

Farm Workers Getting as Low As 15c Day--Organize, Fight!

By JIM ALLEN

For the farm laborers, croppers, tenants and poor farmers this is one of the hardest slave summers ever seen. They are working from sun-up to sundown for practically nothing—planting a crop which will be taken away from them, and facing a winter of starvation and cold.

Sumter County is in the heart of the black belt in South Carolina. Rembert is a town in this county named after the "big boss," Bob Rembert, biggest plantation owner in the section. On his large plantation at Rembert he pays 25 cents a day for farm workers—not in cash but in food that the worker is forced to buy from the plantation store. About 100 are working on this plantation. Children are paid 10 and 15 cents a day.

15 Cents A Day

In adjoining Clarendon County farm laborers are being paid 15 cents a day for hoeing cotton. Around Rembert they are paying 25 cents an acre for hoeing cotton—and it takes a good full day's work to hoe an acre of cotton. On one of the farms managed by Bob Rembert three Negro children, working four and one-half days chopped seven acres of cotton and got a total pay of one dollar.

The croppers are working at starvation conditions. The plantation bosses and landowners are just advancing them enough food so that they can get up the next morning and work the day through and not drop dead at it. One Negro cropper family, having nine mouths to feed, gets an advance of \$2.50 worth of food a week from the landowner. The whole family is supposed to get along on the following for a week: 10 pounds of fatback, 12 pounds of flour, two quarts of rye, two pounds of sugar, 2 pounds of lard and one pound of coffee. Another cropper family having eight mouths to feed gets \$1.75 worth of food a week.

Boss Takes Crop

For this starvation food advance and some fertilizer the whole family works on its crop of cotton and corn the whole summer long, only to find that when "settlement" time comes most of it, if not all, goes to the landowner. The landowner is supposed to take only half the crop, but he manages to take nearly everything.

The outhouses on the cropper farms are in ruin, and the boss will not have them fixed so that the cropper can store his part of the crop there. The idea is to get most of the crop stored in the landowners barns—and once it gets there the cropper never sees it, or the proceeds of it.

The cropper and his children are forced to work on the white plantation owner's land for nothing. He may promise them 25 cents a day for hoeing peas, but he doesn't pay them. He charges it up to "horsepower" or something else. The cropper must put his children to work on the bosses' land for the use of his mules. For two days of plowing the landowner's land, he may permit the cropper one day of plowing on his own.

When settlement time comes, there just is no settlement. The white bosses' word is law. You've got to take what he gives you, and if he gives you nothing, you got to take that, too, without opening your mouth. If you have the nerve to ask for your settlement, he will call the sheriff and there will be a chaingang sentence for you on charge of "breaking contract." It is worse than slavery for men, women and children working on the farm lands.

Organize!

A handful of white plantation owners keep hundreds of cropper families in slavery, the white croppers as well as the Negro. The small white landowner is also losing his land and going into slave service for the plantation boss. Something will have to be done and done quick if the poor farmers are to save themselves from death.

There is only one way to fight against having to hoe cotton for 25 cents an acre and then not getting paid for it. There will be only one way to fight against the starvation wages that are going to be paid when cotton picking time comes. There will be only one big way to fight for the crops, for something to eat and dress in when winter comes.

That way is organization. Like in Southern Alabama and on a plantation in Georgia, the croppers of South Carolina are also organizing. They are organizing to fight against the starvation wages, against the starvation advances and to put up the big fight for their crops when settlement time comes.

DO YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION?

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