

# Some Aspects of the Farmers' Problems

By BERNARD M. BARUCH

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II  
Let us, then, consider some of the farmer's grievances, and see how far they are real. In doing so, we should remember that, while there have been, and still are, instances of purposeful abuse, the subject should not be approached with any general imputation to existing distributive agencies of deliberately intentional oppression, but rather with the conception that the marketing of farm products has not been modernized.

An ancient evil, and a persistent one, is the undergrading of farm products, with the result that what the farmers sell is of one quality is sold as of a higher. That this sort of chicanery should persist on any important scale in these days of business integrity would seem almost incredible, but there is much evidence that it does so persist. Even as I write, the newspapers announce the suspension of several firms from the New York Produce Exchange for exporting to Germany as No. 2 wheat a whole shipload of grossly inferior wheat mixed with oats, chaff and the like.

Another evil is that of inaccurate weighing of farm products, which, it is charged, is sometimes a matter of dishonest intention and sometimes of protective policy on the part of the local buyer, who fears that he may "weigh out" more than he "weighs in."

A greater grievance is that at present the field farmer has little or no control over the time and conditions of marketing his products, with the result that he is often underpaid for his products and usually overcharged for marketing service. The difference between what the farmer receives and what the consumer pays often exceeds all possibility of justification. To cite a single illustration. Last year, according to figures attested by the railways and the growers, Georgia watermelon raisers received on the average 7.5 cents for a melon, the railroads got 12.7 cents for carrying it to Baltimore and the consumer paid one dollar, leaving 79.8 cents for

the service of marketing and its risks, as against 20.2 cents for growing and transporting. The hard annuals of farm-life are replete with such commentaries on the crudeness of present practices.

Nature prescribes that the farmer's "goods" must be finished within two or three months of the year, while financial and storage limitations generally compel him to sell them at the same time. As a rule, other industries are in a continuous process of finishing goods for the markets; they distribute as they produce, and they can curtail production without too great injury to themselves or the community; but if the farmer restricts his output, it is with disastrous consequences both to himself and to the community.

The average farmer is busy with production for the major part of the year, and has nothing to sell. The bulk of his output comes on the market at once. Because of lack of storage facilities and of financial support, the farmer cannot carry his goods through the year and dispose of them as they are currently needed. In the great majority of cases, farmers have to entrust storage—in warehouses and elevators—and the financial carrying of their products to others.

Farm products are generally marketed at a time when there is a congestion of both transportation and finance—when cars and money are scarce. The outcome, in many instances, is that the farmers not only sell under pressure, and therefore at a disadvantage, but are compelled to take further reductions in net returns in order to meet the charges for the service of storing, transporting, financing, and ultimate marketing—which charges they claim, are often excessive, bear heavily on both consumer and producer, and are under the control of those performing the services. It is true that they are relieved of the risks of a changing market by selling at once; but they are quite willing to take the unfavorable chance, if the favorable one also is theirs and they can retain for themselves a part of the service charges that are uniform, in good years and bad, with high prices and low.

While, in the main, the farmer must

sell, regardless of market conditions, at the time of the maturity of crops, he cannot suspend production in toto. He must go on producing if he is to go on living, and if the world is to exist. The most he can do is to curtail production a little or alter its form, and that—because he is in the dark as to the probable demand for his goods—may be only to jump from the frying pan into the fire, taking the consumer with him.

Even the dairy farmers, whose output is not seasonal, complain that they find themselves at a disadvantage in the marketing of their products, especially raw milk, because of the high costs of distribution, which they must ultimately bear.

### 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 purports to permit them to combine with

limited liability under certain conditions. Admittedly, 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 limited to a hundred thousand corporate shareholders to direct 25 or 30 or 50 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 seedling 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 turn-over 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 railways 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 the health of industries and interests. Rescuing the railways 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 contributive to the gen-

eral 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 of government to inject the injection of government into the business, but I do believe that it is an essential function of democratic government 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 legislative, 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.

### FARM POINTERS

Early potatoes may be had on many dry farms if the whole potatoes are planted as early as the ground can be worked. Earliest of all and Early Ohio are good varieties for the first planting.

Spring wheat, oats, or barley for Eastern Oregon should be planted shallow and early on the firm seed bed. The formaldehyde treatment is good. Seed should be dipped and then planted as soon afterward as it will run through the drill.

The barley average of eastern Oregon has decreased materially in the last 10 years. The decline amounts to nearly 40,000 acres. Many of the light lands, however, would produce spring barley better than spring wheat. Hanneken, Haricut and White Smyrna are good spring varieties.

The best varieties of spring wheat for dry land conditions are hard Federation and early Baart. For irrigated conditions Federation and Marquis are preferable. Baart, being a large seeded variety, should be seeded at least 20 per cent heavier than the others to insure a good stand.

The sixty day oats put out by the Moro Experiment station is the best dry land variety for east of the mountains.

For early spring seeding of any seeds shallow planting is necessary. Seed planted too deeply in cold soil usually germinates slowly, resulting in a poor stand. Spring seed beds are often so loose and mellow that it is easy to get the seed planted too deep.

The potato planter should be kept over to replace broken cogs or sprockets, and broken, corroded, or bent picking fingers, if the planter is of the picking type. Lack of repair will mean poor stands and low yields. No dairyman expects a big cream check if his stalls are empty, and no potato grower may expect a big yield if his rows are full of empty spaces.

Watch out for the pruner who heads back young trees by gathering two or three shoots together and clipping them off with one cut. Such even heading gives each branch an equal chance to develop upwards, resulting in weaker crotches. Where two branches are making a growth nearly equal, cutting the one shorter will subordinate it and cause it to become a strong side branch of the leader.

Examination of new fall seeded clover fields should be made to determine the extent of freezing injury and the necessity for February reseedings. Plant seed with the least possible buckhorn, as it becomes a serious weed pest. Seed taste may be had free at the Oregon Experiment station.

Through fanning or cleaning of spring grain for early planting will remove many light, weak, and broken kernels, leaving seed that will not rot so quickly in cold soil. Good stands mean better crops.

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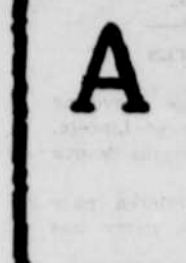
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### CHAPTER X

Lund sooner or later, willing or unwilling, would stand between her and the hunter. Lund would be a character only as his rival.

For the time being the Karluk and the Ing out of the purpose of Lund's attention. Twice he had been weather from glennin vest, and it began a third attempt might tuate.

"The Karluk's stout but she ain't built for we git ripped badly eggshell."

"And then what?" "Git the gold!" come for. If we ha an' use the hunters! He laughed indomita a man of you yit, I git back."

Lund was snatching seeking always to force the position of the ice that continually

Against all opposit way until, just after as the dusk swept t shout and pointed to the port bow. Raine aurora, but Lund lau "It's the crater also said. "Nothin' das lighthouse. Now, be his deep voice ringin ton, "there's gold in for a change of weat er's son of you!"

The deck was soe the previous trip he proached the island angle, but the men acknowledge the glov as the expected lan mained on deck, and fore any of the c Raine, during his mountain fire-pulse, g ing like the eye of gleam reflected in t watchers who were the island and rob sands.

The change of wea three in the morning Lund had hoped. A tialized from the the canvas with its glazing the schooner



"We'll Make a Man of Afore We Git

ture dripped, bringin send of clouds that moon. The sea app thickened. The Karlu ly, as if she was sail tracke.

### CHAPTER

Smoke.

When Raine came morning he found the Ing in a small lagoon center of a floe. The slush, half solid. Mal close furled, the hea the Karluk was nosin end of the rapidly th the wind was still liv

A deep hum of burr toned all other noise as she was, the schou were sweeping slowly in the grip of a curr before the gusty wind Lund came up with stood blinking at the

He seemed well an prospect. "Had bronk Raine, she then: "git the men aft." He followed an e