

Seeking the answer to economic problems

by Benjamin J. Russell, Mountain Home, Ark.
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The fear of unemployment is a growing concern for many working men and women. We see and hear reports almost daily about people being laid off as companies, both large and small, cut back their work force. Company mergers also create situations that lead to reduction in number of workers. Competition among workers tends to increase as college and high school graduates add to the unemployment figures.

Increasing technological advances can improve product quality, increase productive efficiency, lower production costs, and reduce retail prices for the consumer. What is the purpose of inventions and labor-saving equipment if not to create unemployment? If food, clothing, shelter and all the good things of life can be produced with less time, less effort and cost, is that not an ideal situation and a great benefit to society?

The question is whether this steadily increasing power to produce wealth of all kinds must be associated with poverty and loss of jobs. When all these positive factors fail to improve our standard of living, but rather seem to intensify our social problems, we are challenged to seek answers to some key questions. Why should any willing worker be unemployed? Why is it that the worker is denied the opportunity to use his time, talent and efforts to satisfy his desires? What are the causes of this senseless and unnatural condition? Why do real wages continue to go down even as productive efficiency increases? Why is progress associated with poverty?

Many methods have been devised to cope with low wages and job shortages. Unemployment insurance, make-work programs, and job training have all been used, but with limited success. It has become obvious that political action and charity have had little effect in creating jobs or raising wages.

We are faced with a paradox. We have millions of working people, most of them strongly motivated, with unlimited wants and desires, willing and able to work. We live in a world of abundant resources, not the least of which is man's initiative and creativity. Nature supplies all the resources necessary to supply man's needs, now and in the future. The only other requirement is man's labor. Why then, is he idle? What all men and women need is that freedom of opportunity that will enable every individual to provide for himself and his family.

For those who are aware and concerned about these problems, I would suggest a first step might be to read Henry George's great book, Progress and Poverty (in our local library).

"Progress and Poverty is the first and only thorough, complete, scientific inquiry ever made into the fundamental cause of industrial depressions and involuntary poverty. ... George's great merit is that of having worked out his discovery to its full logical length in a complete system, which none of his predecessors did, not only establishing fundamental economics as a true science, but also

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discerning and clearly marking out its natural relations with history, politics and ethics ... one of America's very greatest men." — Albert Jay Nock, author.

Many thousands of students have found their own answers to our social problems by a reading and a study of George's analysis. For more information, please phone or write: Council for Economic Inquiry, Route 9, Box 375, Mountain Home, AR 72653; Telephone 492-5743.