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Why Farmers Should Organize and Stay Organized

III.—To Curtail and Control Production of Crops For the Market.

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LIMITED PRODUCTION is a modern business principle that underlies the safety and success of every business profession. *Limiting supply to actual demand* is the scientific business principle that stands between success and failure. *Unlimited production*, without regard for demand, would bring financial disaster to the manufacturer, and *unlimited distribution*, without regard for demand, would wreck and ruin the biggest and strongest mercantile enterprise on earth. All classes of manufacturers anticipate the demands for their various products and they then produce only enough to meet the probable demands. That is the intelligent plan of production and it is the safe plan. Following this plan out, congested markets from abnormally large factory outputs are prevented and bankruptcy avoided. Limiting production to actual normal demand insures profitable prices to the producer and makes his business safe, permanent and profitable. This result can be attained in no other way except through the modern business principle of limited production, which the entire professional and commercial world puts into action as far as practical. Professional men limit the production of service to actual demand for the same business reason that is behind the idea of limited production with the manufacturers.

When I recommend and advocate and defend the idea of limited production of farm products, intended for the market, I am advancing no new or untried plan, no new theory of economics. I admit that it is, indeed, new as applied to the business of farming, but the very fact that we haven't been farsighted enough to apply it in our own business explains why home-owners are becoming fewer and fewer in the rural districts every year, why we have been made to suffer for our own wasteful industry and why others have reaped the result of our toil and our energy and our economies in production.

Why should we have *competitive production* on the farm after it has been eliminated everywhere else? Why should we waste our labor and energy to produce and gather a bumper crop to sell at prices below cost of production? If by increasing the aggregate production of hogs for the market the price

of hogs declines so that the consumer gets the benefit of the increased production, doesn't it result in loss to the producer? In the aggregate, if ten million bales of cotton for the market will bring two hundred million dollars more money to the producers of cotton than fourteen million bales will bring, isn't it business suicide to produce fourteen million bales? "The world needs the cotton," you say? If farmers find that they can't get a profitable price for cotton unless they produce *less than the world needs*, isn't it their moral duty to go ahead and produce *less than the world needs* and thereby protect their own interests and the interests of their families? If they don't guard their interests, who will? Is it right for a farmer to carry his wife and children into the fields to make big crops of cotton and tobacco when it is a fixed law of economics that prices decline in proportion as the market is congested by abnormally large outputs? Isn't it a mistake that almost amounts to a crime for farmers to keep their children out of school and put them into the fields to *depress prices of farm products* and let them grow up in ignorance and become an easy prey for superior intelligence? Talk about tragedy, but here it is, written in scarlet, in millions of Southern farm houses. Child slavery in cotton mills is, indeed deplorable and it ought to be prohibited by the strong arm of law, but it is no worse than child slavery in cotton and tobacco fields. In fact, child slavery in the cotton fields is a double tragedy, for it results both in *perpetuating the curse of ignorance on the farm and also brings ruinously low prices for the very thing which the children are kept out of school to produce!*

If the white children of the South had been kept out of the cotton fields this year the cotton crop would have been reduced approximately two million bales. And again, if Southern white farmers had all planted for a living at home, thus correcting a suicidal economic error that has cost the South more than any other, the cotton crop would have been reduced another two million bales. These two legitimate and commendable business methods of limiting cotton production would have saved this year one-fourth the labor and energy that has been criminally wasted. This same principle of limiting production will apply to any other crops grown especially for the market, and unless farmers wake up and become practical business men, as well as good

farmers, and co-operate to control the output of products intended for the market, the classes who do business under the principle of *limited production and controlled distribution* will eventually own all the farm lands of this country and the masses in the rural districts will be reduced to tenants. No class of people who enter into deadly competition with each other, both in the production and sale of their products, can reasonably expect anything but ultimate industrial slavery.

I am fully conscious that the argument I am producing here is somewhat in conflict with the work of well-meaning employees of the agricultural departments who have encouraged us to make competitive business war against each other to see which can succeed in doing most to increase the aggregate production of farm products for the market. Their efforts to correct the great and far-reaching error of importing food products to consume on the farm is commendable. Their idea of soil improvement is also right and proper, if they also advise the *reduction of acreage and shorter hours of labor on the farm* as a safeguard against congested markets and low prices, but if the aim and idea is to increase the aggregate production of products for the market by *improving all the acres now in cultivation*, they are unconsciously engaged in a task, which if consummated, means nothing but disaster and low prices to the very class they seek to help, and it brings corresponding prosperity to the inhabitants of towns and cities who buy our products cheaply just in proportion as the aggregate output of our farm products increase.

I am also mindful of the fact that in advocating controlled production and controlled distribution of farm products I am contending for the same principle that "trusts" and combines use to fix prices upon their products, and without which they could never succeed. If I am criticised for this by "trust busters" I respectfully remind them that no "trust" has ever yet been "busted" by legislation and we are getting tired waiting for relief from that source. The idea of breaking up "trusts" and combines by law now is an empty dream. Nothing short of the application of the principle of socialism will do it, and this country isn't ready for that yet. Besides, any act of legislation that would prevent "trusts" from controlling the output of their products and

(Continued on page nine)