



# Harper's

## MAGAZINE



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### SOLD OUT TO THE FUTURE

The Mistake of Our Generation

By ROY HELTON

The Case for Inflation . . . . .	Stuart Chase
The Path to the River . . . . .	Anonymous
Motor Tourist, 1903 Model . . . . .	John Chapman Hilder
The New Patriotism . . . . .	Viscount Cecil
Hammerstein the Extravagant . . . . .	Gilbert Seldes
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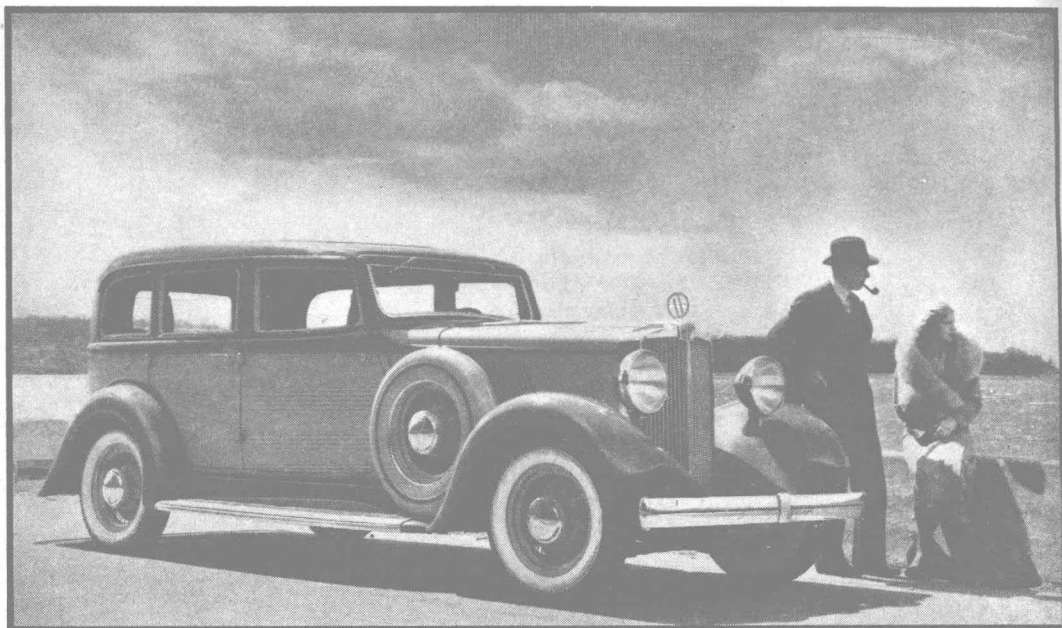
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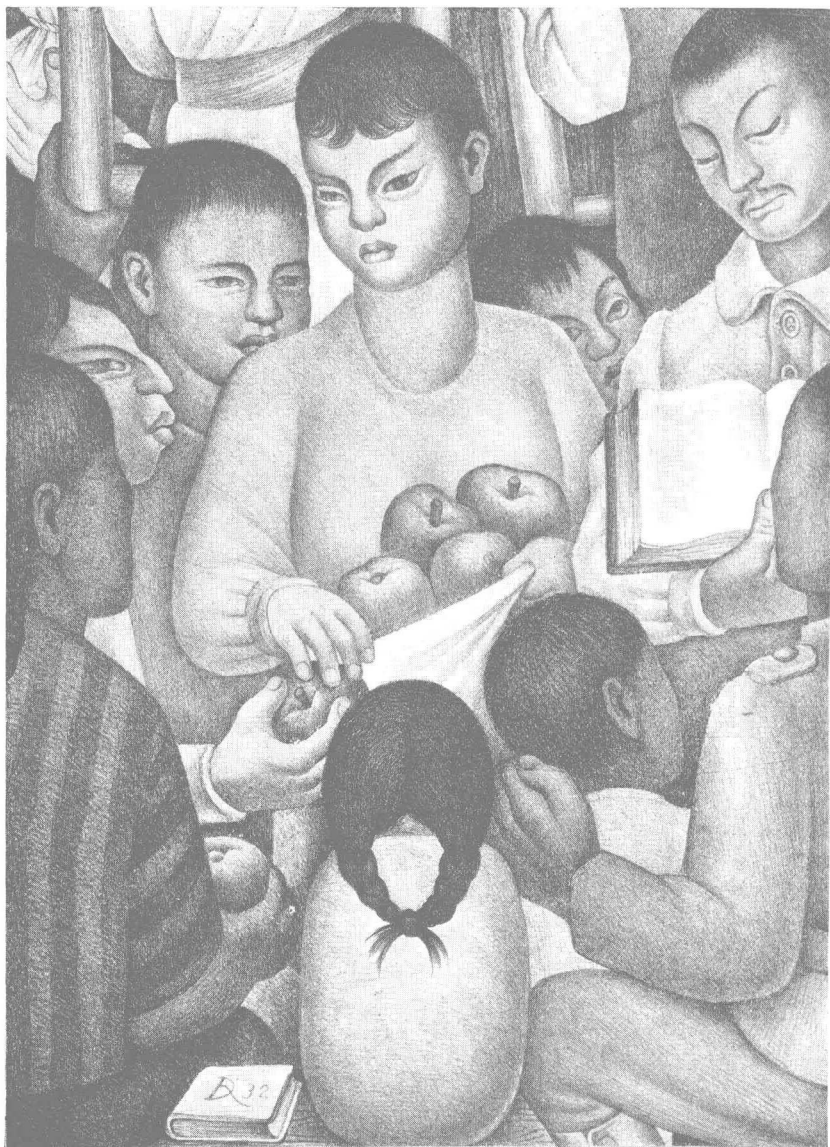
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*Diego Rivera*

FRUITS OF LABOR

By Diego Rivera

Courtesy of the Weyhe Galleries



# Harper's *Magazine*

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## REBELLION IN THE CORNBELT

AMERICAN FARMERS BEAT THEIR PLOWSHARES INTO SWORDS

BY MARY HEATON VORSE

**I**F YOU will look at a map of the United States you will see, lying side by side, the States of Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri, the two Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas. This vast prairie, watered by two great rivers, richly endowed with natural wealth, possessed of almost inexhaustible fertility, is the agricultural stronghold of the nation. Labor, privation, and endless determination transformed this country from a wilderness hunting ground of the savages into the garden of the world in less than a hundred years. First the overland trails, the stockade at Fort Dearborn, then came the tide of emigration from the East. The adventurers and the dissatisfied slowly pushed down the Ohio, across the Mississippi. One by one, the river towns sprang up, St. Louis expanded as a fur market; lumbering began in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The revo-

lution of 1848 brought a flood of Germans, after them the Scandinavians, the Bohemians, and the Poles. It was essentially a land of pioneers, of free people, passionate supporters of the Union upon the outbreak of the Civil War. Then came the railway boom and Omaha, seething with excitement, became a metropolis. Farther and farther west General Dodge drove the Union Pacific. The first fortunes of the pioneers were founded. Neither flood nor blizzard nor drought nor pestilence could stay these people. Little by little, acre by acre, the land bloomed. The towns waxed in prosperity; there was more leisure; the State universities flourished. When the railroads, owned chiefly in the East, commenced their practice of strangulation, the people turned to legislation. The Granger Movement and the Farmers' Alliance culminated in the

Populist Party which, in 1892, polled over a million votes. In 1896 came Bryan, crying for silver and agricultural emancipation. Despite every obstacle placed in the way of these people, their determination could not be stayed, and the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha in 1898 presented to the world an agricultural people conscious of their wealth and their importance. Wheat, corn, cattle, and hogs were the source of this wealth; the homes, the gardens, the barns, and the towns were the evidences of it. The great State capitol of Nebraska, recently completed and one of the most beautiful public buildings in America, is in a way the monument to a farmer's pride and achievement.

Up to the War this rise in wealth, despite occasional setbacks, was constant. In 1918 land sold for two hundred dollars an acre; a succession of bumper crops could not satisfy the markets of the world. Then gradually the recession began. First land dropped in value. Then prices for wheat and corn began to sag. It was difficult to believe that the great days were over. Year after year, farm prices dropped lower. The farmers began to find it necessary to mortgage a portion of their land in order to meet expenses. The recession continued. Fewer cars were bought; children failed to return to the university. Uneasy, the farmers began to see the foreclosure of their neighbors' mortgages. The cry for help was raised, the phrase "farm relief" came into existence, the farm bloc in Congress was formed. But Congress was not interested. The country was launched upon its great boom; there were fortunes for the asking in the stock market; there seemed no reason to be concerned for the people who supplied their food. And all the while, as bigger and bigger mergers were taking place, as the shouting around the exchanges was growing

louder and louder, the Middle West was drifting faster and faster to its destruction. Each year there was less and less money, farm prices sank to sixty per cent of prewar level, and even though Montgomery Ward reached 439 $\frac{7}{8}$ , fewer and fewer farmers were buying from their catalogues. Then came the crash. It took time for it to reach the farms, but it came at last. The banks crumbled, first one by one, then by dozens and scores. The effect on mortgages was merciless. Forced sales and voluntary bankruptcies have involved twenty-four per cent of the farms of Iowa, the richest farm land in America. In Nebraska and South Dakota the percentage has been even higher and, high as they are, they are as nothing compared with the numbers of farms which will soon go under the hammer for the non-payment of taxes and to satisfy the land-bank mortgage claims. With ever-increasing speed, the farmer saw himself being dispossessed and replaced by farm renters, share croppers, and laborers. Fifty-four per cent of the farms in Iowa are now operated by tenants, and in the western half of the State, the richest half, the figure rises to sixty. The richer the farm the higher percentage of mortgage, and the greater the number of tenant farmers.

In desperation the farmers banded themselves into unions; the cry for help grew more intense. The Farm Board came into being, spent its money, and departed. The Federal and Joint Stock Land Banks, which for years had actually been speculating in the farmer's misery and profiting by it, began wholesale foreclosures. In 1931 they foreclosed 16,601 farms. The Federal Seed and Feed Loans brought destruction in their wake; for the farmer who had such a loan was not allowed to sell part of his crop or cattle to get cash for current expenses. All must be sold at once to satisfy the government claim.



Meantime taxes had reached a figure representing 266 per cent of pre-war rates. The farmers were now close to their last stand. They were witnessing the work of generations swept away before their eyes, while their government talked platitudes. They had put their faith in government, and government had failed. Then, last August, they reached a point where they could stand the strain no longer and moved toward open rebellion.

## II

Suddenly the papers were filled with accounts of highway picketing by farmers around Sioux City. A Farmers' Holiday Association had been organized by one Milo Reno, and the farmers were to refuse to bring food to market for thirty days or "until the cost of production had been obtained."

"We have issued an ultimatum to the other groups of society," they proclaimed. "If you continue to confiscate our property and demand that we feed your stomachs and clothe your bodies we will refuse to function. We don't ask people to make implements, cloth, or houses at the price of degradation, bankruptcy, dissolution, and despair."

Reno, their first leader, was crying to them, "Agriculture as we know it has come to the parting of the ways. We will soon have no individually owned and operated farms. We have come to the place where you must practice what every other group does—strike! Or else you are not going to possess your homes."

This is literally true. In no group of farmers can you find anyone who is secure, and this is what has brought the farmers out to the roads and into action. They are not interested in a back-to-the-land movement. What they are interested in is a keep-on-the-

land movement. They discovered at once that this had brought them more notice from press and legislature than all their desperate years of peaceful organization.

The strike around Sioux City soon ceased to be a local matter. It jumped the Missouri River and crossed the Big Sioux. Roads were picketed in South Dakota and Nebraska as well as in Iowa. Soon Minnesota followed suit, and her farmers picketed her roads. North Dakota organized. Down in Georgia farmers dumped milk on the highway. For a few days the milk supply of New York City was menaced. Farmers in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, organized, and potato farmers in Long Island raised the price of potatoes by a "holiday." This banding together of farmers for mutual protection is going on everywhere, but the center of this disturbance is still Iowa and the neighboring States.

The Milk Producers' Association joined forces with the Farmers' Holiday. All the roads leading to Sioux City were picketed. Trucks by hundreds were turned back. Farmers by hundreds lined the roads. They blockaded the roads with spiked telegraph poles and logs. They took away a sheriff's badge and his gun and threw them in a cornfield. Gallons of milk ran down roadway ditches. Gallons of confiscated milk were distributed free on the streets of Sioux City.

Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Des Moines were blockaded as well as Sioux City. In all these cities numerous deputies were sworn in to help the respective sheriffs. The Governor of Iowa ordered the roads cleared. Trucks attempted to rush through the lines of picketing farmers. A few trucks were escorted through the farmers' lines by armed deputies.

The armed deputies at James, ten miles out of Sioux City, started to

convoy a fleet of thirty trucks through the lines. Guns were pointed. The farmers stood fast. Before an audience of bystanders the trucks were turned back. No shots were fired.

On another highway, farmers bared their breasts, daring the armed deputies to shoot. The deputies did not take the dare.

At Council Bluffs there were sixty arrests. A thousand farmers marched on the jail. The prisoners were hastily released on nominal bail.

In the East there were rumors that the pickets were not bona fide farmers, but a disorderly element from the cities and groups of unemployed or "reds." One of the local papers took a canvass of the men in the Woodbury county jail in Sioux City, where ninety pickets were confined, with this result: five were farm owners; twenty had owned farms and were now renters; twenty-five had always been renters; fifteen were farm boys, living with their parents; seventeen were farm laborers long living in the community, and there were eight packing house employees and workers in other industries living in Sioux City.

Yet in spite of this inquiry, city officials in Sioux City and prominent business men gave interviews to the effect that the picketers were paid by the Democratic party or "instigated by Milo Reno." Naturally this blockading the roads was unpopular with the business men. High city officials went to the Governor to ask for State troops. Sheriff Davenport of Sioux City made a similar request of the Governor. But Governor Dan Turner had brought the troops out during the so-called "cow-serum war" last year with disastrous political effects.

Leaders of the movement ran round to the picket lines and begged the farmers to stop picketing. There was an organization meeting of the executive committees of the Farmers' Holiday

Association of ten States. What threat of troops, or jailings, or arrests could not do, the Executive Committee did. By the twenty-first of September the roads around Sioux City were cleared for the first time in six weeks.

But the farmers had learned the lesson that direct action pays.

### III

The picketing had not been stopped when we arrived in Sioux City. We had been driving through rich farmlands for two days. We had come through Indiana and Illinois into Iowa. In two days we had not passed through wild land or woods, as we must have done in New England, Pennsylvania, or New York. The East is now much wilder than the Middle West. There is now no uncultivated land in these States. The countryside is spread out like a beautiful and tended park. This is the heart of America. It is more American to-day than is New England.

The farmhouses are ample, well set back from the road, as often as not on a little eminence. Shade trees surround them. There are nearly always shrubs and flowers. The great red barns and outhouses are flanked by brick silos. Fine cattle graze in the fields. There are droves of fat hogs; for Iowa makes its living from hogs and corn and dairy produce. The fine barns and the houses need paint. This is the first stage of decay and dilapidation. It is four years since the farmers have made costs of production.

It seems incredible that failure and bankruptcy should hang over these opulent farms. Never was there such rich, abundant country. The soil is so black it is purple. Here and there are fields which have had their fall plowing. Beside them are vivid green fields of alfalfa. The grain is in. Great stacks of straw stand behind

fat red barns. There are flocks of chickens, ducks, turkeys. There are young peach and apple orchards. The corn stands uncut, waiting for frost.

Beautiful elms meet over the wide streets of towns. Pleasant homes sit far back among ample lawns and flower gardens. Everywhere are new schoolhouses. These towns are old towns, proud of themselves. Sioux City is the only sprawling, down-at-the-heels place we have seen. It is a strange thing to realize that the owners of these peaceful farms have been out picketing the highways and illegally obstructing them.

In ordinary strikes there is a concrete organization to combat. The worker is fighting the owners of a certain mine or mill. The picketing farmers have no such definite enemy. It is almost as if they were picketing the depression itself. They are organizing against ruinous prices, with foreclosure and bankruptcy as their enemies.

Highway No. 20, leading to Sioux City, has been the scene of some of the sharpest clashes between deputies and farmers. It has won itself the proud name of "Bunker Hill 20." On the night we visited No. 20 a score of men were sitting round a campfire. A boy was sprawled out on an automobile cushion asleep. Everyone was in overalls. Their sunburned faces shone red in the firelight.

A lamp in a smaller tent glowed in the darkness. A trestle table stood near at hand. The Ladies' Aid bring substantial meals to the picketers. The irregular circle round the fire, the high moonlit poplar trees, the lighted tent were like a stage set for a play. There was an air of immense earnestness about the farmers. They had been swung completely out of their usual orbit, but they are absolutely sure of the righteousness of their cause. An old man with white mustache said:

"They say blockading the highway's illegal. I says, 'Seems to me there was a Tea-party in Boston that was illegal too. What about destroying property in Boston Harbor when our country was started?'" He sets the note of the evening.

"If we farmers go down bankrupt," says one of the younger men, "everything in this country goes down. If we get enough to live on, everybody's going to go to work again."

"When we can't buy," says another, "there can't be any prosperity. We ain't been buying nothing, not for four years."

"My binder's fallen apart so, don't know how I'm going to get through this year." The conversation moves slowly from one man to another with quiet deliberation. There is a cry:

"Truck!"

They hurry out in the roadway. All of them carry heavy stakes, some made from axe handles. None of them is armed, though a young fellow pointed to a little mound of quarter bricks.

"Plenty of Irish confetti," he said cheerily. Beside the road, handy to use, are heavy spiked logs and planks bristling with spikes to throw in front of trucks. This truck is empty. There is a short conference. The truck passes on its way.

"Good-night, boys," calls the driver. "Good luck!" He is one of them, part of the movement that is just beginning to realize its power. We go back to the fire.

"There are not so many picketers on the roads as there were," we suggest.

"There don't need to be," says the man next to me. He is an older man with heavy grooves in his face. His big hands rest on his club. Next him sits Davidson, a "committee man." He is a young giant towering over the others. He wears a clean shirt with

a knitted sweater over it, and he has had a fresh haircut. Davidson takes up the tale.

"We've got so organized," he says quietly, "the farmers ain't coming over No. 20 any more. The Holiday Association bought some time on the radio—KSCJ—and we radioed the farmers to stay home, and they're doing it."

"We don't need but a few fellows now," said Ben Grey, another committee man. He is a young fellow with a felt hat on the back of his head, a little shorter than Davidson, in blue shirt and overalls and high boots.

"We know an hour before a truck is on the road," explained the old farmer. "One of our folks will see it way off and telephone down to us. The telephone operators are all with us. We can get a hundred farmers here in a few minutes if we need 'em. So we don't need to have so many picketers on the roads now we're organized."

"I heard about how there was a fellow bootlegging milk through here. Heard about how he was laughing at us on No. 20. Said we was a lot of scabs, didn't know what we was doing."

"Say, if he comes through, we ought to learn him something." This from the older farmer with the white mustache. "We certainly should turn him back on a dirt road and learn him a lesson."

Again there is a cry of, "Truck!"

The farmers run forward, the sleeping boy awakes. This time it is the bootlegging milk truck. A long intricate dialogue follows. Everyone takes his turn. The milk bootlegger is a plausible fellow with a high whining voice.

"Now, friends," he entreats, "you wouldn't want to put me out of business, would you, like them big fellows would like to put out of business all of us little fellows?"

"We wouldn't want no hardship visited on him that we wouldn't want visited on ourselves," says one.

They put it to the vote. The specious bootlegger has won them over, to the disgust of the committee men.

#### IV

The next evening the farmers had a meeting at the Golden Slipper dance hall on Highway 141 to vote whether road picketing should continue. Long before the time for the meeting, farmers' cars choked the roadways. There are a thousand people in the hall—double that outside. Newcomers could only wriggle eelwise through the crowds. Farmers in store clothes, farmers in overalls, farmers in old hats and caps, dirt farmers of Iowa coming to vote about picketing. They have come from South Dakota and Nebraska as well as from miles back in Iowa. They have come from Cherokee, and there are pickets from Council Bluffs and Clinton.

The dance hall has pseudo-modernistic decorations, silver triangles against green and black. Black silhouettes decorate the hall—an odd "arty" decoration for this page of history to be played against.

There is a shout of, "Everybody outside!"

The hall is cleared, a double file of men stands at the door. Each picket passes through the gauntlet of two lines of men. He must be recognized and accredited in order to vote. Only pickets can vote.

"Anybody know this fellow? John, have you seen him?"

"He says he's been at 141."

"Yes, I know him. He's been there." The man passes through.

"Seventy-seven. Who's on 77? This fellow says he comes from 77." No one on 77 knows him. The man is turned back. The hall begins to



fill. No one is allowed to go out again for fear that he might return and vote again.

Outside, on a cattle truck, speeches are being made, one of them by a communist. Any mention of a debt moratorium is sure to be welcomed with applause. Inside the hall the ballot has been taken.

They vote two to one to close the roads.

As we went from picket line to picket line the talk harked back continually to 1776 when other farmers blockaded the highways. Up in James they had a "battle" with deputies last Wednesday. They liken it to a revolutionary battle. Over in Stevens in South Dakota, across the Missouri to Nebraska, we find similar groups of farmers who talk of "revolution." These farmers feel that they have a historic mission. The word "revolution" occurs often among them, but what they mean is a farmers' revolt. They do not understand revolution in the communist sense. They think of themselves as fighting the banking interests of the East or the "international bankers" about whom they are perpetually talking.

They have sat still for years and seen prices of food and animals which they raised slide down the hill to ruin. The bread lines in the cities grew, and the number of unemployed swelled to millions while their fruit rotted on the ground because there was no market for it. Now they are out to do something about it.

To them the solution of this evil situation seems simplicity and sense itself. In the slow shift of their talk there are no threats, there is no braggadocio.

These farmers who sat around campfires picketing highways, who came miles to meetings, have the serenity of faith. They feel the certainty and power of a young, vital movement, American and militant.

## V

In the town of Fremont, Nebraska, we saw the Holiday Association in the making. The town swarmed with farmers in blue overalls. There are clots of blue coming down the street, an informal procession of farmers making for the public square, which is in the center of the town, shaded by elms like a New England common. It is hard to find parking space. The Farmers' Holiday Association is organizing the State of Nebraska.

A cattle truck has drawn up alongside the curb near the City Hall. It is decorated with homemade slogans in large black letters.

"Be Pickets Or Peasants" it advises.

"On With The Strike" it exhorts.

"By Moratorium We Mean Debt Holiday."

"No Salaries For Farm Leaders."

"No Eviction For Any Farmer."

"By Cost Of Production We Mean A Decent Living For Farmers."

"We've Got Our Back To The Wall. On With The Strike."

The slogans on this eloquent cattle truck summarize briefly what the farmers' strike is about. The National Organization of the Farmers' Holiday Association started a "farmers' holiday" to obtain cost of production on farm produce and stock by the use of the embargo—farmers pledging themselves not to take their produce to market for a period of thirty days. The rank and file of farmers who have made history by picketing the roadways of four States have enlarged on the leaders' platform. They want a program with teeth in it. The leaders want something milder. All the morning long delegates from fifty-odd counties have been chopping out the resolutions in the City Hall. Now there is a recess and everyone is streaming through the streets to the square where Milo Reno, leader of the Farmers'

Holiday Association, is going to speak. At least two thousand people have gathered to hear him.

Milo Reno is sixty-seven. He wears his curly hair, which is thick and grizzled, in a plume. He is a politician of the Bryan era. For years he has been active in the farmers' movement. He has been bitterly attacked. He has been accused of having a huge income from various sources. He admits to an average income of eight thousand dollars a year for the past twelve years. He has been accused of everything, from being in the pay of the Soviet Government to that of the Democratic National Committee. Nothing has been too fantastic of which to accuse him. No praise has been too extravagant. He has been hailed as the farmers' savior. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere nearer to the judgment of the old Nebraska farmers who say laconically:

"Milo Reno has bit off more'n he can chew with this movement."

Certainly the Farmers' Holiday has got away from Milo Reno and its other leaders who had planned a farmers' holiday and not a farmers' militant strike. Barricaded highways, milk in the gutter, marches on jails, fighting evictions were not in the original program. Milo Reno and the other officers of the Farmers' Holiday Association were in the position of barnyard fowls who have hatched out a nest of dragons' eggs.

Milo Reno's phrases come easily like words which have been used over and over again, but he knows his farmer audience.

"In the eighteen months after deflation," he says, "thirteen billion dollars' worth of farm values have gone, and nothing has been done to correct the situation. People say that the farmers have been on a financial spree and must get back to normalcy. Yet to get back to normalcy, the thirteen

billion of farm values would have to be reestablished.

"It is the last stand. You will win the battle or you will put on the wooden shoe. We're going to correct this thing or we're going to have revolution, and revolution is the quickest way of overthrowing the Christian church. . . .

"People say the picketers are disregarding property rights, disregarding law, disregarding constituted authority. This was what was done at a certain Boston Tea-party. . . .

"We have appealed to society for twelve long years. 'Let's come to the conference table and decide what is fair for the different groups of society.' It did no good. What do you think we got? Got a pat on the back—'Good boys, go home and feed the hogs!'" Milo Reno mops his brow and sits down amidst the applause of the farmers.

The Governor who had been unable to accept the invitation to the meeting, had sent Mr. J. S. Allen, a little, nattily-dressed up-state politician, to represent him. He brought the Governor's greetings and explained what the Governors' Conference might mean to the farmers. Mr. Allen said that the Governor had power to help the farmers. Under certain circumstances he could, for instance, declare a moratorium on farm debts.

As he closed, an old man got to his feet. He stood in front of the bandstand where the speakers were.

"I want to ask a question," he quavered. He turned his face up toward the Governor's representative and raised an eloquent work-gnarled hand.

"How soon," he cried, "can the Governor declare a moratorium? That is what I want to know! Can he do it right off?" He stood there, his anxious blue eyes staring at Mr. Allen, his eloquent hand lifted. You could have heard a pin drop while

Mr. Allen shuffled through an apologetic answer.

Not right off, such things took time.

"You can't say *when*, you can't say *how soon*?" the old man insisted with terrifying urgency.

It was as though this old farmer represented all the hard-pressed farmers of the country, all the old people who in a short time, in a few weeks, will be driven off their farms, sold out after a lifetime of fruitful work. How soon could a governor declare a moratorium? Not in time to prevent this catastrophe? He stood there, old and frail and anxious, his arresting hand still raised. A murmur went through the crowd. They had sensed the tragedy behind the old farmer's question. All of them have felt the approach of bankruptcy and eviction. No one here but understands.

## VI

The mass meeting adjourned. The meeting of the delegates reconvened in the City Hall. There was a struggle going on between the politicians and the rank and file farmers, who have been fighting for their own program, framed by the farmers of Madison County. The Madison County program sounds as though written by farmers who had got mad. Its numerous "whereases" sound like angry bees buzzing.

WHEREAS the recent interstate conference of governors held in Sioux City FAILED to take any positive and immediate action to solve the farmers' emergency

AND WHEREAS the governors merely dug up the time-worn issue of "tariff," dusted it off and foisted it upon us as emergency relief,

AND WHEREAS we know that destroying food while millions hunger is wrong,

AND WHEREAS the governors walked around the spontaneous and universal demand of the farmers for a *complete debt holiday* by applying the phrase moratorium

only to the 25 per cent of government real estate mortgages and that only until Congress convenes in December and whereas and whereas

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we consider the Governors' Conference a *dismal failure*.

The rank and file program demanded cost of production plus an amount which would insure a decent standard of living; the moratorium on farm debts and interest; cancellation of feed and seed loans by the government; tax exemption for poor farmers; moratorium of rents until prices have made payment possible; that the higher prices on farm produce should come from the middleman and not from city consumers. Especially there are to be no evictions.

WE DEMAND THAT there be no evictions. WE DEMAND that the governor, sheriffs and law enforcement officers publicly pledge themselves at once against evictions. If our lawfully elected representatives fail in this, *we pledge ourselves ready to save our brother farmers from eviction by united action*.

The rank and file resolutions end with a call

For a National Emergency Farm Relief Conference for Action, to be held in Washington, D. C., when Congress convenes on December 1st, 1932. Issued at Sioux City, September 9, by rank and file farmers.

It is this fighting talk which has stuck in the leaders' crops. But the leaders of the Farmers' Holiday will soft-pedal in vain. Such fighting talk is going on everywhere among the farmers. Over in Iowa, miles from Monroe County, Nebraska, the farmers have signed the eight-point pledge promising mutual aid. They are to "prevent farm landlords from dispossessing tenants of their chattels, to prevent farm landlords from collecting rent greater in value than a fair share of the products of the farm, to prevent foreclosures, to prevent dispossessing

farm owners, etc." This document ends, "We agree to hold ourselves in readiness, *to answer any reasonable call when any one of our members becomes in need of assistance.*"

In an entirely different county in Iowa a new organization called the United Farmers was recently formed, the principle object of which is to prevent eviction and foreclosure.

This is the farmers' answer to the old man. If the Governor can't help him, they will.

It is strange to think of these quiet middle-aged farmers endorsing direct action. It is almost the first step of revolution, an instinctive revolt like Shays's Rebellion. These patient people have been driven out to fight. They feel they are literally fighting for their homes.

This movement is already starting to prevent people being put off their farms because they cannot pay rent or taxes or a mortgage. A foreclosure was forcibly stopped in Woodbury County not long ago. A tenant farmer who could not pay his rent had a chattel mortgage of three hundred dollars against him. They started to sell him out. All his neighbors came to that sale. They cut the telephone wires so they could not call the sheriff, and the sale began. His stuff was bid in for \$11.75. The farmers took up

a collection for that money. They gave it to the owner together with a quitclaim and made him sign.

The Farmers' Holiday has now gone into its second stage. The spontaneous militancy of the farmers has been temporarily checked by the leaders. But organization is going on in ten States. The farmers' strike has emerged from a local matter to one which aims to involve two million people in the embargo.

In all this there can be felt the slow powerful heave and stir of a people which precedes an attempt at a social change. Yet the Farmers' Holiday Association as such may be only a bubble on the stream of the farmers' justified discontent. It may easily be diverted into political channels and swamped. But even if this happens to the F.H.A. a militant farmers' movement is inevitable. The farmers of this country are not going to be reduced to farm laborers without a struggle. They have tried direct action and have seen more attention given to their emergency than in all the years of peaceful negotiation, when the only response from government or public was, "Good boys, go home and feed the hogs."

They will not take this for an answer if they hold their conference in Washington this December.





## SUGAR BE SWEET!

A STORY

BY GEORGE MILBURN

**S**PRING was a soft green cloud hovering over the willow tree in the corner of Whalen's front yard the day that Marion died.

Mrs. Whalen wheeled her out on the front porch in her invalid's chair after the noon meal so that she could take in the sunlight. She had been in high spirits all morning, excited about spring's coming back. She talked cheerfully and she even suggested to her mother that she might be getting up soon. She wanted to go into the woods to pick violets.

It was the first fine day of the season. And yet, beneath the warmth of the breeze, there was a reminiscent chill. Mrs. Whalen was careful to tuck the blankets snugly about her daughter. There were still to be rain and bitter days, it is true, but the motes of renascence were in the air. All about there was a quickening stir, and it was inconsistent that a body should die at such a time. It refurbished all the platitudes about death.

Charlie Whalen was the one who heard the last words his daughter ever spoke. He reenacted the scene many times, in his own mind and for other people, with as many tears and hiccups as a sober strong man is permitted, all up until the funeral. But after the funeral he never thought of his distinction again, or if he did, he never said anything to anyone about it.

The way it was, he recollected, he had finished his noon meal, a hearty dinner, and had got up and gone out into the hall to get his hat. He was about to leave the house when he felt in his vest pocket and found that he didn't have any toothpicks. So he went back into the dining room to get a few. The ruby glass toothpick-holder stood on the sideboard empty.

Now where emptiness was there Charlie Whalen found a pinch of chaos. Later he was glad that he had not made a scene on finding the toothpicks all out that noon. He pondered his restraint vaguely as something portentous in itself. He would never have got through blaming himself, he thought, if he had raised a commotion in that last hour of his daughter's life. So he was pleased to recall that there had been more of reproach than of irritation in his voice when he spoke to his wife that noon.

"Clara," he said loudly, "what have you done with all the toothpicks?"

Mrs. Whalen was at that moment tucking the blankets about Marion against the faint chill of the April wind. She gave the covering a hurried final pat and hastened back into the house.

"Just a minute, papa, and I'll get some toothpicks for you," she said in her mild, faded voice. And she apologized as she disappeared into the kitchen, "I should have filled the glass