

AGRICULTURAL REPORT

EDITORIAL

A QUESTION OF HUMANITY

Jan. 5 (IPS)--This Christmas there was no Santa Claus for hundreds of thousands of North American farmers. Try as he might, even the roly-poly National Farmers Organization (NFO) head Oren Lee Staley can't convince farmers otherwise. Staley's hysterical "Think Thirty" foolishness is falling flat on its face. Exhorted to "corner 30 per cent of the market" in exchange for a rosy future, farmers across the country rightly suspect that the only "30" in sight is something like 30-acres-a-mule might -- with luck -- end up with if they follow the know-nothing Staley at a time when worldwide depression threatens agricultural production with total destruction.

Over the next three months, farmers will be faced with the toughest decisions of their lives. Like the ten million industrial workers who will be unemployed by the end of January, North American farmers are faced with the end of life as they have known it. They, like the industrial worker, must decide whether or not they will commit themselves to a serious political fight or knuckle under to Rockefeller's destruction of their lives and the wholesale starvation of millions throughout the world.

Within the next three months the desperation of the situation will be crystal clear: Smothered in debt, with declining farm prices and still-soaring operating costs, with no prospect for low-interest credit, or any credit at all, with a burgeoning natural gas hoax that threatens to bring fertilizer production to a standstill, the farmer will be forced to ask himself whether he can afford another harvest. Should he cut back his operation drastically -- as livestock farmers have already done -- or should he sell out altogether -- as thousands of dairy farmers did this year -- getting out before he is caught owing interest on a dust bowl?

Staley's "Think Thirty" hoax, and similar populist "fair price" schemes, are designed to conceal this reality. It is a campaign dedicated to preventing farmers from focusing on the real problems they face in common with North American workers and peasants and workers throughout the world. That is precisely why the criminal Staley dutifully mobilized his NFO machine to squelch the real news from the NFO national convention -- the fact that a formal resolution calling for an emergency moratorium on farm debt was passed overwhelmingly.

Right now farmers aren't falling for the Staley hoax. They are shell-shocked, in some cases buoyed by fantasies of emergency measures coming down the pipeline from Washington. For the most part they have managed to get by this year -- they have managed to make partial payment agreements or get

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adjustments on their loan repayment schedules, they have gained a little breathing space -- but not for long, for the question of new credit and operating supplies looms ahead.

"Think Thirty" or the U.S. Labor Party

The lines are being drawn. In the coming months farmers will have to choose between the "Think Thirty" gimmick and other suicidal, populist rallying cries aimed at isolating farmers in a rearguard battle against the rest of the population, or the growing farmer-worker alliance of the U.S. Labor Party. Only such alliances can mobilize the necessary mind and muscle power to defeat the Rockefeller clique and reconstruct the world's economy, starting with an emergency moratorium on farm debt and the massive expansion of food production. Right now workers in and around the U.S. Labor Party across the continent are discussing and planning a campaign to convert the same auto plants which Rockefeller is rapidly emptying to tractor production, productively employing the masses of now-unemployed workers in this required first step to expand food production worldwide.

Commitment to Progress

To make this choice in favor of humanity farmers need only draw on a quality within themselves which both the Rockefeller attack on agriculture and Staley's demagoguery are designed to annihilate -- that is the North American farmer's longstanding and very practical commitment to progress. The typical farmer has based his existence and the expansion of his productive powers on the steady assimilation of new skills and technologies. This and the resulting, phenomenal productivity of U.S. farming has widened the farmer's horizon, forcing him to view himself in terms of his very real contribution to human existence worldwide. The typical farmer sees his creativity in terms of employing these skills and technology to increase his contribution, and thus his vital role together with the world's productive working class, in sustaining and enriching human life.

It is from the emotional and intellectual resources located in the farmer's actual human identity, that the real solutions to the agricultural crisis will be forthcoming. Rockefeller is determined to cripple world food production, sending agriculture back to the stone age. Mr. Staley, with his jiggery-pokery, is dedicated to enlisting farmers in their own destruction. The U.S. Labor Party's farmer-worker alliance, dedicated to the realization of expanded food production and fusion power technology, is the only way out.