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There will never again be paid jobs for all

Our nation is tying itself in knots by refusing to face a plain fact. We need to recognise and accept the consequence of advancing technology. In free societies there will *never again be paid jobs for all*. Through taxation some of the money received by paid workers is redistributed in payments to the rest. We would do well to recognise the true nature of this operation by talking of redistribution payments instead of unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit, and so on.

A person without paid work should neither feel nor be made to feel inferior. In return for his or her redistribution payments, he or she should accept an honourable obligation to do unpaid work of one sort or another. Often this will be within the family circle, and none the worse for that. Redistribution payments should not, as they are at present, be regarded as public *expenditure*. To avoid this confusion, the tax out of which they are met should be given an appropriate name (say redistribution tax).

If the payments are in fact all met out of income tax, this would mean that a certain slice of income tax would be called redistribution tax and dealt with (apart from assessment and collection) by a separate process. Then, if the rate of redistribution tax were varied by the Chancellor, the public would know exactly what this meant, namely that a greater (or lesser) share of earned wealth was being diverted to the unpaid. The current size of this share must always be one of the great social issues.

The political consequences of such a change of public attitude would be considerable. Governments, while still promoting economic prosperity, would not feel obliged to create meaningless jobs. Politicians would not have to claim, with diminishing conviction, that their party had the policies to cure unemployment. Budgets would not be distorted by treating redistribution payments (now running at £15bn a year for unemployment benefit alone) as Government expenditure. No longer would unemployment statistics be bandied about and argued over. They would have become obsolete like the very word unemployment itself. And those without a job would regain their dignity.¹

¹ *The Times*, 28 July 1983.