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Greater Farm Efficiency Essential to Maintain Yields

LAST week, out of just one of the larger counties of the South, 700 able-bodied young Negroes left for a training camp. Out of the South's ten million Negroes, not less than 100,000 will be taken by the draft, and of our white population probably 200,000 will be drawn. Thus 300,000 young, vigorous workers will be withdrawn from productive industries. This means, because the South is largely rural and agricultural, that Southern agriculture is to lose a heavy proportion of its most efficient labor.

But this is not all. Within the past twelve months probably not less than half a million Negroes, attracted by high wages in the North, have left the South. Many thousands of our boys have voluntarily enlisted in the army and navy, and they are still going. Finally, industries of all kinds are running at the highest pitch ever known, and the wages they are paying are still further depleting our farm labor supply.

In the face of this labor shortage, we are confronted with an urgent need for not only maintaining crop production, but for actually increasing it. For our fighting men must be fed and clothed. Can the South solve the problem? Can we, with a decreased labor supply, maintain and increase our crop yields?

To do it, some radical changes are necessary. Inefficiency in methods and machines must be cast into the scrap-heap. With less human labor, what we have must be made to count to the utmost. What are some of the ways in which this may be done?

1. Increase, rather than decrease, the acreage in cultivation. Labor is scarce, but labor-saving machinery must be used to take its place. Two and three-horse breaking plows, or tractors in some instances, and two-row cultivators must be used to take the place of the man power we have hitherto used. Don't let the fields lie out for lack of help; buy labor-saving machinery and keep them busy.

2. Make every acre do its best. This is a time for intensive effort on an extensive scale. Prices of crops are double the normal, and we are justified in doubling the expense, if necessary, of making them. Every possible pound of barnyard manure should be saved and put on the fields, and commercial fertilizers should be used heavily. These are high-priced, but proportionately they are not as high-priced as the crops we sell.

3. Take in the waste places. This is a time when every acre should be required to render an account of itself, and if it is a loafer it should be put to work. Wet bottoms, hillsides grown up in bushes and briars, so-called pastures that grow no grass—these should



FARM EFFICIENCY THAT COUNTS—ONE MAN FILLING THE SILO

all be reclaimed and put to work without delay.

4. Use livestock to consume wastes. The farmer without a good flock of hens to consume barnyard wastes, two or three sows to take care of the kitchen slop, and a few cows to take care of field wastes that would otherwise bring us no return,—a farm without these is not an efficiently managed farm.

The mettle of the Southern farmer is to be tested. He must prove himself efficient or be a failure. Now, while the rewards for efficiency are greater than ever before, while our country has need of efficiency as never before, we simply cannot afford not to measure up. It is our great opportunity for service.

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