

An Interesting Correspondence

2/4/18

We print below letters which have passed between the committee on public information and Samuel Dansiger, editor of National Single Tax bureau, and the Public, the well-known weekly magazine:

Foreign Press Bureau,
235 West 23d street,
New York, N. Y.
Jan. 17, 1918.

Editor, National Single Tax League Bulletin, Arden, Wilmington, Del.

Dear Sir:

The president has placed in the hands of the committee on public information the task of helping to put before the Russian people the reasons for our entry into the war, together with an account of that democratic movement which has made the country what it is today. While many Russians are deeply appreciative of what this country has done through its loans, the railroad commission, the Red Cross, the Y. M. C. A., etc., and while many men and women of such different political views as Milyukoff, Lvoff, Madame Brechikovsky, and Tchaykovsky understand America, great numbers of influential Russians are almost as ignorant of this country and of its war aims as are the millions of workers and fighters whose opinions are shaping today the destinies of Russia—and of the world. Thousands of German agents there are picturing America as a nation owned and sweated by millionaires, who now, for their own profit, have driven us into the present war. The Russians know little or nothing of the democratic movement here in the last 20 years, and they know no more of our war aims.

The purpose of this bureau as regards Russia is twofold; first, to present to the Russian people a true picture of this country as a nation, which through many faults and blunders and against numberless obstacles, has been struggling steadily onward toward democracy, and has entered the present war in the hope of bringing about a state of things where war and autocracy alike will have been left behind; and second, in proof of our friendship toward the new Russian democracy, to help them in every possible way by practical suggestions drawn from our own experience, our failures and successes, our achievements and mistakes.

In this work we hope that we may have your hearty cooperation, and that, accordingly, you will be willing to place this bureau on your complimentary mailing list. We shall, of course, give due credit to any articles taken from your publication in which we make use in whole or in part.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) RAND KENNESLAY.

January 24, 1918.

Mr. Rand Kenneslay, committee of public information, 255 West 33d street, New York.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your of 17th inst.

If you would convince the Russian people of the purity and unselfishness of our intentions in entering the war, I would advise that you first rid your mind of the utterly false notion that none but "German agents" question it. The Russian people know better, and will not place much confidence in what you tell them if they see that you do not know that the skeptics and critics are at least as devoted to the interests of the United States as the most vociferous defenders of the war, and are more opposed to German or any other kind of autocracy than American upholders of the policy of Burleson, Gregory and McAdoo.

I am willing to help assure the Russian people that the American nation is not owned and sweated by millionaires as soon as you can furnish me with a satisfactory answer to some apparent evidence they may present in return.

They are struggling to free their country of land monopoly. They have not hesitated to revoke titles and declare the land open to whomsoever will use it. These people will be interested, naturally, in examining in what we have done of a similar nature, and I fear the comparison will not be in our favor. In fact, they might ask us wherein we have done more than Germany, Italy, Japan, Austria or any other monarchy in freeing the land. They may note that while they started with a monopolized country and have gone toward freedom, we began our history with a free continent, but have become a nation of landlords and tenants, with ownership constantly concentrating. They may ask why we do nothing practical to check that tendency, or why we trifle with patchwork remedies, demonstrated as failures in other places where already tried.

They may ask why we were so tender with monopolistic interests in getting our revenue, why we put taxes on honestly earned incomes and on labor products and why we issued bonds, while not a penny has been put on land values. They may ask whether the attack on Secretary Baker is not the work of disappointed greed, because he has stood in the way of unearned profits and militarism in peacetime. And they may ask that if we are so sure that our motives will stand discussion, why we do suppress papers, break up meetings and arrest speakers for discussing that very matter. They

may point to the rights guaranteed by the constitution, and ask what excuse our government has, aside from some absurd quibbles, covering the right of Congress to declare war, for violating them.

I confess I would be stumped for an answer that would satisfy myself, let alone a suspicious foreigner who has been under the influence of "German agents."

We will take pleasure in putting you on our complimentary mailing list, and hope you will let me know in detail, the knowledge we lack as how to allay suspicions aroused by what I have mentioned, and we hope that the administration will help us in convincing the Russians by adopting a more democratic policy. Yours truly,

(Signed) SAMUEL DANSIGER,
Editor, National Single Tax
Bulletin.