

# The Horsepower Of Four Bits

By T-BONE SLIM

QUINTER GROVE, Kan. — The great American harvest hand is a proud, independent spirit. His pride and independence costs him a pretty penny, in real cash, U. S. money.

For one thing—he is too proud and independent to pay fifty cents a month dues to the I. W. W., the only organization that ever has given him high wages—and the organization that could give it to him to-day did he but belong to it—but no, he's not putting out fifty cents every thirty days.

As a result of his failure to pay fifty cents a month for protection, the farmer puts a fine of two dollars a day on him in wages and pays him \$4 a day instead of \$6—that's \$60 per month that the harvest hand pays for his independence. It's all right, if he can afford it but, personally, I think he should take the sixty dollars and put out the fifty cents instead—if for no other reason, than to fool the people into thinking he understands his arithmetic.

Some would think that an advantage is being taken of the harvest hand and that he is compelled to do one or the other, pay out union dues or sacrifice two dollars a day in wages, and that he is a slave to the proposition—it would seem so, too, in view of the criminal syndicalism laws passed by some of the agricultural states—by the farmers, in other words—to prevent the harvest hand from protecting himself “by way of a union.”

The mere fact that farmers have seen the effectiveness of unionism in the protection of workers, and their mad rush to criminally syndicalize their laws, then their failure to utilize organization in their own affairs, does not detract from their reputaion for general all-around ignorance—with the result that to-day we have the farmer applying himself assiduously to the task of prying two dollars per day from a ten-day harvest stake, his income thus limited only by the shortness of the period of employment.

Presumably the farmer, after forbidding his helpers to organize, feels guilty and therefore cannot take advantage of organization himself—a ridiculous situation that places him at a disadvantage and at the mercy of the organized grain speculators—but, nevertheless, on a basis of perfect equality with the unorganized harvest worker—both of them practically on the bum and dispossessed of all things that make life worth living.

The farmer today, in his unorganized condition, as a perennial pleader before his legislative representatives, receives less than one cent a pound for his wheat. The same wheat (after it's bread) is bought back by the farmer for 15 cents per 14 ounces—what became of the odd 2 ounces it is short of a full pound, I do not know — but I do know bread at 15 cents or 14 ounces is fifteen times the price John gets for his wheat and indicates the baker and miller are better organized, or that the grain passes through fifteen hands all of whom receive as much (or little) as John. In the latter case, it would seem the farmer could make more money by milling and baking his crop and selling it in waxed papers under poetical cognomens.

But no, unorganized farmers would compete one with the other and we'd have the ridiculous spectacle of, John, flour from head to heels, begging “lumps” from Congress—a chronic bum. He will not organize himself, and sanctifies by his approval the laws that aim to prevent the more sensible people organizing.

John has therefore the choice between organizing or stepping out—

he'll step out. The reason I think he will step out is he has already permitted laws to be passed that will prevent him organizing. Should he (in the last wan hope to save himself) attempt to organize, his faithful servant, the law, will lock him up a criminal syndicalist and make him eat corporation wheat and packing house butter, a low grade axle grease . . .

Well, that was that.

Now the question arises what is the harvest hand going to do? Is he gonna continue paying the farmer two dollars a day tribute and finally step out of the picture? He will do neither—that man has good sense. He will organize a union for his own protection and prevent the farmer dragging him down to destruction. He will organize a union against the day when corporation farming will try to make a serf of him and John—and to be on time, he will do it now.—T-b S.