

A Farmer Goes To Market

By Uncle Tobey

A California farmer had shipped his annual crop of fruits and vegetables to the market in the city, but the returns were so meager that he determined to do something about it. So he said to his wife: "I am going to see those commission men I sent my crop to and find out what happened."

So he went to the city, met the commission man and registered his complaint. "Well," the commission man said, "I can't get more than the people are willing to pay."

"You charge too much commission, too much for selling," said the farmer.

"Now look here," said the commission man, "look at my expenses. Take into consideration the rent and the taxes, licences and other items too numerous to mention. We have to occupy a very valuable space in this city where there are the best facilities for distributing your products and there are heavy charges against me in this business."

"What charges?" inquired the farmer.

"Well, this location, the plot of ground occupied by this market is very valuable and the owner charges a high rent for the use of it; then there are the taxes on the building, the bond we have to put up as a guarantee of fair dealing, a license for the privilege of doing business, hired help and other expenses."

"And does that have to come out of my pocket?" asked the farmer. "Do I have to pay land rent here in this city?"

"Yes, of course it has to come out of the selling price. It can't come from any other source. You farmers can produce but you cannot distribute; that is our business. You are as much dependent on us for distribution of your product as you are dependent on the weather for growing crops. The site we occupy here is valued at several million dollars and the farmers have to pay the owner for its use. Understand that this site is an indispensable ad-

junct to every farm in the state."

"Does that mean that I am paying rent to a landlord here and that I am sharing my income with him?" queried the farmer.

"Certainly."

The farmer collected what was due him and went up on Broadway to do some shopping. The prices were higher than anticipated, but the merchant was a pleasant man and he gave him some excellent reasons for high prices. "You see," said he, "this is a very expensive locality. It is a good locality for business but the rents are high. Now take this site, for instance, it is valued at several hundred thousand dollars, and the owner expects an ample return on his investment. Then there are the taxes on the building, the taxes on our merchandise, taxes accumulated on the merchandise from the beginning where it started, and then city licenses for doing business here."

"All this in the price of the goods, I suppose, and I am the goat."

"Well, yes, of course it has to come out of what we sell."

The farmer made his purchases and returned to his home. On the way

he pondered and wondered, and his thoughts ran in circles about distribution, taxes, land rent, high prices and payment for this, that and the other. It was not yet quite clear, except one thing, that he had no control over what he should receive for his crop, nor anything to say about the prices on the goods he had to buy.

When he arrived home, his wife asked him: "What did you find out?"

"I found out that I am a share-cropper."

"How is that?"

"I am paying a big bill for land rent and taxes in the big city."

"Maybe that is what Jim Cole our neighbor has been harping on. You better go and talk it over with him."

He went over and talked it over with his neighbor. After a long interval he came back, and as his wife met him she asked:

"What conclusion did you come to?"

"The conclusion we came to is that we are a nation of thieves. Not intentionally, perhaps, but it amounts to the same thing."