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In 1932, Peter Maurin, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, was working at hard manual labor at Mount Tremper, New York, at a boys' camp where he mended roads, cut ice, and did other chores winter and summer and received his living, not a very munificent one, in return. As a French peasant he lived on soup and bread. His account at the grocer did not come to more than a few dollars a week. He slept in the barn which was as close to the Stable as he could get. He spent seven years in the vicinity of Kingston, New York, studied, worked and prepared what he liked to call the Green Revolution. Before this he had travelled through the States and Canada as an unskilled laborer. Before that he had worked in France, where he was born, at the one thing he was skilled at, teaching with the Christian Brothers. But he believed too, that the scholar had to become a worker not only that he might understand the conditions and problems of the worker, but that the worker too might become a scholar, because Peter believed in THE PEOPLE changing their own conditions. He did not speak in terms of THE MASSES, being swayed by some dictator demagogue.

Peter Maurin studied the prophets of Israel and the Fathers of the Church; he studied Proudhon, Karl Marx, Kropotkin and famil-

iarized himself with utopian socialist thought as well as Marxist thinking. He knew to whom to turn among Catholic thinkers, and he introduced us to Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, Luigi Sturzo, Vincent McNabb, among the priests, and to E. I. Watkin, Christopher Dawson, G. K. Chesterton and Hillaire Belloc as well as E. J. Penty and Peter Kropotkin, who was in a way his favorite among the laywriters. When he waved the encyclicals at us, it was not only the social encyclicals of the Popes, but also that on St. Francis of Assisi. He preferred St. Francis' way to the industrial council way. He always aimed at the best, and to him voluntary poverty, manual labor was the beginning of all true reform, which was to begin with one's self. First of all he was a personalist and a Communitarian. "People are always saying, 'they don't do this, and they don't do that,'" he would cry out in ringing accents, "WE is a community, THEY is a crowd." And a lonely crowd, David Reisman would say, himself crying out against "the damned wantlessness of the poor." Peter would have liked Reisman's book as he would have liked Martin Buber's book, PATHS IN UTOPIA. He wanted people to be taught to want the best, and the best for him was the immediate program of the works of mercy, practiced in the cities and farming communes set up in the countryside where workers and scholars could get together to try to rebuild society within the shell of the old by founding better institutions to take the place of soulless corporations. (He spoke and wrote in phrases so packed with thought, that to expand them would mean the writing of a book.) He saw the need for the works of mercy as a practice of love for our brother which was the great commandment and the only way we can show our love for Christ, and he saw too that such a practice would mean conflict with the State. "Personal responsibility, not state responsibility," he always said.

Peter's teaching meant the immediate establishment of houses of hospitality because it was a time of depression and not only the worker, but young Catholic college graduates were unemployed. Peter shocked people by calling for an "abolition of the wage

system" and self employment. Young people gave their services and unemployed workers gave their skills, and readers of THE CATHOLIC WORKER sent in material goods and money, so that for the last twenty years we have kept going on this basis of voluntary poverty and "abolition of the wage system," for those preferred to give their services rather than go out and earn a wage for them.

This self employment was an immediate remedy for unemployment but the long term program meant substituting a new social order to take the place of both capitalism and communism. Peter did not believe in the use of force to bring about this new society, so from the first we have opposed class war, race war, civil war, imperialist war, and have been surrounded by them all. There is even the war between the worker and the scholar, and Peter faced the reality of that. He spoke of the treason of the intellectuals and also of the fault of the worker who permitted his work to be treated as a commodity to be bought and sold.

The impact Peter made on us all, from one end of the country to the other, so that houses of hospitality and farms were undertaken from coast to coast, was because he personally lived a life of poverty and work. He knew the skid rows of the country. He never asked anything for himself. His speech was "yea, yea," and "nay, nay." He was a great indoctrinator, a great agitator. He believed in "a theory of revolution" and advocated much study. "The evil is so deep seated," he said, "that of course much of the time will be given up to an immediate practice of the works of mercy." But he believed too, in constantly trying to create order out of chaos. "To be a social missionary," he said in one of his essays, "requires social mindedness, historical mindedness and practical idealism."

Because Peter loved most of all what he called the green revolution, we are beginning our twenty-first year with emphasis on the land.