

The U. S. Government and the Agricultural Masses.

By Jay Lovestone (Chicago).

A great political drama is now being enacted in the House of Congress. One should say, a political tragedy, to be more exact. The battle is being fought actually in the corn fields and in the cotton fields, but to all intents and purposes, the present act is being performed in the House of Representatives.

Neither the **Haugen Bill** or the **Tincher Bill** affords substantial relief for the exploited American farmers. Of the two, the **Haugen Bill** unquestionably affords a bit more than does the **Tincher Bill**, which is simply a camouflaged piece of legislation aiming to put the farmer to sleep on the Coolidge bandwagon for 1926 and 1928.

The basic economic problem for American agriculture is as acute as ever. The divergence between prices for agricultural commodities and industrial commodities has been increasing within the last few months at a pace altogether too alarming for the most conscious leadership of our ruling class. The World War lent great impetus to the development of American agriculture to capacities far beyond the demands of the so-called normal world market. Besides, while industry is being operated more and more on a gigantic and collective, monopoly scale, agriculture is falling behind in development, when compared with the tremendous progress in technical and commercial avenues within the last decade. In the main, American agriculture is still organized on the individual basis prevailing at the opening of this century.

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The deepening crisis in agriculture is having its political reflex in the class relationships in the United States. But we already hear talk about the "solid middle-west".

We are now being introduced to "corn-belt committees". An attempt is being made to secure the passage of the Haugen Bill through an alliance of the representatives of the farmers of the middle west and the representatives of the cotton growers of the south.

Simultaneously, however, there is being created a chasm between the big bourgeoisie and the small bourgeoisie of the South. In the House of Representatives, the small bourgeoisie of the South have some substantial representation. In the Senate, they have considerably less.

Some sort of an agreement between the representatives of the Western and Southern small and middle farmers has been arrived at through the arrangement to appropriate one hundred million of the three hundred and seventy million dollars provided for indirect farm-relief in the Haugen Bill to meet losses in cotton marketing operations. The spokesmen of the big financial interests, located primarily in the East, are exerting every possible pressure they can, on the Southern representatives, in order to break up this combination. The Bill, introduced by the reactionary Congressman Aswell of Louisiana, notorious for his attempt to secure the enactment of wholesale deportation legislation, is an example of the efforts of the Southern big capitalist interests to win away the Southern agricultural, the smaller cotton interests, from the camp of the middle western congressmen.

The extent to which confusion has crept into the camp of the bourgeoisie in their efforts to meet the agricultural crisis is shown clearly by the fact that neither a political, nor even a numerical, majority could be secured in the House Agricultural Committee consisting of twenty-one members for any of the three major agricultural Bills now before the House. Of course, since it was impossible to secure a majority in a committee of twenty-one, the likelihood of securing a majority in a larger Committee the House of Representatives, consisting of 435 members - is even slimmer. Come what may, no matter what bill be passed or rejected by the House in its closing deliberations, the hold of the Republican Party on the agricultural sections will be further considerably weakened.

What may the farmers expect from the United States government? Perhaps the best answer to this question is to be found in the recent action of the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce in its dealings with the railroads. The railroads owe the United States \$ 304,000,000, which were lent to them during the war period by the United States Treasury. This money was lent to the railroad interests at the rate of six percent. Only the other day the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce reported favourably a bill for the reduction of the rate of interests from six to four and one half percent on the amount owed the government by the railroads. This reduced rate of interest means an annual loss to the United States government of more than six million dollars.

At the same time, the Senate is refusing to enact legislation to give money to the land banks for use in helping the farmers in the Piedmont regions of Georgia and South Carolina to meet the emergency caused by the severe drought, which is the worst experienced by the farmers in this territory in many years. A futile effort has been made to secure an appropriation of five million dollars in order to enable these farmers to make loans at the local banks for the purpose of meeting interest on overdue debts.

These South Carolina and Georgia farmers are being compelled to borrow from local banks at exorbitant interest rates or forced to lose their property. At the same time, the railroads are being saved millions of dollars by the government. While the railroads are enjoying a most prosperous year, many sections of these states have had their whole cotton crop destroyed. Nearly one half of the countries of South Carolina have been so hard hit that their entire crop has been wiped out.

Through the land banks, the farmers of these territories owe the government approximately one hundred million dollars. The farmers being bankrupt cannot meet these obligations. They are thus forced to give a second mortgage on their farms or to mortgage other property they may happen to have at the local banks. These banks charge the farmers a minimum interest of nine percent. The government consequently is compelling these farmers to pay the loan sharks at least nine percent in order to

meet the interest maturing on the mortgages controlled by the land banks of the Washington administration.

If anyone wants to know whose government is now being run at Washington, all he has to do is to examine the above facts.

The American capitalists are ready to give practically a moratorium on debts to railroads, to the Fascist government of Italy and to all capitalist cliques in Europe and elsewhere but the United States government is too poor to help farmers in distress. **Senator Nye of North Dakota** does not stand one chance in a million to get even the slightest consideration for his bill to have the United States government accord the same treatment to the bankrupt farmers which it has accorded to the Fascist government of Italy.

In the meanwhile, the workers in the industrial centers can glean increasing signs of developing hostility on the part of the small farmers to the big capitalist interests.

The class conscious proletariat of the United States has a distinct and imperative duty in its relations to the agricultural masses. It is the task of the working class to win over as many of the agricultural masses as possible to its banner and leadership in the fight against the big bourgeoisie. The contradictions in American agricultural economy are too inherent and ingrown to be met by the half-hearted efforts of our capitalists. Herein is a real opportunity for communist inspiration and leadership.