

Bills and Things—Day After Day

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Reports on the current worsening employment conditions in the country, and the concomitant need to send out another appeal for funds, even though it is summer. Gives an account of the communal work on the farm, and the problems of bills and the need for help during the canning season. (DDLW #908).

It is a rainy June day and cool enough for a wool dress. After a heat wave which lasted a week, it is now too cool and it was a bad morning for the line. A seminarian friend was down the other day taking pictures of it, and the line of men extended down to the corner and around to Mulberry street, longer than ever, for now times are harder than ever. It is estimated that 13,000,000 people are unemployed and about two million part time employed. One week a friend from Wall Street writes that times have never been so uncertain and gloomy for the past forty-five years, and the next week there is a flurry and rise in stocks due to the U. S. Steel lowering their prices and announcing that they are also lowering their wages. The great mass of comfortable people do not seem to realize that we are at the end of an era and that times will get increasingly worse until there is a widespread effort to build up a new social order based on cooperative principles, mutual aid and decentralization of industry and agriculture. Yet the move toward centralization goes on.

More Help Needed

We are going to have to send out another appeal. More and more calls are made on us so that we are crowded to the doors and the farm is overstocked with guests. We have never sent out an appeal in the summer before, but it is necessary with the thousands of mouths to feed. We cannot turn men away who come to us confidently for bread.

Reading the life of Rose Hawthorne, “Sorrow Built a Bridge” by Katherine Burton, I was given courage to mail out another appeal, though we sent one out in the early spring. When she was hard-pressed, she kept appealing and appealing until help came. And we’ve got to do it for our poor men. We never did it before in summer because people were on their vacations and we weren’t sure of reaching them, but we will trust to the Lord to touch their hearts and to reach them wherever they are so that they will share with God’s littlest what He has given them.

The Farm

This morning the thought of the farm came to me during Mass. I am going to be in Pittsburgh these first two weeks of July and then in Nova Scotia through August so I cannot be on the farm as much as I’d like this summer. But I

had one good week there this month and aside from occasional terrible thunder showers the weather was great.

It was during my thanksgiving that thought of the farm keep persisting. The need for families there and yet the impossibility of a thousand families. Someday perhaps there will be a building fund. Voluntary poverty, manual labor, communal living are part of the life right now. There is much growth in this two years. This year we have cooperated with Mr. Wallace, who is over seventy, helping him build his fences. I say we, but it was Harold Craddock who did all the hard work. Then we work our neighbor's, the Smiths, to a much greater extent. Mr. Smith, John, Harold, Charlie, and others, plough, cultivate and hay together. Boyle and he are raising chicks together, we using their chicken house and incubator. Helen Smith helps at the house, and we are helping her buy her uniforms for the nurses training school where she is going in the fall. They come to our meetings. We must visit and invite neighboring farmers. And I thought,—the families will come about,—they will move around the farm, they will be part of the community. There is every reason to be encouraged after this short space of two years. Peter Maurin is down on the farm now and will be there for the next two months, working and talking and thinking. So I feel free to travel and write for the summer and look forward to some time there during the delightful months of September and October.

Problems

The greatest problem on the farm right now is the grocery bill, hanging over from the early spring, and a car to transport vegetables from country to city. Our truck was wrecked and we have been getting along borrowing Mr. Smith's. But it is hard to walk the two and a half miles to church in the morning and many want to get to daily Mass. And there are many errands to do.

We need more equipment for canning—stoves, jars, cold pack canners, and the women to come down and put in a few weeks' work, picking and canning the surplus. Yet the only housing we can offer them is the barn where the children are going to stay.

However, God will send us what we need both in the way of humans and machinery and equipment. We just have to pray a little harder. Pray with us.