

THE
HOBO PHILOSOPHER

(The Philosopher of the Hobo Life)

or

The Message of Economic Freedom

by

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Why work six days a week when you
can get your living by working one?

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THE MOTIVE

We are living in a world where it ought to be possible for everyone to get the necessary food, clothing, and shelter easily and quickly. We have ample resources of timber, coal, oil and agricultural lands to supply all our needs. Modern machinery enables us to do our work largely by power derived from coal, oil or waterfall. Yet the great mass of people are working all their lives to get a living, and many even lack the necessaries of life.

In a Democracy such conditions can only exist while the majority remain in ignorance of the possibilities of modern industry. Lester F. Ward, in his "Applied Sociology" sums up the whole matter by saying that if a man wants to help the human family, he should devote his life to spreading among the people some of the accumulation of knowledge on Sociology and Economics which we have in our Colleges and Universities. Such is the aim of the author in writing and distributing this little book.

The development of modern civilization is held back largely because most people spend all their lives working, and have no time for education and the higher things of life. We ought, however, to get our living working very little, if we only went about it in the right way. One day a week or about fifty days in the year should supply all our needs. Thus the greater part of our time would be set free for developing a race of men capable of supporting a higher and better civilization than the world has ever seen before.



PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is an inquiry into the meaning of life. Its practical aim is to teach us to live better lives. While most of the philosophy of antiquity is valueless because not based on fact, yet we have received from the ancient Greeks two great principles both valuable for the study in this book.

1. To accept no institution or idea, however ancient or venerable it may be, but to inquire into everything; to test all by truth or merit. This is known as the Socratic method, and for applying this to the customs and traditions of his age, Socrates was compelled to drink the cup of hemlock. The use of this method in recent times has laid the foundation of modern science, with its tremendous gifts to mankind: steam, electricity, telegraphs, telephones, automobiles and aeroplanes. Yet for applying the same method to our social institutions, right here in America today, men are being persecuted, jailed and murdered. When we do, similar great advances may be expected, as in our industrial life. War, millionaires, poverty, crime, and many other evils will be abolished, but the greatest advance of all will be the emancipation of the worker from the slavery of the job.

2. The application of this principle to the things which we use in our daily life. A little thought will enable us to distinguish those things which are necessary to man's welfare and happiness from those which are merely a matter of custom or prejudice. Most of the so-called luxuries and comforts of life are but counters (i. e., counterfeit coins) for which

we have been taught to sacrifice our true inheritance of dignity and leisure. By eliminating these we can minimize our needs so as to have to spend very little time in the money-making pursuits of farm, factory or market place and so have the maximum time for the pleasure of real living. To demonstrate this principle the Philosopher Diogenes used to go about the country simply attired, eating plain foods, and sleeping sometimes on the porches of temples and sometimes carrying with him a barrel to sleep in.

THOREAU'S EXPERIMENT

To find out exactly how long it is necessary for a man to work to get his living, David Henry Thoreau, the greatest philosopher that America has produced, went into the woods by Walden Pond. He there cleared a piece of ground, built himself a hut and made his living by growing beans, potatoes, corn, etc., producing enough for his own wants and a surplus to exchange for the things he needed to buy. He tells us at the end of his experiment, "For more than five years I have maintained myself thus solely by the labor of my hands, and I found that by working about six weeks in the year I could meet all expenses of living." This is a little less than fifty days or about one day a week.

One of the most sacred experiences the writer has ever had was at Walden Pond, when he added one stone to the cairn of rocks that is rising on the ground where the hut of the sage stood. This cairn is a fitting monument to a rugged character, the value of whose teachings the world today is only beginning to learn.

THE AUTHOR'S EXPERIMENT

Before knowing of the work of Thoreau the writer had been making a similar experiment, but not in the woods as a hermit, but on the highway among the Hobos. The experiment started somewhat accidentally out of a hike from Los Angeles to San Francisco to visit the Fair in 1915. Observing numerous camps of Hobos along the road, his interest was aroused. After visiting the Fair he determined to find out something about them. For this purpose he went into the Sacramento Valley, where he lived in the "jungles" and worked picking grapes, peaches and hops. In about twenty-five days considerably more than enough was earned to pay all the expenses of a trip lasting over four months. This trip included a visit to Yosemite Valley, the climb of Mount Lassen, our only active volcano, and was continued as far north as Crater Lake, Oregon.

Returning to Los Angeles, a longer trip was commenced which led ultimately right across the continent to Boston. No work was done on the journey to New Orleans. Between New Orleans and Chicago strawberry picking was followed for about two months, the berries being followed north as they ripened. Arriving at Chicago, several days' work was done digging ditches for the People's Gas Company. A move was then made to Columbus, Wisconsin, where about three weeks' work was done in a pea cannery. A few days' work was done on building jobs at Buffalo and at Boston.

After these strenuous days it was decided to

winter with the millionaires in Florida. The journey south was made along the Atlantic Coast and extended as far as Palm Beach and Miami. The return was made around the north of Lake Ochochobee to Tampa, and thence around the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans. From here a route was taken through the Allegheny Mountains, passing Birmingham, Chattanooga, Bristol, Knoxville, and through the Shenandoah Valley, thence by way of Philadelphia and New York to Boston. On this trip only a few days' work was done, the expenses being paid out of savings made the previous summer. Several involuntary visits were made to southern jails and on one occasion the writer had to serve twenty days on a negro chain-gang for the crime of being a "walking tourist."

This trip completed about two years' wanderings, the whole expense of which was paid by working about one hundred days as recorded here. Thus the writer demonstrated that it is possible, living the life of the Hobos, and working as they work to get one's living by working about fifty days in the year or one day a week. This idea the author sometimes calls the Hobo Philosophy; and as he goes through the country teaching it he is sometimes called the "Hobo Philosopher."

The period of the experiment was the two years previous to the entry of America into the World War. Work was usually easily obtainable but wages were low, averaging about two and a half dollars a day. By cooking one's meals at a camp fire "jungling up" a careful man could live well on thirty cents a day. With flour at eight cents a

pound, a little baking powder and a rind of bacon to grease the pan, sufficient flapjacks for a meal could be made for five cents. With rolled oats at six cents a pound, some canned milk and a little sugar, enough mush for a meal can be had for about six cents. With beans at ten cents a pound, and a little salt-pork and onion and bread, a substantial meal can be made for ten cents. With ten cents' worth of meat, some potatoes, onion and bread, two substantial meals can be made for about thirteen cents each.

As to outfit, the cooking utensils carried consisted of a frying pan, which served as a plate as well as for frying, one knife, fork and spoon, one can holding about a pint for making coffee, two cans holding about two quarts, used for cooking mulligan beans, rice, fruit, etc. These cans have air-tight tops, so that they can be used for carrying water, and also as a fireless cooker by wrapping in a sweater while traveling during the day. These things, together with a sleeping bag, a change of underclothes and a few sundries are carried in a Canadian pack-bag similar to that used by the Alaskan miners. The whole outfit including a week's supply of food will weigh forty pounds. Without food and cooking utensils, fifteen pounds. The sleeping bag is just a woolen quilt sewn up in the form of a bag. It slips inside another bag made of balloon silk, in order to keep it dry. In cold weather another bag made out of a light blanket is slipped inside the quilt. In very cold weather a fire is necessary at night. On a wet night the open porch of a church or school or any other dry

place is used to spread the bag. The carrying of a tent was early abandoned, as it was usually found easier on a wet night to find a dry place to spread one's bed, than to pitch a tent. As for clothes a complete outfit of khaki clothes with boots and underclothes can be bought for about twenty dollars. This with about the same amount for repairs and replacements will last a year. An expense of about ten cents a day.

Thus far we have seen that if a man is willing to reduce his wants to somewhere near his needs, he can get his living by working about one day a week. Such a life, however, is used here rather to teach a lesson from than to urge its practice. It can be used, however, by the individual as a means of escape from the slavery of the job, but its application to the whole of society under modern conditions is not possible. The solution socially, however, will need a little study in

ECONOMICS

Economics is the science which deals with the production and distribution of wealth. What answer has this science to the question: Why do the majority of mankind spend all their time in the struggle for food, clothing and shelter, thus living in a hopeless, grinding slavery to the mere cost of existence?

When men had nothing but hand tools to work with, they were easily able to produce enough to maintain themselves, and a few others who did no work such as the King, the nobility and the priesthood. In recent times the introduction of machinery has tremendously increased the productivity

of human labor. Kropotkin, in his "Conquest of Bread," tells us that one hundred men, working two or three months with modern machinery can produce enough bread to feed ten thousand people for a year; that one hundred men working in a modern factory can produce enough clothing for ten thousand people for two years; that one hundred miners can produce enough coal for ten thousand families. Logically, this increased productivity (conservatively estimated as ten-fold) ought to have materially shortened the hours of human labor. Yet, notwithstanding this, the great mass of the human family are today working harder and longer than they did before any machinery existed.

The heart of our trouble today lies in our having allowed private ownership in the big industries of the country. Under such conditions the workers are compelled in order to live to sell their labor power, and for this commodity they will receive, as is paid for every other commodity, the cost of production, i. e., enough money to buy sufficient food, clothing and shelter, to live and reproduce their kind. The Iron Law of Wages. All that the workers produce beyond this must go to the owners. Hence the increased productivity brought about by modern machinery, has gone not to the workers, but to the owners of the machinery, and will continue so to go, so long as we allow private ownership of the socially used means of production.

As a business proposition the American people (and they pride themselves on their business ability) ought immediately, by the right of "Eminent Domain" to take over the properties owned by the

great industrial combinations, giving the present owners bonds payable during a term of years in exchange for them. When the bondholders are paid off the people would own these industries free from all incumbrances. It would then no longer be necessary to work to produce wealth for the owners and a tremendous shortening of the hours of labor could be brought about.

The proportion of their time that the workers work to produce wealth for the owners is uncertain. Some claim that as high as eighty per cent goes to capital, others only forty per cent. A very conservative estimate would be a fifty-fifty division between capital and labor. If this is correct then the workers work three days a week to produce their wages and three days to produce wealth for the owners. Under social ownership, other things remaining the same, the hours of labor could be reduced from six to three days a week.

This reform having been completed, considerable additional saving in the hours of labor could be expected from two different sources.

1. Increased efficiency, such as:

(a) The abandonment of many of the most inefficient plants, and the working of the efficient plants continuously by shifts of men.

(b) The replacing of human labor by machinery wherever possible.

(c) The converting of our coal into power and gas right in the mines.

(d) The development of all the water power of the country, of which only about seven per cent is developed today.

(e) The electrification of all the railroads. It is estimated that a saving of at least half the labor would thereby be made.

(f) The abandonment of our existing chaotic method of distribution of products, with its multitude of jobbers, commission men and wholesalers, advertising and traveling men, together with the millions of wasteful competitive stores, and replacing them by "Consumers Coöperatives" obtaining supplies direct from farm and factory, and distributing direct to consumers.

These and many other improvements which could be suggested ought easily to increase efficiency by one-third. Thus the hours of labor already reduced to three per week could be further reduced to two.

2. Putting everybody to productive work. About one-half of the people above ten years of age reported themselves as having no occupation at the last U. S. census. They consist of several groups:

(a) Millionaires—few in number—but maintaining armies of men and women to attend to their wants; to build and maintain palaces, hotels, yachts, automobiles, etc.; to clothe, feed and amuse them.

(b) The ordinary "tired" bum as distinguished from the former, the "rubber-tired" bum, the man who will not work if he could, preferring to get his living by begging or crime.

(c) The unemployed worker, willing to work but unable to find it. Under our wage system of industry there must be, except in periods of unusual activity, a reserve army of unemployed workers.

(d) The army of men who work but not productively. Some are just parasites, exploiting the

workers of the community, some doing destructive work. Soldiers, sailors, preachers, politicians, lawyers, policemen, etc.

(e) The women also should do their share of the productive work of the world, except of course when child-bearing or child-rearing.

It is evident that if everybody were engaged in productive work the numbers of workers would be doubled and thus the hours of labor already reduced to two days a week could be reduced to one.

THE EFFICIENCY ENGINEER

There has grown up in recent years a new profession, the efficiency expert or engineer. Three of the best known of these men are perhaps Messrs. F. W. Taylor, H. L. Gantt and Walter N. Polakov. At first these men directed their efforts to making the workers more efficient, as for instance by teaching bricklayers to lay brick with the least number of motions possible. This was, however, soon abandoned as it was found that the amount of time so lost was as nothing compared with what was lost by managerial inefficiency. The writer had the fortune to attend a course of lectures by Mr. Polakov in which among many other things he gave a report of a survey of existing American machinery made by him in conjunction with Mr. Gantt. They found that half the existing machinery was idle all the time, and the other half working about half time or at half efficiency. He gave it as his opinion that American industry is seventy-five per cent inefficient; that we were producing only about a quarter of what we could produce; that if we did not want more than we are producing today, we

ought to produce it by working a fourth of the time we work or about one day and a half a week. If efficiency could reduce the hours of labor this much the putting of all the idle to work could easily reduce it to one day a week. Thus we get back again by way of the "Efficiency Engineer" to our original proposition, that instead of working six days a week we could get our living with modern machinery used efficiently, by working about one day a week or fifty days in the year.

SOME QUESTIONS

1. Can a man support a wife and family by working one day a week?

Yes; but a little foresight is necessary before marriage, instead of the hindsight that most people use after.

The best method I know for a man with a wife and family is to get one or two acres of land near a city, build a home, plant fruit and nut trees, grow vegetables enough for family use. To produce enough surplus to exchange for those things needed from the outside some special line should be taken up such as poultry, bees, hares, mushrooms, flowers, or nursery work. A few pleasant hours' work daily, averaging about fifty days a year by both husband and wife, should easily supply all needs. But it may be objected, this would need at least two thousand dollars. Yes, indeed! The man who has not got the ability and thrift to save two thousand dollars has no business raising a family. He shows his mentality to be that of a child of twelve years old or less, and ought not to

be allowed to reproduce the human race. Improvident marriages on the Dollar Down and Dollar a Week plan are the bane of America today.

2. How could the work of a farm be done by working one day a week?

Farming is today the most backward industry. The farmer is still trailing across the field behind a mule, while a great waterfall is going to waste in the distance which could be doing his ploughing for him. Henry Ford is teaching the farmers how to get their living by working thirty days a year with a tractor. In the future the staple crops will be grown coöperatively, over great tracts of country work by electrically driven machinery. Gangs of men will go out from their homes during the farming season, each man working about fifty days in the year. Many small farms will of course survive, but they will be homes rather than commercial undertakings.

3. How could a store keeper get his living by working one day a week?

It will be done when all the store keepers in a particular business learn to coöperate to do their business instead of fight each other in doing it. They could then abandon the greater number of their stores, and do the same business better in the remaining stores with perhaps one-sixth of the labor. The multitude of small competitive stores today are mostly parasitic. They are gradually being eliminated by the big department stores in America, and by the coöperative stores in Europe. Today, they are mostly traps for separating some foolish worker from his lifetime savings.

CONCLUSION

Sufficient has now been said to demonstrate that it is not necessary for a man to work all his life to get a living. Thoreau's experiment by Walden Pond, the author's experiment among the Hobos, the teachings of economics, reinforced by the opinion of the Efficiency Engineers, all go to show that a man can get his living by working about one day a week or fifty days in the year, and that as a result of education we shall all do so ultimately. When that day comes we shall all have time for real living, time to read, think, study and learn something of this wonderful world in which we live; time to travel and enjoy some of its beauties; time to cultivate a hobby, worth while, such as art, drama, music, painting, sculpture; time for religion, and even time for play.

But it may be objected that spare time for most people would only be time for idleness and vice. Mental tests applied to the men drafted in the war, showed that about half of them had the mentality of a child of twelve years old or less. Such men are incapable of culture, and spare time to them would mean idleness and vice. Social welfare work should be organized to teach them to make the best use of their time. In the future, however, this class of people should be eliminated by preventing them reproducing their kind. Today they are reproducing freely, whilst the more intelligent limit their families, resulting in degeneration of the race. In Europe this problem has led to the development of two classes, one of low mentality, working all the time to get a living, the other of higher men-

tality who mostly do not work to get a living, but devote their time to those things comprised under the general term of culture. Today, when a man can do as much work with a machine as one hundred men could do with their hands in the past, there is no need for a "working class." If we would eliminate the mentally deficient we could build up in America a civilization such as the world has never seen before, not built on "slavery" as in ancient Greece, nor on a "working class" as in Europe today, but built on the principle that everyone doing his share of the necessary work of the world, should have time and opportunity for culture.

RECENT TRAVELS

Since the journeys spoken of in the earlier part of this book, the writer has made several trans-continental hikes.

The first from Boston to Los Angeles opened with a trip through New England, in which the coast was followed as far as Mount Desert Island, thence across the White and Green Mountains to Lake Champlain. Then south, around Lake George through the Berkshires back to Boston. New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Kansas City, Dallas, El Paso, Phoenix, Yuma, San Diego, show the general route taken to Los Angeles. Many of the beauty spots of New England were visited. Some pretty scenery was noticed crossing the Allegheny Mountains. New Mexico and Arizona gave the added interest of desert travel. This trip lasted about eight months, covering about five thousand miles.

The second trip was from California to New York. Leaving Los Angeles in June the summer was spent

in the Sierra-Nevada and Rocky Mountains. Yosemite Park was visited, Mount Dana climbed and Lake Tahoe circled, all in the Sierras. After crossing Nevada and Idaho, Yellowstone Park with its wonderful geysers and the Rocky Mountain National Park were visited. The fall was spent traveling through Colorado, Texas and Louisiana to New Orleans. From here the Gulf of Mexico was followed to Florida, where the extreme point visited during the winter was Fort Meyers. The spring travel was through the Southern States, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky, whilst the summer was spent wandering through Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The journey was completed on the arrival in New York in the fall.

Spending the winter in New York the start of the third trip was made in May. The coast was followed east as far as Boston, and then turning west across the Berkshires, Albany was visited. The general direction of the Mohawk River was followed to Buffalo, thence south of the Great Lakes to Chicago. The latter was left late in the fall and a bee line made for New Orleans. The spring was spent wandering through Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. The summer was spent visiting Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Omaha City, Kansas City and the intervening country. The winter was spent in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, arriving in Los Angeles early in January. This trip covered about ten thousand miles, and lasted twenty months.

The next trip, commencing at Los Angeles, was up the Pacific Coast as far as Vancouver, B. C. The main road was followed, visiting San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Portland and Seattle. Early in May a start was made from Vancouver, across Canada. Following the Frazer River to the mountains, several ranges were crossed, leading successively to the valleys of the Okanagan, Kettle and Columbia Rivers. The latter was crossed at the outlet of the Arrow Lakes. From here the general direction of the Kooteney River was followed to Lakes Columbia and Windermere. The new road was taken from Windermere to Banff, and thence on to Calgary. The scenery along the border was much appreciated, but the Canadian Rockies, although very beautiful, did not come up to expectations. Good roads were found on all this part of the trip except the first crossing of the Cascades from Hope to Princeton, which was made by trail, and from Nelson to Kooteney Landing, which had to be made by boat. On the prairies besides Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina and Winnipeg, were visited. From the latter, to avoid the bad travel through Northern Ontario, the route was partly in Canada and partly through North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Grand Forks, Fargo, Duluth, Port Arthur, Houghton, Sault Ste. Marie, Bay City and Port Huron will show the route taken to Southern Ontario, where Toronto was reached in November. Spending the winter resting and studying in Philadelphia and Washington, a return was made to Toronto in the spring, where the journey was resumed to Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec and Halifax, thus completing the trip across Canada.

The writer hopes at an early date to cross the water, and after visiting most of the European countries, to hike across Russia and Siberia, and thus complete a trip around the world.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Roger Payne, often called the Hobo Philosopher, was born at Aldershot, England, January 27, 1874. After serving an apprenticeship to the drug trade and obtaining some experience as a clerk, he studied at the School of Pharmacy, London. Here he became qualified as a Pharmaceutical Chemist and won the certificate of honor in chemistry.

Continuing the study of science at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, he obtained a B. A. degree. As the result of a post-graduate course in law, he also received an LL. B. degree. Joining the Inner Temple at London, he became qualified to be called to the English bar. Desiring, however, a more out-of-door life, he became interested in the real estate and contracting business. At the same time he traveled considerably in England and on the Continent of Europe.

Coming to America in 1908, he spent seven years in building construction work. Since then he has spent his time traveling and teaching as recorded in this book.

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