

The Productivity of Russian Labor

From the Russian Soviet Government's First Annual Report

(Continued from last week.)

By A. Lomov

At the beginning of 1918 a definite break became obvious in the mood of the workers, in the sense of recognizing the necessity of introducing strict labor discipline and a readiness and willingness to have the piece-wage established. At the same time the administration of the establishment undertook the planning and gradual realization of a project of technical reorganization of the factory production; the factory committee, at the same time selecting the best methods of introducing labor discipline, propagated the idea of the necessity of the latter amongst the masses of the workers.

In the Spring of the present year there was organized a mixed committee of representatives of the administration and workers' organizations, which worked out rules for the internal factory management; these were later confirmed by a general meeting of the workers and the administration of the establishment.

The practical introduction of labor disciplinary rules which in the main correspond to the labor laws, having for its purpose the introduction of the piece-wage, required a certain time for preliminary work and the improvement of the technical equipment of the shops; but during June, July and August these problems were in a greater or lesser degree solved, and the factory now works completely on the bases of piece-wage scales.

The introduction of piece work was preceded by serious doubts on the part of the workers as well as on that of the administration, because they feared that at the beginning the wages of piece workers would prove insufficient as a result of the general disintegration of production, and also because the workers themselves had lost the habit of more intensive labor. The workers greatly doubted the success of the enterprise, particularly on account of their physical exhaustion as a result of poor nutrition; it seemed that the general desire to establish the piece-wage system was threatened by no small dangers. It was decided that at the beginning, approximately for about three months, the rules of labor discipline would be applied with the necessary laxity, and that to the tariff scales there would be added, in case of necessity, pre-payment to individual workers in cases where the price-fixing commission found that the failure to produce the output required was not a result of negligence or lack of skill on the part of the worker himself, but the result of the general decline of efficiency in production.

But finally, however, these fears proved to be considerably exaggerated, and the output of the workers turned out to be completely satisfactory, so much so that the above mentioned correctives had to be applied in rare cases only.

While establishing new wage scales, the latter were increased as compared to the rates of 1914 proportionately to the average exchange, with an additional 25% on account of the shortening of the working day from 10 to 8 hours, 25% on account of the decrease of labor efficiency as a result of poor nutrition and about 1% to 10% on account of a somewhat lowered norm accepted for an average daily output in 1914.

Thus the accepted increase in piece wages for regular work, to which class most labor belongs, showed itself, as regards the hourly output, in an increase of 50%, and in regard to a daily output an increase of 35%. Some jobs, having no direct examples in 1914, were revalued anew in accordance with the experience of the daily output; in several factories the above mentioned increases were made.

As a result of wages calculated thus, it was proven that the average weekly pay of piece workers has exceeded the daily pay by 30-160%, an average of about 80%; i. e., the average output of workers during the eight hour working day is already now about equal to that produced in 1910 during a ten hour working day. The comparison of several separate operations has enabled us to discover the average hourly production of labor. The time passed since the introduction of piece-work is not sufficient to warrant a final conclusion of the results achieved, but nevertheless, the

fact that the hourly productivity of labor in 1914 has already been attained, must be considered more or less established. In the future, with the elimination of the technical and economic disintegration of production, and with an increased adaptability of the workers themselves to more intensive labor, we must expect a marked increase in production irrespective of any changes in the technical aspects of the work.

Similar information we have regarding the Tilmans and Luberetskoye factories in the Moscow districts. The reports of a number of chemical, powder and other factories show an increase in the productivity of labor to a norm approaching that of peace time.

At the present time when the most acute period of hunger must be considered as passed, when the harvesting of the grain goes on in the main satisfactorily, one may and should expect further improvements in this field. For was not hunger that merciless power which could "destroy everything," as the workers' representatives used to say? The proletarian gradually takes possession of industry. For the year of the revolution he can with pride view the past route and to look at the incarnation of his slogans in ordinary practical life. There is much more for him to do, but the most difficult has already been achieved. Now everything is clear: the road is found, the work begun. With the greatest heroism the Russian worker realizes his economic system of Communism, gradually and infallibly perfecting its mechanism. That which the bourgeois world of Europe could not manage, that which the Kerensky band of chatterboxes could not handle, the Russian workers are beginning to accomplish successfully. At the time when bourgeois economy disintegrates more and more with every passing hour, the proletarian people's economy develops and becomes stronger. The first already gives off the breath of a rotting corpse, the second is just beginning to live and to blossom. The dead are still clinging to the living, but with growing resolution does the young world push down the old one. The Russian worker no longer wants to live in a kingdom of ghosts and shadows, he longingly stretches out his hands to the coming Spring, for ever breaking with the old system. Without compassion or pity he breaks with it, leaving to the bourgeois corpses to bury their dead.

It is necessary to note besides the economic, also the psychological significance for the workers of the nationalization of industry. From the moment of the transfer of industries into the hands of the Soviet government, the worker no longer labors for the benefit of a capitalist, but for that of the whole republic of proletarians and poor peasants. If before nationalization the worker had not sufficient incentive to increase the intensity of labor to the point of high efficiency, then, from the moment of workers' control, everything changes radically. Upon him now depends the finding of raw materials and fuel, the obtaining of orders, the delivery of the products, the financing of production and the payment of the workers. The deep significance of the November Revolution as it is prompted by the class feeling of the workers, consists in nationalization, which is becoming socialization, of the whole industry.

Those who daily and nightly sing funeral songs over the economic measures of the Soviet govern-

ment, do not notice the basic tendency to an increase in the productivity of labor which has markedly developed in the last few months.

The workers and their government cannot manage industry! Back to capitalism! Such is the "revolutionary" slogan of the Capitalist-Menshevik bloc.

Alas!—merciless history here also laughs at them. In Ukraine and Siberia the power has temporarily passed from the workers to the bourgeoisie, and the latter immediately has replaced the economic plan of the proletariat by one of its own. And what are the results of this change?

To all the critics of the Communist program of the Paris workers of 1871, Marx replied—"Does capitalistic society still exist in its maiden state of purity and chastity? Have not its bases developed, its self-deceptions been revealed, its prostituted reality been discovered?"

Back to capitalism! Here is the sole light-house amidst the stormy waves of the Communist Revolution. Thus think "Socialists" suckled by a bourgeois wet nurse in childhood fifty years after the experience of the Commune.

The capitalists must return to the factories and mills and pull the reins harder, because labor discipline and the productivity of labor have decreased. They forget that the fall in the productivity of labor is an incessant process that went on with gigantic strides both during Czarism and Kerenskyism.

Let the impartial language of the official statistics of the capitalist government of Skoropadsky give a clear and exhaustive reply to the question at issue.

The output of coal and anthracite in the Donetz basin was shown in 1918 in the following figures of millions of poods:

| | | |
|-----------------|------|---------------|
| January | 80 | million poods |
| February | 38 | " " |
| March | 65.7 | " " |
| April | 45 | " " |
| May coal | 27 | " " |
| May anthracite | 20 | " " |
| June coal | 12 | " " |
| June anthracite | 4 | " " |

For the railroads it became necessary to import Silsian coal (from Germany). In July a bourgeois genius proposes to increase the output of the Donetz basin . . . to 18 millions poods—a figure, according to our conviction, greatly exaggerated. The Kiev flock of professors and bourgeois, relying upon Austro-German military and capitalistic forces, for two and a half months of its works, can only admit the complete failure of its economic program. However, of this speaks not only the impartial language of figures, but the Austro-German command itself, in whose "control" the coal mines were placed. Not long ago it unofficially put to the members of the peace delegation of the Soviet Republic the following question: On what conditions would the Soviet Republic be willing to assist them in organizing the coal output in the Donetz basin? To ask such a question means to confess their own impotence. But not only the coal industry is in a state of complete paralysis, the entire metallurgy of the South is also dead since the day of the capture of power in Ukraine by the adventurous traitors who sold themselves to the sharks of German and Austrian capitalism.

Under conditions of the present revolution the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of managing or of reconstructing industry, while the proletariat each day makes possession of them all the firmer and better.

Frightened, the bourgeois do not want to see the tendency toward the strengthening of labor control; stubborn in their desire to overthrow the workers' dictatorship, they close their ears when reality speaks of an increase in the productivity of labor.

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