Production, increase in, see "Technical efficiency"
- "Productivity," theory of wages, 25
- "Profits," function of, 38
- Program, conditions of formulating in long-time terms, 161
- Program for wage campaign, see "Strategy of trade unions"
- Property, reduction in payment for use of, as source for wage increase, 67
- Publicity of factual information, 147
- Rate, relation to trade unionism, 88
- Raw materials, decrease in price of as an increment to wages, 44
- Redistribution,
- Research,  
 "economic research" as source of wage increase, 79  
 labor research as instrument in securing wage increase, 86
- Resources, relation of wage level to, 87
- Responsibility of conduct of business, assumption of, by labor in exercising control over sources of wages, 127
- Restriction of output as a waste in industrial technique, 155
- Salaries,  
 determination of, 43  
 elimination of, 44
- "Salary roll," as an increment in wages, 42
- "Scientific management," in relation to effective utilization of labor, 49
- Selling, emphasis on, as a waste in industry, 166
- Sources of wage increase, ethical consideration of, 126
- Sources of wages,  
 institutional character of, 108  
 susceptibility to control, 109  
 variable character of, 108
- "Specific productivity of labor," 26
- "Standard of living,"  
 demand for minimum standard, 144  
 moral claim to, 143  
 relation to rising prices, 145
- "Standards of efficiency" as an increment to wages, 61
- "Standardized dollar," relation to wage increase, 95
- Strategic industries, wage differentials in, 88
- Strategy of trade unions in wage campaign, 124  
 policy of tapping the increase in wealth, 133

- Strikes, as a waste in industry, 164  
 "Subsistence theory," of wages, 23  
 "Supply and demand," theory of wages, 21
- Tariff, and wage increase, 35
- Taxation, relation of incidence of, to "free income," 100
- Taylor System, its effect on labor's attitude toward technical efficiency, 149
- Technical efficiency,  
 as an article of labor policy, 158  
 as an article in labor's policy, 156  
 conditions of labor's interest in, 151  
 labor's attitude toward, 149  
 lack of standards of, 162
- Technician, employment of, by labor, 158
- Technique of industry, improvement in, as increment to wages, 56
- Theories of wages, "functional theory," 107  
 "productivity," 25  
 "subsistence theory," 23  
 "supply and demand," 21  
 "wage fund," 24
- Trade unions,  
 and immigration, 88  
 and mobility of labor, 119  
 and organization of labor as consumers, 89  
 and wages, differentials in strategic industries, 89  
 as means of securing wage increase, 86  
 co-operation with other agencies of control, 132  
 need for amalgamation, 126  
 need of industrial organization, 87  
 strategy of, in wage campaign, 124
- Unemployment,  
 as a waste, 164  
 as a waste in industrial technique,
- Unification of industry,  
 as source of wage increase, 75  
 objections to, 76  
 proposals for, 75
- Unification of processes as source of wage increase, 71
- Uniformity in wage rates, tendency toward, 116
- "Unstable dollar," its relation to a "militant" union policy, 134
- "Use of leisure," 172
- "Value product,"  
 decline in labor's share of, 146  
 defined, 140  
 distribution of, 140  
 ratio of wages to, 143
- "Wage fund," theory of wages, 24
- Wage rates, factors to be considered in the making of, 124
- Wages,  
 and welfare, 169  
 high wages no guarantee of welfare, 171  
 nominal wage, ways of increasing, 34  
 raw material of welfare, 170  
 relation to other shares in distribution, 120  
 relation of, and the "standardized dollar," 95  
 relation of wages and regularity in prices, 94  
 source of, 29  
 source of increase in, see "Price increase," "investments," "natural resources," "salaries," "raw materials," "efficiency of labor," "efficiency of management," "technique of industry," "equipment of industry," "business cycle," "property," "markets," "unification of processes," "unification of industry," and "research"
- standard of fairness. 83

## INDEX

185

- Wage structure,"* 18  
  *explanation of,* 114  
*Wage systems, conditions of a satisfactory,* 17  
*Waste"*  
  *defined,* 152  
  *idleness due to strikes as a,* 164  
  *war as a waste in the industrial system,* 163  
*Waste in Industry,"* report of the Federated Engineering Societies, 152  
*Waste" in modern industrial technique, summary of,* 154  
  
*"Waste" of management, as an argument for wage increase,* 152  
*Welfare, wages as a means to,* 169  
*"Welfare work" of a corporation, as means of increasing "free income,"* 98  
*"Workers control," as method of unifying industry,* 78  
*Workmen's compensation,*  
  *as means of increasing "free income,"* 100  
  *as means of limiting laborers' expenditure,* 96

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## INDEX

- Accidents as a waste in industrial technique, 155
- "Business cycle,"  
as a cause of unemployment and a waste in industry, 166  
in relation to wages, 65  
its relation to a "militant" union policy, 134  
problem of elimination of, 66
- Coal industry, overdevelopment in, as a waste, 165
- Collective bargain,  
as means of securing share of "corporate savings" for wage increase, 71  
as means of securing wage increase, 86
- "Collective marketing," 75
- "Collective research," 75  
in technique, 72
- "Coming of industrialism," 15
- "Commodity" theory of labor and tendency toward uniform wage rate, 116
- Consumer, see "Strategy of trade unions"
- Consumers,  
and wage increase, 36  
organization of laborers as, 90
- Control of wage-determining factors, the case for control, 29
- "Controls" over factors affecting wage rate, 125
- "Corporate savings" and wage increase, 38
- Demand, changes in, as a cause of idleness of plant 166
- "Economic arts,"  
development of, 135  
improvement in, as source for wage increase, 63
- "Economic worth," determination of, as basis for standard wage rate, 118
- Efficiency of labor,  
increase in, as increment to wages, 46  
in relation to absenteeism, 50  
in relation to health, 47  
in relation to its utilization, 49  
in relation to morale, 50  
in relation to training and placing, 48
- Efficiency of management,  
increase in, as an increment to wages, 52  
in relation to marginal management, 54  
in relation to production for service, 55  
in relation to selecting personnel, 53
- "Empire of machines," 169
- Engineer, employment of, by labor, 157
- Equipment,  
idleness of, as a waste, 163  
overequipment as a waste, 165
- Equipment of industry,  
effect of rate of replacements on wages, 59  
improvement in, as increment to wages, 59  
marginal managements in relation to. 60

- Expropriation,  
 of income from natural resources,  
 41  
 of profits, 39
- Factory organization, improvement  
 in, as increment to wages, 60
- "Financial unification" of industry  
 to secure surplus for wage in-  
 crease, 75
- "Free income,"  
 definition of, 97  
 in the feudal system, 101
- "Functional" defined, 112
- "Functional theory of wages," state-  
 ment of, 107
- "General rate of wages," analysis  
 of, 115
- Good will, earnings on, as an in-  
 crement to wages, 37
- Government services as means of in-  
 creasing "free income," 99
- Human needs, as a standard of effi-  
 ciency, 162.
- Illness as a waste in industrial tech-  
 nique, 155
- Immigration,  
 and the tendency toward a uni-  
 form wage rate, 116  
 relation to wage, 88
- Income,  
 moral claim to, 83  
 sources of, 82
- Industrial arts, improvement in, as  
 source of wage increase, 130
- "Industrial accountancy"  
 defined, 152  
 its use by labor, 157
- Industrial equipment, reduction in,  
 as source of wage increase, 127
- "Industrial services" as means of  
 increasing "free income," 98
- Inefficiency in management. see
- Information,  
 factual information concerning in-  
 dustry  
 central agencies for investigation  
 during the war, 162  
 need for, 138  
 sources of, 139
- "Intangible assets," ownership by  
 community as source for wage  
 increase, 67
- Interest rate and wage increase, 38
- Inventions, change in method of, 56
- Investments,  
 income from, as an increment to  
 wages, 36  
 limitation of return on, 68
- "Liquidation of ownership," in cor-  
 porate property, 69
- "Living wage," classification of, as a  
 necessary cost of production,  
 128
- Luxuries, decrease in, as source of  
 lower prices, 93
- Management, lowering the quality of,  
 as source of wage increase, 127
- Marketing, emphasis, as a waste in  
 industry, 166
- Markets,  
 "collective marketing," obstacles  
 to, 72  
 reorganization of, as source for  
 wage increase, 71
- Middle Ages,  
 "free income" in, 101  
 source of income of laborer in, 14
- "Militant" union policy, its relation  
 to the "unstable dollar" and  
 "business cycle," 134
- "Militant" trade unionism,  
 its function in the wage cam-  
 paign, 132  
 its limitations, 125
- Mobility of labor,  
 and competition, 118  
 and tendency toward uniform wage

- Monopoly profits as an increment to wages, 37
- Nationalization of industry, to secure surplus for wage increase, 76
- "Natural laws," 28
- "Natural rate of wages," theory of, refuted, 111
- "Natural resources," income from, as an increment to wages, 40
- Natural wage, 21
- Policy, wage, see "Strategy of trade unions"
- "Potential" welfare, 172
- Price increase, as source of wage increase, 127, 129
- "Price system," the, 169
- Prices,  
 control of, 91  
 decrease in luxuries as source of lower prices, 93  
 effect of irregularity on purchasing power of wages, 94  
 increase in, as an increment to wages, 35  
 sources of lower prices, 92
- Production, increase in, see "Technical efficiency"
- "Productivity," theory of wages, 25
- "Profits," function of, 38
- Program, conditions of formulating in long-time terms, 161
- Program for wage campaign, see "Strategy of trade unions"
- Property, reduction in payment for use of, as source for wage increase, 67
- Publicity of factual information, 147
- Rate, relation to trade unionism, 88
- Raw materials, decrease in price of as an increment to wages, 44
- Redistribution,
- Research,  
 "economic research" as source of wage increase, 79  
 labor research as instrument in securing wage increase, 86
- Resources, relation of wage level to, 87
- Responsibility of conduct of business, assumption of, by labor in exercising control over sources of wages, 127
- Restriction of output as a waste in industrial technique, 155
- Salaries,  
 determination of, 43  
 elimination of, 44
- "Salary roll," as an increment in wages, 42
- "Scientific management," in relation to effective utilization of labor, 49
- Selling, emphasis on, as a waste in industry, 166
- Sources of wage increase, ethical consideration of, 126
- Sources of wages,  
 institutional character of, 108  
 susceptibility to control, 109  
 variable character of, 108
- "Specific productivity of labor," 26
- "Standard of living,"  
 demand for minimum standard, 144  
 moral claim to, 143  
 relation to rising prices, 145
- "Standards of efficiency" as an increment to wages, 61
- "Standardized dollar," relation to wage increase, 95
- Strategic industries, wage differentials in, 88
- Strategy of trade unions in wage campaign, 124  
 policy of tapping the increase in wealth, 133

- Strikes, as a waste in industry, 164  
 "Subsistence theory," of wages, 23  
 "Supply and demand," theory of wages, 21
- Tariff, and wage increase, 35
- Taxation, relation of incidence of, to "free income," 100
- Taylor System, its effect on labor's attitude toward technical efficiency, 149
- Technical efficiency,  
 as an article of labor policy, 158  
 as an article in labor's policy, 156  
 conditions of labor's interest in, 151  
 labor's attitude toward, 149  
 lack of standards of, 162
- Technician, employment of, by labor, 158
- Technique of industry, improvement in, as increment to wages, 56
- Theories of wages, "functional theory," 107  
 "productivity," 25  
 "subsistence theory," 23  
 "supply and demand," 21  
 "wage fund," 24
- Trade unions,  
 and immigration, 88  
 and mobility of labor, 119  
 and organization of labor as consumers, 89  
 and wages, differentials in strategic industries, 89  
 as means of securing wage increase, 86  
 co-operation with other agencies of control, 132  
 need for amalgamation, 126  
 need of industrial organization, 87  
 strategy of, in wage campaign, 124
- Unemployment,  
 as a waste, 164  
 as a waste in industrial technique,
- Unification of industry,  
 as source of wage increase, 75  
 objections to, 76  
 proposals for, 75
- Unification of processes as source of wage increase, 71
- Uniformity in wage rates, tendency toward, 116
- "Unstable dollar," its relation to a "militant" union policy, 134
- "Use of leisure," 172
- "Value product,"  
 decline in labor's share of, 146  
 defined, 140  
 distribution of, 140  
 ratio of wages to, 143
- "Wage fund," theory of wages, 24
- Wage rates, factors to be considered in the making of, 124
- Wages,  
 and welfare, 169  
 high wages no guarantee of welfare, 171  
 nominal wage, ways of increasing, 34  
 raw material of welfare, 170  
 relation to other shares in distribution, 120  
 relation of, and the "standardized dollar," 95  
 relation of wages and regularity in prices, 94  
 source of, 29  
 source of increase in, see "Price increase," "investments," "natural resources," "salaries," "raw materials," "efficiency of labor," "efficiency of management," "technique of industry," "equipment of industry," "business cycle," "property," "markets," "unification of processes," "unification of industry," and "research"
- standard of fairness. 83

## INDEX

185

- Wage structure,"* 18  
  *explanation of,* 114  
*Wage systems, conditions of a satisfactory,* 17  
*Waste"*  
  *defined,* 152  
  *idleness due to strikes as a,* 164  
  *war as a waste in the industrial system,* 163  
*Waste in Industry,"* report of the Federated Engineering Societies, 152  
*Waste" in modern industrial technique, summary of,* 154  
  
*"Waste" of management, as an argument for wage increase,* 152  
*Welfare, wages as a means to,* 169  
*"Welfare work" of a corporation, as means of increasing "free income,"* 98  
*"Workers control," as method of unifying industry,* 78  
*Workmen's compensation,*  
  *as means of increasing "free income,"* 100  
  *as means of limiting laborers' expenditure,* 96

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