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GALENA FARMERS DISCUSS LABOR SITUATION

On Saturday, February 21st, at 1.30 p. m., about sixty farmers from the vicinity of Galena met in the Grange Hall to hear County Agent Derrick discuss month and day labor, and to further discuss the subject themselves.

This meeting was called through Galena Grange. A committee was appointed by the Grange to consider the labor question. The committee met and decided they should call a public meeting of all farmers in that vicinity and have the County Agent present to address the meeting. The decision of the committee was carried out in the meeting held last Saturday.

Professor Ransom was called on by Mr. Walters, Chairman of the Committee, to act as chairman of the meeting. Professor Ransom opened the meeting and introduced County Agent Derrick. The County Agent began his talk by stating that the labor situation in the United States today is perhaps the most important question to be solved, and as the great minds of the country had not as yet solved this question, he did not expect to solve it but could only point out the conditions in the county as seen by him. Those conditions, as outlined by the County Agent, were, that in Kent county there are enough laborers to take care of all farm work needed, and that it should not be necessary to go out of the county for farm help. It is the opinion of a large number of farmers in the county, and almost apparent to all, that the farm labor in Kent county have their own organization and set their own wage. The unorganized farmers of the county must, therefore, deal with organized farm help. Furthermore, the farmers in the county, in order to secure help, must bid in competition and against all other farmers of the county. This means that unorganized farmers are dealing with organized labor, and, furthermore, are outbidding one another for farm help. The County Agent stated that either the farmers or laborers will control the situation, and that the farmers could do so if they would. Mr. Derrick suggested that the farmers decide upon a fair wage for farm help of average ability, and for the different classes of farm work to be done. The County Agent also brought up the question of the cost of boarding and rooming farm help per day, and suggested that the farmers at this meeting take up the question and decide upon the average cost per day of boarding and rooming farm help. County Agent Derrick congratulated those present for being the first farmers in the county, as far as he knew, to hold a public meeting to consider the question of farm labor.

Professor Ransom then made a short address urging the farmers to organize to meet the labor situation, and proceeded to secure the average cost of boarding and rooming help on the farm per day. After a short discussion every farmer in the hall was asked his estimate on boarding and rooming each farm laborer per day. These amounts were totaled and divided by the number who gave an estimate, and the average cost of boarding one farm laborer per day, estimated by the farmers present, was $1.25. Estimates on keeping a farm hand's horse were placed at from $5.00 to $15.00 per month, the latter being more nearly correct.

The discussion then shifted to a fair wage for farm help. Practically every one of the sixty farmers expressed his ideas regarding this fair wage. After a discussion of over an hour the following wages were decided to be fair wages for farm help of average ability, from the present until wheat harvest:

1. Month help, $35.00 and board and room.
2. General day help, $1.50 per day and board.
3. Corn shelling, $2.00 per day and board.
4. Corn thinning is not to be considered special work and will come under the class of general farm work, which is $1.50 per day and board.

It was decided by the farmers at this meeting to hold a meeting prior to wheat harvest to discuss a fair wage for harvest work.

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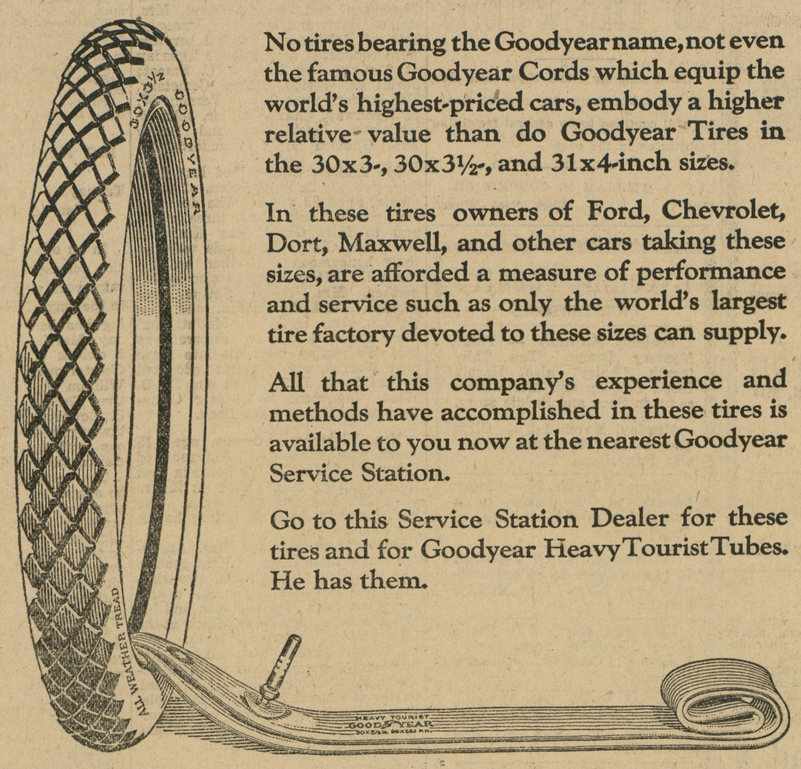

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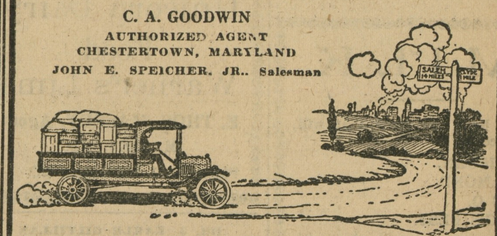

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