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EDITORIAL COMMENT

HOW MANY members of your Local Union are going in debt this year? One of the purposes of the Farmers' Union is to discourage the credit and mortgage system. The credit system is the greatest curse Southern farmers have to contend with. The only practical way to discourage it is to appeal to the individual members to stay out of debt. A debt contracted for supplies (which ought to be produced at home) means bondage—industrial slavery. Why not plant for a living at home this year and get in the independent way? There is no other road that leads to it except the Farmers' Union Live-at-Home route. If you are in debt the best way to get out of debt is to plant for a living at home. If you are in debt, planting too much cotton or tobacco has put you there, and it's the worst kind of folly to depend upon getting out of debt by planting *the very thing which has put you in debt!*

IN ANSON COUNTY there lives an independent farmer. On sandy soil, which everybody says isn't suitable for the production of wheat, this farmer averages about twenty bushels of wheat per acre, and he doesn't sow but a half bushel of seed wheat per acre. About twenty-five years ago this Anson county farmer didn't own a foot of land. The first year after his marriage he went to the time merchant and gave him a crop lien (on a crop about to be planted, a system of security that is a disgrace to civilization), and after the bondage papers had been duly signed up and witnessed, this young farmer said to the time merchant: "I belong to you, body and soul. I want you to tell me what to plant." The merchant replied: "You plant whatever you please. I leave that entirely with you." With a young wife, and bouyant with the vigor of young life and with ambition backed by good judgment, these folks went to house-keeping and farming. Notwithstanding the fact that they were wrapped up in debt, secured by a crop lien, this young couple went to work and planted *for a living at home the first year*. Hundreds of others would have said, and did say: "I am in debt, and I must plant cotton to get out of debt," and many of them are in debt yet—nothing more than industrial slaves living

from hand to mouth. But this Anson county farmer never had to sign but one crop lien and he has never been in debt for "supplies" but one year, and that was the first year. The very simple reason he has not been in debt for supplies exists in the fact that he has raised practically all his supplies at home and in that way he gets them at first cost, with no tolls added.

IT HAS been three years since the writer spent a night in the home of this Live-at-Home Anson county farmer, being there for the purpose of organizing a Local Union in his school district. The air of independence in that home, with a table loaded down with home products, and the recital of early struggles under adverse circumstances that would have caused the faint-hearted to relax efforts and surrender, impressed us forcibly with the economic value of his experience as it relates to the general farming interests of this country. No railroad or middleman got any tolls out of the meat, the bread, the molasses, the fruits and vegetables that went on his table. Instead of buying these things, he was a *seller of them*, and the local markets were anxious for his products.

THERE is another point we want to make in this connection in regard to the real independent Live-at-Home farmer, and it is this: He never gets excited over the price of cotton. Live-at-Home is a part of his religion and he never permits himself to worry from it, it matters not how high the price of cotton may soar temporarily. Live-at-Home with him is an economic principle from which he allows nothing to influence him. It's the solid rock of independence upon which he is permanently fixed and nothing can move him from that strong and safe position.

IN THIS connection we want to say that we have been ably and amusingly entertained during the past week by editorials in Charlotte dailies telling how farmers can get rich raising hogs and chickens. While the average city editor could not make as much net profit in the hog or poultry business in a year as he gets for one month's salary which he receives for writing those brilliant editorials on the possible income from "brains mixed with the soil," it is timely for him to spread out on subjects of this kind when poultry associations and Berkshire breeders hold sessions in his city.

UNFORTUNATELY, there is just one little oversight which our enthusiastic city editorial writers have failed to observe, and that is, that poultry associations and Berkshire associations do not sell the plain chicken and plain pork, but they sell pedigrees, and pedigrees bear a close resemblance to "watered stock." Farmers in the peanut section of North Carolina can raise pork on the waste product of the peanut farms. And while pork packers of Suffolk, Va., were refusing to take pork at 6½ cents per pound,

net, Berkshire breeders were getting twenty cents a pound gross—for the "pedigree" and hog mixed up together. And it's the same way with poultry. The only folks who are making easy money in poultry are those who are selling "pedigrees"—not plain chickens.

THE WRITER has a long well-written letter from a pedigree poultry man, giving detailed description of a chicken which is worth fifty cents on the market. That is, the meat in that chicken is supposed to be worth 50 cents. A page letter is written to show that the said chicken is a bargain at \$7.50. That means fifty cents for the chicken and seven dollars for the "pedigree." When the editors of the Charlotte papers were exploiting the men who sell Berkshire pigs and "pedigrees" at twenty cents a pound, they thought they were rendering the country a great service, and they were doing that very thing, but the service simply costs too much for the "pedigree." We are fully aware that pedigree has its value, but the value is measured by the nerve of the fellow who fixes the price, and a man who can boldly charge twenty dollars for a five-dollar pig, or \$7.50 for a fifty-cent chicken has his nerve with him all right.

AND THIS reminds us of so-called "successful" farmers who sell twenty-five cent cotton seed for a dollar a bushel and dollar-a-bushel corn for \$2.50. They get their reputation up by making maximum yields on an acre or two of land and get the papers to exploit them by free publicity, and then they sell their seed at extortionate prices to farmers who could get far better results by intelligent selection of seed from their own fields. So-called "successful farmers" of this kind are not only exploited by metropolitan daily papers, but technical agricultural papers "puff" them under a guarantee of honesty of purpose and square dealing. And it all comes at the expense of the illiterate farmer who gets caught as a sucker.

WHERE our city editorial writers fall down hard is in the attempt to show that farming is a money-making occupation. No farmer has ever made a fortune except at the expense of ignorant labor. By his own labor no farmer has ever accumulated a fortune. By good management a farmer can make a living at home and put himself in an independent position, but he can not get rich unless he does it at the expense of somebody else. If our benefactors (?) who spin out free advice to farmers would stop their foolish talk about farming as a "money-making" occupation, and refer to it as an occupation where men can make a living and be independent, the result would be better, for the fundamental idea of farming is not to make money but to make a living.

LIVE-AT-HOME should be stressed in your Local Unions with more emphasis this spring than ever before. It's the solid rock upon which Southern farmers must stay if they expect to keep