

EDUCATION, COÖPERATION, LEGISLATION

(1) Education to Develop Power, (2) Coöperation to Multiply It, and (3) Legislation and Good Government to Promote Equal Rights and Human Progress—Plain Talk About Men, Measures and Movements Involved
By CLARENCE POE

Let the Farmer Who Is Getting Old Keep His Children Near Him

WE HAVE been very much pleased by the appreciation of our recent editorials on "Sell Some Land to Good White Neighbors" and "How to Build a Good Neighborhood." It is impossible to say how many thousands of farmers in the South are simply scratching over large farms with shiftless tenants, making practically no profits, unable to improve their homes or farms, living without enough good white neighbors, and probably driving their children away to town, all because they insist upon holding on to tracts larger than they are able to cultivate properly.

Just a few days ago an enterprising young farmer and trucker came into our office with some products that he was justly proud of. "I went back to the farm last fall after having been in town several years," he told us. And then he gave us a story that might be duplicated in its essentials in almost every neighborhood in the South. "My father owned five or six hundred acres of land," he said, "which he was renting out to Negro tenants and making nothing off of it. But he was so bent on keeping the whole farm all together just as it was that he would not divide off any parts for my brother and me, either to sell us or even for long-time lease. I suppose it was natural for him to wish to keep in charge of the whole five or six hundred acres as he had always been. As my brother and I didn't wish to improve and enrich any particular part of the farm without having a permanent understanding about it, we naturally had to go to town. Last year, however, my father decided that it was better to have his own sons near him rearing their families and building up good farms, instead of continuing the land-skipping by ignorant tenants. Consequently, he made arrangements for dividing off tracts for my brother and me, and naturally all of us are happier to be grouped together again in this way."

We suspect that there is a lesson here for many of the older farmers who read *The Progressive Farmer*. Why should they insist upon passing their old age in loneliness, away from their children, when in many cases they have plenty of land to justify them in following the example just given? Or if a farmer who is getting old has no children, he certainly needs to have good, sympathetic white neighbors near him and should be willing to sell any surplus land to secure this result.

We think that the advice, "Sell Some Land to Good White Neighbors," is good both for young farmers and old farmers who have more land than they can cultivate in a really scientific and creditable fashion. But the advice applies especially to older farmers. And in this connection we believe the article we are printing next week, "Should The Farmer Too Old to Work Move to Town?" will be found especially interesting.

Time to Quit Splitting Up Counties

THERE is too much of a tendency in the South to split up school districts and counties and neighborhoods into ineffective small units. Just as a community cannot support schools and churches and farmers' organizations unless it is large enough to include a sufficient number of persons, just so a county cannot economically serve its people if it is too small in size. The Atlanta Constitution does well to sound a note of warning against the multiplication of counties in a state which has already suffered too much from this tendency. Take a good-sized county and it is easy to have a whole-time county school superintendent, a whole-time county health officer, a whole-time farm demonstration agent, and an efficient road supervisor. Cut this county in two and put the people to the expense of supporting two sets of county officers, two sheriffs, two registers, two clerks of the court, and probably two useless treasurers where even one is not needed, two county homes, two jails, etc., etc.—and the result that word probably goes that the people cannot have a whole-time superintendent of schools or farm demonstration agent nor whole-time county health officer. All the people's money goes to pay salaries for doing routine work, and every form of genuine progress is handicapped. Search to the bottom and it will usually be found that a movement for a new county is the result of the ambition of some little town to become the county seat. It is high time for farmers to begin taking a stand against such extravagance. Give us country communities large enough to support strong schools and other social agencies. Give us strong counties large enough to support

government agencies that really benefit the people—efficient officers working for better schools, better farming, better roads and better health—instead of smaller counties absorbing all the people's taxes for merely keeping the wheels going round. In union there is strength. In division there is weakness. It would help the South a great deal to consolidate not only a great number of school districts but a considerable number of churches and small counties.

Intelligent Labor Costs More, But Pays Better

IN A recent issue of the *Irish Homestead* Sir Horace Plunkett makes a strong appeal to Irish farmers to do more intensive farming and use more improved machinery. Incidentally he points out that with improved machinery farmers can pay laborers more than at present and then find them more profitable than present low-priced labor. As Sir Horace says:

"Happily there is in this case no fear that so-called labor-saving machinery will displace labor. My own belief is that its use will not only result in the production of more food, but will inevitably lead to the employment of more labor. The immediate effect of the change will be to make labor efficient by giving it the proper implements and to increase the profits of the farmer so that he can employ more laborers and pay them better."

Sir Horace then goes on to quote with approval what Mr. A. D. Hall says in his notable book, "A Pilgrimage of British Farming": "The farmer's general complaint is that the majority of his men are not worth their wages, and that is very probably true; they will have to be more highly paid still before they will earn their money." In other words, Mr. Hall's point is that by paying enough to get intelligent laborers who will do better farming, use improved machinery, care for the soil, the crops and livestock more wisely, farmers will find their profits much increased. There is little doubt about it that the highly-paid, intelligent white farm labor of the North and West pays employers bigger profits than the so-called "cheap" labor of the Southern states.

Minor Matters

EDUCATIONALLY we need hardly anything more than the general use of an arithmetic giving practical attention to farm problems. It is nothing less than disgraceful to have thousands and thousands of farm boys year after year studying problems in bank exchange, latitude and longitude, British money, and the metric system of weights and measures, while they learn absolutely nothing about how to compound a fertilizer formula, estimate the values of different grades of fertilizer, nor have any problems in mixing rations for livestock. Farmers everywhere should make up their minds to keep on raising a perpetual row about this situation until it is remedied.

The government of Denmark has made excellent provision for helping farmers buy land. Hence it is a pertinent comment which Mr. Oscar Sorensen makes on the report that Professor Ravn is coming to America to teach our people the Danish methods of farming. Mr. Sorensen writes:

"What I wish to say about it is this, if Mr. Ravn would only teach this government to assist the farmers here with capital, the same as the government does in the country where he comes from, I shall risk *The Progressive Farmer's* teaching me all about the farming."

We hope that our readers are not forgetting the arguments made in our "Educational Edition" showing the advantages of the three-teacher school. There is no greater problem in the rural South than that of developing genuine community life, organizing neighborhoods around adequately supported social centers. Just as we need to thin corn and cotton in spring, so we need to thin schoolhouses at the present time. They are too thick to be properly supported and hence are living at a sort of half-dying rate, like cotton stalks, corn stalks, or forest trees when they are crowded too close together for proper sustenance. With schoolhouses suitably located, the districts extending two and a half miles in each direction, we should soon have an educational system that our farmers could be proud of, and the other social agencies would develop correspondingly.

Sooner or later our Southern merchants must get on the cash basis. Credit ought to be had from bankers at from 6 to 8 per cent and not from merchants at from twice to five times as much. One eminent authority says in a recent indictment of the credit system:

"The honest farmer must pay for the losses caused by the dishonest one. This is wrong. The whole country store system is wrong and inefficient. The country store merchant should put his business on a cash basis in order that he can buy for cash. The South says it does business on credit. We all do credit business, but we ought to do it with the banks, which are the logical rating agents."

The *Sumter Watchman* and *Southron* does well to remind our South Carolina readers that it is time for them to put the screws on their lawmakers about the continued disregard of campaign pledges as to the Torrens system of registering land titles. As our *Sumter* exchange says:

"The Torrens system in South Carolina, as in other states, is unpopular with an influential section of the Legislature and it will continue to be pigeon-holed on one pretext or another so long as the people will stand for it. Candidates for the Legislature go from one end of their counties to the other telling the voters that they are in favor of land title registration, but after election the successful ones, almost without exception, discover other more important matters to engross their attention."

We are more and more firmly convinced that the justest and least harmful tax ever devised by the wit of man is the inheritance tax. We should reduce the tax on people who are working and earning, and put correspondingly more on those who possess without having earned. Take this item we find in a recent daily paper, for example:

"John Nicholas Brown, of New York, aged fourteen, known for years as 'the richest boy in the world,' has been made \$10,000,000 wealthier by the decision of Justice Weeks in confirming the legality of the will of the boy's grandmother. This will make the boy's total fortune \$22,000,000. The latest legacy came from the estate of his grandfather, John Carter Brown, the textile manufacturer, who died 26 years before the boy was born. He left his \$25,000,000 estate in trust until the death of his widow. She was granted the liberty of disposing of it in her will. Mrs. Brown divided \$20,000,000 between her daughter, Mrs. Watts Sherman, and her grandson."

The farmers should encourage urban labor to organize for better wages. Any movement which is conducive to the prosperity of the town, any improvement in government which tends to put property and wealth in the hands of the masses instead of in the hands of the classes, means better markets for every farm product. As the *Irish Homestead* well points out, the man with a million dollars can eat but little more farm products than the man with a hundred dollars. But if you increase the one hundred dollar man's income, he will doubtless buy a more varied and higher priced line of farm products.

No man in the country is pleading more earnestly than Herbert Quick for country schools that really train for country life. He even declares that our country schools are not so good as they were fifty years ago.

"They are not really rural schools at all. They are copies of the poor city schools of many years ago—and bad copies at that. The rural teacher of fifty years ago was quite frequently a schoolmaster instead of a school-ma'am, and in either case was a much larger figure in the community than now. There was more essence of birch used then—and that was objectionable; but there was more personality—and that was good."

A Thought for the Week

IN THE now not very short life that I have passed in this capital and the public service of the country, the most alarming tendency of this day, in my judgment, so far as the safety and integrity of our institutions are concerned, is the tendency to judicial legislation, so that when men having vast interests are concerned and they cannot get the law-making power of the country which controls it to pass the legislation they desire, the next thing they do is to raise the question in some case, to get the court to so construe the constitution or the statutes as to mean what they want it to mean. —Judge John M. Harlan, United States Supreme Court.