

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE NEW AGE."

You are right in suspecting that the scheme which Mr. Mills published twenty years ago was not a new one at the time. For a similar proposal had, in fact, been elaborated as far back as 1817 by no less a genius than Robert Owen. This greatest of the pioneers of English Socialism, who, anticipating Marx to that extent, already understood the working of Capitalism, with its ever recurring economic crisis and consequent throwing out of employment of thousands of wage-earners, had, at the time mentioned, submitted to the British Government a scheme whereby employment of a lasting nature was to be provided for the victims of an individualist system of production.

That scheme contained the germs of what Mr. Mill's book advocated, and more, for it was worked out with all Owen's love of his subject, and accompanied by plans of the co-operative farms and buildings to the minutest detail, with the economic calculations carefully tabulated.

That project was not adopted by the Government, although it had, of course, its "sympathy." Perhaps they apprehended the possibility of the scheme proving successful. Had they been as sure as you seem to be of its impracticability, it is safe to say that they would have tried the experiment—in their own way, of course—if only to throw discredit upon Mr. Owen and his Socialism. Anyhow, it is a fact that the Malthusians attacked the scheme as one that might result in an increase of the population. That is surely the greatest compliment that can be paid to such a proposal.

The scheme is as old-fashioned as Socialism itself, but not, on that account, necessarily unscientific. It is certainly the only Socialist remedy for unemployment short of a Socialist Society, and recommends itself for the following reasons:—

(1) It puts idle soil under cultivation; (2) it organises production for use and not for profit; (3) it restricts the sources of supply for the capitalist labour market; (4) it gives to the workers the entire produce of their labour, minus reserve stores for reproduction; (5) it provides the means of schooling the industrial proletariat in co-operative Socialist organisation.

To the sympathetic eye there are many more advantages in the scheme over any other, and hence Dr. Wallace may be pardoned (if he cannot be thanked) for having recommended it to the attention of a Socialist paper as "*The Remedy for Unemployment.*"

ANDREAS SCHEU.

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