

the European Coal and Steel Community that the expanding industrial center of Lille in the north voted "Yes" while Decazeville, a once prosperous south central mining area that increased competition has rendered submarginal, voted "No." Since the Gaullist UNR is most strongly implanted north of the Loire, the classic river line should logically be the electoral frontier between the Gaullists and the anti-Gaullist coalition, but the fact is that two of the opposition parties, the MRP and the Independents, are strongest where the UNR is quite strong, and often appeal to much the same type of voter. Hence it is that during the present electoral campaign three opposition leaders, the Independents Bertrand Motte and Paul Reynaud and the Socialist Guy Mollet, have faced tough struggles for re-election in northern precincts that last month gave de Gaulle majorities above the national average. Hence also that in eastern France, where the voters are both ardently Gaullist and traditionally aligned with the opposition MRP, there is a tacit agreement between the UNR and the MRP symbolized by the UNR's nomination of an obscure local candidate to conduct a strictly token campaign against former Premier Pierre Pflimlin, the mayor of Strasbourg, who was officially neutral on the referendum issue. Hence also in Metz, the capital of nearby Lorraine, the Independent Mayor-Deputy Raymond Mondon, who broke party discipline by refusing to vote censure of the Pompidou government last month, is running for re-election with official Gaullist endorsement.

The two-round voting system on the basis of single-member constituencies that the Fifth Republic has borrowed from the Third, thereby rejecting proportional representation, stresses local over national issues and favors these seemingly illogical deals between adversaries that in reality make for the play of ancient local interests rather than for the sweep of ideologies. The result of the nation-wide vote cannot be exactly reflected in the fragments of the local constituencies.

On November 7, de Gaulle called on the nation to throw off the dead weight of the "parties of the past"

that joined against him in their "professional passion" and were repudiated by the referendum vote. "I hope that you will see to it that this second consultation [the coming elections] does not contradict the first," and he asked for deputies who, regardless of party, "will serve within a system wholly devoted to the national interest." He named no parties, not even his own, but André Malraux's new Association for the Fifth Republic has already endorsed forty-two non-Gaullist candidates.

#### **When the New Assembly Meets**

The impact of all these complex factors will be felt when the new Assembly convenes. The UNR, which held 173 seats out of 480 at the end of the last legislature, can hardly fail to drop down, perhaps to a hundred or even less, while most of the opposition parties, particularly the Radicals and the Communists, seem almost sure to gain ground. Thus the Gaullists have little chance of obtaining a parliamentary majority for any coalition government headed by themselves. But taking into account the pressures on many MRP and Independent deputies from their pro-

Gaullist constituents, the survival of the present Democratic Front as an anti-Gaullist bloc in the Assembly is not very likely either—unless de Gaulle himself deliberately keeps it alive.

When the Assembly convenes next month, de Gaulle will have the choice of two strategies. He can name as premier some non-Gaullist who is not a systematic anti-Gaullist—for example Pflimlin or former Premier Edgar Faure—and co-operate with the parliamentary majority, at least for the first year of the new legislature, during which the constitution forbids him to dissolve the Assembly again. Or he can choose to disregard the unmistakable warning given him by the substantial number of normally Gaullist voters who boycotted the referendum, and can resume his war with the parties, utilizing the many constitutional weapons available to him, including the important new one of being able to resign and run for re-election. Such an aggressive strategy might succeed but, unless forced on de Gaulle by his adversaries, it would more probably prove disastrous both for him and for France.

## **Farmers on Strike**

**JULIUS DUSCHA**

**T**HE LABOR DEPARTMENT recently paid a great compliment to a new and still almost amateurish organization when it blamed a farmers' strike for a sharp increase in meat prices. The strike was led by the militant National Farmers Organization, which has swept across the Midwest like a prairie fire. The NFO has stunned officials of the well-established farm lobbies and surprised rural politicians, who say little about the NFO because they are so uncertain about the depth of its influence.

Until the Labor Department conceded in its September consumer price index report that the NFO-led farmers' strike had caused a temporary increase in meat prices, both the government and the big Midwestern meat packers had discounted the effectiveness of the NFO's month-long effort to hold cattle, hogs, and

sheep off the market in a demand for higher prices. The three major farm organizations—the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Farmers Union, and the National Grange—had also belittled the upstart NFO. But visitors to the corn belt at the height of the NFO's "all-out holding action" in September quickly sensed that the movement was constantly gaining strength and was threatening to upset the long-established balances of economic and political power in rural and small-town America.

Now that the effectiveness of the NFO has in effect been recognized by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the protest movement is expected to generate even more support. It displayed impressive muscle in Des Moines, Iowa, on a hot afternoon last August when twenty thou-

sand discontented farmers jammed the municipal auditorium to roar their approval of NFO President Oren Lee Staley's plans for the holding action that began on August 31. From then until October 2, tens of thousands of farmers throughout the Midwest, many of whom did not even belong to the NFO, withheld cattle, hogs, and sheep that they would normally have marketed. This caused a temporary shortage of meat and a rise in meat prices followed. The NFO called a recess in the strike on October 2, to "give those who need to do so an opportunity to sell some of their livestock." This was a face-saving way of saying that the farmers had held out as long as they could. So the animals went to market and meat prices declined.

Although the holding action has not yet been resumed, no one in the Midwest believes that the last has been heard of the NFO. In fact, not in thirty years has the interest in nongovernmental action to raise farm prices matched the stir created by the NFO in just three months.

### An Expensive Floor

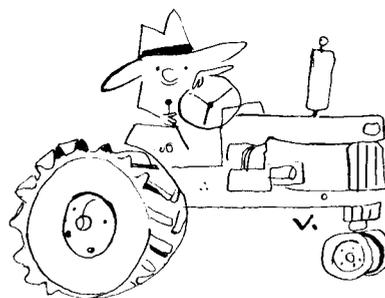
Curiously, the militant NFO movement received considerable impetus in midsummer when the Committee for Economic Development issued a scholarly report suggesting that one out of three farmers ought to leave the land for the city during the next five years. The proposed rural migration rate was about the same as it has been in the last decade, but the NFO turned the CED report into a rallying point for its own program.

The CED, a group of progressive businessmen, noted that overproduction was the crux of the farm problem and that it made more sense to move farmers to cities than it did to subsidize uneconomic production on the farms. The NFO, however, read the report as an attack on farmers and immediately got farmers to pile up Sears, Roebuck mail-order catalogues in front of Sears stores in the Midwest to protest the presence of a Sears director on the CED. The Sears management quickly pointed out that the director was acting on his own and did not represent the company on the CED.

Since the first Agricultural Adjust-

ment Administration farm laws of the early New Deal days, most farmers and farm-organization leaders have stressed government action to put a floor under farm prices and to keep the income of farmers on a parity with the income of other Americans. In recent years, the Farm Bureau, which is the nation's most powerful and most conservative farm lobby, has become disenchanted with the controls that are an inevitable part of government price supports and has called for the gradual withdrawal of the Federal government from the agricultural economy.

Small- and medium-size farmers, who make up the bulk of the NFO membership, have also become disillusioned with Federal farm programs. These farmers have seen the size of farms steadily increase and the big farmers prosper while the



rest continue to struggle along. The vast technological changes in agriculture—expensive equipment, fertilizers, insecticides, vitamins, and so forth—are more to blame for the plight of many farmers than are the farm programs. They have meant that a farmer has had to increase the size of his operation to make a profit. Nevertheless, many small and medium-size farmers blame the government for the trend toward bigness.

The NFO is the first regional or nation-wide organization since Milo Reno's Farmers' Holiday Association of the depression era to advocate the withholding of commodities to force up prices. The Farmers' Holiday movement was strongest in 1933 just before Franklin D. Roosevelt got Congress to enact the first farm price-support legislation. Farmers' Holiday demonstrations in the Midwest led to violence, including dumping milk and overturning cattle trucks. The NFO movement has led to sporadic violence to intimi-

date the reluctant but not at all on the Farmers' Holiday scale. The 1933 protests ended largely because farmers were willing to try government programs, for which they had been agitating throughout most of the 1920's. But the NFO is not looking to the government for help. Under the NFO program, once an optimum price level has been forced by the withholding of commodities, the organization hopes to negotiate annual contracts with packers and other processors, guaranteeing satisfactory prices to farmers for their meat, milk, grain, and other commodities.

The NFO claims that it can effectively control marketing if only thirty per cent of the farmers in an area agree to strike until the price is right, though economists judge this to be an optimistic estimate. In the first two weeks of the big NFO protest this fall, cattle and hog sales in parts of the Midwest were cut to one-fourth of normal. Lesser efforts in the previous three years resulted in the negotiation of a few minor contracts with small processors, but no contracts with large companies have even reached the talking stage. The NFO leaders readily concede that higher prices for farm commodities would mean higher food prices, but they argue that the cost to consumers would be far less than what consumers are now paying in taxes for subsidies to keep farm prices high. The Budget Bureau's latest estimate shows that farm subsidy programs (livestock products are not subsidized) cost the government \$3 billion a year. Since not all of this sum actually reaches the farmers, NFO leaders argue that if subsidies were abolished farmers could get substantial price increases and still save the taxpayers money.

WHATEVER its cost to consumers, the NFO program has come along at a time when many farmers have become frustrated and disillusioned with existing government farm programs. During two extensive trips through the Midwest and the West this fall, I found that the farm belt was indeed in ferment. Small farms have been uneconomic for years, and now even many medium-size Midwest farms of from two hundred to four hundred acres are becoming obsolete. Every week farms are being

sold, generally to neighboring farmers who want to add the land to their present acreages so that they can make their costly machinery pay. Abandoned farmhouses and buildings are a common sight in the Midwest, and many once prosperous small towns are drying up as the soil did in the Dust Bowl days of the 1930's.

### **A Weekend Farmer**

Although the NFO has among its members a fair number of large farmers, its strength lies with the small and medium-size operators in areas where the soil and the topography are not the best. In these places live the farmers who for lack of training or resources cannot keep up with the rapidly changing technology of agriculture. They are hard-working for the most part and do not want to leave the familiar land for the assembly-line cities. They are also the farmers who get the least help from the price-support and other government farm programs. A man with a net cash income from \$2,500 to \$5,000 a year does not have a large enough farming operation to benefit greatly from government price supports.

President Staley of the NFO, a big, beefy Missouri farmer, seems to be typical of his organization's members. He farms four hundred rolling acres near Rea, in northwestern Missouri, where he raises hogs, pure-bred beef cattle, and corn for feed. Staley is thirty-nine years old. He bought his land after the Second World War at a fairly high price and is struggling with his steep fixed costs. While Staley runs the NFO from a cluttered desk in the back room of an old store on the quiet main street of the little town of Corning in southwestern Iowa, his wife operates his farm during the week with the help of a hired hand. Staley usually gets home to help only on weekends.

Seated at a desk piled high with letters, yellowing newspaper clippings, cardboard boxes filled with correspondence, and empty medicine bottles, Staley tilted back his chair, propped up a foot, clasped his hands behind his head, and quietly told me how the idea for a farmers' holding action, or strike, had come to him.

"I was sitting on my tractor, plow-

ing corn and thinking," Staley said earnestly, "when I suddenly realized that the farmer is about the only person left who still takes his produce or goods to market and just asks, 'What'll you give me for them?' Everyone else has some control over their market. Businessmen can quickly change their production plans, but farmers can't. Workers have their unions, but not many farmers have much of a bargaining position."

It was then, Staley said, he decided that farmers could only save themselves by taking direct action to get better prices in the market place for their commodities. Staley pointed out that the NFO program differs from previous agrarian protest movements because it goes further and proposes to solve farm-price problems through collective-bargaining contracts with processors. Two-thirds of the NFO members in an area that would be affected by a contract would have to approve the agreement before it could go into effect. Staley's vision, which has also been seen by other farm leaders down through the last sixty years, came to him in 1957. He has been the organization's president since it was founded in 1955 following a meeting of thirty-five farmers at Carroll, Iowa, called by a farmer and a feed salesman to protest low hog prices. "But," as Staley said to me, "you can protest for only so long." So two years after the first NFO county units were set up, Staley began steering the organization toward countryside collective bargaining.

### **Shirtsleeve Strategists**

The NFO claimed that by its first winter, in 1955-1956, it had 180,000 members in thirteen Midwestern states. The organization no longer issues membership figures, preferring, Staley said, to keep "the opposition" guessing as to its size and the location of its strength, which everyone knows is concentrated in Missouri and Iowa. At twenty-five dollars a year, the NFO membership fee is fairly high. Most observers of its activities in the Midwest discounted the initial 180,000 membership claim and would be surprised if even now there were more than 75,000 to 100,000 members.

Whatever its membership, the NFO has the kind of strength, unity, and

appeal that is often lacking today in the Farm Bureau, with its more than one million members, as well as in the Farmers Union and the Grange. These Big Three farm organizations go to great lengths to demonstrate how their policies are supposedly germinated down on the farm, but their leadership is so entrenched and so set in its ways that grass-roots revolts within the organization are easy to put down. The contrast between the bucolic NFO headquarters on a Midwestern Main Street right out of Sinclair Lewis and the sophisticated Washington operations of the long-established farm organizations is startling. Oren Staley and the other NFO officers don't even wear coats and ties to their makeshift offices, favoring instead open shirts and lightweight cloth jackets with zippers. Their offices are as crowded as they are cluttered. There are no rugs on the floors and no secretaries blocking the doors. Press releases, newspapers, and other publications are issued, but seldom on time. Salaries and expense accounts are modest. During the September holding action, cots were moved into the offices and either Staley or one of his aides was on duty twenty-four hours a day.

Staley is a Baptist Sunday-school teacher. He says that he has never taken a drink and smokes only when the pressures of his job become too much for him. He is as open and straightforward as the members of the NFO whom I met one night in a smoky, dilapidated Veterans of Foreign Wars meeting hall in the southcentral Iowa town of Osceola. Dressed in worn overalls, old jackets, and hats, fifty or more NFO members crowded into the hall to have a cup of coffee and to hear an NFO organizer explain to them the decision to call a recess in the holding action. Many of these farmers had been hurting and were obviously relieved to hear that they could now raise some badly needed cash by selling their hogs and cattle that were getting too fat and were overdue for market. But no one seemed to consider the lifting of the strike to be an admission of defeat. One after another they told me how the number of hogs sold in their county during the first two weeks of the strike had amounted to only a fourth

to a third of normal sales for that time of year.

They were mostly men in their fifties and forties who had bought land late in the 1940's or early in the 1950's and were now caught in an ever-tightening cost-price squeeze on their mortgage payments. Donald Burgus, for example, farms 280 acres for which he told me he paid ninety dollars an acre. By planting fifty acres of corn and a few acres of soybeans and feeding twenty head of cattle, he managed to net only \$2,500 last year, even with the help of the government's generous feed-grain program under which he was paid for cutting back corn acreage.

Then there are farmers like Lowell Chipp, who have decided that the only way they can continue to live in the country is to try to combine farming with a factory job. Five days a week Chipp and four other farmers from his neighborhood pool a car and drive fifty miles to Des Moines to work on an assembly line in a Ford plant there. With his wife's help, Chipp still manages to tend to his hogs and cows early in the mornings, late into the nights, and on weekends.

All of the NFO members who had come to town for their regular Tuesday-night meeting had troubles that they wanted to pour out once they were satisfied that the visitor from the East was merely curious and not a spy from "the opposition," by which the NFO means other farm organizations as well as the big meat packers. The farmers were embarrassingly frank in discussing their low incomes and hard work at the only life they know.

**T**O A GREAT MANY economists and politicians the NFO program of direct action may seem to be impractical and even naïve. Market control, economists argue, can be successful only when the number of producers is restricted, where government enforces control, or when there is enough money to bankroll the withholders or enough force to keep the independents in line. But to the NFO members it offers what they think may be their only hope for survival in agriculture, where bigness is becoming as common as it has been in other sections of the economy for generations.

# Our Integrated Army

ROBERT E. SCHWEITZ

**A** FLURRY of hastily worded denials and clarifications was put out by the Army after questions had been raised about the racial composition of the Federal troops sent to maintain order in Mississippi. These pronouncements did less than justice to the Army's record in such matters. The fact is, all the armed services of the United States are more thoroughly and fairly integrated than any other social grouping of similar size and complexity in American life.

This is not to say that there is no segregation in the armed forces. There is, but it is important to note that none of it exists with official sanction. Indeed, the Army is so sensitive about the racial issue that it won't even admit that it knows how many Negro officers it has. It knows, but it won't tell. The standard reply is that the records are not kept on a racial basis.

Although official policy is firmly against segregation, sometimes civilians bring their prejudices in with them at the recruiting station. There is no inoculation against it.

Negro men in uniform still have trouble finding suitable housing for their families, and in many areas the schools to which they send their youngsters are segregated—although the school systems get plenty of Federal aid. That's the reason the Justice Department moved in on Prince George County, Virginia, where Fort Lee is located. If the county doesn't integrate the schools that serve Fort Lee youngsters, it stands to lose Federal payments.

At the Pentagon's request this summer, the President appointed an Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces. It is meeting in the Pentagon, and one of its jobs is to advise the President on what can be done to assure equal opportunity and treatment for all members of the armed forces. Since obeying orders is still a pretty good way to get along in the services, the application of the committee's recommendations within the active forces should not prove to be a major problem.

There is still segregation in the National Guard and the reserve force, and this will not be easy to eliminate. The reason for the difficulty is that both have some elements of local control. The Army Reserve, for example, was ordered to integrate last spring. An appeal procedure was set up so that Negroes who were refused admission to local units could get a chance to expose the discriminatory practices. But the appeals procedure didn't work because tests for fitness of the Negro applicants, both mental and physical, were given by the local unit officers. The Pentagon now has a new program for bringing its own standards of fitness into effect at the local level, but the program can still be circumvented.

Pentagon officials hope that the Presidential committee's recommendations will clear up the Army Reserve and National Guard situation. The main assignment of the committee will be much more difficult. It is to advise the President on how to keep civilians from discriminating against colored soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

## Tightening the Purse Strings

The Negro in uniform has the same problem as his civilian counterpart in housing, schooling, swimming pools, busses, and parks. In the first two areas, education and housing, the intervention of the Federal government infuriates bigots from Maine to Florida. It brings cries of anguish from real-estate men too, who say they resent having the burden of social progress placed most heavily on their shoulders.

In education some fairly vigorous steps have been taken, as at Fort Lee. Since the 1954 Supreme Court decision, it is an understatement to say that not all Southern school districts have rushed to integrate. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare finally decided to apply financial pressure. Former Secretary Abraham Ribicoff announced that communities whose school systems serve children who live on Federal