

**USE AND ABUSE; OR, RIGHT AND  
WRONG, IN THE RELATIONS TO  
LABOUR, OF CAPITAL,  
MACHINERY, AND LAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649442690

Use and Abuse; Or, Right and Wrong, in the Relations to Labour, of Capital, Machinery, and Land by William M'Combie

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**WILLIAM M'COMBIE**

**USE AND ABUSE; OR, RIGHT AND  
WRONG, IN THE RELATIONS TO  
LABOUR, OF CAPITAL,  
MACHINERY, AND LAND**



USE AND ABUSE;

OR,

Labour, Capital, Machinery, and Land.

USE AND ABUSE;  
OR,  
RIGHT AND WRONG,  
IN THE  
RELATIONS TO LABOUR,  
OF  
CAPITAL, MACHINERY, AND LAND.

BY

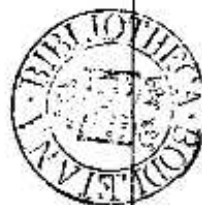
WILLIAM M'COMBIE,

AUTHOR OF "HOURS OF THOUGHT," "MORAL AGENCY," ETC.

LONDON:

WARD AND CO., 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1852.



232. c. 16.

## INTRODUCTION.

---

THE Distribution of the elements of wealth presented by Nature *to* man, and of the constituents of wealth secured from Nature *by* man, forms the great social problem of the times. Not only does this problem underlie all the various schemes of communism and organization of labour; but, discerned or not, is at the bottom of all jealousies between employers and employed—of all strikes and combinations, and, though more indirectly, not less truly, of all questions of rent, protection, and the incidence of taxation. There is the great storehouse of materials—the earth; and the great productive agent—the soil; and whatever man's skill and labour have educed, and his economy secured for his use, out of these.

Of objects directly adapted to man's wants, Nature presents but a scanty supply. And this is more especially the case in countries like that which we inhabit, where the spontaneous productions of the earth would do no more than sustain the lowest form of animal

existence, and that but to a very limited number. The materials of which the earth is the repository require skill and labour to adapt them to man's use; and the productive elements embodied in the soil require skill and labour to develop them, and to secure products out of them adapted to man's daily wants.

And the constitution of things under which he is placed is adapted to stimulate man to provide not merely for his present, but for his prospective wants.— There are, for example, but certain seasons of the year at which the crops which constitute a large proportion of his food can be grown. If he does not till the land in its season, and sow and reap those crops in their season, he wants them for the year. Man, as he regards and provides for only his immediate wants, is an animal and a savage; man, in proportion as he contemplates and provides for his prospective wants, evinces and calls into exercise his rational nature; he rises above the animal condition, and secures the instruments of civilization.

And the labours of the savage, as they tend only to the supply of immediate wants, so do they bear only on the supply of individual wants, or of those of them for whom the instincts of nature prompt him to provide. But regard to prospective wants tends to develop the social elements of man's being. To make effective provision for these, men must act more or less in con-



cert. They first *combine* their labour; and as they attain greater skill in the processes, and better tools wherewith to perform them, they *divide* their labour. And the more that skill and variety of tools are called into requisition in any branch of labour, the more of training becomes necessary to fit for its expert and efficient performance. Hence the origin of different trades—the settled division of labour.

The fruits of labour adapted to prospective wants constitute capital. Capital is the product of skill and labour, saved and secured for future use. Not only can there be no capital without labour, but none without saving. All our houses, furniture, land-improvements, roads, railways, ships, factories, are the fruit of savings made by our predecessors or ourselves. Had our forefathers consumed as fast as they produced—had they saved nothing of the products of their skill and labour, we should have been in much the same state as the natives of Kamschatka, or New Holland. Capital, therefore, is the instrument of civilization.

So long as the only productive instrument is man's hands, or an appropriate *tool* which he uses with his hands, the difference between one man's productive capacity and that of another, is just as is the difference between their skill, strength, and power of application. But, in the progress of society, the possession of capital indefinitely increases this power. A man

who is able to produce more than another, or who saves more of the fruits of his labour, can procure better tools—he can purchase other animal power to do the heavier portions of his work; and, as invention proceeds, he can obtain machines, which will do great part of what he has hitherto done with tools, much more expeditiously, and in larger quantity.

One man who has produced and saved more than his neighbours, or, which comes to the same thing in effect, who has inherited what others have produced and saved, comes to possess more productive power than he himself can direct and apply; he is a capitalist. The man who has neither inherited nor saved, has no productive instrument but his hands. As to power of production, he, in consequence, stands at a great disadvantage compared with the man possessing capital. He, therefore, hires his labour to the capitalist; as, in this way, he can earn more than in working on his own account, with the very inferior instruments he might be able to obtain. This is the origin of working for wages; and when the number of capitalists in a community is large compared with the number of non-capitalists, hired labour is well paid—as capital has ever a tendency to seek productive occupation; and men, generally, who possess capital, will hire others to perform the heavier kinds of labour, rather than perform these themselves.

So far, all would be smooth and equitable; and the more of the members of a community who were industrious and economical—the more that it possessed of the saved fruits of industry (supposing always that there is scope for remunerative labour)—the better wages would there be for those who had yet to begin to save—whose position led them not to be employers, but employed.

So far, we say, there is a clear and equitable relation between the capitalist and the labourer. But in modern society, especially as it exists in this country, this relation has become increasingly open to three great sources of derangement—the first source being found in the state of property in land; the second in the extensive use of machinery; and the third in the system of credit.

When one expends labour in the reclamation and culture of a certain portion of previously unappropriated land, by giving it a value which it had not before, he acquires a certain right to its possession; and, subject to an equitable charge to the State, to be adjusted periodically, as the country advances in population and wealth, it is the interest of the whole community to sustain his title as valid. He owns the land which he cultivates, subject to a rent-charge for the maintenance of the civil government of the country. But the case is entirely different when property in