

this basic Socialist principle. Nothing, they said, could induce them to depart from it. But the soviet held a different view. There was a deadlock. Instead of using the historic method of settling the dispute by bombs and troops the workingmen fought it out on the floor of the soviet. The miners capitulated to the logic of the soviet. Their wages were fixed at 15 rubles a day (about \$7.50) with a bonus for extra production. In a short time twenty-six poods of gold (36 pounds in a pood) were accumulated at headquarters. Against this reserve the Soviet issued paper money. Query: What determined the wages of these men at 15 rubles a day as a fair return for their labor? And may the balance of the production be assumed to be economic rent? Query: Have we here an illustration of Mr. C. L. St. John's contention that "economic rent" may be a misnomer, so far as mines, quarries, water-powers, forests, oil-fields, etc. are concerned?

Yours very truly,

W. R. LANE.

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We submitted the foregoing to Horace Wenzel and asked his opinion of it. "It is exactly in accordance with many things I observed in Russia," he said. "Those people are so steeped in what you may call the 'folk-ways' of co-operation that they easily see the distinction between private and communal property, and are possessed with a social conscience which points out to them what they must set aside for social uses. The ancient institutions of the village, the mir and the industrial artel, not to speak of the great modern development of co-operative trading, all have made the Russian peasants and workingmen believe more or less in a 'natural order.' To them the regime of Czarism was hateful because it came into conflict, by reason of its institutions of private land ownership and privilege, with village democracy and communal ownership of land, which had descended to the Russian people from time immemorial. Accordingly when the Bolshevik Revolution of November 7, 1917 proclaimed that the private ownership of land was abolished the Russian peasants joyfully realized the resumption of their ancient hereditary rights in the soil, of which they had been ruthlessly despoiled by Peter the Great and his successors. And they were ready to undergo the greatest hardships and sacrifices to re-establish their new found freedom. How they rose in the Civil War and conquered foreign and domestic foe is a wonderful story—paying during that period to the nation the entire surplus product of their farms over and above the satisfying living-wage which they were directed to reserve for themselves and their families. As long as the Civil War continued they cheerfully contributed this surplus product for the support of the army and the government—the benefit they received in return being the defeat of the common foe and the preservation of Soviet Russia. At the conclusion of the war the situation changed. What further benefits was the government able to return to the

peasants in exchange for the continued delivery of the surplus product? The peasants naturally demanded the quid pro quo. 'Give us tools, clothing, farm implements, manufactured goods, needed foods, etc. in exchange for our grain, our eggs, our fish, our lumber, etc.' But this was exactly what the central government was unable to bring about. All Russia was boycotted by the entire trading world. Her coasts were blockaded. Her ability to exchange raw products collected from the peasants was nil, while domestic industry in factories and workshops, destroyed by the invading armies, was at a standstill, with disintegration and ruin the order of the day. It was at that time that we heard of the breakdown of the whole system—of vast quantities of fish, for example, collected and awaiting transportation, going bad and proving a total loss; with similar instances of paralysis of exchange.

Was it any wonder that the government was forced to change from a system which refused to function to a new economic policy (the so-called Nep.) that was better adapted to the country's immediate requirements? "But," said Horace Wenzel in conclusion, "I confidently expect that there will ultimately be a resumption of the earlier experiment. With freedom of trade with the rest of the world I believe the Russians will prove to have discovered a system for the production and distribution of wealth admirably adapted to the genius of their national folk-ways and an example of intelligence to the world at large—not necessarily to be followed, but at least to be studied with respect and with an open mind."

Benevolence of the Landed Gentry

PROBABLY no wealthy Englishman is or was more humane to his poverty-stricken fellow countryman than the Victorian landed proprietor. His heart, so to speak, bled for the agricultural laborer who paid him exorbitant rent for the occupation of a filthy hovel. Thus in such books as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's "Diary" and Arthur H. Savory's "Grain and Chaff from an English Manor," you will find most beautifully worded sentiments about old servants who died in the workhouse, and a real touching account of how Blunt's eighty-year-old wood reeve shot himself as he was about to be thrown out of his cottage because he was too old to work. It is a fair assumption that he committed suicide rather than witness poor Blunt's distress over what would have been a painful incident upon the eve of Blunt's departure for his winter residence in Cairo. Blunt's account of it corrects two false impressions in the American mind, to wit, that English landed proprietors are *not* kind to their laborers, and that a wood reeve is an insect which bites human beings. Apparently wood reeves *are* insects, but they don't bite human beings—or perhaps English Victorian landed proprietors weren't human beings.

MONTAGUE GLASS in *Life*