

the back-to-the-home 5 acre plot. If so, this farmer sees himself as a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, not only without hope for education for his children or comforts he feels are his right in a country he has been taught from the cradle up to consider the richest in the world, but without a chance to make even a bare living.

It is a platitude now to say the farmers are mad but it is quite to the point to say they are fighting and organizing. The farmers represented here are not relying much upon government legislation but neither are many followers of Milo Reno. This group splits from the Reno crowd in not having any faith in that opportunistic leader who calls and calls off strikes much too arbitrarily to suit the rank and file. This group will not put trust in any leader not picked and guided by the mass of dirt farmers they represent.

The delegation from my locality in Pennsylvania may be taken as a cross section of this conference. Here are four solid Menonite Pennsylvania Germans, a Quaker of pre-revolutionary stock, two naturalized citizens who have "only" been on their farms 25 and 17 years respectively. Most of these farms are superior farms, with fine well kept stone houses, huge barns, machinery and hired help. What moves these men to throw in their lot with the impoverished Negro share cropper from Alabama?

Nothing except the conviction that their struggle against mass ruin is the same. The farmers in this convention hall represent some 115,000 voting farmers from California to New York and Alabama, but actually they express the situation and belief of a much greater number who are convinced the official policy means to save the well to do farmer at the expense of the middle and poor farmer.

If they are demanding cancellation, not moratorium, it is because with a 12 billion dollar debt, larger than that owed us by our allies, they can never hope to pay. Interest charges alone amount to \$900,000,000 a year and together with the property tax took one-fourth of the farmer's gross income for 1932. His income of 17 billion dollars in 1919 has dropped to 5 billion dollars in 1932 with a possible six billion in 1933 but with farm prices dropping 6 points between July and September and commodities he must buy, rising 9 points, he sees little advantage.

For the past six years an average of

184,134 farmers a year have been forced out of ownership. Tenancy seems just around the corner for nearly half the farmers who still hold their own farms. In a sample study on farm mortgages made by the Department of Agriculture 36 percent were delinquent in payment of principal or interest due or both.

This situation has brought the farmers realizing it down to bed rock. Facts are not handled with kid gloves by these farmers from all over the country, some of them taking weeks to get here. Their trucks with slogans, *Our First Mortgage Is to the Wife and Children, New Dealers Use the Same Old Deck, Farm Surplus Starved Millions*, stand in a parking lot across the street from the auditorium. On the night of a big mass meeting in the Coliseum when Chicago workers met with the farmers, a parade 8 blocks long packed with singing, yelling farmers scooted through the streets.

During this last year these farmers have thrashed out their troubles in local meetings; through struggles and strikes

they have gained in numbers and confidence. On the second day before outlining their demands, they sat back and listened to what the different political parties had to say to them. It was no surprise that the Republican party sent a letter enclosing the Republican platform of 1932 and it brought a good natured laugh. The Democratic reply, written on Mr. Farley's stationery, suggested the convention refer to the Democratic program and to Mr. Wallace. Another and louder laugh. The Socialists sent a speaker who inspired interest and applause but whose silence on the Negro share cropper and concrete problems of the farmer caused whispering among neighbors near me. If the Communist party representative, Clarence Hathaway, raised cheers it was because his talk was plain and concrete and the farmers are sick of hot air. They are not yet, as a whole, politically minded. But they are not afraid to have visions of a new social order. That auditorium was as spirited a place as I've ever been in, with a kind of contagious



Adolph Dehn 1932.

Adolph Dehn

"IT HAS 2 PLEATS AND 6 RUFFLES!"