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Some Aspects of the Farmers' Problems

By **BERNARD M. BARUCH**

(Reprinted from Atlantic Monthly)

III
Now that the farmers are stirring, thinking, and uniting as never before to eradicate these inequalities, they are subjected to stern economic lectures, and are met with the accusation that they are demanding, and are the recipients of, special privileges. Let us see what privileges the government has conferred on the farmers. Much has been made of Section 6 of the Clayton Anti-Trust Act, which purported to permit them to combine with immunity, under certain conditions. Admitting that, nominally, this exemption was in the nature of a special privilege,—though I think it was so in appearance rather than in fact,—we find that the courts have nullified it by judicial interpretation. Why should not the farmers be permitted to accomplish by co-operative methods what other businesses are already doing by co-operation in the form of incorporation? If it be proper for men to form, by fusion of existing corporations or otherwise, a corporation that controls the entire production of a commodity, or a large part of it, why is it not proper for a group of farmers to unite for the marketing of their common products, either in one or in several selling agencies? Why should it be right for a hundred thousand corporate shareholders to direct 25 or 30 or 40 per cent of an industry, and wrong for a hundred thousand co-operative farmers to control a no larger proportion of the wheat crop, or cotton, or any other product?

The Department of Agriculture is often spoken of as a special concession to the farmers, but in its commercial results, it is of as much benefit to the buyers and consumers of agricultural products as to the producers, or even more. I do not suppose that anyone opposes the benefits that the farmers derive from the educational and research work of the department, or the help that it gives them in working out improved cultural methods and practices, in developing better yielding varieties through breeding and selection, in introducing new varieties from remote parts of the world and adapting them to our climate and economic condition, and in devising practical measures for the elimination or control of dangerous and destructive animal and plant diseases, insect pests, and the like. All these things manifestly tend to stimulate and enlarge production, and their general beneficial effects are obvious.

It is complained that, whereas the law restricts Federal Reserve banks to three months' time for commercial paper, the farmer is allowed six months on his notes. This is not a special privilege, but merely such a recognition of business conditions as makes it possible for country banks to do business with country people. The crop farmer has only one turnover a year, while the merchant and manufacturer have many. Incidentally, I note that the Federal Reserve Board has just authorized the Federal Reserve banks to discount export paper for a period of six months, to conform to the nature of the business.

The Farm Loan banks are pointed to as an instance of special government favor for farmers. Are they not rather the outcome of laudable efforts to equalize rural and urban conditions? And about all the government does there is to help set up an administrative organization and lend a little credit at the start. Eventually the farmers will provide all the capital and carry all the liabilities themselves. It is true that Farm Loan bonds are tax exempt; but so are bonds of municipal light and traction plants, and new housing is to be exempt from taxation, in New York, for ten years.

On the other hand, the farmer reads of plans for municipal housing projects that run into the billions, of hundreds of millions annually spent on the merchant marine; he reads that the railroads are being favored with increased rates and virtual guarantees of earnings by the government, with the result to him of an 'increased toll on all that he sells and all that he buys. He hears of many manifestations of governmental concern for particular industries and interests. Rescuing the railroads from insolvency is undoubtedly for the benefit of the country as a whole, but what can be of more general benefit than encouragement of ample production of the principal necessities of life and their even flow from contented producers to satisfied consumers?

While it may be conceded that special governmental aid may be necessary in the general interest, we must all agree that it is difficult to see why agriculture and the production and distribution of farm products are not accorded the same opportunities that are provided for other businesses; especially as the enjoyment by the farmer of such opportunities would appear to be even more contributory to the general good than in the case of other industries. The spirit of American democracy is unalterably opposed, alike to enacted special privilege and to the special privilege of unequal opportunity that arises automatically from the failure to correct glaring economic inequalities. I am opposed to the injection of government into business, but I do believe that it is an essential function of democratic gov-

ernment to equalize opportunity so far as it is within its power to do so, whether by the repeal of archaic statutes or the enactment of modern ones. If the anti-trust laws keep the farmers from endeavoring scientifically to integrate their industry while other industries find a way to meet modern conditions without violating such statutes, then it would seem reasonable to find a way for the farmers to meet them under the same conditions. The law should operate equally in fact. Repairing the economic structure on one side is no injustice to the other side, which is in good repair.

We have traveled a long way from the old conception of government as merely a defensive and policing agency; and regulative, corrective, or equalizing legislation, which apparently is of a special nature, is often of the most general beneficial consequences. Even the First Congress passed a tariff act that was avowedly for the protection of manufacturers; but a protective tariff always has been defended as a means of promoting the general good through a particular approach; and the statute books are filled with acts for the benefit of shipping, commerce, and labor.

(Continued Next Week)

IRRIGON NEWS ITEM

Every farmer on the project should get a copy of the Boardman Mirror of January 27th, and read the article written by M. K. Flickinger of the Boardman district. He can show you exact figures how he made \$100 clear per acre on fourteen acres and five cows. There is no reason in the world why any person could not do as well, and those who have farmed like Mr. Flickinger has done, have made good. Butterfat may drop to a low figure at times but to stay with the game year in and year out you will show nice balances to the good. As long as there is an over supply of hay in the west, the price of hay cannot go up. Some estimates allow that there is enough hay in the west to supply the visible demand for three years if not a straw should be raised in that time. Where will your organized efforts to hold up prices come off at? Something else has to be done. How will we do it? Shall we advertise like the Lemon and Orange Growers of California in the big magazines and pay out \$11,000.00 for a page in the Ladies' Home Journal and try to convince the people that alfalfa is fine table and beverage product, and that it has many health producing qualities? It will help your health all right if you get out here and raise alfalfa in our great project, irrigate and cut four and five crops of alfalfa every season. It will do you lots of good. I enjoy it immensely, but do we want to advertise for more hay growers when we already don't know what to do with what we have raised? The same sort of advertising is being carried out by the raisin growers and others, but let some one figure how this can be applied to alfalfa. Do not mistake me, I am not opposed to co-operative marketing organizations. I am first, last and all the time for co-operative associations, to buy and sell your farm products. We got to do it. We got to make every cent count or we cannot make our business a success. The problem before us now, is exactly this or I am badly misinformed. For example, let us say there are 600,000 tons of hay in the west, and normal annual production 300,000 tons and average annual markets available for this territory amounted to about 200,000 tons. How long would you figure it necessary to hold over the bulk of the hay if pooled for shipping markets? When could we hope to realize a clean-up and what would be the selling cost per ton when you figure the interests your money could earn if turned

MIRROR WANT ADS

SELECTED TILLAMOOK COUNTY
Dairy Calves out of high grade cows making 300 lbs. of fat or better in cow testing associations and by purebred registered sires for sale. For particulars and prices write Frank A. Rowe, 53 Fourth St., Portland, Ore., dealer in dairy stock. 51-52

FOR SALE—R. C. R. I. COCKS,
Dewey strain; prize winners. \$2.50 to \$10. Paul M. Smith, Boardman, Ore. 51-51p

FOR SALE—ONE BALING OUTFIT
complete. New Ann Arbor baler with 10-20 Titan tractor. \$1600 cash. E. A. Westervelt. 51-51p

loose? How is that about the frog in the well? He went up two feet and fell back three every day. When did he get out. It has been figured by some experts, but I believe the frog is in the well yet. Now, more of us will have to go pumping the cows like Mr. Flickinger is doing and we must dispose of the bulk of this surplus in other ways. We must make rates to the sheep and stock men that will also encourage them to hold over their stock and feed our surplus alfalfa. It we can get anyone to burn up his stacks and scatter the ashes as fertilizer, we should encourage and assist him. Can you sight any cases where prices have been boosted when there was an enormous over supply from all sources? Well, let us admit such has been the case. What was their experience in cost of the hold-over? What net prices. Will the hold-over alfalfa improve with age? We are organized to sell hay. That is fine. Now let us organize to reduce the over supply and get down to business. Let us get a few more cows and let us pump awhile. Insist that stockmen who will feed on the grounds get the benefit of the selling cost when baled and shipped to other markets and have them leave the manure on our grounds. It has already been proven that hang on alone will not clear us anything and, besides it is only placing us in greater peril for another year on account of increased over supply on hand. When we work like the lemon and orange growers, only instead of telling our friends to spread the alfalfa on their tables, tell our stock and sheep men, come to our country with your stock and we will sell you hay at a price that is right. We will give you the benefit of moving the stacks, baling and selling costs. He will hang on to his products until he gets a fair and reasonable price for his goods and while he is doing that, he is reducing our over supply and puts us on our feet. When we get this scheme working, the first Unit West Umatilla project will go on the map in three years with some town on the unit designated with a star over the dot. We will be a "State" with out capital right here. Our Eastern Oregon friends will not know us for our near likeness to them. The Jack rabbits and sage brush will have disappeared. Let us start now. Everybody get down to business right.

Mrs. Ingerson of Kamela, is here visiting with her sister, Mrs. W. T. Bray.
C. C. Calkins, our county agent, spent Tuesday in Irrigon arranging for the educational lectures next week.
Prof. Jamieson is now scheduled to be with us at one o'clock, Feb. 10 and give us a lecture on dairying.
Prof. C. S. Brewster will give us

a lecture at one o'clock, Saturday, Feb. 11 on poultry, culling, housing, etc. to double production.

The Farm Bureau holds its regular monthly meeting on Saturday evening, February 4, and arrangements will be made for these two

occasions. These educational lectures will probably be held in the new school auditorium.

(More Irrigon on Opposite Page)

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will gladly furnish instructive and beautifully illustrated booklets giving complete information about this glorious playground of the West. Let them tell all about hotel rates, railroad fares, through car service, the famous Circle Tour through San Francisco and Salt Lake City, or a part of the way by ocean trip. No journey of equal interest in America.