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Plan of the Cincinnati Labor for Labor Store

Josiah Warren

1829

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*This piece, from the **Mechanics Free Press**, 1829, is among the
earliest statements by Warren of his principles.*

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Explanation of the design and arrangements of the Cooperative Magazine, which has recently been commenced in Cincinnati. Whoever can for a moment, so far abstract his thoughts from his pecuniary concerns, as to Look around him, and observe the evils which the established laws and. customs, with respect to the administration of property, are daily producing in what is called Civilized Society, must, if he is possessed of the least degree of sensibility, feel a strong desire, to remove these evils.

That the inevitable tendency of these Laws and Customs is to produce Ignorance, Want, and Wretchedness, to the majority of mankind, to the Labouring and useful members of Society, we have only to refer to their condition, in those countries where the present arrangements have been longest in operation, and where a full and satisfactory trial of them has been made.

In these countries, abounding with everything that is desirable, we see the labouring and useful members of Society, who have produced every thing, starving in the streets for want;

while some are rendered equally miserable from the anxieties of speculation and competition, and others for want of an object worthy of pursuit, are destroying their health, and shortening their lives by inactivity and apathy, or by luxuriously revelling upon the labour of the depressed.

Insincerity among friends, lawsuits between relations, hypocrisy in religion, deception in trade, dishonesty, speculation and enmity between man and man are only a few of the results of these laws and customs.

Nor should we confine our observations to the old world only. Already have we in this country, made alarming progress in the road to national ruin; and unless some effort be made to prevent the accumulation of the wealth of the country, in the hands of a few, we instead of setting to the world an example of republican simplicity, of peace and liberty, shall soon add one more to the catalogue of nations, whom aristocracy has blasted, and whom inequality of wealth, has precipitated from a comparatively prosperous situation to the lowest grade of degradation and misery.

Every reflecting mind must perceive the propriety of searching for the means by which these evils may be avoided, and of making every practicable effort (however feeble) to put them in operation.

With these views an experiment has been commenced in this place; which although upon a very small scale, will test the principles upon which it is based. And it will be a very easy and natural step, to make more complete and extensive arrangements whenever it may be desirable.

As this experiment now begins to excite much inquiry; and as it is immediately connected with the greatest interests of all parties, it appears necessary and to bring the subject forward in such a form and proper manner that all may have an opportunity to consider, and to understand it.

It is already known that the method of dealing at this place is different from that in common practice. But it is our friends

only, who at present understand in what this difference consists. It is for the information of inquiries, and for the benefit of those who are desirous of making similar arrangements, that the following statements are made, and in doing this, we shall carefully avoid all comments and matters of opinion. They may in future occupy their proper time and place. At present we wish to make a simple statement of facts, and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

All labour is valued by the time employed in it. Much might be said to show that, as time is above all things most valuable, that time is the real and natural standard of value. But we will not now undertake to prove, that which upon reflection no one will undertake to deny. We will rather proceed to, give the arrangements which have been made to carry this principle into effect.

Present Arrangement of the Magazine

Here upon this single and simple principle, any exchanges of articles and personal services are made, so that he who employs five or ten hours of his time, in the service of another, receives five or ten hours labour of the other in return. The estimates of the time cost, of articles having been obtained from those whose business it is to produce them, are always exposed to view, so that it may be readily ascertained, at what rate any article will be given and received. He who deposits an article which by our estimate costs ten hours labour, receives any other articles, which, together with the labour of the keeper in receiving and delivering them, costs ten hours, or if the person making the deposit does not wish at that time, to draw out any article, he receives a labour Note for the amount; with this note he will draw out articles, or obtain the labour of the keeper, whenever he may wish to do so.

In cases where the labour does not admit of being deposited, the person who receives it, gives a labour note on the Magazine,

by which the bearer can draw out any articles which the magazine may contain, as persons of all professions will require those things which do admit of being deposited. At present many articles are bought with money-these are delivered out for the same amount of money which the keeper paid for them, and he is rewarded for his labour with an equal amount of the labour of him who receives them, which is deducted from the note before mentioned.

There are some articles, one part of which at present is procured with money, and the other has been deposited upon the new principle. That part for which money was paid, is paid for in money, and the other part is paid for in an equal amount of labour. We do not exchange labour for money, or money for labour, excepting in particular cases of necessity.

The loss on any article, after having been ascertained, is added to, and becomes one part of its price. An account of all the labour and money expenses is kept, and when any one receives an article, he pays as much labour and money over and above the cost, as will be likely to pay these expenses; the amount being liable to vary according to local and other circumstances, is fixed periodically by the keeper. An open record is kept upon which is noted in a simple and expeditious manner, each article that is delivered: and this is done by such a method that at a meeting of those who are in the habit of dealing here, it can be readily ascertained how much labour and money have been received for the purpose of discharging these expenses: and if when compared with the account of expenses it appears that too much has been received, the overplus will be distributed equally unless any individuals choose to keep an account of the precise proportions of their dealing, in which case they will receive accordingly. If too little has been paid, all will see the propriety and the necessity of supplying the deficiency, and therefore no obligation to that effect is required. The expenses are paid in this manner, in order to secure the magazine against the chances of loss, and to enable

strangers to receive the benefits of the establishment, without being under the necessity of returning at a future time for the purpose of discharging these little items of expense.

The keeper exhibits the bills of all his purchasers to public view so that the cost of every article may be known to all. There is a list upon which each individual who is in the practice of dealing here, can make known his wants, and the keeper of the magazine reports each day the articles or labour that can be received, and those who wish for the employment, refer first to the report of their wants to know whether their articles or services are required-as none can be received which are not wanted.

When the keeper has occasion for money, he reports upon the list of wants the rate at which he is willing to receive it in exchange for his labour. There is a place for advertisements, so that communications can be made to all interested. When any one wishes to deal in the common way, and feels no interests in the new arrangements, the keeper will deal in that way, provided the profits will amount to that which he requires in money as the reward of his labour for that day.

These are all the important arrangements which have so far appeared necessary. There are no contracts or agreements between any parties but these, or any other regulations -or Customs which may from time to time be adopted at this place, will always be subject to alteration, or to be abolished whenever increasing knowledge shall exhibit the propriety of change.

N.B. Those who may be desirous of establishing magazines will find their labour very much abridged by taking copies of our labour estimates of articles.