



Mr. John N. Dakota

The organized business men of the farming districts are "egging" the farmers to fight labor; no doubt figuring that while they are doing that it will be easier to pick their pockets, for John is a warrior bold when he gets started.

Now it might not be out of place to acquaint ourselves with the duties of the business element and discover their mode of making a living. We wish first of all to know if they consider it a service worth board and lodging to sit in a store reading circulars and cream separator advertisements from 8 to 10 a. m., while the hired brains, the clerk, sweeps the place? We want to know if waiting on five customers in the forenoon is considered a full half day's work for this pair of bouncing worthies?

Except on Wednesday and Saturday nights, their stores are practically deserted. There they are—joyous and carefree, cracking jokes, fondling their goods, keeping up a running fire of witty remarks. In comes a merchant who has been clowning out on the sidewalk, or loafing at the postoffice waiting for the postmaster to get through with his work. What pearl of wisdom drops from his lips as he re-enters the store? He says to his partner: "You'd been out of luck with 5-cent margin on corn, it's dollar six now." It seems he is a tinhorn grain-gambler on top of all his other virtues—a baby speculator. It's the words of these men the farmer takes in preference to the word of his hard working helper. These men are not satisfied with \$3.50 and \$4.50 profits on a day's business. Oh, no.

Their profits on Saturday night's business range from \$40 to \$140 and more—clearly too much, yes it is—but you argue "this is necessary because business was dull during the week." So it was, that's what I argue too, we agree—it was dull, and these men might as well have been working some place. We're not prepared to hand them a living for Saturday night's work. I contend that the lowest figure (\$40) covers the cost of a full week's livelihood, and that it all "comes in" in four hours. No wonder they cavort and cut up on Main Street, joshing with the harvest hands and shaking hands with the farmers' Lena, when she's in town dickering with the surly barber for a shingle bob. These are the men that advise the farmer to buck labor. And John thinks they are friends of his'n.

It is said that North Dakota has a bank for every 800 people and I will say that 720 of the people have nothing to put in the bank and nothing to get out. Thus each bank has at least three people looking after the business of 80 customers and since most of these have business only once a week the banks serve only about 100 customers per week—16 2-3 customers per day. No wonder the banks work only six hours a day. (I have much to say here but I must condense). These business men are continually misleading the farmers.

Lately they have harped on Diversification to the end that John has adopted it: Golden Valley county, Western North Da-

kota, has 512 farms and Beach, N. D., alone has enough business men for them to support—then there is the town of Golvea that can't live on wind. Just think of it, 512 customers are trying to support two towns.

Wheat wouldn't pay, so they hooked non-paying dairy-business to it.

Barley wouldn't pay, so it was married to non-paying alfalfa.

Oats wouldn't pay, so they ran a side-line of non-paying hawgs with it.

Rye wouldn't pay, so it had to divide with non-paying sheep.

Flax wouldn't pay so it was doubled with non-paying poultry.

Thus, through diversification, the farmer dies before he finds the cause of his trouble. In the meantime he acts as a Labor Board and sets wages for everyone but himself.

Diversification means the joining together of everything that doesn't pay and trying to live on the proceeds.

John has hashed his farming and supports a bunch of prancing business men. If John N. Dakota would organize to sell grain instead of acting as a labor board these merchants would soon go to work or starve. By organizing to SELL instead BUY, half the bankers would find themselves LAYED-OFF.

My advice to the farmer is: Don't diversify your attention. You live not by producing grain but by selling it. To my fellow worker I will say: You do not live by working, you do not live by raising big muscles, you live by selling labor-power—don't diversify—this is the capitalist's system and a rotten one it is.

The wage hereabouts is five dollars; the going wage \$4.50 (going almost gone). Yet, I was offered Three Dollars this day by a misguided and thoughtless farmer. Imagine "That," fellow workers! Three Dollars for stacking! Although I was deeply offended I survived the foul blow but, believe me, I was mortified—and, mortification is next to MORTEM. Me—with not a spavin or a blemish! Three dollars! I was hurt. I was wounded. My pride was wrecked. My soul was twisted out of all shape. . . . Fellow workers, it will take me years to live this down. Three dollars! Was there ever such disgraceful proceedings? Was ever a man discredited in such an underhanded manner? Oh, why did I ever tell him I was looking for work?

A local boy comes into town raving and frothing at the mouth:

"What's the matter, what's the matter?" I inquired.

"Why, that Gol' Sham farmer asked me to sleep in the barn."

"The hell he did, the dirty Son of a Gun," I swore politely.

"Yes, 'here's your blankets,' he said, 'you can sleep in the barn—and take the dog with you.'"

"He di-id?" I exclaimed, aghast, "I hope you didn't hit 'im. . . . although, of course, any jury would decide it was in self defense; for god and country, sea and senate. . . ."

"Yes, and what makes it worse, he's got five empty rooms with beds upstairs."

"The dirty son of a gun," I could only marvel.

"—if my mother found out," moaned the humiliated lad, "if my mother found out that I slept in a barn, or, even, that I was told to sleep there, she'd make me take a bath out in the wood shed—she wouldn't let me in the house—she'd make me burn all my clothes."

You're right, lad, and your mother would be perfectly justified in sending you to a reform school—it's against the law, too, to

sleep in barns. If I was you I wouldn't say too much about it, you're liable to arrest, and thirty days.

And so we parted—

I could see that his young soul was severely wrung and his faith in agriculture violently shaken. Alas, that this should be so! It's so. So.

As he thought of John Farmer and John Farmer's wife,

And the puddings and pies that she'd bake, He "clumb" on an east-bound W. P. Train—

To search for his next winter's stake. Thoroly surfeited with oranges and jails

He'd go straight to Kansas or bust— After living all winter on donuts and snails—

He left Sunny Cal in disgust.

In due course of time he reached the State line,

His waistline exceedingly slim; When lo and behold, two burly bulls bold Proceeded to fumigate him.

They took off his clothes and turned on the hose

And took all the hide off his shape— Ignoring the fact that such a grave act Amounted to invasion—or rape.

His bundle, collected throughout the long years

They soaked it with gas—yes they did— Ah neighbors, indeed, it makes my heart bleed,

Taint no way to treat a good.

(To be finished)