

one can see that such a tax would have raised enough funds theoretically to pay off war indemnities at one stroke. But there has been no real effort to collect this tax, because there is no way known to political economy by which so large a proportion of property in land and buildings can be converted into cash.

The net results of all these experiments in Government Socialism is debt,

depreciated currency, and harder living conditions for the very ones intended to be benefited. It is generally the way.

Europe needs a horizontal reduction of hatred. It will do little good, perhaps much harm, for one nation to do all the forgiving. A general reduction in extravagance and inflated currency is also imperative, and in the necessary reorganization labor must undergo a certain amount of equalization also.

America and England must reduce or their competitors increase wages. Some of both is the best for all concerned.

American labor has long been the most prosperous in the world. If the tendency in America to condone leniency toward Germany in the show-down settlement results in closing our shops and destroying America's foreign trade, we can well fear for the sanity hereabouts.

WILLIAM C. GREGG.

WHOM SHALL WE HELP—THE WEAK OR THE STURDY?

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE FROM CHINA

A COLD north wind is blowing little whirls of dust across the sandy plain as we pass through the double gate in the east wall of Tanghsien. A stronger gust than usual whips the sand into our faces. It stings and reminds us of the unusual dryness of the soil even for the dry season. A mirage a mile or two away between two groves mocks us with the appearance of a lake reflecting on its smooth surface the trees and shrubs. We might easily be deceived if we did not realize that this is a common phenomenon on these flat plains of Chihli Province, where the bright sunshine warms the surface of the soil in spite of the cold north winds.

We pass two or three dust-colored villages which look from a distance like a series of mud walls and gates amid the trees. They have already been visited by our investigators. We come at last to the Fang Village. The cloth peddler, who says he knows the place well, directs us to the home of the head man. Before we have gone very far a boy offers to lead us and we are followed by an excited crowd of men and children who have already guessed what we have come for. Only yesterday they came to the famine relief headquarters in the city to remind us that we had missed their humble village, and that they had received nothing from us in the first distribution. We told them that we could not give out anything, not even a ticket, until we had investigated, but that we would come to their honorable village as soon as possible. It was in fulfillment of this promise that we were coming to-day, although we still do not know when we shall receive any more grain for distribution from the Peking Committee. After meeting the head man and being invited to come into his house and sit down, we request that the crowd be kept outside, as we wish to talk over some business with him privately. We knew that in the presence of the crowd he would find it inadvisable to distinguish the very poorest from the next poorest, and we can help only the neediest.

"How many 'family doors' are there in your honorable village?" is our first question. It is the family, not the individual, which is counted in China.

"Let me think a thought," he answers. "About one hundred and ten or twelve."

"Are any of them poor?"

"Oh, all are poor. We had no harvest at all. Early in the summer the grasshoppers came and ate our winter wheat before it was ripe. As we were driving a swarm of them off in one direction other swarms came from the other direction. It was no use. Grasshoppers attacked some of our later crops too, and in addition there was no rain. In spite of all our prayers to the Dragon King, the Old Man of the Sky sent down no rain. So we are all poor, very poor indeed."

"Yes," we answer, "but so are they in all the other villages in this *hsien* [county] and in several provinces, and we cannot help all. Please choose out of your village the twenty or thirty of the very poorest, that we may go and see them. If they are really in the very poorest class as compared with other villages we can help them, perhaps, when more grain comes to us."

We write down the names which he gives us, noting the number of "mouths" in each family. They do not "count noses," but "mouths," in China. The list grows to thirty, forty, fifty, yet the head man insists that they are all the very poorest, who really have not enough to eat. Only our strict insistence that we have enough for only the very poorest prevails upon him to revise the list by omitting all who have over five *mu* of land (one *mu* equals one-sixth acre). This is on the assumption that a person who had more land may have had some grain left over from previous prosperous years, or he may have had something to sell, or at least he might borrow a little money by a mortgage on his land wherewith to buy food even at famine prices.

When we have pressed the list to its smallest possible limits by striking off all the names about which there seems to be a moment's uncertainty in the head man's decision, we ask to be taken to see the homes that are named on the list.

The first home which we see seems fairly well off. In the big iron kettle

which sits over the fire there are signs that the family had a little millet for breakfast. Cabbage in one of the bowls on a side-table tells us that this family is not of the poorest. Several deep crocks stand at one side of the room, which we find empty except one on the bottom row, which is half full of millet, and in the adjoining storeroom is a pile of seven or eight cabbages. A few handfuls of white flour show that they had something better at the Chinese New Year holidays. My companion calls out that he has found a donkey in one of the outbuildings. Evidently a family which can keep a donkey is not starving, and we scratch the name from our list without bothering to search the cupboards further.

The next house is closed and locked. We are informed by the crowd that follows us that the occupant has moved away, gone up beyond the Great Wall to find food. Scratch him off. We cannot give to one who is not here to receive it, though he may be back to-morrow or next week and ask us to reconsider, when he have not time. Occasionally they lift the door of the house off its hinges, lock and all, insisting that the family have just gone out to the hills for the day to find grass to burn and will be back at night. The warm stove proves that they have not been gone long, and the absolute emptiness of the cupboards, jars, granaries, and cooking utensils persuades us that this family needs help, and needs it soon. And that is one feature of the homes that grows on one—the large empty willow grain baskets, the great quantities of empty jars which speak of plenty and abundance in normal years but which ring with deathly hollowness to the stroke of our stick.

Yet after all our investigation we realize that four-fifths of the names on the list are genuine cases of honest poverty. They have not enough to keep them alive till the wheat harvest. They are eating now the immature millet grains with the husks on them or the millet bran of years before. In many houses the jars are half full of leaves put down in water—elm, willow, and even thistle leaves. Elm bark is ground to a powder

and mixed with the millet bran. This may fill the stomach, but it cannot sustain life as a regular diet for four months yet. Any one who views the inside of these homes can see for himself that without help the people will starve before wheat harvest, and the only reason more of them have not starved already is that the Government and some benevolent societies in China gave out some grain, money, and clothing just before the Chinese New Year, which came this year on February 8.

It does not seem at all probable that either in China itself or in foreign countries enough money will be contributed

to save all. The question, a very real practical question, that confronts the investigator who gives out the precious grain tickets is, Which shall he save? Shall it be the poorest of the poor who would make a precarious living even in normal years, the landless laborer who has sold his house over his head with the stipulation that he and his family may live in it till spring? Shall we save the widower who has pulled down two-thirds of his house to sell the timber and is trying to keep a fire and find food enough for his two babies who live in the remaining end? Shall we give a ticket to the weak, old, white-haired

beggar woman who lives alone in the little single room of the village shrine? Or shall we save it for the sturdy middle-aged farmer who after he has been helped over this hard winter may be able to support his family and in a reasonable amount of comfort, and whose labor is needed to produce next year's crops?

For the good of the country it is necessary to keep alive the strongest. Yet we cannot deny food to the aged or clothing to the shivering babes. There is not enough for all. Whom shall we let die?

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FARM LABOR AND THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

AS chairman of the Labor Committee for the lower house of the Wisconsin Legislature, I have had to wrestle with the farm labor problem for many weeks. There is a political group in the Legislature which marches under the Farmer-Labor banner. The leaders of this group are firm in the belief that the farmer and organized labor can get together, and between them solve the labor situation of the commonwealth.

Now let us see how this political alliance works out in practice. The labor groups vote solidly and persistently for all of the legislation demanded by the farmers, and many of the farmers vote for the bills fostered by organized labor. But always there are a few farmers who cannot swallow the eight-hour day, with the result that one member of our Committee put it this way:

"Labor will not get one comma changed in the labor laws of Wisconsin."

Farmers are opposing the eight-hour day because they themselves are unable to keep to an eight-hour schedule. Farm work is seasonal, and crops have to be harvested while the getting is good, regardless of hours. Even admitting that labor were plentiful enough so that farmers could operate two shifts of help, and that every farmer could house and feed a double quota of hired men, he has no guaranty that he could get one cent more for his crops. Under the present organization of society, the farmer is compelled to accept what he is offered for his crops, and, while it may be possible to anticipate that the spread of the co-operative marketing movement will improve this situation, the sad fact remains that for the present, and for a long time to come, the farmer is up against it.

Labor leaders in the industrial centers have shown a surprising inability to see the farmers' side of the question. They look upon the hired man in the light of a peasant, a man who has no future, who leaves all hope behind when he engages in farm labor. These same labor leaders also forget that the average farmer is an employer as well as a worker, that he suffers much and not

always patiently from lazy, shiftless, and incompetent help. During those happy days of the war it was almost impossible to get help on the farm at all, and such men as could be had were independent and insolent to an extreme. The farmer cannot altogether be blamed for being a little independent himself, now that men are begging for work.

One of the main objections which the farmer has to the eight-hour day in industries, established by law, is that it will attract even more men from the farms, and make it harder to get men from the cities to go back to the farm. There is some ground for this contention of course, but the fact remains that even to-day, when thousands of men are idle in the cities and we are not on an eight-hour basis, farmers cannot get all the help they need. Men would rather remain in the cities without work, and starve, than to go to the farm, where the food and keep are pretty well, thank you.

I, for one, do not believe that labor conditions on the farm can be improved by keeping conditions in the city down. The best thing that the farmer can do is to help the man in the city get the best possible working conditions, and then to solve his own peculiar problem on the farm. This is subject to solution from a twofold angle.

First, the farm wife is beginning to rebel over the task of boarding and washing the hired man. She wants more conveniences in her own home and a little more privacy, so as to enjoy some of the blessings of family life, which many farmers deny themselves and their families. Because the good wife will have none of the hired man the farmer is compelled to build small tenant houses and hire married help. This helps to secure steady men, because the man who has a comfortable, even if small home, a garden, and wage enough to be able to save a little will be more content, and not so likely to roam from place to place.

Second, the war showed the farmer how completely he could depend upon machinery. Iron and steel must more and

more replace human muscle, and gasoline and kerosene horse power. This utilization of machinery will mean one of two things: either larger farm units, so that machinery will be economical, or else small units which can be operated by the owner without any hired help at all. The large farms of course will need from one to many extra men.

I have been much interested in listening to the labor leaders in the committee rooms. They have just one cry: that the rich are preying upon the poor, and that the interests of the common people are constantly being betrayed. Even if we would grant, for the sake of argument, that one class of society has gained at the expense of another, we cannot get away from the fact that the man who is willing to work hard and who is thrifty in his habits and foresighted enough to study his business or trade at every opportunity will always get ahead.

It is well enough that we should warn captains of industry that labor must not be exploited, but we must also teach labor that it cannot eat its cake and have it too. If we give workers an eight-hour day, they must expect to give their best efforts to their employer for those eight hours, and not ask for eight hours' pay for six hours of work. Labor must also learn that after a certain reasonable sum is reached a proper standard of living is the spending of less than is earned. If society is organized so that the laboring man can expect an average wage of, say, six dollars for an eight-hour day, the laboring man should save at least one dollar of the six, so that when hard times do come he will not be caught adrift.

Every man who is able-bodied and willing to do an honest day's work, of as many hours as intelligent society deems best, should be paid a minimum wage which will give him most of the comforts and some of the luxuries of life. But no member of society, except the physical or mental defectives or unfortunate, should expect anything from society which he has not conscientiously strived for.

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