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The Farmer's Misery

BY D. MACPHERSON.

“WE appeal to you. The farmers of this country are ruined.”

This is not the voice of the Industrial Proletariat in the wilderness of despair looking for a job, but that of H. W. Wood, the leader of an organized movement which was 38,000 strong one year ago, but has since dwindled to around 16,000. Mr. Wood was sending an “S.O.S.” for help to the Mackenzie King government at Ottawa, to help them out with their wheat pool. The wheat pool, I may add, was a red herring that was drawn across the trail previous to the stampede that drove the farmer candidates to power in the Alberta Legislature. The move has since been held in abeyance by Wood & Co. after they had received full power to proceed from the Mackenzie King outfit in Ottawa.

The farmers are ruined. Wheat pool or any other palliative in the way of political or social reforms will not save him from damnation. Mr. Wood and his political alliance with past masters at labor faking, with their empty ravings about group government and other political novelties, can avail nothing for the farmers, when the world markets are the dominating factors under Capitalism, that rule the price of farm produce and all other forms of commodities.

The slough of despond in which the farmers find themselves, can only be explained through the historical method of analyzing capitalist production. To the superficial observer who has not made the acquaintance of Marx's Capital the farmer's problems cannot be anything but a mass of confusion and perplexity. The farmers are easy prey; they see around them property in the shape of land, machinery and live stock. They never give a thought that they are allowed these things around them, that their real masters can more effectively fleece them of the wealth they produce in abundance. If the farmer had to produce, with primitive implements, there wouldn't be a vast surplus produced for the capitalist to fleece.

Modern farm equipment plays a great part in the skinning game. The gigantic machinery companies, with a mighty organized capital, are in business to make the maximum of profit. The farmer, finding himself in the vortex of capitalist production has to use high priced machinery and work long hours to produce a larger volume of low priced commodities. The farmer we must bear in mind, is an individualist with small, ill organized capital. In fact today there being only around 3 per cent of the farmers solvent proves that as a bunch they are practically not even in the category of the petit bourgeois, their small capital has practically been gobbled up by the real owners of all wealth. The wealth the farmers produce goes to the machine companies with their 10 per cent interest, the bankers and mortgage and loan companies with their 8 to 10 per cent interest. The transportation companies and elevator companies have all got to have their toll; a host of smaller parasites too numerous to mention are all eating off the farmer's wheat bin. The modern mechanism of Capitalist exploitation has drained the last vestige of bourgeois vitality out of the farmer animal and has left him insolvent.

We find that the bankers, machine companies and

the other parasites on the farmer's back have not decided to oust him from his nest of misery,—the farm. They own him anyhow and what is the use of driving the present bunch off their farms and putting another bunch with less experience in their places. The present beast of burden has shown himself to be a hog for work during the prosperous times of war, but now that the gods of the world's market drought and other conditions are against him, they have mutually decided to leave him his hide anyhow.

The farmers grow wheat not for use but for profit. In the great process of wheat production the farmer only play a part. Under modern conditions it takes a multitude to produce a bushel of wheat. Modern machinery and a never ending string of industries are linked up and take part in the process. The farmer, with practically a low capital of his own, gets a price as “Geordie” puts it, below value. The highly organized capitals get a price which is above value. The law of value holds good taking an average of the capital employed over a period of time.

The U. F. A. Premier Greenfield and his farmer legislature, cannot function even as social reformists; all they can do is to carry on the business of the capitalists. The money barons of Wall Street call the tune, Farmer legislators merely dance to the capitalists' music of bonds, dividends, interest and profits. Whatever pipe dreams some of the farmer members may have had when they were talking to the farmers during the political campaign, they got rudely dispelled, when they came in contact with the grim reality of doing the dirty work of their masters.

The farmers are ruined and disappointed, no wonder the membership of the U.F.A. has slipped from 38,000 to 16,000. We don't wonder, as Marxists that the farmer legislature can do nothing, even if they were capable of carrying out petty reforms.

That cancer, that running sore of capitalism that is draining the vitality of society can never be healed by reforms. The present social order like previous ones had its birth in the throes of revolution. It will take its course no matter how many social and political quacks will come on the scene. Changes will take place and social undercurrents will ripple occasionally on the surface, driven for ever by irresistible economic forces.

The cumbersome mechanism of capitalist exploitation will grow more clumsy, waging war against its own vitality. New forces will appear to hasten the pulsating death struggle. The present order will die a natural death of ripe old age. Everywhere we see serious complications; we can almost hear the death rattle of a fast decaying social order. The farmers' miserable condition and its cause can only be understood by the class conscious slaves, who have been stripped of the last vestige of property, except their power to labor. The haze that obscures the issue with the farmer, is the concept of property. During normal times of peace, and as time goes on he can be seen more clearly in his real position as a beast of burden, whose real function in society is to pile up mountains of wealth from which he is separated, by the complicated and cumbersome mechanism of capitalist exploitation.

This year 300,000,000 bushels of high grade wheat have been produced in the western provinces of Canada; over and above there have been thousands of fat cattle, sheep, swine, butter and cheese, fruit and other foods produced. Sufficient to feed the whole population of Canada for five years.

The farmers who produced all this wealth find it hard to buy themselves a suit of overalls or a plug of tobacco. Usually they sell all their cream and use skimmed milk for their own use. They sell all their fat stock; if there is a cull among the bunch they keep it for their own use. Volumes could be written on this theme, about the peculiarities and characteristics of the docile and humble creature under discussion.

There is a small percentage among the farmers who think they have made good. As far as their credit in the bank is concerned, they may have got a few thousand dollars, and a title deed to show for a whole lifetime of self denial, hard toil, and possibly extra fertile spots due to good luck, etc. At what a price have this “faithful few” gained their prize? Usually their youth has been spent, isolated from the real good things of life.

The wave of discontent among the farmers following the slump of war prices of farm products in the fall of 1920, shows that he is capable of moving, even if his energy is guided and moulded by the press, U. F. A. leaders, politicians, and other capitalist flunkies, as was seen in Alberta during the election of the year following. The capitalists who know, do not fear the farmer's political movement, as long as they control their minds and their financial mechanism. Shortly after the farmers took control at Edmonton, their first job was to borrow from Wall Street sufficient funds to run their capitalist government. This was readily forthcoming on condition that their policy would be a safe and sane one for capitalism, which entails, of course, a policy of exploitation of wage slaves, and a continuation of fleecing the farmer slave who elected this bunch of legislators. The farmer who really does not want the abolition of capitalism has his brains running disconnected on an endless pulley. He has been fleeced under a liberal government, then he was skinned under the Onion government, but taxation has increased and farming went to the dogs under representatives of his own calling at the political helm. Mr. Farmer Slave has lost confidence in his fellow man; to him they all appear to become traitors whenever they are elected. It never occurs to him that the system of profits which he has for ages cherished and hugged to his bosom is the cause of all his misery. It never occurs to him that the present system is changing rapidly, developing abnormalities and contradictions as it approaches its final collapse. Social systems take us along with them, we are drawn into the vortex of their political whirlpools, unless we are guided by the chart and compass of understanding in accord with science.

We of the Marxian Socialist movement appeal to you, Mr. Farmer, as members of the working class movement, working for economic freedom. We know that whatever you may have thought your-

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