



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

Los Angeles Times.

age, a farmer remains no more than four or five years on a rented piece of land. In 1922, 27% of the tenants changed their farms. It would not be too much to say that the American tenant farmer leads a wandering life.

These facts are associated with the change in land ownership in general. Even the full owner does not remain very long on his farm. He is always ready to sell his farm (not as in Europe where farms generally pass from generation to generation). According to an official investigator "most American farms change hands every generation and a considerable number of farms change hands several times in the period corresponding to the average business career." Investigations have shown that over 88% of the farmers (full owners) bought their farms and only 12% inherited them or obtained them otherwise. The American farmer speculates on the increase of land values and is always on the lookout for a good customer for his farm. For this reason too, he is hesitant about renting out his farm for too long a period.

Land in America is thus drawn into the stream of commodity exchange. Of course commodity exchange in itself is not capitalism but it is a fundamental condition for capitalist relations.

5. The "Agricultural Ladder": Farm Laborer—Tenant—Owner.

Under such conditions it would be absurd to speak of the dominance of the "family-labor-principle" in the United States. On the other hand the idea of the so-called "agricultural ladder" is very wide spread. This implies: the land does not pass on thru inheritance—the farmer buys it for money; hence every farm hand (farm laborer) can acquire the status of an independent

possessor. Didn't Henry Ford start out as an errand boy? Just so can any sensible, hard-working man, thru hard work, thrift, and business ability, get hold of some capital and mount the ladder: farm hand, tenant, owner.

There can be no question that once upon a time, when there still were wide stretches of uncultivated land and when the situation of America on the world market was favorable, such "climbing the ladder of success" was a widespread fact. Even then, we must remember that such "climbing" was largely accomplished thru speculation — an enterprising man would stake a claim, wait till land values rose, then sell out at huge profit, rake up the money and go still farther West to get down to more solid business.

The situation today is, of course, entirely different altho speculation of this sort was still possible only a few years ago (colonization had not come to a complete end and the war boom of 1916-20 prevailed). As a matter of fact, according to the census of 1900, 44.% of all owners had been tenants and 34.7% had been farm hands. Of 100 tenants in 1910, 33 had already become owners in 1920—in other words, had ascended the ladder. Until a few years ago this "ladder of success" undeniably existed.

But we must not fail to examine the other side of the picture. First, according to the 1920 census, 42% of the owners had *never* been either tenants or farm hands. Secondly, according to the same census, 47% of the tenants became tenants immediately and did not pass thru the stage of farm hands. Even, therefore, according to the 1920 figures, "climbing the ladder" was not a common phenomenon.

(Continued in next issue)



THE RUSSIAN PEASANT—The Past and the Future

AND so the strike began by forty railroad workers in a small town in West Virginia spread like wild fire and in a few days embraced the entire land. It became a general strike of the railroad workers—the first general strike in America.

From New York to San Francisco raged the struggle between labor and capital, for the railroad strike was something more than a strike of the workers in one industry—it was an armed uprising of the American workers against the capitalist order. And the American capitalists understood very well that it was a struggle for the very foundations of capitalist rule in America and so they made preparations for a new civil war. A short telegram from San Francisco in the Evening Post throws light on the preparations made by the capitalists.

“Yesterday evening there took place in the Chamber of Commerce a large meeting of the most prominent citizens of San Francisco.

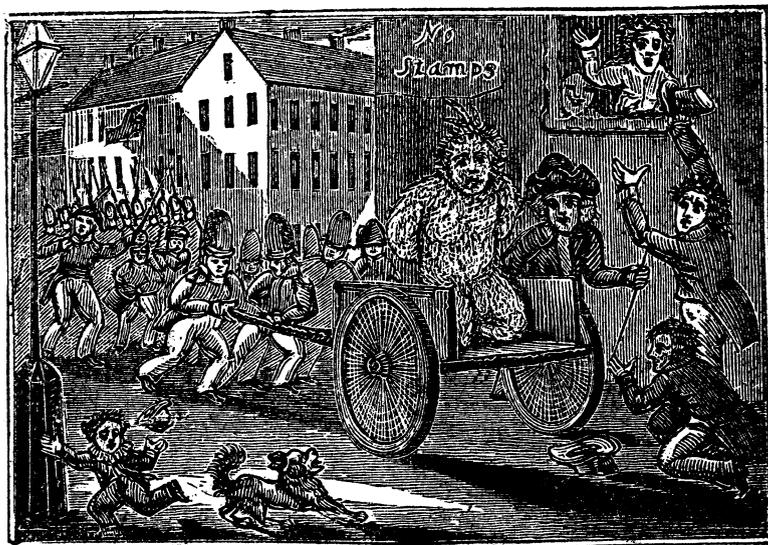
“It was decided to organize a committee of citizens to co-operate with the military and with the police in case of necessity. A committee of 24 was selected to organize the citizens.”

We have already noted that the revolt of the workers in Pittsburgh was crushed when the

bourgeoisie of that city organized themselves and created a fund of several thousand dollars to fight the strikers. Such “committees of safety” and “committees to co-operate with the military and police” were created in every town and village where the struggle penetrated.

The first insurrection of labor against capital in America was suppressed. The workers were still too weak to cross swords with the American capitalists. In their hands the capitalists had the state power; the workers, however, had no centralized organization to carry on the struggle and to bring clarity, consistency, and system into it.

After this first revolt of the American workers there followed new bloody struggles between labor and capital in America. How untrue is the statement often heard in certain circles that the American working class has no revolutionary traditions! The official leadership of the labor movement seeks to hide these revolutionary traditions of the American working class. The conscious revolutionary workers of America recall with honor and pride the first courageous fighters against capitalism in the United States.



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