

Welcome to Cow Time

By [Boris Kagarlitsky](#)

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It's really a hassle the way in late October each year the days become shorter, the nights longer, and it's still dark when we wake up in the morning. That nightmare ends on the last weekend of October. The country switches over to what is called "winter time," but what is really normal astronomical time.

Daylight-saving time was invented a century ago to save a few pennies on electricity, but it never justified itself economically.

Now, when society's basic demand for electricity goes far beyond simply lighting our homes and streets, the whole idea of daylight saving has become an anachronism. In fact, plans for eliminating daylight-saving time are being discussed within the European Union. Once they overcome the formidable European bureaucracy they will probably succeed within a few years.

Russia, by contrast, resolved this question quickly, but it accomplished this by eliminating winter time instead of daylight-saving time. In so doing, Moscow leaders are recklessly contradicting nature, economic principles and common sense.

Given Russia's vast geographical expanse across two continents, moving the hour hand on the clock in the winter will automatically lead to the direct opposite results. Millions of people will go to work and school in the dark, which will require an even greater use of electricity.

The only explanation that President Dmitry Medvedev gave for the move is that it will make life easier for Russia's cows. Exactly how Medvedev divined the cows' opinion on the subject remains a mystery.

All of these years, as late October arrived, the cowshed was thrown into a state of confusion and anxiety. "Where is the farmer? Why is he late? Has something gone wrong?" the cows say to themselves.

Their nervousness and distemper spread to the chickens and pigs. The threat of social pandemonium hangs ominously over the whole barn. Sensing the pending problem, the authorities took action.

It's a pity that the authorities don't show as much concern for their countrymen as they do for cows. In fact, our leaders never asked what the Russian people think about the proposed schedule changes.

The people making the decision to move the hour hand apparently don't know just how early in the morning others will have to go to work as a result, or how difficult it will be for parents to get their sleepy and cranky kids off to school and kindergarten. All of those worries and concerns remain unknown to the bureaucrats in the capital. After all, they normally work bankers' hours.

How all of these games with time zones will personally affect Russians is better left unsaid. Even before these problems, the birthrate was dismally low. At the same time, Russia is a leader in Europe in terms of male mortality.

It just so happens that while I was composing these lines, somebody slipped me an invitation to take part in the next Day of Wrath demonstration. And just for a change, this rally will actually be sanctioned by the authorities. The slogan, as always, will be: "It's time to change the government!"

But I think it's too late for that. This problem goes beyond mere politics. Our officials require serious medical treatment.

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