

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 7, NO. 335.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1907.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

WAGES AND COST OF LIVING

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DESPATCHES from Russia convey the information that to-day “no one has any difficulty in Baku, Lodz or Odessa in having his personal enemy removed for the modest sum of 40 or 50 kopecks.” In other words, the wages for the job of murder is 20 cents, piecework, in those cities.

Sixteen years ago, the *New York Sun* stated: “There is no difficulty in New York to find a man to commit murder for \$2.” In other words, in New York, sixteen years ago, the wages for the job of murder was \$2, piecework.

At first blush it would seem that the wages of murderers was sixteen years ago higher in New York than they are now in Baku, Lodz or Odessa. This is an error. Considering the cost of living in Baku, Lodz or Odessa, and contrasting the same with the higher rents and cost of living in the New York of sixteen years ago, the conclusion is clear that, if anything, the wages of murderers, in the Russian towns mentioned, are higher than they were in New York of 1891. Contrasting the present cost of living in the present New York with the cost of living in the New York of that day, and making allowance for the increased supply of murderers, the actual wages in this “industry” are lower here than in Russia.

The reasons stated in the dispatches for the low price or wages of murderers in Europe are, first, the cheapness of human life; secondly, the low esteem in which the laws are held. Identical causes operate here productive of identical results.

In Russia, as in America, society is in a state of dissolution. Here, as there, the ruling class, at the end of its tether, is running amuck at such a rate that any one so innocent as to suppose that a Russian grandee or an American capitalist has the slightest regard for the law would be laughed at as childish. Finally, there as here, life has become “dirt cheap” in the estimate of the ruling class. In Russia, the ruling class thinks nothing of massacring with bayonet, sabre or hemp whole rafts of

people. Here in America, what capitalist has the slightest compunction at the scores of workers periodically sacrificed on railroads, in mines or mills, or at the many more whose lives are slowly drained, like the life of a man who cuts the artery of his wrist and lies down in a bath of warm water—drained in the murderous pens of “industry”?

Like causes, like effect. Murder becomes an industry when an old social rule is dissolving and a new is rising. 'Twas so in the Rome of the Caesars; 'twas so in the Athens immediately after the Peloponnesian war; 'twas so in the England of Charles I, 'twas so in the France of Louis the XV and XVI;—'tis so in the Russia and the America—supplementary opposites—of to-day.

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Uploaded October 2009

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