

On Progress.

HENRY FORD told an interviewer recently that farmers have never been properly paid for what they produce, and they spend far too much time producing it. "With the ordinary crops 15 to 20 days a year is all that is necessary if the workers are equipped with the necessary implements. We have proved that our satisfaction on our own farm of 10,000 acres here at Dearborn."

The interviewer was impressed but not convinced. He says he took the scheme to a level-headed farmer in Illinois. The man sustained the proposition. "A great deal of the farm work can be done in a few days," he said. "We are renting a farm that we do not spend more than 20 or 30 days a year on."

This might seem like a dream to all who have studied farming close up.

But we must remember that the average farmer is an antiquated person. He uses old fashioned tools, and toils along as his father did, consequently his ideas are a reflex of the past.

He is not to blame that he doesn't do things the way Henry Ford outlines. With little or no capital, he has no chance to be modern. In fact, the farmer is in no wise different to the bygone handcraftmen.

He has lingered on the stage longer for several reasons. Cheap or free land. The ability to grow most of what he eats, to raise a large family and exploit them for long hours, breaking down the health of his children prematurely as a result.

And the contrast between the dependent position of the wage-slave and his own apparently free status, makes him toil fiercely to preserve his "independence."

I have read the story of a wage-slave who went on the land, having saved a few hundred dollars and being desirous of escaping the uncertainties of employment in the city.

He said he succeeded. But the story of the success was heartbreaking. It was purchased at a price, that few intelligent men would pay, and required constant and unremitting toil to keep it. It spelled years of wretched slavery for all the family, even to hauling stumps by moonlight; and he was only compelled to stick by the lamentations of his wife, when he despaired of standing more of it. And he won. He himself said it. His picture and his fellow slave of sorrow adorned the page of a well-known farm magazine, and the poor nut was encouraging others to escape wage-slavery by that route.

His number is legion. And the dismal swamp of ideas generated in such environment would sicken a Chinaman, and they too can work. But here comes Modern Machinery, and let us slaves who have been "help" to Farmer John hail with joy our mechanical Saviour. Here is Henry Ford's idea:

"A big factory is to be set down in a farm region. He would operate all the farms within several miles' radius as a unit with a resident manager, and over all these managers a highly qualified superintendent. This superintendent would do the farm planning. Then most of the year the workers would work in the factory, but when the time came to plow, cultivate or reap, he would put them on the farms with highly efficient machines and do the farm work thoroughly and effectively. The 20 days—or 30, according to the Illinois man—would hardly be missed from the factory work, and having enough skilled labor and machinery would do great things for the production of food."

That is what the world needs; to be put in charge of engineers, men of science, so that wealth may be produced efficiently, without waste or adulteration for the benefit of the whole world.

Under capitalism such a thing is impossible; the ensuing plethora of products would glut the markets continually, resulting in unemployment, and consequent poverty, misery, suicides, crime, prostitution, war, and so on, link on link; the fatal effects follow the original cause—the production of wealth for private profit. But this thing can be solved, and is in the way of being solved, though under most unfavorable circumstances.

In the midst of a dreary swamp of small peasant proprietors, who wish to compete for the pleasure of being big proprietors, the new idea is endeavoring to take root.

Below, follow some remarks of a Washington State officer, a mechanical engineer, who served two years in Siberia with the American forces. He was captured by the Reds, and in his ignorance, expected every morning to be shot. Instead, he was allowed comparative freedom.

But read what he says:

Withdraw From Siberia.

"When Maj. Buchanan was released practically all of the American soldiers had been withdrawn from Siberia. After waiting at Vladivostok for some time for a transport to take him back to the United States, he finally obtained passage on an army transport being one of the last American soldiers to leave Siberia.

"Siberia is a wonderful country and the Russian peasant is a hard working, industrious person who may some day put his land in its proper place among the nations of the world, Maj. Buchanan believes. The workings of the soviet regime are good and bad; some of the things it has accomplished are working out admirably, while others are theoretical impossibilities, the major said.

"Nationalization of industries has not been such a terrible failure as some would have the world believe, according to Maj. Buchanan. 'They have plenty of well trained men, men whose training in technical schools has been augmented by long experience,' said the army officer. 'It is this type of man that is placed in charge of the larger enterprises; not the ignorant workman who can only handle the job somebody else maps out for him.

"Many of the directors or superintendents held similar positions before Bolshevism captured Russia. In most instances they have been transplanted from the city where they originally worked to some far distant place. They are being paid more than ever before and the same is true of the workmen. Even though their pay still is comparatively small, yet their wants are so simple that they do not want the amounts required by American labor.

"Business was more or less at a standstill when I left the interior of Russia where sovietism is in control. As fast as the military government moves out of captured territory, the civil government moves in and assumes charge of all affairs and regulates all industry and business. This is an immense task of course, hence actual accomplishment is still more or less hazy, especially so to a foreigner."

If economically backward Russia, in the midst of the most heart-breaking circumstances, and appalling difficulties, is far-seeing enough to place men in their proper spheres, according to ideas outlined in Bucharin's "Programme of World Revolution" (a masterly exposition of our position in clear, simple language), how much could not be accomplished over here with the equipment at hand? But doubtless, we shall see capitalism exhaust all possibilities of exploitation first. And the working class complain, grumble, try this way, that way, rebel; do anything in fact but reason, till the limit of their endurance is reached; and absolutely nothing remains but revolution.

This may be a fatalistic view, but it should not preclude Socialists from giving most generously of their time, energy and money to push the work of enlightenment along.

Our day will come.

And may it be a speedy coming.

F. S. F.

Canadian Workers' Defense League

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