

Farm And County News

Some Aspects of the Farmers' Problems

By BERNARD M. BARUCH

(Reprinted from Atlantic Monthly)

The whole rural world is in a ferment of unrest, and there is an unparalleled volume and intensity of determined, if not angry, protest, and an ominous swarming of occupational conferences, interest groupings, political movements and propaganda. Such a turmoil cannot but arrest our attention. Indeed, it demands our careful study and examination. It is not likely that six million aloof and ruggedly independent men have come together and banded themselves into active unions, societies, farm bureaus, and so forth, for no sufficient cause.

Investigation of the subject conclusively proves that, while there is much overstatement of grievances and misconception of remedies, the farmers are right in complaining of wrongs long endured, and right in holding that it is feasible to relieve their ills with benefit to the rest of the community. This being the case of an industry that contributes, in the raw material form alone, about one-third of the national annual wealth production and is the means of livelihood of about 49 per cent of the population, it is obvious that the subject is one of grave concern. Not only do the farmers make up one-half of the nation, but the well-being of the other half depends upon them.

So long as we have nations, a wise political economy will aim at a large degree of national self-sufficiency and self-containment. Rome fell when the food supply was too far removed from the belly. Like her, we shall destroy our own agriculture and extend our sources of food distantly and precariously, if we do not see to it that our farmers are well and fairly paid for their services. The farm gives the nation men as well as food. Cities derive their vitality and are forever renewed from the country, but an impoverished countryside exports intelligence and retains unintelligence. Only the lower grades of mentality and character will remain on, or seek, the farm, unless agriculture is capable of being pursued with contentment and adequate compensation. Hence, to embitter and impoverish the farmer is to dry up and contaminate the vital sources of the nation.

The war showed convincingly how dependent the nation is on the full productivity of the farms. Despite heroic efforts, agricultural production kept only a few weeks or months ahead of consumption, and that only by increasing the acreage of certain staple crops at the cost of reducing that of others. We ought not to forget that lesson when we ponder on the farmer's problems. They are truly common problems, and there should be no attempt to deal with them as if they were purely selfish demands of a clear-cut group, antagonistic to the rest of the community. Rather should we consider agriculture in the light of broad national policy, just as we consider oil, coal, steel, dyestuffs, and so forth, as sineews of national strength. Our growing population and a higher standard of living demand increasing food supplies, and more wool, cotton, hides, and the rest. With the disappearance of free or cheap fertile land, additional acreage and increased yields can come only from costly effort. This we need not expect from an impoverished or unhappy rural population.

It will not do to take a narrow view of the rural discontent, or to appraise it from the standpoint of yesterday. This is peculiarly an age of flux and change and new deals. Because a thing always has been so no longer means that it is righteous, or always shall be so. More, perhaps, than ever before, there is a widespread feeling that all human relations can be improved by taking thought, and that it is not becoming for the reasoning animal to leave his destiny largely to chance and natural incidence.

Prudent and orderly adjustment of production and distribution in accordance with consumption is recognized as wise management in every business but that of farming. Yet, I venture to say, there is no other industry in which it is so important to the public—the city-dweller—that production should be sure, steady, and increasing, and that distribution should be in proportion to the need. The unorganized farmers naturally act blindly and impulsively and, in consequence, surfeit and death, accompanied by disconcerting price-variations, harass the consumer. One year potatoes rot in the fields because of excess production, and there is a scarcity of the things that have been displaced to make way for the expansion of the potato acreage; next year the punished farmers mass their fields on some other crop, and potatoes enter the class of luxuries; and so on.

Agriculture is the greatest and fun

damentally the most important of our American industries. The cities are but the branches of the tree of national life, the roots of which go deeply into the land. We all flourish or decline with the farmer. So, when we of the cities read of the present universal distress of the farmers, of a slump of six billion dollars in the farm value of their crops in a single year, of their inability to meet mortgages or to pay current bills, and how, seeking relief from their ills, they are planning to form pools, inaugurate farmers' strikes, and demand legislation abolishing grain exchanges, private cattle markets, and the like, we ought not hastily to brand them as economic heretics and highwaymen, and hurl at them the charge of being seekers of special privilege. Rather, we should ask if their trouble is not ours, and see what can be done to improve the situation. Purely from self-interest, if for no higher motive, we should help them. All of us want to get back permanently to "normalcy"; but is it reasonable to hope for that condition unless our greatest and most basic industry can be put on a sound and solid permanent foundation? The farmers are not entitled to special privileges; but are they not right in demanding that they be placed on an equal footing with the buyers of their products and with other industries?

Let us, then, consider some of the farmer's grievances, and see how far they are real. In doing so, we should remember that, while there have been, and still are, instances of purposeful abuse, the subject should not be approached with any general imputation to existing distributive agencies of deliberately intentional oppression, but rather with the conception that the marketing of farm products has not been modernized.

An ancient evil, and a persistent one, is the undergrading of farm products, with the result that what the farmers sell as of one quality is resold as of a higher. That this sort of chicanery should persist on any important scale in these days of business integrity would seem almost incredible, but there is much evidence that it does so persist. Even as I

(Continued on Page 7)

MILLS RIVER VALLEY.

At the 11 o'clock service last Sabbath at the Methodist church, Rev. Holloway's text was taken from Exodus 14:15, "Speak Unto the Children of Israel that They go Forward."

Frank Burgin and his bride from South Carolina have been visiting relatives in this and the Brevard section for the past two weeks. Roy Wright has returned from Kansas again, and is with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Will Wright.

J. T. Davenport and family attended the funeral of Clifford Davenport, son of the late Otto Davenport, who died a month ago. The funeral of the son was on Tuesday of this week in Asheville.

Mrs. B. M. Jones, after spending some time with her daughter, Mrs. Fred McDowell at Asheville, has returned home.

C. L. Dillard and family have returned to their home here, after having spent over a year at Pisgah Forest.

Mark McCall and wife of Asheville are visiting at the home of his father, W. P. McCall.

There has been quite a lot of ploughing done in this section during the fall and winter months, more than has been noticeable in several years.

Miss Lucile Warlick, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Wartick, underwent an operation for appendicitis Sunday.

Miss Reed, a nurse from Roanoke, Va., has been the guest of her sister, Mrs. E. R. Bright, for the past two weeks.

Miss Belle Nichols, from Dallas, Texas, spent a few weeks recently with her mother, Mrs. Tom Nichols.

Mrs. Nan Johnson is with her daughter, Mrs. T. V. Carland, near Holly Springs school house.

X.

FLAT ROCK.

Carl M. Jones, who has been ill with pneumonia, is improving nicely.

Miss Jervey Thompson, who has been spending some time with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Thompson, at Flat Rock, left Monday for Charlotte where she is attending school.

PLEASANT HILL.

Our Sunday School at this place is progressing nicely under the management of our new superintendent, Mr. Sinclair.

Rev. Mr. Dotson preached an interesting sermon at Pleasant Hill Sunday morning from Ezekiel 33:11.

Mrs. Martha Sentell visited her daughter, Mrs. Leroy Wilkie, Monday.

Mrs. Alexander Barber is very ill with pneumonia fever.

Mrs. James Drake of Blantyre, who has been visiting her sister, has returned home.

Mrs. J. W. Brown, who has been on the sick list, is able to be out again.

Miss Sallie Drake of Hendersonville spent Sunday with her parents.

Mrs. William Fletcher of Pleasant Grove is spending a few days with her sisters, Mrs. Rachel and Mrs. Nancy Shepherd.

Miss Charlotte Drake, who has been spending the winter in Greenville, has returned home.

Oscar Orr of Kanuga Lake motored to Hendersonville Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Painter, who have been visiting friends and relatives at this place, have returned home.

Quite a number of the Pleasant Hill people attended the funeral and burial of George Sentell Saturday. Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Jamison of Hendersonville attended services at Pleasant Hill Sunday afternoon.

WEST HENDERSONVILLE.

Homer Hefner had the misfortune of falling while cleaning out a well last Wednesday and broke one of his legs.

Mrs. Mingus Shipman of Greenville, S. C., spent the week-end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. D. W. McCall.

H. G. Jackson and family of Asheville have moved to West Hendersonville.

Mrs. J. H. Beck entertained last Thursday with a birthday dinner given in honor of her husband. The delicious dinner was served to a number of friends and relatives.

Norman and Louis Reid of Flat Rock spent Sunday with Eugene Saltz.

J. L. Newman has purchased a fine Jersey cow.

The little infant of Mr. and Mrs. Singletary Sentell is very sick with pneumonia.

D. W. Jones spent Thursday in Brevard on business.

Johnny.

FLETCHER.

Miss Sue Livingstone of Hendersonville spent the week-end with her parents here.

George Lance has entered Fruitland Institute for the spring term of school. Mr. and Mrs. Hobart Evans of Asheville spent Sunday with the latter's parents, Mr. and Mrs. K. R. Seals.

Prof. and Mrs. W. V. Cope spent Saturday in Hendersonville, and purchased a new Ford car.

J. N. Russell visited his daughter, Mrs. W. S. Scott, in Asheville who was sick last week.

The friends of Elisha Garren will regret to learn that he is very ill. J. E. Long, who has been working in Spartanburg, S. C., for several months, has returned home.

W. D. Bagwell is living a handsome residence built on his farm near Good Luck.

E. A. Livingstone of Hendersonville spent Sunday at his home here.

FLAT ROCK SECTION.

Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Surratt and children of Hendersonville, who have been visiting their parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. F. Surratt, have returned home.

Miss Jervy Thompson, who spent the holidays with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Thompson, returned to school at Charlotte Monday.

A number of young people from this section attended church at East Flat Rock Sunday night.

Rev. W. A. Morris of Hendersonville attended church at Oak Grove Sunday.

Ernest Hyder is very ill with pneumonia at his home on Route 1. The singing at Refuge Sunday was

well attended by people from this section.

Mr. and Mrs. Pink Thompson visited in Tuxedo Sunday.

Ella Fay

CRAB CREEK.

The Crab Creek Sunday School set Sunday, January 22, for the purpose of re-organizing and electing officers for the Sunday school for the ensuing year.

A number of young folks from this vicinity have been attending the singings at Craganolia, being conducted every Saturday night by Elliott Ward. Miss Bessie Levi of this place has

(Continued on page 7)

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