

The Farmer

Fellow farmer, this is written to you, by one who has been a member of the wage-earning section, the proletariat, but has for fifteen years been one of you. One who has worked his twelve to sixteen hours a day in the summer, and has used the leisure of the long winters to inquire why the members of his section of the working class are in no better position, financially, than the wage-earners, why the only benefit in being a farmer, over being a wage earner, is that the farmer has a steady job. It is the result of this inquiry that he wishes to present to you, for your consideration.

Financial position means power to possess commodities, and when we consider where commodities come from we find that there are two factors necessary to the production of a commodity: First, the natural resources of the earth—nature bestows these on those who are able to take and use them—man, "dominating," has supreme claim; second, to make use of these natural resources man must labor, so, a commodity is the result of labor applied to natural resources. Naturally then, man says, if the natural resources are the free gift of nature, the giving of my labor or service is the only thing that costs me anything, and that cost is measured in time: a portion of my life. I give a portion of my life to produce commodities, then if I allow someone else to have those commodities, they are getting my time, so I want in exchange an equal quantity of their time. Man then pays for his commodities with labor, service, reckoned in time.

So, if a person does not labor in some way to produce commodities, there is nothing else he can give for the things he must have, and so he is getting something for which he has paid nothing. It is impossible to rob such a one, even if you take all that he possesses.

Now, fellow farmer, it is impossible for us to explain all the intricacy of value and price in so short an article, or give the proofs we would like to give. All we can do is touch on the main points, the basic principles, and make an appeal that we hope will be timely.

Capital is wealth used in the production of more wealth, and for the exploitation of labor. Capital is itself the product of labor, just as all wealth, whether used in the production of more wealth or not, is the product of labor. So it is not possible for capital to give to the commodities which it is used in the production of, a value greater than its own. That is, capital is not greater than its creator. The labor time embodied in the machine is given to the product of the machine in the exact proportion that the machine is consumed, or worn out.

Take the average binder, for instance; say its value is \$200 (or 200 hours) including value of repairs; say it wears out in ten years and cuts 200 acres a year, or 2,000 acres in all—then there is embodied in the crop from each acre, on the average, ten cents given to it by the binder, or one-tenth of an hour, or the time necessary to produce that one-tenth of a (gold) dollar.

Price is not value (except in a broad sense which we cannot here explain). Price is determined by supply and demand, but the basis of price is value; that is when those two opposing forces, supply (tending to send prices down) and demand (tending to send prices up) are equal, then the one counteracts the other and prices are at values, or, the time embodied, in the gold is equal to the time embodied in the other commodity which exchanges for it.

If, after looking up the price of a commodity in a mail-order catalogue, and getting a price of a similar commodity in your town store, you are inclined to doubt the above statement, go back to the first part of this, and rest assured that any seeming contradictions can be explained.

It has been computed that on the average a man produces a value which is about five times

that which he receives as wages, that is, he receives (on the average) about \$2 a day and produces about \$10, the \$8 is, therefore, the product of unpaid labor, or surplus value. Whether this calculation is correct or not, the war has shown that it takes only a small percentage of the workers to produce the necessaries of life for the whole population. We believe that the value created by the average worker is rather more, than less, than \$10 per day of 10 hours, or rather more than \$1 per hour. [Evidently our contributor is using pre-war figures.—Ed.]

Now, fellow farmer, when you have a little time, figure out for your own satisfaction how many hours you work in a year, leaving out any work that a wage-earner would do for himself, or pay for out of his wages, such as a small garden, and then estimate roughly what you get for this labor; find out what you get for yourself and family—this does not include such things as money spent on machinery (farm), horses, harness, binder, plow, etc., but includes only what is spent on yourself and family for your keep and "pleasure," and see whether it comes near a dollar an hour. Then decide for yourself whether you are wasting your labor, whether you are putting more time into the production of farm produce than the average farmer. The result will surprise you.

We figured the thing out very carefully on a well-managed farm of 480 acres, estimating a long life for machinery (12 years), and making all our calculations in cost of production on the low side, and all calculations with regard to receipts according to government statistics, (average price for wheat 73 1-5 cents on track, and average yield 18.6 bushels to the acre); also, no account was taken of an engine which was sometimes used for ploughing, and the farm had a large pasture and hay swamp which yielded cheap feed, and still the total receipts for labor were only 38 1-2 cents an hour, not \$1, by any means. And it must be remembered that the average farm in Saskatchewan is less than 320 acres, and the larger the farm the cheaper, normally, can production be carried on. We believe that when interest on mortgages and notes is taken out of the value the average farmer receives, his "wages" will not compare very favorably with those received by the average wage-worker. But figure it out for yourself.

How, then, are we robbed or exploited? By the action of economic law, which says, when there is an over-supply, a commodity shall be "cheap." There is an over-supply of labor power on the world market. Part of this over-supply flows into the farming industry, the effect is a chronic over-supply of farm produce which keeps the price down to the point where (on the average farm) the farmer can "make" a living for his family and himself, and interest on the comparatively small amount of capital invested. The interest goes to the owner of the capital, whether that is the farmer, or a machine or mortgage company. ("Abnormal" war conditions left out of the calculation.) [Note: The value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor involved in its production, measured in time. Over a period of time, during which the fluctuations of prices cancel each other, commodities are sold at value. There is an average degree of productivity within the socially necessary. Those individual producers who produce with greater efficiency than the average rate of productivity, receive above the average rate of profit. These producing with average efficiency will receive value for commodities, or average rate of profit for capitalistic enterprises. Those producing below the average rate of efficiency will receive less than value. This latter class are known as marginal producers, being on the margin of production, and will generally include small farmers, whose inefficiency may not be due to lack of skill and know-

ledge, but to lack of capital. The small farmer's poverty is, we believe, mainly due to the fact that he is a marginal producer, though other minor factors are also contributors. Comrade Smith's factor may be one.—Ed.]

We cannot stop the wage-worker from flooding our field of operations, because it is easy to start farming, so the remedy which will free us from the exploitation which we are subject to, is to help the wage-worker free himself from exploitation.

The power that keeps the workers in the position they are, is the power of the state, behind which is the capitalist class, the ruling class. So, to attain the result we desire we must unite to remove this class from their dominating position with regard to the state, and institute a state dominated by the workers, as a stepping-stone to the time when all will be workers, and there will be no need for a repressive state, as there will be only one class, the working class.

Fellow farmers, comrades, there is no narrower way to free ourselves from the difficulties and excessive toil which we suffer from. The road we must travel is the broad, as yet untravelled, road of unity; not only unity among ourselves, but unity with the wage workers, the peasants, and the farmers of all lands, for the ONE purpose of overthrowing the useless, oppressive, vampire class, by reason of whose greed, "bred-in-the-bone," we must all suffer. H. F. S.

A CAPITALIST "MARXIAN"

Mr. H. N. Barnes, director and general manager of E. Pollard, Ltd., may or may not possess a knowledge of Marxian economics, but the following observation culled from an article written by that gentleman in the Draper's Record for February 1, 1918, makes interesting reading to Marxian students.

We Marxians have endeavored to din into the minds of the workers the truth that the money they receive as wages is only on the average equivalent to the value of the food, clothing and shelter necessary to maintain the workers, etc. And that actual money-wages are only nominal wages: real wages being the purchasing power, or the amount of food, clothing, etc., one can buy with one's wages. Mr. Barnes, in an article, the object of which is to convince business people that they need not be alarmed at high prices, etc., for despite high money figures the workers are only getting the same real wages as before the war. Says he:

"After all, the real crux of the matter is the altered value of money. The exchange value of services is much the same as in pre-war days. A wage earner turns out a week's work in exchange for a week's provisions, etc. The face value of the money he receives is of no consequence; it may be five or fifty pounds, but if it is only exchangeable for his week's sustenance nothing really matters."

It is delightful, isn't it, to have a capitalist prove to us that the workers' condition under capitalism is incapable of permanent improvement.—Glasgow Socialist.

PRINCE KROPOTKIN IS ALIVE AND WELL

LONDON, Feb. 17. (Mail Correspondence).—Prince Peter Kropotkin, Socialist leader, despite various reports to the contrary, is alive and well at Dmitrovsk, near Moscow, according to Alexander Berkenheim, vice-president of a Russian society here. He says he saw the prince last December and recently has received letters from him.

"Now as always," Berkenheim said, "he remains far from the seat of any political activity, and is occupied with literary work. He enjoys the greatest esteem and consideration of all circles in Russia without exception."