Farm strike

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Iowa in September 1932, Farm Holiday member asked the governors to declare an embargo on the movement of farm produce across state lines. The governor of Minnesota offered to declare an embargo and enforce it with the state militia if the governors of neighboring states would join with him. They declined, and no action was taken.

Strike activities ceased for a month in September and then were renewed on a sporadic basis, extending into 1933. In many areas, the protesters began using force to stop foreclosure sales of farms. This resulted in some state legislation to ease the debt situation.

Another national farm strike was scheduled for May 13, 1933, but was called off, partly because the Agricultural Adjustment Act was signed on May 12, 1933. However, a milk strike was carried out in Wisconsin that May. When a newly-formed committee failed to get higher milk prices, Wisonsin dairy farmers again went on strike in October 1933. Milo Reno had called a "last resport" farm strike to begin on October 21, 1933, but it did not materialize. Another strike threat in November also was averted.

The Wisconsin milk strike of October 1933 resulted in considerable violence before it died out in mid-November. It was the last major move under the "Holiday" banner. Action by the governor of North Dakota to embargo wheat shipments was related to the holiday movement, but was not really part of it.

The farm strikes themselves did not raise the overall level of commodity prices. However, even their critics concede that they dramatized for the nation the serious plight of agriculture and brought about more immediate and vigorous action on the part of state and federal governments to ease the crisis.

Withholding Actions in the 1960's

For many years, the programs offered by the federal government and reasonably good market prices, plus steady increase in productivity, created a decent climate for farmers. However, by the late 1950's many farmers were caught in a price-cost squeeze. Oren Lee Staley, president of the National Farmers Organization, which had been concentrating on collective bargaining since the late 1950's, wrote in 1960: "When a sufficient number of farmers make up their minds to price their production and hold for that price they will get a price as long as it is fair and reasonable." In a membership appeal, the NFO said: "Holding actions are farmers determining a price for their products and holding for that price. Thus, they use the same principle that everyone in America has already found necessary to be successful in their business operations. Holding actions are only used to implement our collective bargaining program."

Holding actions by the NFO have been of two types. Test holding actions of short duration involving a limited number of commodities sought to determine farmer support and market reactions. All-out holding actions had the goal of reaching agreements with processors to "stabilize prices and marketing conditions in the future."

The NFO's first all-out holding action began on August 28, 1962, and ended on October 2, 1962. This action called for withholding hogs, cattle, sheep, corn, and soybeans. The second all-out action began on August 20, 1964, and ended on October 1, 1964. This action called for withholding livestock from market.

In March 1967, NFO members in 25 states sought to increase milk prices for farmers by 2 cents a quart through milk withholding and dumping. Going to court against the wishes of Agriculture Secretary Orville L. Freeman, the Department of Justice obtained a temporary order in Des Moines, Iowa, barring the NFO from any use of threats or force to gain outside support for its milk strike. The milk dumping ended early in April.

Early in 1968, the NFO asked its members to stop selling grain until prices rose. A month later the action was extended to meat animals. Local farm groups killed and buried substantial numbers of hogs in March and April. Some of the animals were donated to charity. These particular withholding actions appears to have ended in April or May. The NFP actions were largely ineffective in raising prices.

Farm Withholding in the 1970's

During the 1970's, a number of local farm groups withheld or destroyed farm commodities. Large quantities of potatoes were destroyed in Virginia and Washington in the Spring of 1970. In the fall of the same year, many poultry producers in Alabama suspended operations for a short time. Dairy and beef producers in some areas undertook dramatic programs in the Fall of 1974. Most controversial was the slaughter and burial of calves in Minnesota and elsewhere. In some instances, the meat was donated to disaster victims. In many cities, NFO dairy farmers sold cheddar cheese from the backs of trucks at half the usual prices, claiming that they could not sell it in the usual distribution systems for even that much. A few weeks earlier, the president of the Georgia Farm Bureau Federation urged farmers to keep corn and soybeans off the market until prices advanced.

Protests continued into 1975, with the sporadic donation or destruction of calves, beef cattle, chickens, potatoes, and other commodities. For example, calves were slaughtered in a Texas community and the carcasses were given to needy persons. In other areas, ground beef was sold in cities by farmers off the backs of trucks at bargain prices, just as cheese had been a year earlier. Potatoes were burned or donated to the poor.

In the Fall of 1977, a new farm organization, American Agriculture, called for a national strike by farmers for better prices, and began setting up offices in farm areas. The parades of farmers with their tractors in rural areas, like the one in Plains, Georgia, on No[illegible]ber 25, were partly to urge support for a nationwi[illegible] [illegible]arm strike on December 14.

Actions in recent years have had the same effect as the widespread actions of the 1930's. They have dramatized the cost-price squeeze faced by farmers as prices of farm products have declines and the prices of goods - such as gasoline, machinery, and fertilizer - purchased by farmers have continued to rise. More people are being made aware that the farmer is receiving a smaller and smaller proportion of every dollar spent for food, - but, the final effects of this year's actions are still to be measured.

Packer violating P & S Act

MAINLAND – T. M. Lanids, Inc., Mainland, a meat packing firm which purchases livestock for slaughter pruposes in southeastern Pennsylvania, northern Maryland, and the Shenandoah Valley area of Virginia, has been ordered to cease and desist from violating bonding requirements of a federal fair trade practices law for the livestock, poultry, and meat industries. The firm has now fued a bond, as required under the Packers and Stockyards (P & S) Act.

The cease and desist order, like a permanent injunction, was issued to insure future compliance with the Act.

T. M. Landis, Inc., consented to the order and waived oral hearing. The firm neither admitted nor denied the charges in an administrative complaint filed under the P & S Act.