

## One Farmer's Experience

The Chattanooga, Tenn., Times prints the following interesting letter:

By far the most interesting feature of your valuable paper is the local discussion now in progress on the high cost of living. This subject seems to be attracting the attention of most every one, from the United States government down to "A Laboring Man," alias "Farmer," who, by the way, was amusing in his first article in the Times and his second "takes the cake." Just how he can write such articles on a dollar and a half a day is a profound mystery to me. So, he is going back to the country to raise cabbage, potatoes, corn, etc., and to my notion he will raise h—l in general.

Now, he has told us what he is going to do. Let me tell you what I have done, because I am right fresh from the country, where I spent two years. I thought I would raise cabbage, tomatoes and beans and had nice prospects, but the whole blamed thing was prematurely harvested by old Chickamauga creek the first week in June, 1909, when she flooded the whole country along her banks.

With full determination not to be outdone by a little overflow, I planted corn and watermelons; nursed them like a sick babe and had fine prospects, but the August-September drouth cooked them. I lacked fifty cents of making enough off of two acres of melons to pay for the seed and made less corn than I ate while making it. I didn't raise any h—l either, for my creditors and my landlord did plenty of that.

Yes, Mr. Farmer, there is a greater opportunity on the farm to live economically and independent of trusts and trust products than in the city, and until such time as congress passes a law requiring hickory bark to peel the whole year, you will find trouble in steering clear of trust-made leather, nails, bolts, etc., and if you will train your dog to catch rats as well as rabbits you can save the cost of keeping a cat. By climbing the barn-lot fence you will save much wear and tear of gate hinges. Notwithstanding my idea of economy, I decided that rural life was not what it was cracked up to be and went back to the city, where the female part of the family could make the living. "Let the men do the voting and the women do the work."

Our friend ventures to guess that 50 per cent of the laborers of Chattanooga own their homes. If I were guessing on that subject I would guess that not 10 per cent of the laboring men of Chattanooga own a free home, for I have been over, through and around about thirteen states and two territories and I can't see that the laboring men of Chattanooga are materially better fixed than those of other localities or, rather, I don't see that they are above the average. See what the average is, according to the eighteenth annual report of the United States labor commissioner, issued in 1903, by Carroll D. Wright:

Homes — United States census 1890: Rented, 52.2; free, 34.4; mortgaged, 13.4 per cent. Commissioners' annual report, 1903: Rented, 81.1; free, 10.6; mortgaged, 8.3 per cent.

The above shows that the free home of the laboring man is very fast slipping from him and he is gradually becoming a tenant. This is one feature of the high cost of living that is generally being overlooked. I have no statistics but I

believe extortionate house rent in Chattanooga is working a greater hardship for laboring people than any other one thing. I believe a rate of 15 per cent on purchase money is being collected in many instances.

Mr. Wright, in the same report quoted above, gives the result of a canvas of 28,000 working men's homes in thirty-three different states, and gets the average income of each family, the number of workers per family being a portion over two to each. He found the average annual income per family \$827.17, and the average cost of living \$768.54. That leaves us \$58.65 to save up and get rich and to put in the savings bank. He also gives us a table showing just how this \$768.54 is spent, and, by the way, it shows rent to be the second highest article in the list.

Let our observing farmer friends sit up and take notice of the high standard of living that our spell-binding, high-flying office seekers and prosperity howlers make us believe shall be kept up. This table is well worth studying and comparing with our individual experiences.

Here is the list:

Fresh beef .....	\$ 50.05
Salt beef .....	5.26
Fresh hog products.....	14.02
Salt hog products.....	13.89
Other meat .....	9.78
Poultry .....	9.49
Fish .....	8.01
Eggs .....	16.79
Milk .....	21.32
Butter .....	28.76
Cheese .....	2.62
Lard .....	9.35
Tea .....	5.30
Coffee .....	10.74
Sugar .....	15.76
Molasses .....	1.69
Flour and meal.....	16.76
Bread .....	12.44
Rice .....	2.05
Potatoes .....	12.93
Other vegetables .....	18.85
Fruit .....	16.52
Vinegar and pickles.....	4.12
Other food .....	20.40
Rent .....	99.53
Principal and interest on mortgage .....	12.15
Fuel .....	32.21
Lighting .....	8.15
Clothing .....	107.90
Taxes .....	5.76
Insurance .....	20.98
Organization fees .....	8.99
Religious purposes .....	7.60
Charity .....	2.30
Furniture and utensils .....	28.68
Amusements and vacations..	12.30
Books and newspapers .....	8.38
Intoxicating liquors .....	12.45
Tobacco .....	10.91
Sickness and death .....	20.52
Other purposes .....	45.14
Total for all purposes.....	\$768.54

Mr. Wright also tells us that the aggregate wealth of this nation in 1902 averaged \$2,500 per worker over ten years of age, still in wages it takes two workers to earn \$827.19 per family.

Anybody with brains enough to read writing and write reading knows there is a screw loose somewhere. All admit this fact, but the remedy is what we all differ on. A man told me on the car last Sunday that if we would leave off whisky and tobacco we would soon be a free people. Another told me once that the thing to do was to stop raising children to work for the rich people, so the rich would have to go to work for themselves.

A good old rural democratic chairman told me last summer that the trouble was there are so many people

in the world we need a good long war to kill off about half of them.

Now, here comes Mr. Sam Divine, "the farmer," and others advising us to discriminate against trust products and high-priced grocermen.

When I was in a railroad camp when a dish of eatables would become exhausted we would pass the dish back to a Mexican table boy to be refilled. He would say "Hain't no mo'." So don't talk to us about "free competitive articles and cheap merchants for there 'hain't no mo'."

Then we find thousands conspiring to leave off eating meat until the price comes down. Here is one old work-ox that does not enter any such a conspiracy for two reasons: First, I will not punish my stomach for the amusement of the beef trusts, for amusement is what it would amount to with them. Second, I do not want to take chances on having an injunction served on me, or going to jail for contempt of court, or conspiracy to injure some man's trade. I don't intend to die in debt to my stomach and when I cut out my eating it will be for the want of the price.

If this world owes us a living, or even, as I believe, owes us the opportunity of making a living, this world is already in debt to me several times the price of a beefsteak.

Live without patronizing the trusts! Come across, "Mr. Farmer," "Mr. Observer," "Mr. Divine," tell us how we can do anything except breathe, or jump in the river without directly or indirectly patronizing the trusts. I am from Missouri.

Gentlemen, the trusts and combines are not products of competition, therefore competition can not ever destroy them. They are crea-

tures of the law and by the consent of the law-making bodies and they will never be destroyed by law. No man can make goods half as cheap as machines can; no small factory can manufacture goods as cheaply as can a large combine. The trusts are here and they are here to stay and the sooner we all realize that fact the better for us.

To do away with trusts and combines and return to the good old days of the stage coach, hand-made goods, toll gates, jeans pants and cowhide boots is as unreasonable and as impossible as to arrest circulation and turn the hands of progress backward on the dial of evolution. It would be like turning the Tennessee river flowing back toward its fountain head in the mountains.

The only thing I can see to do is to all get on the great trust band wagon and take a ride. If you were on the trust band wagon now we would get our coal oil for two cents per gallon, for that is what Mr. Wright said was the actual labor cost of producing and delivering to consumers. If we were all on the trust band wagon we would not be paying three cents per mile to ride on a railroad train, while the cost is less than one cent per mile. If Uncle Sam (not Sam Divine) was on the trust band wagon instead of under it, he would not have a deficit of one and a half million dollars in feeding the army and navy.

If he were on, instead of under the trust band wagon, he would not have an enormous deficit in the postal service, for then he would not pay twice as much as express companies for car service and would not be paying twice as much per year

## The Sublime Oberammergau Passion Play

In the little village of Oberammergau in the Bavarian Highlands, the Sacred Drama of the Passion Play of Jesus the Saviour, will be presented this summer. It has been presented every ten years by the people of this village as a religious fete in fulfillment of a vow made to God centuries ago in return for His mercy in delivering them from pestilence and sparing their lives. It will be an event of world-wide interest. Already the full capacity of many steamships has been sold out for months ahead to those who will make the pilgrimage to see this wonderful religious ceremony.

### "The Passion Play" on Post Cards

At enormous expense the original photographs taken from scenes in the Passion Play have been secured and reproduced in many beautiful colors. There are fifty-five views in all, regular post card size, packed in a neat box ready for mailing.

A full description is printed on the back of each card, so by beginning with No. 1 and looking at the pictures in the regular order you have of the greatest event in the history of mankind.

A booklet describing the play and the people in it accompanies each set of the cards. It is estimated that 50,000 people will visit this play. Everybody will be talking and reading about it, and you will be fortunate to have this opportunity to secure this fine set.

### How to Secure a Set for Yourself Without Cost

Commoner readers who are interested in the political principles advocated by this paper may view this remarkable religious play by fifty beautiful post cards without expense. We want you to write at once and secure one of these beautiful cards and learn our plan by which a full set of these cards are given away.

### CUT OUT AND SEND US THIS COUPON AT ONCE

THE COMMONER, Lincoln, Nebraska:

Enclosed find one two-cent stamp for wrapping and mailing one card out of the set of the Wonderful Passion Play post cards. Please advise me how I may secure the complete set.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....