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Why Farmers Should Organize and Stay Organized

I—To Protect and Promote Class Interests.

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Theoretically, the idea of "the universal brotherhood of man" sounds well. Sermon after sermon has been preached describing the beautiful characteristics of an "unselfish people"—an imaginary part of the human race that does not exist. Discourses upon these imaginary ideals have an uplifting influence upon mankind and are all right in their places, but in this series of articles on "Why Farmers Should Organize and Stay Organized" it is the purpose of the writer to deal with human nature and modern conditions as they are and not as we would prefer to have them.

In the incentive to action behind nearly every human endeavor there is an element of selfishness. It is a part of human nature and can not be eliminated. Without this element of selfishness men would be indolent, indifferent and inactive. Without it mankind would be improvident and there could be no advancing civilization, no material development.

In following out the impulse of his nature to look out first for his own interests and the interests of his family, man frequently disregards the interests of others in his business relations with his fellow men. This is done on the presumption that each individual ought to be man enough and have intelligence enough to protect his own personal interests, and that nature has decreed that the individual or class of individuals that do not protect themselves must suffer for it.

In the relationship between the different classes of the same vicinity there are sometimes certain community interests that are common to all and, therefore, when it comes to providing means for the building of good roads, for establishing educational institutions and other public conveniences which enhance the community value of property in a town or vicinity, we frequently find doctors, lawyers, merchants, manufacturers, farmers and wage earners all lined up together, working for the same end. But when it comes to the financial interests that directly concern the different professions and classes, there is a natural conflict of personal interests, and each class or profession works as individuals, and through its distinct class organization, to promote its own interest in every legitimate manner possible, regardless of the effect it may have upon the interests of others. The merchant's prosperity depends upon the amount of profits he can get from others. The lawyers and doc-

tors succeed financially in proportion to the amount of fees collected from others. The wage worker's prosperity depends upon the amount of wages collected from others, and the farmer's success depends upon the price he gets from others for his products. So, when the direct interests of the different classes are considered, there is a natural and unavoidable conflict of personal interests running through all our business relationship with each other, and it can't be dodged. If we, as farmers, first realize that this conflict of interests in our business transactions exists and must continue to exist, we will then be in better shape to deal with these conditions intelligently and successfully.

It is folly to attempt to change natural conditions which can never be changed, unless it were possible to change human nature and human environment. We must, therefore, deal intelligently with human nature as it is and with modern conditions as they exist, and not waste any effort or energy in trying to change them.

The natural conflict between class interests has been greatly intensified during the past quarter of a century by the combinations capital in productive industrial enterprises and by class organization and co-operation, through which *production is limited to actual demand and distribution controlled*. These class organizations fix prices with an eye single to the interests of the class that does the fixing, and it is done at the expense of the class that does not have the intelligence and good business sense to follow that method of promoting its interests. Now, don't be quick to condemn in others the same part of human nature that is in all the human race, and let us be slow to condemn others for doing what we would do, if placed in the same position. The point we make is that life itself is a fierce struggle which is not ethical, but selfish to the core.

In its business dealings, if one class takes advantage of another, that other class has no right to kick, if it lies within its power to prevent it.

You have heard it said that farmers have not been getting "justice," but it is justice that is hurting them. When a class of people humbly and stupidly permit an organized system of commercialism to price everything they buy and also everything they sell, with no organized effort to prevent it, justice comes along with considerable force and hits them hard between the eyes. It is this kind of deserved justice that farmers have been getting, and

that kind of justice will keep on hitting us until we find a remedy and apply it.

Farmers must organize to promote and protect their own class interests, because that is the only way it can be done successfully. Acting as individuals, alone and single-handed, we become an easy prey for the combined forces of the classes who recognize the power of organization and co-operation. Again, farmers must organize to protect their own interests, because there is nobody else that can, or will, protect these interests for the farmers, as a class. In the protection of our farming interests we necessarily come in contact and in conflict with the personal interests of those who want to buy our products as cheaply as possible, and everybody, except the farmer, wants to do that. It's an idle dream to expect any help from them, even if they knew how to help us. It's a stern battle of class interests that the world is engaged in, and each class must make an intelligent and manly organized fight for its own interests, or be left in the race—to suffer for its own folly and indifference.

With the Farmers' Union in our midst, as the "last call" to the farmers to unite permanently, as all other classes have done, intelligent and loyal farmers can't afford to remain out of this organization, for the world hates a "scab" and a quitter. In an article in a recent issue of the American Magazine, on the success of labor unions, Mr. Clarence Darrow, labor's foremost defender in the courts, makes this comment: "In this world men are crucified not because they are bad, but because they differ from their fellows. Trade unionists have for centuries believed that they were upholding the rights of men, protecting the welfare of their class, and promoting the interests of their homes; that without the union shop their liberty and their independence would be gone. They have come to regard the non-union men not only as the enemies of their homes, the destroyers of their families, but as traitors to their class; as men who seek to undermine and destroy the organization which protects them. This is not a fact in trade unionism alone, but a deep abiding fact in human life. In its last analysis it is the law of self-defense."

[Mr. Green's next article on "Why Farmers Should Organize and Stay Organized" will appear next week. Subject: "Neighborhood Co-Operation on the Farm."]