

Wage Trouble in Soviet Utopia

Walter Duranty, Moscow correspondent for the New York Times, writes: "It is a curious paradox that the Soviet regime now shows sharper and more widespread inequalities than in any country in the world." The inequalities are not of birth or privilege or class, but of earning power of various workers. Differences in wages.

"It is anything but uncommon that one worker in a mine or factory earns 1500 rubles a month while his fellow-worker in the same mine or factory gets only 200." Something has apparently gone askew with the Marxian principle of equality, although Mr. Duranty does not say so. It would be strange for one condi-

tioned to that ideology to recognize the obvious fact of differences in ability. For such recognition would lead to an individualistic conclusion.

What is true of the industrial workers, according to this article, is also true of the farmers. It would be more pertinent if Mr. Duranty had also compared the wages of workers in various parts of the country, to substantiate also that other fact of wages—that the general level is determined at the margin of production.

But the "reasons" for these inequalities are more interesting than the story, for they show the fallacy of conclusions based on wrong premises. When one takes the position

that wages can be planned by human agencies, rather than natural law, one is likely to sink into absurdity. The main reason given for these inequalities between Soviet workers is "management." It is true that in a poorly managed business wages are likely to be lower than in a well-managed business; because production will be less. But Mr. Duranty has pointed out that the differences occur "in the same mine or factory—even in the same shaft or shop." Given the same management why are there differences in wages? Mr. Duranty does not say.

The other "reason" is Stakhanoffism—the Russian edition of American scientific management. Under this system differences in skill and intelligence between workers are emphasized. Such differences must find expression in earning power. Thus the equality of Marxist dialectic comes in conflict with natural law. It can't be done without a headache, from which the Soviet is suffering.

—F. C.

See: "Science of Political Economy," pp. 310-312.
"Progress and Poverty," pp. 206-210.
"Teachers Manual (P. & P.)," L. IV, Q. 29.