

FARMERS DEMAND IMMEDIATE RELIEF

**Executive Secretary of Their
Organization Tells of
Their Plans.**

WANT EVICTIONS TO CEASE

**Meeting in Washington to Work
Out Their Thoroughgoing
Program.**

NOT SURPLUS, THEY ASSERT

**Neither do They Consider "Surplus"
Crops Unemployed Want
but Cannot Buy.**

**By LEM HARRIS,
Executive Secretary Farmers' National Relief Conference.**

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 6.—The farmers themselves have come to Washington to frame their own proposals for immediate relief from the burdens under which they are now being crushed.

Western farmers of pioneer stock have come here to save the land which they won from the wilderness, at the price of long struggles with blizzards, sand storms and drought. They have been joined by the farmers from other sections of the country in a nation-wide movement to make eviction of penniless farmers illegal, and to guarantee this by a holiday on farm debts.

The agricultural depression, beginning almost a decade before the general economic depression, has seen the steady fall of farm prices. It likewise has seen the rise of an overpowering farm mortgage debt which Secretary of Agriculture Hyde puts at more than \$9,000,000,000.

This fact was at the bottom of the great farm strike which raged in the Middle West last September. Out of this strike came the call of the rank-and-file farmers for a national conference of all farmers to formulate a farmers' program of farm relief.

The farmers meeting in Washington will work out their own program, but those who have spoken with the delegates know beforehand that their program will be thoroughgoing.

Want a Moratorium.

They will insist on legislation which will declare a moratorium on farm debts during the emergency. They want a law which will declare evictions and tax sales for non-payment of debts illegal.

For tax relief they do not want a sales tax which merely shifts the burden from the land to the shoulders of the mass of consumers, which, of course, includes themselves. They will ask either that this moratorium on debts be extended to taxes or that farmers living definitely below a decent standard of living shall be exempt from taxes.

The farmers are not satisfied with a promise of a voluntary domestic allotment plan when the Democrats come into power, as some old line professional farm leaders expound. In the opinion of the farmers, a national emergency exists, and this is a time for emergency action. That means immediate relief, not some complicated scheme to "make the tariff effective" several years hence.

In many States of the Middle West the farmers already have begun to put a relief program into action. Anton Rosenberg, a farmer of Madison County, Neb., and vice president of the Nebraska State Holiday Association, has been telling us how the farmers of Eastern Nebraska have prevented eviction of their impover-

ished fellow-farmers by going in large numbers to the bankers or Sheriffs and insisting that the farmer be allowed to stay on the land until interest and mortgage can be paid. Rosenberg is a member of the committee which called this conference.

While the agricultural economists, notably Professor E. G. Nourse, suggest that three-quarters of the farmers are "surplus" and must be retired from production, Rosenberg knows that this already is going on and that unless immediate steps are taken will be achieved all too soon.

Middle Man Is Blamed.

The three-quarters of the farmers which Mr. Nourse as an economist calls "surplus" cannot consider themselves as such. Neither can they consider their crops as surplus when they know that there are millions of unemployed who lack the very things which they produce and cannot sell. It was the recognition of this ironical situation which led the farmers of Iowa to give milk to the unemployed of Sioux City during the farm strike there.

This note already has been struck in the preliminary work of the conference. The farmers insist on higher prices, but they are not willing that these higher prices come from an increase on the city consumers. They declare their price relief must come out of the wide and unjust spread which goes to the middle men, in milk as well as in grains and other foodstuffs.

The farmers realize that long-term credit is not their only problem. Almost the entire production is made on credit—seed and feed credit, merchant credit, or "furnishing," as it is known in the South. For the last two years there have been seed and feed loans from the Federal Government to fill the gap made by the failure of many small banks and merchants who formerly had advanced this type of credit.

A "Wooden-Shoes" Existence.

For the coming year the farmer knows that no such credit is anticipated by Federal authorities. With no funds available from these former sources, the farmers face the prospect of making no crops for lack of production credit. This means falling back to a live-at-home program, with hardly enough to live on, no cash for coffee, sugar or clothes. The farmers call this "wooden shoes," to represent the analogy with the peasant standards of Europe.

Every farmer coming to this conference has had personal experience with the farm problem. He is a real dirt farmer, elected by at least twenty-five farmers back home. His coming spells his distrust of the professional farm lobbies. He has taken matters into his own hands, because he knows that no one else can do the job as well as he can.

He comes before Congress, therefore, not cringing, with hat in hand, but upright and with a challenge, because he feels that what he seeks he has every right to receive.