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David Davies
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The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered

David Davies (1742–1819) was an English clergyman and social commentator, best remembered for this survey of the lives of rural agricultural labourers. Raised and educated in the West Indies, Davies acted as a schoolmaster, plantation manager (which confirmed his abolitionist views) and private tutor until he was ordained in 1782 and became the rector of Barkham, Berkshire, where he remained incumbent until his death. This volume, first published in 1795, contains Davies’ discussion of the living conditions of agricultural labourers in England. Davies discusses in detail the causes of the poverty of labourers, linking the high prices of goods with poverty, and proposes measures to relieve the labourers, including linking their daily wage to the price of bread. Davies’ observations also demonstrate the failings of the contemporary Poor Laws. Originally focusing on the annual expenditure of labourers in Davies’ own parish, this volume was expanded to include accounts of expenditure from elsewhere in Britain. This meticulously researched volume provides valuable evidence for the increase in rural poverty in the late eighteenth century.

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THE CASE
OF
LABOURERS IN HUSBANDRY
STATED AND CONSIDERED,
IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.
A VIEW OF THEIR DISTRESSED CONDITION.

PART II.
THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THEIR GROWING DISTRESS AND NUMBER, AND
OF THE CONSEQUENT INCREASE OF THE POOR-RATE.

PART III.
MEANS OF RELIEF PROPOSED.

WITH
AN APPENDIX;
CONTAINING
A COLLECTION of ACCOUNTS,
SHEWING
THE EARNINGS AND EXPENCES OF LABOURING FAMILIES,
IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE KINGDOM.

BY
DAVID DAVIES,
RECTOR OF BARKHAM, BERKS.

THE LABOURER IS WORTHY OF HIS HIRE. LUKE x. 7.

BATH, PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL,
FOR
G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1795.

TO

THE HONOURABLE

THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.

AFTER spending a great deal of time in examining the circumstances of *Labourers in Husbandry*, I have thought it my duty to lay the following facts and observations before the publick. I hope they will be useful in drawing once more the attention of confiderate persons to what appears to be a case of real, wide-spread, and increasing distress; and be instrumental in procuring for the numerous class of people in question that redress, to which they seem to have the justest claim. At all events the motive will excuse me with the candid and humane for committing this work to the press.

It seems to lie peculiarly within the province of a Board instituted for the improvement of Agriculture, to enquire into the state and condition of that denomination of people, by whom the business of agriculture is carried on. That Board have it more in their power than any private individual, to obtain the most authentick information with respect to labouring families; and I understand that they have notified their intention of making this one object of their

[6]

their particular enquiry. If the result should be, *that the pay of the day-labourer is not adequate to his necessities* ; then, on their representation of the matter, a rational plan may easily be devised for his speedy relief. For these reasons I have thought that the present publication might with propriety be addressed to that Board.

To that Board, therefore, I take the liberty to inscribe it; earnestly hoping that, such as it is, it may prove of some service in the farther prosecution of these useful enquiries. Heartily wishing them success in all their views for the publick good,

I remain,

with the greatest respect,

their most obedient

and most humble servant,

BARKHAM, BERKSHIRE,

MARCH 26TH, 1795.

DAVID DAVIES.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

SECTION I.—PAGE 1.

INTRODUCTORY Observations concerning the Poor and the Poor-Laws.

SECTION II.—PAGE 5.

An enquiry into the state of the Poor, necessary, previous to a reform of the Poor-Laws. The manner in which the *accounts* here given of the earnings and expences of labouring families were obtained. Accounts of six families in the parish of *Barkham*, with an abstract of the same.

SECTION III.—PAGE 21.

Observations suggested by the foregoing Accounts, and confirmed by others received from different parts of the kingdom.

SECTION IV.—PAGE 31.

An Apology for the Poor:—eating Wheaten Bread—Neglecting the use of Potatoes—Drinking Tea.

PART II.

SECTION I.—PAGE 43.

A view of the progressive Advance of the Poor-Rate.

SECTION II.—PAGE 46.

Circumstances which have enhanced the prices of the Necessaries of Life, and by consequence increased the Number of the Poor, thereby *doubly* augmenting the Rate.

SECTION III.—PAGE 53.

Circumstances which have directly increased the Number of the Poor, and by consequence the Amount of the Rate.

SECTION IV.—PAGE 61.

Circumstances which have directly increased the Rate itself.

SECTION V.—PAGE 64.

Comparison of the prices of the Necessaries of Life about the middle of this century with their present prices.

SECTION

[8]

SECTION VI.—PAGE 67.

Application of the contents of Sections II. and III. to account for the late augmentation of the Poor-Rate.

SECTION VII.—PAGE 68.

Sketch of the Relative Proportion between Labour and the Necessaries of Life in different periods.

PART III.

SECTION I.—PAGE 75.

A Reduction of the Prices of certain Necessary Articles recommended, as soon as this shall be practicable.

SECTION II.—PAGE 78.

Providing *additional* Employment for Men and Boys in Winter, that they may lose no time at that season.

SECTION III.—PAGE 83.

Providing *constant* employment for Women and Girls, that they may be enabled to earn more than they commonly do.

SECTION IV.—PAGE 98.

Correcting the Improvidence of the Lower People, and encouraging Frugality among them.

SECTION V.—PAGE 106.

Rating the Wages of Labourers according to the statute 5 Eliz. c. 4.—Or,

SECTION VI.—PAGE 115.

Regulating the Price of Day-Labour by the Price of Bread.

SECTION VII.—PAGE 119.

Supplying the Deficiency of the Earnings of large families out of the poor-rate, &c.

SECTION VIII.—PAGE 124.

A *supposed* objection against the measure of raising Wages answered. Conclusion.

APPENDIX.

For the Contents, see the Appendix.