

INFLUENCE OF MILO RENO ON THE IOWA FARM HOLIDAY ASSOCIATION
AS COVERED BY THREE IOWA DAILIES

by

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INTRODUCTION

Milo Reno's emergence as the spokesman for Iowa's militant farmers during the depression was not unexpected from a man who began his career as a speaker for the Grange at the age of 10. At 22, he campaigned for the Union Labor party and at 27, he attended the Populist Party's national convention in Omaha as a supporter of General James B. Weaver for the presidential nomination in 1892.¹

Reno was born January 5, 1866, on a farm near Batavia and Agency in Wapello county, Iowa. He was one of 13 children. Reno grew up in an atmosphere of Midwestern agrarian radicalism. His father was a Granger and his mother a supporter of the Greenbackers.² Although he would later campaign for the Populist, Union Labor, Farmer-Labor and Democratic parties, Reno was nominally a Republican.³

Many other aspects of Reno's life were contradictory. As a youth, he attended Penn College in Oskaloosa, Iowa, to study for the ministry, but failed to be ordained until he was 40 years old.⁴ Before his ordination, he traveled to the West in search of excitement. One author writes that he was a "...rakehell in his youth..." and his hands were gnarled from fist fights.⁵

¹Kramer, Dale, The Wild Jackasses (New York, 1956). p. 7

²White, Roland A., Milo Reno (Iowa City, Iowa, 1941). p. 19

³Saloutos, Theodore and John D. Hicks, Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West (Madison, Wisconsin, 1951). p. 436

⁴White, op. cit., pp. 13-19

⁵Kramer, op. cit., p. 192

He was married and a farmer but neglected his own farm to the extent that his brothers took it over. He hired himself out as a farm worker to his brothers and others. Dale Kramer observes that in 1918 he was "...little more than an aging farm hand..." when he became interested in the Farmers Union effort to establish itself in Iowa.⁶

As the post World War I farm depression deepened, he began to build a real following among the growing membership of the organization. His speeches to farm gatherings harkened to the days of the Greenbackers, Grangers and Populists as he would pound a well-filled brief case and shout that it contained damning evidence that the farmers' problems were caused by Wall Street. "...The masters of Wall Street had set out with diabolical cunning," Kramer paraphrased, "...to deflate the American farmer...."⁷

In 1921, Reno defeated T. A. Hougas to become president of the Iowa Farmers Union in a bitter contest. Hougas then defected to the Iowa Farm Bureau, taking 5,000 of the Union's 20,000 members with him. But, Reno kept the majority of the members during his presidency from 1921 to 1930.⁸

Throughout this period, Reno demanded government-induced inflation to cure the farmers' economic ills.⁹ In May of 1927, Reno helped organize the Corn Belt Committee, which represented 24 Midwest farm organizations

⁶Ibid., p. 196

⁷Ibid., p. 192

⁸White, op. cit., p. 40

⁹Kramer, op. cit., p. 199

but primarily bespoke the policy of the Farmers Union.¹⁰ One of those who worked with Reno on the Committee was young Henry A. Wallace.¹¹

Chief object of Reno's invective was the Republican party. In 1928, Reno, who said he was a Republican, campaigned against Herbert Hoover and for Al Smith, the Democratic nominee. Along with Reno, another Republican, Henry A. Wallace, was also campaigning for Smith. Lord describes Reno as "...that shouting rabble-rouser of the Midland...."¹²

Although Reno, as early as 1920, made allusions to the term "cost of production plus a fair profit" as the goal of his farm agitation,¹³ it was not until the formation of the Corn Belt Committee in 1927 that he began to cry for national legislation to insure the farmer "cost of production" for his products.¹⁴ Any other effort on the part of the federal government to solve the farmers' problems was worthless, in Reno's opinion.

The method of arriving at the figures for "cost of production" may be shown for a 160-acre farm:

Five per cent on the farmer's real estate investment, seven per cent on the farmer's personal property, and \$100 per month for the farmer's own labor and management. Using these figures as a base, the

¹⁰Saloutos and Hicks, op. cit., p. 386

¹¹Kramer, op. cit., p. 204

¹²Lord, Russell, The Wallaces of Iowa (Boston, 1947). p. 182

¹³White, op. cit., p. 35

¹⁴Saloutos and Hicks, op. cit., p. 389

average farmer operating a 160-acre farm, in order to obtain these returns, had to receive 92 cents per bushel on corn, 49 cents per bushel on oats, \$11.25 per hundred on hogs, 35 cents for eggs and 62 cents a pound for butterfat.

(These figures would apply to 1932 at the time the farm strike was to begin.)

The prices farmers were actually receiving at that time were: eggs, 22 cents; oats, 11 cents; butterfat, 18 cents; hogs, \$3-4 per hundred.¹⁵

However, at the time Reno started his campaign for "cost of production," the farmer was still better off than he would be after the crash of 1929. The effects of this national disaster, together with some strictly local grievances in Iowa, were to give Reno an opportunity to dramatize the farmers' desperations.

The situation has come to be known as the "Cow War."

The "Cow War" was a struggle by a group of farmers in southeastern Iowa to prevent the compulsory testing of their cattle for tuberculosis by state veterinarians.

The Iowa State Legislature had made provisions for tuberculosis testing as early as 1919. There was little difficulty in enforcing the law until prices of farm goods dropped to levels at which many farmers felt they were receiving unfair prices for condemned cattle.

¹⁵Murphy, D. R., "The Farmers Go on Strike," New Republic, (August 31, 1932). pp. 66-67

To indicate the plight of the farmer: one farmer out of seven in Iowa had lost his farm in the period 1926-1931.¹⁶ But it was not until the middle of 1930 that he began to feel the full effects of the crash of 1929.

By the spring of 1931, farmers began to grumble seriously that their compensation for condemned cattle was too meager.¹⁷ They felt the evaluation scale had been placed too low as the depression worsened. While the resentment of testing had an economic base, much of the antagonism was directed at change by a particular group of farmers who claimed that keeping a tuberculosis diseased cow in their herd was a basic right. These men referred to the state veterinarians as the "squirt gun boys"¹⁸ because of the hypodermic needles they used in giving the inter-dermal injections for the tests.

The farmers in the Tipton, Iowa, area formed the Farmers' Protective Association as an organization to halt the testing by the "...shavetails from Ames...."¹⁹ White claims that Reno helped form the Farmers' Protective Association,²⁰ but Dileva indicates that the association was

¹⁶Dileva, Frank D., "Frantic Farmers Fight Law," thesis [Drake University Library, Des Moines, Iowa] published in Annals of Iowa (Des Moines, October 1953). p. 85

¹⁷Ibid., p. 88

¹⁸White, op. cit., p. 57

¹⁹Ibid., p. 50

²⁰Ibid., p. 51

already established when Reno entered the picture.²¹

At the time Reno appeared in the "Cow War," he offered himself as a negotiator between Governor Dan Turner and the Farmers' Protective Association. He did so, Dileva writes, without being asked. Governor Turner was concerned over the violent methods employed by the farmers in preventing cattle testing.

If Reno was indeed a "negotiator," he was a strange one. He traveled to southeastern Iowa from his office in Des Moines to talk to the members of the Farmers' Protective Association. In one speech, he stated: "...Any little shyster who has come out of a certain college in the state can go on a farmer's property and conduct a test which is more apt to be wrong than right."²² Reno also referred to the state's agricultural college as a "political machine."²³ Much of his antagonism toward Iowa State College was due to his feeling that the land-grant colleges had too close an association with the American Farm Bureau Federation in establishing the county extension program.²⁴

The method of the Farmers' Protective Association was to call for a mass meeting at a farm where the results of the interdermal tests were to be read. As many as 500 farmers often answered the call and were

²¹Dileva, loc. cit., p. 96

²²Saloutos and Hicks, op. cit., p. 439

²³Ibid., p. 433

²⁴Kramer, op. cit., p. 218

usually effective in keeping the veterinarian off the farm. When 65 special state agents were deputized to prevent violence to the veterinarians, they were also unsuccessful in upholding law and order.²⁵

By September of 1931, efforts to halt testing had become so violent and resistance on the part of farmers so massive, in some instances, that Governor Turner dispatched the state National Guard to Tipton in Cedar County to quell violence and protect the state veterinarians who were testing cattle.²⁶

The National Guardsmen arrived in September of 1931 amidst much heckling to encamp at the Cedar County Fairgrounds. However, there was no joking in the attitude of the governor as he ordered them to restore public order in the area. Two of the leaders of the Farmers' Protective Association were promptly arrested and jailed. Jake Lenker and Paul Moore were convicted of "...conspiracy to incite rebellion..." and sentenced to 3 years in the state penitentiary. Violent resistance to the cattle testing melted immediately. Lenker and Moore were, after many denied appeals, finally sent to the state penitentiary at Ft. Madison, where they were eventually to serve only 40 days of their sentences before being paroled.²⁷

According to Dileva, the "Cow War" also demonstrated one fact to the depressed and angry farmers: that all farmers, not just a comparative

²⁵Ibid., p. 209

²⁶Dileva, loc. cit., p. 103

²⁷Ibid., pp. 107-108

few should be organized.²⁸

The "Cow War" demonstrated the hostility of a particular group of farmers to the "...far-reaching hand of the government, colleges and other centralized agencies especially at a time of falling prices...."²⁹

After the unsuccessful "Cow War," Reno continued to campaign for his "cost of production" farm program. He sniped at the state government for its action in quelling the "Cow War" and he stepped up his campaign against the Hoover administration's Farm Board. The Farm Board was a federal agency established to purchase farm surpluses and to sell them on the foreign market. Its major problem was that the export market had shrunk substantially, due to the United States' restrictive tariff policies. Reno accused the administration of seeking to subvert the farmer by the program and predicted that the Farm Board would be successful only in "peasantizing" the American farmers.³⁰

The deepening depression soon erased the memory that direct action by the farmers had failed to win the "Cow War." In less than a year, Iowa farmers were again to resort to violence in an effort to win their goals. Dileva feels that the Farmers Holiday movement would move on from the lessons learned by the Farmers' Protective Association.³¹

Saloutos and Hicks point out that the "Cow War" furnished a precedent

²⁸Dileva, op. cit., p. 109

²⁹Saloutos and Hicks, op. cit., p. 441

³⁰Ibid., p. 429

³¹Dileva, loc. cit., p. 109

for the farm strike, "...that was to gain more attention and for which the 'Cow War' had served as more or less a proving ground."³²

This writer believes the "Cow War" was "less" a proving ground for the farm strike. In the first place, the "Cow War" took place in southeastern Iowa. The principal areas of farm strike activity were in northwestern and western Iowa, both areas unaffected by the "Cow War" and its violence. A great part of the Farmers' Protective Association activity in southeastern Iowa was based on an "anti-progress attitude" of a particular type of farmer who resented outsiders, the state veterinarians, testing his cattle. These farmers did not understand the interdermal tuberculin tests and, as a result, distrusted the administrators. The actions of the farm strikers seem to have been based wholly on economic grievances. There was no "anti-progress" attitude apparent, only the drive of economic desperation.

True, few of the officers of the Farmers Holiday Association came from western or northwestern Iowa, but the rank and file were found there. This was the area of the Missouri River Basin that had felt the influence of the International Workers of the World ("Wobblies") among migratory farm workers. Also, there was some familiarity with the non-Partisan League of North Dakota and the Farmer-Labor Coalition of Minnesota.³³

These farmers who took up the strike had been pre-conditioned by examples of direct and political action to achieve economic goals. If

³²Saloutos and Hicks, op. cit., p. 439

³³Vorse, Mary Heaton, "Rebellion in the Cornbelt," Harpers, (December 1932). pp. 100-112

the "Cow War" had been the proving ground for the farm strike, then the center of activity would have been in southeastern Iowa and it was not. The "Wobblies" and the Leaguers had set the stage for Reno. He had been rumbling about a strike since 1927 to achieve "cost of production," but the depression had to reach the trough that it did in the summer of 1932 before farmers would become angry enough to heed his cry.

Kramer writes that a newspaper in northwest Iowa (he does not name it or give the date) carried a headline, "Milo Reno in General Denunciation of Everything."³⁴ No such headline was found by this writer, but Reno made such good copy that he does not doubt that such a headline might have appeared.

This study viewed all issues of the Des Moines Register and Sioux City Journal from January 1932 through May 1936. The period covers the formation of the Farm Holiday association and its activities until Milo Reno's death. The Council Bluffs Nonpareil was read for specific periods of time, which this writer felt were significant. The Nonpareil was checked after the other two newspapers had been read. This writer would have preferred to have included August and September of 1932 for the Nonpareil, but those issues were missing from the State Historical Library in Des Moines. Their omission does not detract from the study. Its main purpose is an historical account of the Farmers Holiday association and Milo Reno as it appeared on the pages of these three contemporary newspapers.

³⁴Kramer, op. cit., p. 192

THE FARM STRIKE IN IOWA

The Des Moines Register and the Sioux City Journal both gave prominent position to the farm strike once the movement began to assume some violent aspects. Both newspapers paid little attention to the Farm Holiday movement until it was recognized as the force more or less directing the picketing. The press printed Reno's disavowances of the violence, but never seemed to believe him. Or so it appeared to this writer. Reno's fiery and spellbinding speeches to farm audiences often belied his tone of conciliation to the press.

For the most part, both the Register and Journal appeared to be sympathetic toward the plight of the farmers. The Journal, in particular, seemed to favor the farmer-pickets even after violence had broken out in the Sioux City area. The editorial pages presented a tone of moderation rather than condemnation, although neither newspaper approved of the violent methods sometimes employed by the Holiday members.

By the time the full impact of the depression was felt in agricultural Iowa, neither Milo Reno nor the idea of a farm strike were new in the state. Reno had attained prominence in the Iowa Farmers Union and had been the spokesman of the 1931 "Cow War" in southeastern Iowa.¹ And as early as 1927, the Corn Belt Committee launched the idea of a producers' strike to raise farm prices.²

By 1932, the plan for some kind of farmer action had crystallized

¹White, Roland, Milo Reno (Iowa City, Iowa, 1941) p. 49

²Kramer, Dale, The Wild Jackasses (New York, 1956) p. 222

into the Farmers Holiday association. The name was taken from the euphemism, "Holiday," used by banks throughout the nation in closing their doors to prevent withdrawals during the depression.

The organization of the Farmers Holiday association had apparently been loosely completed by the time the Sioux City Journal carried a brief item datelined "Logan, Ia." The date was April 24, 1932, four months before the strike would actually begin. The story only stated that leaders of the "...Farmers Holiday association issued a call for a mass meeting in Des Moines to include veterans groups, labor, commercial groups, and farm organizations."³ There was no threat of a strike in the announcement.

A few days earlier, G. B. Miller, president of the Iowa Farmers Union, had urged farmers to unite in a "buying and selling strike." The Des Moines Register quoted: "...During this strike 'holiday' or whatever it could be called, not one item of farm produce would be marketed. Neither would a single farmer purchase a single commodity."⁴

The Register later carried the news that the Farm Bureau and the Grange rejected the call for a strike and that the Iowa Farmers Union would go ahead with strike plans on its own. This article did not mention the Holiday association.⁵

In May, the Journal reported that 2,000 persons met in Des Moines to

³Sioux City Journal, April 24, 1932, p. 6-B

⁴Des Moines Register, March 3, 1932, p. 12-A

⁵Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 9-A

consider a Midwest farm strike. A story datelined "Des Moines" reported that there were farmers from Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Montana and Missouri. The main speaker was John A. Simpson, president of the National Farmers Union. Milo Reno was elected chairman of the Holiday association. The article also reprinted part of the groups resolution to strike until farmers received "cost of production" for their goods because they had failed to "...obtain justice by legislation."⁶

On the same date, the Register, in a story under the by-line of J. S. Russell, pointed out that Farmers Union members were most numerous at the meeting and that the strike date would be July 4 and the strike would continue one month.⁷ However, on June 26, the Register reported that the Farm Holiday group had postponed the strike to give other states an opportunity to organize similar groups. This story also noted that Milo Reno had appointed an executive committee to handle the association's finances.⁸

A report of a meeting of the "Ladies' auxiliary of the Iowa Farmers Union" was not printed on the Register's society page but in general news. The story stated that the ladies denounced the Hoover administration and backed the farm strike. The ladies also pointed out that the farmer could get relief "...only through his own efforts and not by legislation."⁹

⁶Sioux City Journal, May 4, 1932, p. 3

⁷Des Moines Register, May 4, 1932, p. 1

⁸Ibid., June 26, 1932, p. 8-L

⁹Ibid., June 29, 1932, p. 3

When the strike finally began in early August of 1932, it did so quietly. The papers gave it little space. From Sioux City, the Journal observed there was slight effect felt. Livestock and grain dealers reported no appreciable change in receipts.¹⁰

Milo Reno, on the other hand, had a different opinion of the strike's effectiveness. He said the response to the idea of a farm holiday had been good "all over Iowa." The Register quoted: "...Our farmers have actually been on a holiday for the last 30 days only folks didn't realize it."¹¹

On August 9, the Journal reported that Reno had called the strike for August 3.¹² This was well after the press had carried stories about a strike that was supposed to be under way. This was one of the instances that indicated Reno's followers sometimes acted without receiving word from their leader.

In his strike announcement as it appeared in the Journal, Reno said the movement would be a challenge to show that farmers could "stick together," and that the strike would last until fair prices were received for farm goods.¹² At this point, the strike situation in the Sioux City area became clouded. On August 10, 500 milk producers in the city's milk shed proclaimed a milk strike. The Journal in no way connected this with the Holiday movement.¹³

¹⁰Sioux City Journal, August 3, 1932, p. 3

¹¹Des Moines Register, August 7, 1932, p. 2

¹²Sioux City Journal, August 9, 1932, p. 2

¹³Ibid., August 11, 1932, p. 1

The highway picketing which had been relatively quiet and ineffective, suddenly began to stiffen. The ranks of the Holiday men were probably swelled by the striking milk producers. The sheriff of Woodbury county (Sioux City), John Davenport, announced he would keep farmers from gathering to halt trucks, according to the Journal. The same news item that carried the sheriff's announcement reported one of the methods the strikers used to discourage truckers. "...Gathering at the top of a hill, the holiday 'strikers' mounted the truck when it was traveling slowly and told the driver either to stop or suffer the consequences."¹⁴

By August 14, 1,500 "tillers of the soil" had the city nearly isolated, according to the Journal. Fifty per cent of the produce from Nebraska had been halted and virtually no farm goods reached the city on Iowa roads. The same article reported that Reno was conferring with economists to prepare "cost of production" figures that his strikers would settle for in halting the strike.¹⁵ The Register asserted that there were reports from northwest Iowa of produce dealers being threatened by strikers if they kept their businesses open. This article mentioned that the Holiday and the milk producers' strike were two separate movements.¹⁶

The Journal indicated the seriousness of the situation in an article that covered a meeting of Sioux City "...peace authorities, businessmen

¹⁴Ibid., August 12, 1932, p. 7

¹⁵Ibid., August 15, 1932, p. 1

¹⁶Des Moines Register, August 15, 1932, p. 1

and civic leaders."¹⁷

It reported that these notables had "...voted to deputize 100 unemployed to solve what they term 'a grave situation' brought on in Woodbury and Plymouth counties by the 'farmers holiday'..." and the milk strike.¹⁸

However, in Des Moines the Register stated that few cities felt the effects of the strike and that prices of farm goods had actually dropped rather than risen during the period of the strike.¹⁹ While this drop in farm prices was a disappointment to the Holiday members, it showed that by keeping produce from a few markets, prices were lowered at those markets which were unaffected by the strike. Most of the cattle and hogs that could not reach Sioux City were shipped to Chicago where the increased supplies only further depressed the already low prices.

At this time, Milo Reno appeared in Sioux City to "...hear reports on the progress of the holiday, to advise our leaders and to lend the movement our personal moral support." Reno did not remain long in the city. The Register reported he was on his way to a mass meeting of farmers in South Dakota.²⁰ The Journal noted the tempers of both strikers and law officers were darkening. The first shot of the strike was fired by the sheriff of Union county, South Dakota, to frighten a group of

¹⁷Sioux City Journal, August 16, 1932, p. 1

¹⁸Ibid., August 16, 1932, p. 1

¹⁹Des Moines Register, August 17, 1932, p. 12

²⁰Ibid., August 18, 1932, pp. 1, 3

strikers. However, instead of being frightened, the strikers knocked the sheriff down, took his gun away, threw him into a car and told him to go home. And on the approaches to Sioux City, trucks were being halted and the strikers told the drivers: "...Turn it around and take it home. This is a holiday."²¹

The Register recognized the dangers involved in the strike in an editorial. "...There is a real grievance at the bottom of this agitation," the writer asserted. But he continued in a sobering vein: "It is the method of the holiday, not the aspiration toward higher prices, that is dubious. The difficulties are enormous, the dangers considerable, the prospects of results actually attributable to the holiday slight."²²

When Sioux City dairies announced an agreement with the milk producers ending the milk strike, the Holiday men said they would continue the strike. According to an item in the Register, their spokesmen stated that "...Milo Reno...was the only man who could make the settlement binding."²³ They felt that the milk producers had settled for less than "cost of production," and that would remain their goal until Reno said otherwise.

Statewide attention was suddenly focused on the Council Bluffs area. Pickets appeared on the highways approaching that city and Omaha. After the apparent ineffectiveness of law enforcement near Sioux City, the

²¹Sioux City Journal, August 19, 1932, pp. 1, 4

²²Des Moines Register, August 19, 1932, p. 4

²³Ibid., August 20, 1932, p. 1

Register reported that Pottawattamie county (Council Bluffs) sheriff, Percy Lainson, warned that absolutely no violence would be tolerated in his county.²⁴

The pickets wasted no time in testing the sheriff. The Register reported that deputy sheriffs "...were forced to lay down a tear gas barrage on highway 34 leading to Council Bluffs...as picketers changed their methods from 'peaceful persuasion' to forceful blocking." Sheriff Lainson was quoted: "...I'm going to keep the highways open if I have to deputize a regiment."²⁵

In a Journal report of apparently the same incident, an article added that four deputies received cuts after the strikers were gassed. The sheriff blamed "outsiders" for the violence and added: "They are hoodlums just as much as are Chicago gangsters. Many are from Sioux City, the toughest town in Iowa, and are not farmers...." This article also reported that Lainson said he would deputize 5,000 to stop picketing and "...protect citizens and property from these men." The sheriff also stated that there were "...not over 100 Pottawattamie county farmers involved..." in the violence. He told the press that the majority was from other counties.²⁶

In a statement to the Register, Milo Reno admitted that the strike may have gone out of control in some areas, but he insisted that he had

²⁴Ibid., August 23, 1932, p. 1

²⁵Ibid., August 24, 1932, p. 1

²⁶Sioux City Journal, August 25, 1932, p. 1

directed none of the violence. In a tone of moderation he added: "...I believe this situation can be handled in a different way. I think both sides are making mistakes."²⁷

However, the same issue of the Register carried an article under Reno's by-line in which the farm leader stated the strikers' economic position and called for direct action by farmers. Reno stated:

"The day for pussyfooting and deception of farmers' problems is past, and the politicians who have juggled with the agricultural question and used it as a pawn with which to promote their own selfish interests can succeed no longer."²⁸

Pottawattamie county sheriff Lanson put more credence in Reno's call for action than in his tone of moderation. The sheriff had enlisted 200 deputies and armed them with submachine guns and sawed off shotguns.²⁹

When the press reported from Chicago that E. A. O'Neal, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, attacked the Holiday as a limited group of misguided farmers associating with radical agitators, Reno called the charge absurd and accused O'Neal of "red baiting."³⁰

Near Cherokee, Iowa, the verbal action was replaced by violence. Fourteen strikers were reported wounded by shot and bullets as nine unidentified blockade runners sped through a camp of pickets.³¹ In a Register article, Reno called a temporary truce in the strike because he

²⁷Des Moines Register, August 25, 1932, p. 1

²⁸Ibid., August 25, 1932, p. 9

²⁹Sioux City Journal, August 26, 1932, p. 1

³⁰Des Moines Register, August 31, 1932, p. 1

³¹Ibid., September 1, 1932, p. 1

did not wish to see "...unarmed farmers shot and gassed along the road."³² However, many of the strikers refused to leave their highway barricades in Iowa and South Dakota.³³

The Holiday men accused the Cherokee county sheriff of being behind the shootings. The sheriff denied the charge.³⁴ Then the farmers demanded an investigation of the shootings. The county attorney replied that he would first investigate the alleged dragging of a log in front of an automobile the day before the attack on the farmers.³⁵

Meanwhile, the Register reported that the "Holiday" had begun agitation for an embargo of farm goods by Midwest governors. Reno said that he was counting on the governors' aid when he had called a halt to the strike.³⁶ The practicality of an embargo was questioned in a Register editorial. It asserted that "...unless farmers themselves were a unit in support of the project, it would be impossible to carry out."³⁷

When violence erupted in Plymouth County, a Journal reporter observed a pitched battle between 100 deputy sheriffs and 500 strikers. According to the reporter, the deputies were armed with baseball bats, pool cues, and firearms. The strikers, contrary to rumors, had no firearms.

³²Ibid., September 7, 1932, p. 1

³³Sioux City Journal, September 4, 1932, p. A-2

³⁴Ibid., September 4, 1932, p. A-3

³⁵Ibid., September 5, 1932, p. 1

³⁶Des Moines Register, September 7, 1932, p. 1

³⁷Ibid., September 8, 1932, p. 4

Several deputies were injured as they failed to convoy the trucks from Le Mars to Sioux City after being halted at the barricade.³⁸

At a conference in Sioux City of nine Midwest governors or their representatives, Reno pleaded for an embargo of farm goods to raise agricultural prices. However, he added that the Holiday association would establish its own embargo both to prevent farm products from reaching market and would boycott manufactured goods from the East. Only Governor Floyd Olson of Minnesota supported the embargo plan.³⁹

In a Sioux City press conference, Reno told the Journal that his organization had nothing to do with the picketing, but that picketing had "aroused the public conscience" to the seriousness of the farmers' plight.⁴⁰

Several days before Reno was to call for resumption of the farm strike, the sheriff of Woodbury county requested state troops to keep highways open as picketing by Holiday men began sporadically, the Register reported.⁴¹

This is but one of several incidents which indicated that Reno never had complete control of the Holiday movement.

Three days after the picketing actually started, Reno said the strike would begin on September 21 and last for 30 days. Reno warned his men to

³⁸Sioux City Journal, September 8, 1932, p. 1

³⁹Des Moines Register, September 11, 1932, p. 1, sec. 6

⁴⁰Sioux City Journal, September 13, 1932, p. 10

⁴¹Des Moines Register, September 16, 1932, p. 10

withhold their products from market in a peaceful manner and not to resort to violence. The Journal reported that he also told them that "...If you are as wise as serpents and as harmless as infants, you cannot fail in this movement."⁴² Somewhat at odds with the preceding report in the Sioux City Journal, the Register carried an item covering a meeting of the Executive Council of the National Farmers Holiday association, in which that group called for a strike to begin September 20. The council advised farmers to avoid picketing if at all possible, but urged them to use "...all their persuasive powers..." against foreclosures and evictions.⁴³

This indicated that the "Holiday" was interested in the growing number of farm foreclosures as well as low farm prices. The press coverage of anti-foreclosure and anti-eviction activity is covered in the next chapter.

The Register carried an Associated Press story without dateline, concerning a milk producers' strike in Georgia. This article stated:

"The milk holidays are movements related to that of the National Farmers Holiday association, which sponsored a campaign involving the withholding of all farm products from market in Iowa August 8 and which a few days ago asked followers to spread an embargo on livestock and grain only in 11 middlewestern states."⁴⁴

This item indicates that the Sioux City milk producers strike was associated with the Holiday, an assumption not based on fact.

⁴²Sioux City Journal, September 19, 1932, p. 1

⁴³Des Moines Register, September 19, 1932, p. 1

⁴⁴Ibid., September 25, 1932, p. 6-G

Furthermore, the article does not explain in what manner the milk holidays and the Farmers Holiday are related - whether there was a common leadership or a resemblance of methods. Later, the Holiday did support some milk strikes but there is no evidence that the Holiday and milk strikes had common leadership.⁴⁵

On October 25, Holiday association officers from nine states met in Sioux City to discuss plans for expanding the Holiday movement's area. In this Register article, Reno was referred to as a "...moving force in the campaign."⁴⁶

However, the activities of the "Holiday" association became less noticeable as the presidential election approached with its campaign activity. Farmers' attention seemed to be diverted by a campaign that wooed their votes.

After Roosevelt defeated Hoover, but before the Democrats took office, the Journal reported that Reno threatened a national farm strike unless the incoming administration brought quick relief to the farmers. By this he meant enactment of legislation guaranteeing "cost of production" for farm goods.⁴⁷

Five weeks after that announcement, delegates of the National Farmers Holiday association met in Des Moines to repeat the threat to strike unless "...suitable legislation" was enacted. Reno was named by the

⁴⁵Ibid., May 12, 1933, p. 9

⁴⁶Ibid., October 26, 1932, p. 11

⁴⁷Sioux City Journal, February 6, 1933, p. 1

delegates to represent the Holiday's views before "...any congressional hearing."⁴⁸

In April, the Register reported that Reno again threatened a strike and specified May as the time. Later, the same article reported, Reno attacked Edward O'Neal, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, for saying that a farm strike would have little or no effect.⁴⁹

Finally, Reno announced that the farm strike would begin May 13. He said the strike would concentrate on raising milk prices, especially in Wisconsin, Minnesota and New York. He also asserted that no picketing was planned.⁵⁰

Suddenly, and without stating the reasons, Reno called off the strike. This announcement appeared in a brief item in the Journal.⁵¹ However, the Register, in a similar story, reported the strike was canceled because President Roosevelt urged leniency in mortgage foreclosing. The same article reported that Iowa Holiday members would respect Reno's order, but that Wisconsin and Illinois dairymen reported they would continue their strike plans.⁵²

A Register editorial suggested that the leaders of the Holiday were relieved to have an "excuse" to call off the strike. It further stated that Holiday leadership was aware that the public would oppose a new wave

⁴⁸Des Moines Register, March 13, 1933, p. 1

⁴⁹Ibid., April 24, 1933, p. 3

⁵⁰Ibid., May 12, 1933, p. 1

⁵¹Sioux City Journal, May 13, 1933, p. 1

⁵²Des Moines Register, May 13, 1933, p. 1

of strike violence after there had been violence in halting foreclosures at Denison and LeMars.⁵³

But Reno had not given up the idea of a strike. In an address delivered at Boone, Iowa, Reno again called on President Roosevelt for support. He said that if the president carried out his campaign promises, no farm strike would be necessary.⁵⁴

In Sheldon, Iowa, a Chicagoan, Harry Jung urged farmers to oppose the activities of the "Holiday." He said that the majority of farmers belonging to the "Holiday" were "...being duped and do not realize that they are being led toward communism by false prophets." He elaborated:

"Wherever we have milk riots, farm strikes and labor disorders, investigations always reveals [sic] the sinister presence of communism in the background." Jung recommended that farmers support the Farm Bureau, an organization of "...highly intelligent and real honest to God dirt farmers," quoted the Journal.⁵⁵

Whether Reno was sensitive to the public's antagonism toward violence or expected to achieve his goals from New Deal legislation, he did not call for a strike during the spring and summer of 1933. However, in September, Reno again threatened to call a strike if President Roosevelt and Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace did not raise farm prices to Reno's "cost of production" levels.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., May 14, 1933, p. 3-G

⁵⁴Sioux City Journal, May 22, 1933, p. 1

⁵⁵Ibid., May 23, 1933, p. 1

⁵⁶Des Moines Register, September 19, 1933, p. 16

The Holiday association repeated the strike threat at a meeting of 1,200 delegates in Des Moines. The Journal reported that the main points of the meeting were a demand for a "cost of "production" farm program and the ouster of Henry Wallace as Secretary of Agriculture. Reno presided over the meeting.⁵⁷

Almost a month later, the Journal reported a Holiday meeting called by Reno in St. Paul, Minnesota, which announced a farm strike to begin on October 21.⁵⁸ In covering the same incident, the Register included that Reno instructed Holiday members not to pay their taxes and to withhold products from the market. Reno said the country was being run by "...moneyed interests."⁵⁹ Reno, according to a Register article, said he expected this strike to be a "...long, drawn out battle..." but also advised strikers not to resort to violence.⁶⁰

In Des Moines, Reno appealed to labor for support of the strike. He said the strike would be a battle to determine "...whether the farmer shall become a peasant, the menial slave of the usurers and the industrialists, or retain the independence inherited from his fathers," the Journal quoted.⁶¹

The Register reported that the strike got off to a quiet start with

⁵⁷Sioux City Journal, September 23, 1933, p. 1

⁵⁸Ibid., October 20, 1933, p. 1

⁵⁹Des Moines Register, October 20, 1933, p. 1

⁶⁰Ibid., October 21, 1933, p. 1

⁶¹Sioux City Journal, October 22, 1933, p. 1

little effect on markets. The same article carried statements by Reno attacking Henry Wallace and characterizing the New Deal farm program as a "...brazen attempt to bribe the farmer to surrender the little independence he has left." And, apparently referring to the previous spring when he had canceled a strike after the president had urged foreclosure leniency, Reno warned that "...statements and promises are more gestures to lull the farmer to sleep that his enslavement may be completed."⁶²

While the Register reported that the strike was ineffective, the Journal asserted that the strike was gaining momentum. All truck traffic to Sioux City was halted, and in Shelby county the "Holiday" had the cooperation of grain elevators and creameries.⁶³

In Des Moines, Reno repeated that no pledge by the president would halt the farm strike. Only federal legislation guaranteeing "cost of production" could end the strike. In the same Register article, Reno described the New Deal as "...uneconomic, inhuman and criminal..." because it failed to insure "cost of production" for farm goods.⁶⁴

In the same vein, the Register observed that the Holiday strike had apparently gained the support of the railway brotherhoods, but that picketing was spotty and markets unaffected.⁶⁵ The following day, the Register reported that most of the strike activity was verbal. Holiday

⁶²Des Moines Register, October 22, 1933, p. 1

⁶³Sioux City Journal, October 23, 1933, p. 1

⁶⁴Des Moines Register, October 23, 1933, p. 1

⁶⁵Ibid., October 24, 1933, p. 1

officials threatened truckers and processors, who, in turn, threatened strikers.⁶⁶ The Journal reported a meeting of Holiday leaders in Sioux City in which they called on the governors of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa to declare an embargo on farm produce.⁶⁷

The Register carried a front page cartoon depicting at least "Ding" Darling's opinion of the Holiday's activities.⁶⁸ (See Figure 1, p. 36)

The same day the cartoon appeared, the Register reported the strike was relatively ineffective. An article quoted farmer-strikers as complaining that they were "...tired of working 24 hours a day," picking corn by day and picketing the highways at night.⁶⁹

The Journal reported that picketing around Sioux City suddenly halted for unknown reasons. Elsewhere in the state, resistance to the strike increased. For example, the sheriff of Mills county deputized 50 Iowa National Guardsmen, who donned their uniforms and armed themselves with guard equipment to clear the highways of pickets. The article also mentioned that this was done without state authorization.⁷⁰

In Des Moines, the Register noted that Reno and other leaders of the "Holiday" demanded that Midwest governors who were meeting there establish an embargo on farm goods as the strike appeared to be weakening.⁷¹

⁶⁶Ibid., October 25, 1933, p. 1

⁶⁷Sioux City Journal, October 25, 1933, p. 1

⁶⁸Des Moines Register, October 26, 1933, p. 1

⁶⁹Ibid., October 26, 1933, p. 1

⁷⁰Sioux City Journal, October 27, 1933, p. 1

⁷¹Des Moines Register, October 30, 1933, p. 1

The following day, the Register reported that the governors of Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Indiana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois were presented with a proposal by the Holiday group to set minimum prices for farm products.⁷²

When the governors announced they, or their representatives, would go to Washington to present a "cost of production" proposal to the administration, the Register reported that Reno announced a strike truce pending results of the journey.⁷³

However, at variance with the Register, the Journal quoted Reno as saying: "...The strike is not called off in any sense of the word. And it never will be until our demands are met. It's up to President Roosevelt now."⁷⁴ As if to emphasize Reno's assertion that the strike was not canceled, the following day the Journal reported renewed picketing and violence near Sioux City and Council Bluffs.⁷⁵

In a tone of conciliation, a Journal editorial asserted:

"It never was the intention of the Farm Holiday association leaders to create quick distress for the population of the cities by withholding food supplies. Nor has it been the intention of the various groups to inflict injury upon property or persons in a demonstration designed to emphasize the depressing plight of the farmer."

"All the farmer wants, all that he has ever wanted throughout this agonizing period of constant demand for agricultural relief is the chance to lead a decent,

⁷²Ibid., October 31, 1933, p. 1

⁷³Ibid., November 1, 1933, p. 1

⁷⁴Sioux City Journal, November 2, 1933, p. 2

⁷⁵Ibid., November 3, 1933, pp. 1, 6

independent, satisfying life."⁷⁶

The Register reported that the Midwest governors' price-fixing proposal had been rejected by the federal administration and that friction between striking and non-striking farmers in Iowa was increasing.⁷⁷

The Register quoted Reno's response to the rejection as an attack on the New Deal's corn-hog program as a "...bribe, held out in an effort to quiet the midwestern farmer." He said that the program would "...make slaves out of farmers."⁷⁸

In Mills county, the sheriff asked Governor Clyde Herring for militia to halt the strike, according to the Journal. The article continued that the sheriff said farmers were organizing an anti-strike movement and he felt there would be violence.⁷⁹

After the sheriff's request, the Register paradoxically reported that Governor Herring said he would not use the National Guard to halt violence unless aid was requested by local law enforcement officials. The same article mentioned that a group of farmers halted a train near Lawton, Iowa, and released livestock from the cars.⁸⁰

On the following day, the Register reported that two railroad bridges in Iowa, one near Cherokee and the other near Cleghorn, were burned by strikers. "...These acts of violence are regrettable," the

⁷⁶Ibid., November 4, 1933, p. 4

⁷⁷Des Moines Register, November 5, 1933, p. 1

⁷⁸Ibid., November 5, 1933, p. 1

⁷⁹Sioux City Journal, November 6, 1933, p. 5

⁸⁰Des Moines Register, November 6, 1933, p. 1

article quoted Reno as saying, and also reported a denial by the president of the Iowa Holiday, John Chalmers, that he had urged farmers to take up weapons.⁸¹

A picture in the same issue of the Register showed strikers holding clubs and rope entrenched behind a barricade.⁸²

In the Council Bluffs Nonpareil story of the bridge burnings, the article stated that 60 farmers from the Neola and Underwood vicinity met and passed a resolution "...giving the Pottawattamie county and state officers moral support in maintaining law and order" during the strike.⁸³ The Nonpareil quoted one of the farmers: "...It is our understanding that the holiday men have told the sheriff they have practically every farmer in Pottawattamie county behind their actions. We just wanted to show that farmers in this territory favor law and order."

The Journal reported similar action at Le Mars in the formation of a "Law and Order Body," which attacked picketing by farmers as "un-American" and a "...bad example for the younger generation." The Journal also quoted the group as demanding that newspapers in northwest Iowa print "...no more news regarding Milo Reno or his activities."⁸⁴

The Register story of the same "Law and Order" group at Le Mars reported the speakers criticized the press for giving Reno "...too much

⁸¹Ibid., November 7, 1933, p. 1

⁸²Ibid., November 7, 1933, p. 3

⁸³Council Bluffs Nonpareil, November 7, 1933, p. 1

⁸⁴Sioux City Journal, November 9, 1933, p. 1

publicity." Later, at the meeting, a speaker denied he was being paid by the Sioux City stockyards to organize an effort to break the strike.⁸⁵

The sheriff of Woodbury county promised to deputize and arm every strike breaker in an attempt to halt picketing, according to a news story in the Register.⁸⁶

On November 12, Henry Wallace was scheduled to speak in Des Moines. To the Register, Reno said that the appearance of the Secretary of Agriculture would not effect the strike. The Register quoted Reno as stating that Wallace had used the "same sophistry" since becoming Secretary of Agriculture.⁸⁷

The day after Wallace spoke in Des Moines, Reno was in Shenandoah, Iowa. The Register quoted his reaction to a statement by Wallace that someone was being paid to cause trouble for the administration's farm program: "...Henry Wallace is a damned liar."⁸⁸

When the strike that began on October 21 was less than a month old, the Register reported that Reno's "strike lieutenants" throughout the Midwest began to confer with their leader concerning a strike truce.⁸⁹

While Holiday leaders conferred about a truce, 500 members of the Plymouth county Holiday association met to condemn the Law and Order

⁸⁵Des Moines Register, November 9, 1933, p. 1

⁸⁶Ibid., November 10, 1933, p. 1

⁸⁷Ibid., November 12, 1933, p. 7-L

⁸⁸Ibid., November 13, 1933, p. 1

⁸⁹Ibid., November 19, 1933, p. 1

League that had been organized to fight the farm strike, according to a Journal story.⁹⁰ But the strike did not require a truce to end it. It died quietly from farmer apathy and failure to bring about higher prices. But the thing that probably did the most to halt the strike was that the New Deal's farm program began to pour money into Iowa's farms.

Less than a year after the 1933 strike ended, John Chalmers, vice-president of the Iowa Farmers Union and president of the Iowa Farm Holiday association, asked delegates to the Iowa Farmers Union convention in Des Moines, to support another strike.⁹¹ However, an older hand at these things, Milo Reno, said there would be no strike because the farmer had "...nothing to sell, so nothing could be gained," the Journal quoted.⁹² An editorial in the Register commended the Farmers Union for omitting a farm strike proposal from its 1934 agenda.⁹³

While Reno may have advised against a farm strike in 1934, he sounded as though he had changed his mind. The Register carried an Associated Press story from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which reported that he said farmers' problems would not be settled until "...they put guns on their shoulders and use force." "Reno's militant declaration," the item continued, "followed a brief recital of agricultural difficulties and he did not elaborate on the theme."⁹⁴

⁹⁰Sioux City Journal, November 24, 1933, p. 1

⁹¹Des Moines Register, September 20, 1934, p. 1

⁹²Sioux City Journal, September 21, 1934, p. 1

⁹³Des Moines Register, September 23, 1934, p. 10

⁹⁴Ibid., November 21, 1934, p. 16

A Register editorial stated that it "...would like to believe that Mr. Reno didn't quite say that - at least that he didn't quite mean that." The editorial warned: "...To preach the effectiveness of force to minorities in this nation and in this age is simply to mislead them, whether Mr. Reno knows it or not."⁹⁵

There was no more mention of a farm strike for another 5 months. In March of 1935, the Register reported Reno's opinion of another strike effort:

"The 'complete and inevitable' failure of the AAA program will forestall the possibility of another farm strike, similar to the one that spread into several midwestern states in 1933, Milo Reno fiery gray thatched president of the National Farmers Holiday association, said in Des Moines Thursday. '...When the unthinkable, un-American AAA program fails, as it inevitably will, there will be no necessity for the distressed farmer to strike.'⁹⁶

Although the farm strike had failed to achieve its immediate goal, it dramatized the plight of the farmer as few events did.⁹⁷

The press, simply by reporting the news of the strike, had acted as the agent that told the farm strikers' story as both a hero and a villain.

⁹⁵Ibid., November 23, 1934, p. 8

⁹⁶Ibid., March 8, 1935, p. 16

⁹⁷Saloutos, Theodore and John D. Hicks, *Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1951), p. 435

Figure 1. Editorial cartoon by "Ding" Darling, Des Moines Register,
October 26, 1933, p. 1

THE HOLIDAY BOYS HELP WITH THE MILKING.



EFFORTS TO HALT FORCED SALES AND
MORTGAGE FORECLOSURES

The so-called "penny sales" derived their name from the bids of a few cents on the sale items by friends of the seller in a forced chattel sale.

From several hundred to more than a thousand farmers sympathetic to the seller would appear at the scene of the sale. A noose would often be hung from the hay hoist just to let outsiders know that only a "penny sale" would be tolerated. Any serious bids were discouraged. Those who bought the farmer's chattels for a few cents would then return them to him.¹

At a "penny sale" near Webster City, horses sold for \$1.00 and hogs for 25 cents. The total sale of chattel amounted to \$106, not more than one-tenth of the items' real value. The buyers then returned the goods to their former owner.²

The haltings of foreclosures and the "penny sales" received front page position in the newspaper. Often the articles were brief, however, and lacked any explanatory material. These actions by farmers were often spontaneous, as in the case of Quaker farmers who assembled silently and passively en mass to save a farmer (who was not a Quaker) from being ruined by a mortgage sale.³

¹Kramer, Dale, The Wild Jackasses (New York, 1956). p. 324

²Des Moines Register, January 11, 1933, p. 1

³Nuhn, Ferner, "The Farmer Learns Direct Action," The Nation (March 8, 1933) p. 254

Some of the gatherings were less peaceful in halting sheriffs' sales. An article in The Nation reported a sale stoppage by 1,000 belligerent Iowa Farm Holiday men who were in no mood to see a fellow farmer ruined. The author cites the similarity of the Holiday association's actions to militant labor unionism in trying to use its members as a means of forcing the creditor to bargain with the debtor in arriving at a compromise settlement.⁴

This period and phase of the Farm Holiday association's activities was recognized as being dramatic, sometimes amusing, and more often poignant by the Des Moines Register and the Sioux City Journal. The stories had the elements of a 19th century melodrama. The villain, instead of wearing a black hat and having a thin mustache, was usually the representative of an Eastern insurance company which held the mortgage. The heroine was really the impoverished, indebted farmer. And the hero was not the athletic, wavy-haired hero so often depicted, but the Farm Holiday group - many farmers in straw hats and bibbed coveralls.

The press was certainly sympathetic to the debtor's plight and, in general, sympathetic to the activities of the "Holiday." However, three events - a courthouse fight in Primghar, a violent farm riot near Denison, and the mauling of a judge at Le Mars - cost the Farm Holiday the sympathy of the press and (if the newspapers indicated correctly), the support of a great proportion of the public.

The "penny sales" and foreclosure stoppage differed from picketing

⁴Ibid., p. 255

in that many farmers who did not participate in picketing found themselves thrown in with the "Holiday" as they attended a "penny sale" or assembled at a court house's steps.

A former president of Grinnell College wrote that the sudden shift of Iowa farmers from complacent normalcy to direct action was due to the collapse of the land-speculation bubble, falling prices, higher interest rates, mortgages and evictions, and the farmers' weak position as a group in society because of his individuality.⁵

Another Iowan, a Mason City lawyer, wrote that economic hardships turned Iowa farmers from conservative attitudes to sullen radicalism. To prove his point, he cited the loss of members by the Farm Bureau and the gain by the Farmers Union and the Farm Holiday association in his locality as resistance to court orders meant to enforce foreclosure action increased.⁶

Before the sale actions ever got underway, W. T. Davis, in the New Republic, noted: "...One class is always crowded as hard by other classes as it will permit."⁷ Many Iowa farmers had refused to participate in picketing, but most drew the line at losing their own farm or seeing a neighbor lose his. They figured they had been crowded far enough.

The first "penny sale" reportedly took place in Iowa's Wright County

⁵Nollen, John Scholte, "Revolt in the Cornfields," Review of Reviews (June 1933) p. 24

⁶Glass, Remley J., "Gentlemen, The Corn Belt," Harpers (July 1933) pp. 201, 202

⁷Davis, W. T., "The Farmers Holiday," The New Republic (September 21, 1932) p. 156

in 1921,⁸ eleven years before the Farm Holiday movement became active. It was not until the winter of 1933, that sale haltings were mentioned by the Sioux City Journal or the Des Moines Register. In a period of twelve days, the Register reported six sales halted throughout Iowa. The first of these occurred near Le Mars and there was no indication that the "Holiday" was behind the action.⁹ Others occurred at such scattered locations as Webster City in north central Iowa,¹⁰ Story County in central Iowa,¹¹ and two foreclosure haltings near Sioux City in northwest Iowa.¹²

In noting the sale-halting activities throughout the state, the Journal observed that it was work of the Farm Holiday group that had shifted its attention from the strike activities of the previous fall.¹³

In Nebraska, the Farm Holiday group formally called for legislation in the state capital at Lincoln to halt farm foreclosures.¹⁴ A few days later, the Iowa Farm Bureau announced that it sought legislation in Iowa for a mortgage moratorium. The same news item carried an article that indicated some farmers were not willing to wait for a moratorium. Near Watkins in east central Iowa, 800 farmers attended a chattel sale in which a landlord sought to gain overdue rent from his tenant. Cows sold for

⁸White, Roland A., Milo Reno (Iowa City, Iowa, 1941) p. 70

⁹Des Moines Register, January 10, 1933, p. 1

¹⁰Ibid., January 11, 1933, p. 1

¹¹Ibid., January 13, 1933, p. 1

¹²Ibid., January 17, 1933, p. 5

¹³Sioux City Journal, January 10, 1933, p. 1

¹⁴Ibid., January 17, 1933, p. 1

22 cents each and hogs for 7 cents apiece. The buyers then returned the livestock to the tenant.¹⁵

And from Des Moines, the Farm Holiday called for every farmer to help halt foreclosures and sanctioned "...all organized efforts."¹⁶

In an editorial that noted the spread of "penny sales," the Journal suggested there was no need for alarm. "...Rural America probably is a long way from revolution, provided that official life, supported by public opinion, goes to the farthest legal and moral extreme for relief of conditions."¹⁷

In Harrison County, Farm Holiday leaders urged a tenant to pay his back rent plus \$300 damages to a farm owner. The tenant had paid no rent in two years and had removed some of the owner's cattle from the farm. At an informal hearing conducted by the "Holiday" acting as mediator, a Farm Holiday leader said, "We are for justice. In this case, the landowner was too lenient."¹⁸

When the Iowa Legislature's House of Representatives passed a measure which the Journal referred to as "...a virtual moratorium until March 1, 1935," the Journal also reported Milo Reno's reaction to the bill:

"...Milo Reno, militant leader of the Farmers Holiday association, declared that the Iowa house had not gone far enough. He called the house measure 'an imbecile attempt to provide an alibi for the legislature's refusal to consider a legal farm

¹⁵Ibid., January 20, 1933, p. 1

¹⁶Ibid., January 27, 1933, p. 1

¹⁷Ibid., January 28, 1933, p. 4

¹⁸Des Moines Register, January 29, 1933, p. 3-C

moratorium."¹⁹

After a chattel sale had been halted by the Farm Holiday association near Villisca, the leaders of the group decided that the holder of the mortgage had not been treated fairly. The "Holidayers" met with the farmer and his mortgagor and reached a compromise. Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but all parties said it was satisfactory.²⁰

A few days later, the Register, in a brief editorial, commented that the Villisca members of the Holiday association "...are to be highly commended for what appears to be an excellent exercise of judgment."²¹

From the Villisca affair in early February until mid-April, there was no mention of important action in halting sales. It is not clear whether sale stopping ceased or whether they became so commonplace that the Register and Journal quit carrying reports of them. Neither paper suggested that the moratorium was responsible.

On April 18, 1933, the silence of more than two months was broken by a report that "several hundred" Plymouth County farmers had encamped around the farm home of one Ed Durland to prevent execution of an eviction order. The farmers threatened to "shoot it out" with the sheriff and his deputies, although reporters observed that none of the farmers appeared to be armed.

¹⁹Sioux City Journal, February 2, 1933, p. 3

²⁰Des Moines Register, February 6, 1933, p. 1

²¹Ibid., February 9, 1933, p. 6

²²Sioux City Journal, April 18, 1933, p. 1

The next series of violent events which occurred is still somewhat confused. In Primghar, the Journal reported a large group of farmers seized a creditor's lawyer, forced him to kiss an American flag, and made him promise to represent no more creditors in farm-eviction cases.²³ The newspaper failed to mention that this happened after the same group of farmers had tried unsuccessfully to halt an eviction proceeding within the Primghar courthouse. The farmers were beaten back by a large group of deputies inside the building.²⁴

The Journal carried a story on the front page that in Le Mars, Judge C. C. Bradley, had been dragged from his bench, threatened, choked, and left outside of town by a group of farmers after they had tried to make him swear to stop foreclosure actions. Although the judge was badly shaken, he said he would do no such thing.²⁵

The same report of the Le Mars-Judge Bradley incident continued with a quote from Iowa's Senator Dickinson, who said in Washington, D. C.: "...I presume it is an outgrowth of the Farmers Holiday movement. They are trying to stop farm foreclosures." John A. Simpson, president of the National Farmers Union was also quoted in the article. In something of an understatement, he said "...I'm afraid this indicates that trouble is starting."

The Register also reported the Le Mars violence. This was more

²³Ibid., April 28, 1933, p. 2

²⁴Kramer, op. cit., pp. 239-240

²⁵Sioux City Journal, April 28, 1933, p. 1

complete than the Journal's in that it noted that the judge's abductors were believed to have been the same persons who were beaten by deputies when they tried to break up a mortgage sale at Primghar earlier the same day.²⁶

Milo Reno was in Macon, Missouri, when he received word of the attack on Judge Bradley and that Governor Clyde Herring had subsequently called out the state National Guard.

Reno said that the "...militia will only aggravate the situation."²⁷

Of the attack on Judge Bradley, he said:

"It is deplorable, in fact, revolutionary, when people who have been law-abiding, conservative citizens, ignore the courts and violate the laws even to the extent of mobbing judges.

However, it has occurred a great many times in the world's history. When laws and courts fail to establish and maintain equity and justice, they will be overthrown, ignored and abolished.

The farmers of that community have been God-fearing, law-abiding farmers of society up until the present. I take it that any acts of violence that may have been committed have been due to some intolerable wrong under which the people have been suffering."²⁸

While the furor raged over the mobbing of Judge Bradley, the Register reported another area of violence. Near Denison, a mob of 800 farmers charged 31 deputies, routing them, in a pitched battle at a farm eviction sale. Shortly afterwards, National Guardsmen arrived to

²⁶Des Moines Register, April 28, 1933, p. 1

²⁷Sioux City Journal, April 29, 1933, p. 1

²⁸Ibid., Also, Des Moines Register, April 29, 1933, p. 1

disperse 700 rioting farmers at the scene. The same article quoted the head of the State Bureau of Investigation, Park J. Findley, as saying that Sioux City (near Le Mars) was "...a hotbed of communistic activity..." Findley said he had much evidence of communistic propoganda appearing in the Le Mars area preceding the Judge Bradley affair.²⁹

The Council Bluffs Nonpareil presented a confusing picture of the armament employed by the combatants in the Denison farm riot. "Clubs, ax handles and fence posts were wielded by the militant farmers. While the special deputies were unarmed except for clubs, the other officers were armed, but did not use their weapons except as clubs."³⁰

After the attack on Judge Bradley and the riot at Denison, Governor Clyde Herring ordered the National Guard to Denison and Le Mars, declaring martial law in those areas. The Denison sheriff was reinforced by 350 guardsmen who broke up the encamped farmers at the farm, injuring 14 of them. The sale that the farmers had disrupted the day before then proceeded. In Le Mars, which was occupied by four companies of the guard, Journal reporter, Leo G. Ryan, observed 35 arrests on the first day of the guard's presence. These men were suspected of being involved in the manhandling of Judge Bradley.³¹

While the National Guard was restoring order to the area, the causes of the violence were being explored in and argued by the press. In a feature story, the Register stated that the organization of farmers to

²⁹Des Moines Register, April 29, p. 1

³⁰Council Bluffs Nonpareil, April 29, 1933, p. 1

³¹Sioux City Journal, April 29, 1933, p. 1

prevent foreclosures had "...been carried to a high degree in northwestern Iowa where the farm protest has been most vehement." Several farm organizations had been engaged in similar work of adjudicating claims between debtors and creditors and aiding farmers in keeping their farms from being foreclosed, the article continued. "...But the Farmers Holiday groups under leadership of the Farmers Union in several of the northwestern Iowa counties carried on this movement most conspicuously."

"Rumors that Communist agitators had attempted to make use of the farm unrest...have not been verified," the writer pointed out. The article then quoted the Crawford County (Denison) attorney as stating that he believed the majority of the rioters at Denison were Farm Holiday sympathizers. He said: "...If there has been any activity by communist agitators in this part of the state, I have not heard about it."³²

From Des Moines, Governor Herring reportedly blamed the "...insurrection at Le Mars on professional agitators."³³

The Council Bluffs Nonpareil chose to view the situation historically in an editorial:

"There is little excuse for alarm in the present situation. First, because this ruffian element does not include one farmer out of ten. Faced with the choice between government by mob such as the one which mistreated Judge Bradley and the orderly government of the state under which we live and move in peace and security, a vast majority of farmers would be against the mob.

Historians will place the name of Judge Bradley among Iowa's most illustrious and bravest officers. The members of

³²Des Moines Register, April 29, 1933, p. 4

³³Sioux City Journal, April 30, 1933, p. 2

Napolean's old guard might be killed but they never surrendered. The mob might have killed Judge Bradley and it came near to doing this very thing but it could not force him to surrender his right to be a real judge."³⁴

Even while the newspapers reported that guardsmen were rounding up suspects in connection with the Judge Bradley case and arresting rioters near Denison, Milo Reno announced in Des Moines that there would be a meeting in that city of the National Farmers Holiday association and that he expected 5,000 farmers would attend.³⁵

The day after the Nonpareil ran its "historical perspective" editorials on the violence, it printed a speculative editorial on the same subject:

"When law can be defied, government by gangs comes to the fore. Then racketeering develops. In Chicago today, nobody can do business who refuses to pay tribute to the racketeers. Imagine this condition transplanted to agricultural Iowa with farm tenants paying rent to the landlord and tribute to racketeers in order to be permitted to operate their farms and with landlords also being required to kick in their toll to keep the racketeering organization going."³⁶

Several members of the Farm Holiday were arrested by National Guardsmen in Le Mars,³⁷ and guardsmen entered Sioux City to raid a home and seize some literature. Four persons were arrested and jailed. The seized literature reportedly urged removal of troops from the sectors under martial law. Other literature taken was described by guardsmen as

³⁴Council Bluffs Nonpareil, April 30, 1933, p. 2

³⁵Des Moines Register, April 30, 1933, p. 2

³⁶Council Bluffs Nonpareil, May 1, 1933, p. 2

³⁷Des Moines Register, May 1, 1933, p. 10

being communistic. Officers said it was "...of an inflammatory nature and called attention to a meeting of protest at Des Moines May 4." That was one of the dates of the National Farmers Holiday association meeting in the same city. However, the Journal pointed out that at least one of the leaflets was credited to the Farmers National Committee for action and not attributed to the Farm Holiday.³⁸ This is the first mention of the "committee for action" and its purpose was not explained.

At the "Holiday" meeting in Des Moines, the first item of business was consideration of a nation-wide farm strike. There was no mention of the actions at Le Mars and Denison.³⁹

The same issue of the Register carried a story from Chicago that Clarence Darrow had been approached to handle the defense of the farmers accused of attacking Judge Bradley. Darrow reportedly stated he could not take the case because of his age, 76.⁴⁰

Two days later the Journal reported that Darrow had agreed to defend the more than 100 farmers arrested in the Bradley affair.⁴¹

Milo Reno was re-elected president of the National Farmers Holiday association at its meeting in Des Moines. The "Holiday" also called for a national farm strike to begin May 13.⁴² Reno then left for Chicago to

³⁸Sioux City Journal, May 2, 1933, p. 1

³⁹Des Moines Register, May 2, 1933, p. 11

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 1

⁴¹Sioux City Journal, May 4, 1933, p. 1

⁴²Ibid., May 5, 1933, p. 1

confer with Darrow about the defense of those held for manhandling Judge Bradley.⁴³ Reporting the same meeting, the Register also mentioned that Norman Thomas, head of the Socialist Party, had appealed to Darrow to aid the defendants.⁴⁴

In the meantime, Iowa's attorney general, Edward L. O'Connor blamed "...the reign of terror induced by threats of violence..." in northwest Iowa on the Holiday association. He charged that "...racketeering methods ..." were used to compel farmers to join the movement in that area. He also estimated that not more than 25 per cent of the "Holiday's" members in northwest Iowa had joined the organization of their own volition. O'Connor also referred to the Holiday movement as "...just another racket ..." and charged that Communists were filtering into the region "...to fan the flames of revolution...."⁴⁵

From Des Moines, Reno issued a statement denying any intimidation in recruiting. Furthermore, he stated that his group had resisted communist influence.⁴⁵

In a series of headlines, the Nonpareil presented the same story of the attorney general's accusations. However, neither the headline nor the story that followed carried Reno's denial.

⁴³Ibid., May 8, 1933, p. 1

⁴⁴Des Moines Register, May 8, 1933, p. 1

⁴⁵Sioux City Journal, May 6, 1933, p. 1

"RACKETEERING CHARGED TO IOWA HOLIDAY ASSOCIATION

O'Connor Asserts
 Threats of Fires
 Enrolled Members
 75 Per Cent of Farmers
 Joined Through Fear,
 Atty. Gen. Says
 'True Picture Found'
 Small Merchants Afraid to
 Talk: Communistic Agitators
 Active: Red Literature
 Seized."⁴⁶

These headlines took up nearly two-thirds of a first page column.

A Nonpareil editorial mentioned a farmer who said he had been forced to join the "Holiday" when members of that group threatened to burn his buildings. The editorial continued:

"It was the impulse of a hothead. But it nevertheless reveals a possibility when people get outside the realm of statutory law and constitutions. Some groups may start out to accomplish a certain object which has some merit and which is approved by 500. Another proposal comes up on which only a dozen or so hotheads in the large group agree. All others of the bunch go home and then this small minority proceeds to execute its purpose. No law governs the organization as a whole. Milo Reno, head of the groups in Iowa, one of which mistreated Judge Bradley, says his organization does not approve violence. But he is endeavoring to employ Clarence Darrow to defend those who committed this Bradley outrage."⁴⁷

The chief fault of the editorial is that he has judged those men arrested by the guardsmen as guilty - before Clarence Darrow or anyone

⁴⁶Council Bluffs Nonpareil, May 6, 1933, p. 1

⁴⁷Ibid., May 9, 1933, p. 4

else had a chance to defend them at a trial.

The wake of the Judge Bradley incident and the riot near Le Mars was filled with inferences that the Communists were somehow behind the Farm Holiday movement. Leif Dahl, in an article, the New Republic, mentions the "Red scare" as one of the devices used to undercut the Holiday group. He cites an example of three "Holiday" organizers being driven out of Springview, Nebraska, at the instigation of the local banker who had accused the men of being Communists.⁴⁸ This action took place after the Iowa attorney general had made his "communist infiltration" charges, which were never proven in the Le Mars-Denison incidents, or any others, for that matter.

On May 14, the Register reported that former Senator John J. Blaine of Wisconsin said he would defend the men held in connection with the farm riot at Denison.⁴⁹ As it turned out, neither Blaine defended the Denison rioters, nor Darrow the men held for the attack on Judge Bradley. After many suspects were impounded in both cases, a number were released without being charged. Of those held over for indictment and charged, and convicted, none served prison terms. They received suspended sentences for their parts in the violence.

When the farm strike scheduled for May 13 was canceled after President Roosevelt urged leniency for farm debtors, the Register suggested in an editorial that the "Holiday" leaders were relieved to have an

⁴⁸Dahl, Leif A., "Class Warfare in the Cornbelt," The New Republic, (May 17, 1933), pp. 12-13

⁴⁹Des Moines Register, May 14, 1933, p. 7

excuse to call it off. The editorial stated that the leaders were aware of public hostility that developed after the Le Mars-Denison incidents.⁵⁰

The Register also carried the results of a poll of 27 Iowa newspapers, assessing their reactions to the mobbing of Judge Bradley. In every case, the papers were sympathetic to the Judge. Most of them called for the "...sting of the law..." upon the farmers in the mob that mistreated the judge. The editors and publishers of these papers also felt their readers held similar points of view.⁵¹

One group sought to capitalize on the public's distaste for the "Holiday's" violent activities. A Chicagoan appeared in Sheldon to organize a League for Law and Order to combat the "Holiday." He also urged farmers to join the American Farm Bureau Federation.⁵²

The Register reprinted an article by John Scholte Nollen, president of Iowa's Grinnell College, in which he recounted the economic and political factors that led to the violence. He blamed no one for the events. "...The Farmer's Holiday association, now just a year old, ...has agitated for the application of the moratorium to the farmers' problems, and has been fighting evictions and ruinous prices."⁵³

In a resume of the year's biggest news events in the Register on December 31, 1933, the Register listed the violent activities of the

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 8-G

⁵¹Ibid., p. 9-G

⁵²Ibid., May 28, 1933, p. 1

⁵³Ibid., June 22, 1933, p. 4

Holiday movement as being the biggest local news items.⁵⁴

This was the high water mark, newswise, for the Farm Holiday association. The events that occurred at the end of April (the fight in the Primghar courthouse, the abduction of Judge C. C. Bradley, and the farm riot near Denison) were the climax of the "Holiday's" direct action.

So many different actions occurred in such a short period of time that the Journal and the Register did a relatively good job of simply keeping up with events. Both papers sent their own reporters to the scenes of the violence. The Nonpareil relied on wire service for its news and printed (especially in headlines) material most detrimental to the Farm Holiday.

All three papers expressed sympathy for Judge Bradley after his ordeal and held the "Holiday" responsible. Both the Journal and Register carried honest (in this writer's opinion), intelligent editorials expressing their viewpoint. On the other hand, the Nonpareil's editorials were illogical and almost incoherent. Their author's "argumenta ad horrenda" were sometimes ridiculous, exceeded only by his poor use of the English language.

⁵⁴Ibid., December 31, 1933, p. 3

POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF MILO RENO AND THE
FARM HOLIDAY ASSOCIATION

The press coverage of Reno's political activity was especially competent on the part of the Register. But fewer political articles reached the first page than articles on picketing and the "penny sales." The Register had most of the material in this phase of the "Holiday's" activity. This should not be surprising because Des Moines was Reno's headquarters and the source of most of his political statements.

A chart of Milo Reno's political alliances would show many twists and turns. Of all the political parties he associated with, Reno never was left of center. His tendencies were actually to the conservative, if not reactionary. He may have been one of the "wild men" of the Midwest,¹ but his wildness was of the Populist variety. Reno was 40 years past the time when other agrarian radicals were assailing the "gold bugs" of Wall Street.

With reference to the beginning of the Farmers Holiday strike, Howard Lawrence writes that "The time was indeed ripe for Milo Reno, veteran left-wing farm leader, to lead a movement which conservative Iowa farmers would have completely shunned in more prosperous times."²

Lawrence's statement is correct, except for the "left wing" label. As Reno's political allies are pointed out in this chapter, it will become

¹Lord, Russell, The Wallaces of Iowa (Boston, 1947), p. 132

²Lawrence, Howard, The Farmers Holiday Movement, unpublished master's thesis, State University of Iowa (Iowa City, Iowa, 1952) p. 14

apparent that Reno was certainly not left-wing.

To a great extent, however, Reno chose his political cohorts simply for the sake of expediency. If he had thought the Socialists or Communists would have given him his precious "cost of production" program, he probably would have enlisted their aid.

X Regardless of any political label, Reno was a maverick. No matter who was in office, Reno seemed to be in the opposition. He had to go against the current. He reminds this writer of William Cobbett, a Tory journalist during the American Revolution. During the Revolution, he was a conservative who attacked the American rebels. When he was forced to return to England, he became a liberal in England's conservative climate. Later, he actually went to Parliament as a leader of the Philosophical Radicals with John Stuart Mill.

One of the chief devices used against Reno and his Farm Holiday movement was the accusation that the group was "Red." One of "Ding" Darling's front page cartoons shows the American farmer at the crossroads. This implication that the farmer was being subjected to Communist agitation was presented at the height of the highway picketing in late summer of 1932.³ (See Figure 2, p. 81)

Mary Heaton Vorse mentioned in a Harpers article that there were accusations that the farm strike was the result of agitation by "imported Reds." She visited the Sioux City jail where 90 picketers were being held. This is a breakdown of those men: 5 farm owners; 20 had owned

³Des Moines Register, September 2, 1932, p. 1

farms but were renters at the time of the strike; 25 had always been renters; 15 were farm boys living with their parents; 17 were farm laborers, having long lived in the community; 8 were workers employed in Sioux City - most of them in the meat packing industry.⁴

During the presidential campaigning of 1932, Reno attacked President Hoover frequently. In a farmer rally in Des Moines, Reno launched a "scathing attack" on President Hoover that was enthusiastically received, the Register reported.⁵ Reno characterized the farm strike as an economic, moral and Christian movement.

"We have a right to hold Hoover responsible for existing conditions," the Journal quoted. "It is time we educated those responsible for this condition....We are not going to demand a single thing from society that we are not happy to concede to society ourselves."⁶

This was too much for the Journal. The following day an editorial commented that Reno was wrong in his attack on the President and added: "The strongest, wisest, ablest president who ever occupied the White House could not have prevented the economic developments that came following the crash in the stock market in 1929."⁷

When President Hoover appeared in Des Moines during the campaign, the Holiday men of Milo Reno were ready. More than 2,500 farmers carrying

⁴Vorse, Mary Heaton, "Rebellion in the Cornbelt," Harpers (December 1932), p. 108

⁵Des Moines Register, September 22, 1932, p. 1

⁶Sioux City Journal, September 22, 1932, p. 1

⁷Ibid., September 23, 1932, p. 10

placards paraded past the state capital where Hoover was to speak. They did not actually parade before the President, but their presence must have been known to him. Their placards stated:

"In Hoover We Trusted and Now We Are Busted"
 "Republican 4-H Club - Hoover, Hyde, Hell and Hard Times."⁸

(Hyde was Arthur M. Hyde, Hoover's Secretary of Agriculture.)

The election of 1932 apparently acted as an emotional outlet for agrarian restlessness, because the strike ended as the farmers felt that they could focus blame for their plight on Hoover and campaign for Roosevelt. Republican Iowa voted overwhelmingly Democratic that fall. There was little news about the Holiday movement or Milo Reno until after Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration.

When F.D.R. selected Henry A. Wallace as his Secretary of Agriculture, Reno told reporters:

"In the selection of Mr. Wallace, we feel that Iowa has been complimented and the progressive Republicans recognized. If Henry makes as good a secretary as his father, it will be a mighty fine improvement over his two predecessors."⁹

In the spring of 1933, a tri-state (Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota) political unit of the Farmers Holiday met to support certain legislation in their states. This was primarily concerned with a mortgage moratorium for farmers. The group, at that time, also expressed support for

⁸Des Moines Register, October 5, 1932, p. 9

⁹Ibid., February 27, 1933, p. 2

Roosevelt's farm relief bill.¹⁰

In Des Moines on May 4, Reno called for a nation-wide farm strike to begin on May 13. (This was shortly after the Primghar-LeMars-Denison violence.) The occasion for the Reno statement was the convention of the National Farmers Holiday association. Guest speaker was A. C. Townley of North Dakota, former head of the Farmers Non-Partisan League. In his address, Townley told his audience that it had been victimized by the "international bankers."¹¹ He also called for Congress to issue one billion dollars in scrip to be used in the exchange of products between farmers and organized labor.¹²

By May of 1933, Reno's estrangement with Roosevelt (for whom he had campaigned) was becoming more pronounced. He attacked the New Deal when Congress passed a farm bill that did not have a "cost of production" provision. He said that farmers were facing "peasantry."¹³

In Minnesota, the Farm Holiday's demands were more specific. The group requested that F.D.R. oust Wallace as Secretary of Agriculture. This same article in the Register quoted Reno as denouncing the farm bill as "...just another case of juggling with agriculture."¹⁴

At a rally of 900 Iowa Farm Holidayers near Boone, Reno told his

¹⁰Sioux City Journal, April 4, 1933, p. 5

¹¹Des Moines Register, May 4, 1933, p. 1

¹²Salutos, Theodore and John D. Hicks, Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, (Madison, Wisconsin, 1951), p. 450

¹³Sioux City Journal, May 10, 1933, p. 5

¹⁴Des Moines Register, May 10, 1933, p. 10

listeners that he was still putting his faith in the President to fulfill his campaign pledges. Reno indicated that this was a promise to enact a "cost of production" farm program. Reno also attacked Iowa's Governor Clyde Herring for his "...unwarranted prosecution of farmers and their families in western and northwestern Iowa..."¹⁵ This was after the governor had declared martial law and dispatched the state guard to certain areas.

One of the background features that the Register devoted to the farm unrest compared the situation of the 1930's with the Populist movement of the 1880's and 1890's. The article mentioned that in 1892 the Populists had named an Iowan, General James B. Weaver, as the party's candidate for the presidency.

"The nearest discontented farmers can find to a popular leader today is Milo Reno..." that article continued, "...but the dissatisfied elements of the Midwest have not yet gotten together in political convention to nominate him for president."¹⁶

However, another issue of the Register reprinted an article which had appeared in Review of Reviews by John Scholte Nollen. Nollen pointed out that there were important political implications in Midwest agrarian unrest. Evidence of this was the abandonment of orthodox Republicanism by farmers in the election of 1932.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., May 22, 1933, p. 4

¹⁶Ibid., June 11, 1933, p. 8-L

¹⁷Ibid., June 22, 1933, p. 4

After the Iowa attorney general had made his statements about "red" literature and professional agitators in the Le Mars-Denison scenes of violence, the Register ran an editorial entitled: "What Is To Be Gained By Red Baiting?"

One of the comments was, "...Fundamentally, the farm protest in Iowa has been and is the very antithesis of Communistic."¹⁸

Another feature article on the editorial page of the Register was in the same vein. It was headed: "The So-Called 'Radicals' of the Farm Revolt." The author was a Des Moines minister, the Reverend Mr. Stoddard Lane, and dealt with farmer's meeting in the Le Mars-Primghar area after the assault on Judge Bradley.

The minister quoted the editor of a small northwest Iowa newspaper: "...So long as we can raise our voices in protest we will not be made slaves by Communism nor by Morganism."

The Rev. Lane himself added: "...I am convinced that these 'radicals' had no campaign of violence in mind; that they do not want violence; that they mean to carry out their program without violence - by non-violent resistance where necessary."¹⁹

It appears that the farmers still had several apologists outside their ranks. However, it also appears that the Reverend Mr. Stoddard is naive in his attitude; that enough violence had already occurred to belie his opinions.

¹⁸Ibid., June 25, 1933, p. 6-L

¹⁹Ibid., July 2, 1933, p. 6-L

Reno had been relatively quiet since the farmer rally at Boone. He spoke in Sioux City at a mass meeting in that city's Riverview Park. The Journal reported that 8,000 Holiday members heard their leader. Reno said that he hoped they would always recognize the rights of other segments of society, especially labor. He also attacked the American Farm Bureau Federation and referred to President Roosevelt as a dictator - but he praised F.D.R. for opposing the "...money lords...."²⁰

The Register article of the same meeting gave the number of Holiday members as 4,000 and stated that Reno had praised Roosevelt. Reno said that F.D.R. had accomplished more in three months than all the Republican presidents since Lincoln.²¹

When plans were announced in Washington, D.C., to slaughter the 5 million "little pigs" in an effort to bolster hog prices, Reno attacked the plan as being based on scarcity rather than plenty. He added that benefits would be brief and that Henry Wallace should enact a "cost of production" program instead.²²

In Council Bluffs, Reno launched a petition to oust Wallace as Secretary of Agriculture and referred to him as "the Secretary of Wall Street." He added that farmers could not back NRA until they were shown the same consideration as business.²³

²⁰Sioux City Journal, July 8, 1933, p. 1

²¹Des Moines Register, July 8, 1933, p. 1

²²Sioux City Journal, August 11, 1933, p. 1

²³Ibid., September 10, 1933, p. 1

As a speaker at a Iowa Farmers Union meeting in Des Moines, Reno threatened that, if the President and Henry Wallace did not raise farm prices, there would be another farm strike.²⁴

Later, at the same meeting, Reno was asked his opinion of a national code for agriculture. He replied: "It isn't a question with us whether General Johnson (head of the National Recovery Act) recognizes agriculture, but rather one whether the farmer recognizes NRA."²⁵

Commenting on the Farmers Union and Farm Holiday efforts to oust Henry A. Wallace, a Nonpareil editorial stated:

"Now the militant who could see no virtue in the federal farm board and who denied credit to Congress and the administration for an honest effort to aid agriculture are divided against themselves. Wallace is not radical enough to please the radicals."²⁶

The Nonpareil apparently referred to the 1920's when Reno and Wallace were allied in their opposition to the Farm Board.

In a Des Moines meeting of 1,200 Farm Holiday delegates, Reno again demanded the ouster of Henry Wallace. If this was not done, Reno threatened to call a strike.²⁷

Reno said in Des Moines that the New Deal's farm relief bill was not helping agriculture. Killing hogs and plowing under cotton was "...like treating cancer by operating on an ingrown toenail."²⁸

²⁴Des Moines Register, September 19, 1933, p. 16

²⁵Ibid., September 20, 1933, p. 1

²⁶Council Bluffs Nonpareil, September 22, 1932, p. 4

²⁷Sioux City Journal, September 26, 1932, p. 1

²⁸Ibid., October 5, 1933, p. 10

While Reno was attacking the Democratic administration for doing too little to aid the farmer, the Register printed a letter to the editor in its "Open Forum" column:

"I believe that the farm holiday is nothing but a Democratic racket for the following reasons:

First, John Simpson, president of the Farmers Union is a Democrat from Oklahoma, and there is no strike nor farm holiday there, nor in any other states which are Democratic states; second, ...Simpson speaks for Roosevelt; third, Simpson...urges farmers to leave the Farm Bureau and Grange and join the Farmers Union."

The reader had apparently not been keeping up with the press coverage of the "Holiday." The "Holiday" had certainly been active in states which were Democratic. Governor Floyd Olsen of Minnesota could testify to that. Also, the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation was a Democrat - E. A. O'Neal of Alabama.

As for Simpson speaking for Roosevelt - one of the chief reasons Reno split with the New Deal was that he felt there were too many Farm Bureau men speaking for F.D.R. And the letterwriter's third point is simply a non-sequitur in his argument.

In a "Holiday" rally at Shenandoah, Iowa, on October 15, 1933, Reno told his audience that Henry Wallace had performed an "economic somersault" because he had supported "cost of production" prior to 1933. He also indicated that the New Deal owed a political debt to the Farm Holiday because 90 per cent of its members had voted for F.D.R. in the 1932 election. Reno demanded that the campaign promises be fulfilled.

The climax of the rally was the spanking of an effigy of Henry Wallace draped over a barrel by three husky members of the Farm

Holiday.²⁹

Back in Des Moines, Reno denounced the Wallace corn-hog program as "idiotic" because he felt there was no surplus of farm goods - only low prices. He further stated that 20 per cent of the nation's people were underfed. He referred to the Wallace plan as a bribe.³⁰

In another attack on the New Deal's farm program, Reno described the plan as "...uneconomic, inhuman and criminal..." because it failed to guarantee "cost of production."³¹

The Journal reported the same attack on the administration's farm program, and quoted Reno: "...The whole program simply burdens the public with billions of dollars of debt that will have to be paid eventually or repudiated." He also characterized Roosevelt's statements as similar to the actions of a "...small boy who whistles to keep up his courage while walking through a graveyard."³²

After Henry Wallace had spoken in Des Moines to reassure farmers of a relief program and to undercut the strength of the "Holiday," the Register printed Reno's reaction in a Missouri Valley, Iowa speech.

He accused Wallace of being "...a sub of Wall Street..." in an open air speech on a windy day. "...Wearing his familiar bright red necktie, Reno literally had to scream..." to make himself heard over the wind.

²⁹Des Moines Register, October 15, 1933, p. 1

³⁰Ibid., October 18, 1933, p. 1

³¹Ibid., October 23, 1933, p. 1

³²Sioux City Journal, October 23, 1933, p. 1

Referring to a statement by Wallace that someone was being paid to stir up trouble for the farm program, Reno publicly called Henry Wallace a liar.³³

The Register printed a series of articles on the Midwest farm situation by Russell Owen of the New York Times. Owen stated that Reno's strength was waning as farmers looked forward to receiving government loans of 45 cents a bushel for their corn. He also reported this brief dialogue between Reno and himself:

Reno: "In the east they think we're out with sackfuls of dynamite, trying to blow things up."

Owen: "Well, who does all this blowing?"

Reno: "I don't know."

Owen wrote that Reno's last statement was uttered "...a little petulantly."³⁴

The Register seemed worried because Reno had not attacked anyone verbally in more than a month. One reporter asked him if he was under pressure to refrain from opposing the New Deal farm plan. Reno replied that he was not refraining from attacking the Wallace program. The press had just not been at the right meetings. L. M. Peet, one of Reno's associates, added that no one had attempted to keep Reno "...from speaking his mind."³⁵

³³Des Moines Register, November 13, 1933, p. 1

³⁴Ibid., November 17, 1933, p. 3

³⁵Ibid., December 24, 1933, p. 2

After the first of the year (1934), Reno made a trip to the East in which he called for the formation of a third party in a speech at Cooper Union, New York.

In an editorial entitled, "Mr. Reno Impatient," the Journal commented:

"Mr. Reno apparently overlooked the fact that two major political parties have in varying degrees responded to the demands of the times with a quickly developed liberalism... All parties and all leaders ought to be patient and give the present regime in Washington a fair chance to prove itself."³⁶

While in the East, Reno was interviewed by a reporter from the Yale Daily News which ran an article on the man. The Register carried a reprint of Reno's statements:³⁷

"There is only one person who can judge [farm] production and that's the farmer," he said with apparent reference to the New Deal's efforts to curtail production.

On politics, he commented, "The Republican Party's gone forever - might as well talk about resurrecting a dead horse as the Republican Party." And concerning the Democratic party and a third party, "There'll be a cat 'n' dog fight in the Democratic party that'll surprise you. The golden medium must be found in a liberal third party, a party that won't destroy every spark of individualism and freedom."

Reno left his interviewer with this advice:

³⁶Sioux City Journal, January 6, 1934, p. 4

³⁷Des Moines Register, January 27, 1934, p. 6

"But there's one form of fear you've got to fight in college and all your life - damned moral cowardice.

What we need are men who won't be afraid to say what they think, who won't change what they said in the valley when they are taken to the mountain top and shown kingdoms."

Reno returned to Des Moines and in a radio address said that the New Deal had accomplished nothing of real value for the farmer. He also accused the administration of suppressing independent thought and expression.³⁸

In another radio talk from Des Moines, Reno attacked his old enemies, "the international bankers." He said the "gold backers" (an old Populist term) contributed nothing to society.³⁹

Reno intensified his attack on the whole Roosevelt administration - not just the farm program. He accused the New Deal of threatening constitutional rights "...under the pretense of an emergency caused by the depression...." He added that most of the people had accepted "...this excuse...."⁴⁰

When Governor Floyd Olson of Minnesota requested a meeting of Midwest governors to discuss the farm problem, Reno heartily endorsed the idea. The conference got underway in Des Moines March 10. Governor William Langer of North Dakota could not attend, but he "...appointed Milo Reno ...to represent him."⁴¹

³⁸Ibid., February 5, 1934, p. 3

³⁹Ibid., February 12, 1934, p. 9

⁴⁰Ibid., February 19, 1934, p. 3

⁴¹Ibid., March 12, 1934, p. 1

Reno spoke at the governors' conference in what appears to be a contradictory statement (after his attacks on the New Deal). He stated:

"...There is no such thing as a constitution in time of war and our great president has said this 'is war.'" Reno added that state legislatures had "...almost unlimited power to get farmers a fair price."⁴²

After that apparent reconciliation with the New Deal failed, Reno renewed his attacks on the administration. With reference to accusations that members of the New Deal were conspiring to overthrow the constitution, Reno asserted that "...the program of the administration is the best evidence that...information was correct."⁴³

Reno was referring to statements made by Dr. W. A. Wirt of Gary, Indiana, that a member of the "brains trust" was leading a revolutionary plot. Reno said, "...That there is a treasonable conspiracy to destroy our form of government and is evident to all clear-thinking, American-minded people."⁴³

Reno later repeated his charge that Roosevelt had broken his campaign pledges, "...a solemn covenant made between it [the administration] and the American farmer through the Democratic platform." He also said that Henry Wallace had turned traitor to "cost of production."⁴⁴

Wallace hit back indirectly in a speech in Des Moines. He charged that "...some false prophets, mostly discredited now..." had sought to

⁴²Ibid., p. 10

⁴³Ibid., April 2, 1934, p. 8

⁴⁴Ibid., April 9, 1934, p. 12

hurt the New Deal farm program either for mercenary or political reasons.⁴⁵

Reno countered with a somewhat prophetic prediction that the Agricultural Adjustment Act "...will end in absolute and ignominious failure"⁴⁶

On May 2, the Register reported that the National Farmers Holiday association would have Father Charles E. Coughlin, the "radio priest" from Michigan, as its featured speaker during its convention.⁴⁷

"Holiday" officials said they expected the priest to discuss "...the money question..." in his address.⁴⁸

However, Father Coughlin touched chiefly upon the evils of the New Deal. The Register headline the morning after his address read:

"CHRIST OR TUGWELL - COUGHLIN." The reference to Tugwell was that Rexford Tugwell was the chief target of Dr. Wirt's "revolution" accusation.⁴⁹

Coughlin charged that Tugwell was "...bossed by the international bankers." He added that the American people had been "...dillingered by the international bankers."

When Reno spoke to the same group he charged that "...Henry Wallace was the worst enemy the farmer ever has had in an official position."⁴⁹

⁴⁵Ibid., April 23, 1934, p. 1

⁴⁶Ibid., April 30, 1934, p. 3

⁴⁷Ibid., May 2, 1934, p. 1

⁴⁸Ibid., May 3, 1934, p. 1

⁴⁹Ibid., May 4, 1934, p. 1

The Journal quoted: "...He has been in perfect harmony with that group of political shysters, of half-baked brain twisters, that have used every effort to beat down the self-respect and self-reliance of the farmers."⁵⁰

R. M. (Spike) Evans, chairman of the Iowa corn-hog committee and supporter of Wallace, countered:

"...People who make the assertion that overproduction is not the real trouble with agriculture...have purposely omitted the facts. The reasons for these careless, bombastic and oratorical flights is not difficult to understand. We cannot afford to listen to those who welcome chaos...that they may grasp a power that is slipping away."⁵¹

The Council Bluffs Nonpareil commented with an editorial headed: "LET THE HEATHEN RAGE," which dealt with the speeches of Coughlin and Reno.

"There is little reason to take addresses of this sort seriously. Better treat them as Old Gamaliel suggested considering the preachments of the apostles. If these things these men say are sound and true, declared the old philosopher, they will stand in spite of the storming of those who preach. If they are not true, they will fall in time of their own weight. So with the preachments of Reno and Coughlin."⁵²

The following day, the Nonpareil had another editorial on the subject of Reno's calling Wallace the farmer's "worst enemy." The writer commented that the title should be given, instead, to Reno because: "... The most undesirable citizens of this country are those who seek to array one class against other classes. All through his active life, Reno

⁵⁰Sioux City Journal, May 4, 1934, p. 3

⁵¹Des Moines Register, May 5, 1934, p. 1

⁵²Council Bluffs Nonpareil, May 6, 1934, p. 4

has worked out on this line."⁵³

An editorial in the Journal viewed Reno's charges more seriously, noting that farmers were still suffering while the rest of the country was recovering. The writer thought this was a sign that farmers might defect the ranks of the Democrats and return to the Republican party.⁵⁴

Reno continued his charges in Des Moines that the AAA had "...betrayed, bankrupted, and insulted..." the American farmer. He also referred to F.D.R.'s advisors as the "brain busters."⁵⁵

Reno also renewed his old agrarian cry for cheap money. At a meeting of the Iowa Farm Holiday he urged issuance of the "...right kind of money ..." with which farm debts could be paid.⁵⁶

At the end of May, Reno traveled to Baltimore to speak to the Maryland Farm Holiday group. He repeated his attacks on the New Deal and said that neither major political party had kept its pledges.⁵⁷

"Milo Reno...declined direct comment on the American Liberty League, new organization to combat 'radicalism...,'" the Register reported. Reno, however, cautioned that if the trend toward dictatorship was not stopped, men would have to band together to halt it.⁵⁸

⁵³Ibid., May 7, 1934, p. 4

⁵⁴Sioux City Journal, May 7, 1934, p. 8

⁵⁵Des Moines Register, May 14, 1934, p. 3

⁵⁶Ibid., May 22, 1934, p. 13

⁵⁷Sioux City Journal, May 31, 1934, p. 5

⁵⁸Des Moines Register, August 25, 1934, p. 2

Commenting in Des Moines on ex-President Hoover's articles attacking the New Deal, Reno said they comprised "...the greatest statement of the case for human liberty ever published." But, he added, that when Hoover was president, he "...firmly believed the farmer's part in the national economic scheme was that of a peon...Roosevelt means well, but simply doesn't understand the farmer's problems." In an aside at Wallace, he quipped: "...I don't know whether Wallace is just dumb, or whether he means to be vicious."⁵⁹

A week later, on September 21, 1934, Reno denied that his attacks on the New Deal were venomous. "I would like to see the administration make good. There is no venom in the hearts of farmers toward the New Deal."

The Register article continued: "...Not unexpectedly, Secretary Wallace bore the brunt of many of Reno's thrusts, whom he charged not only of violating the constitution but the ten commandments." The article then quoted Reno: "...And when you violate the principles of Jesus Christ you're going plumb to hell and nothing in the world can stop you."⁶⁰

The Nonpareil was tiring of Reno's criticisms, apparently, when an editorial commented: "...As a fault finder, Milo Reno is in a class which includes only himself and Senator Borah." (Borah was an insurgent Republican senator from Idaho.)⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., September 14, 1934, p. 1

⁶⁰ Ibid., September 21, 1934, p. 5

⁶¹ Council Bluffs Nonpareil, September 29, 1934, p. 4

In a speech at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Reno declared that the farmers would not settle their problems until "...they put guns on their shoulders and used force." The Associated Press story added: "...Reno's militant declaration followed a brief recital of agricultural difficulties and he did not elaborate on the theme."⁶²

Two days later, a Register editorial commented: "...The Register would like to believe that Mr. Reno didn't quite say that - at least that he didn't quite mean that." The editorial then warned: "...To preach the effectiveness of force to minorities in this nation and in this age is simply to mislead them, whether Mr. Reno knows it or not."⁶³

From New York came a strange A.P. release. "Milo Reno, mild mannered leader of the farm holiday movement...spoke before the New York Republican Club. He appealed for new leadership in the party as he scored the present Democratic administration."⁶⁴

That Reno had returned, at least momentarily, to the Republican fold is not strange. The strange part of the story is the "mild mannered" description of him.

In March of 1935, Reno turned down the idea of another farm strike. "...When the unthinkable, un-American AAA program fails, as it inevitably will, there will be no necessity for the distressed farmer to strike."⁶⁵

⁶²Des Moines Register, November 21, 1934, p. 16

⁶³Ibid., November 23, 1934, p. 8

⁶⁴Ibid., January 6, 1935, p. 3

⁶⁵Ibid., March 8, 1935, p. 16

An article in the Register on April 3, 1935, announced that Huey Long, the Louisiana senator, had accepted an invitation to be guest speaker at the national convention of the Farm Holiday in Des Moines. The article also stated that Father Coughlin and Dr. F. E. Townsend had been invited.⁶⁶

Later in April, the Register announced in a second page headline: "Reno Invites Wallace Critic," referring to the invitation also extended to Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia to attend the same meeting as Long. The article stated that Talmadge declined the offer because of a conflicting engagement.⁶⁷

Prior to the Farm Holiday convention, Reno condemned a "relief conference" called by Communist organizers to meet in Des Moines at the same time as the "Holiday" meeting. Reno attacked the Communists because he felt they were attempting to attract farmers who would attend the Holiday meeting. "...We're not Communists. They know we are opposed to them. They can have their own meeting, but should not try to drag our members into their meetings."⁶⁸

On the day before Long was to speak, Father Coughlin in Michigan denied that he had sent two associates to the "Holiday" rally with any third party motives. Reno said: "The radio priest has pulled a boner."⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ibid., April 3, 1935, p. 2

⁶⁷Ibid., April 20, 1935, p. 2

⁶⁸Ibid., April 24, 1935, p. 1

⁶⁹Ibid., April 27, 1935, p. 5

Huey Long spoke to more than 10,000 at the "Holiday" convention. He charged that President Roosevelt had failed to keep a pledge "...to redistribute the wealth." After his speech, Long told reporters that he "...could sweep Iowa easily..." in a national election.⁷⁰

Long had been introduced to the crowd by Reno as "...a man qualified to meet the situation. A man who has guts." Long criticized the administration's agricultural program "...for burning up the surplus when it found people starving in the midst of too much food," according to a Journal report.⁷¹

When Reno addressed the crowd, he said of the Democrats: "...The only things those bird dogs have brought us is beer." And of Henry Wallace, he said, "...He not only makes us sick, he makes the pigs sick."

The Nonpareil reported the number who heard Long and Reno at 20,000. Its article said the speakers avoided the "third party issue."⁷²

A few days later, a Nonpareil editorial commented: "...Huey Long found some of his own kind of people in Iowa despite the fact that we rank first in literacy among all the states in the Union."⁷³

A Register editorial observed that the Holiday movement had probably attained its maximum influence. It said the movement was melting under "...the hot sun of higher prices and government payments...." The

⁷⁰Ibid., April 28, 1935, p. 1

⁷¹Sioux City Journal, April 28, 1935, p. 1

⁷²Council Bluffs Nonpareil, May 1, 1935, p. 10

⁷³Ibid., May 3, 1935, p. 4

editorial writer felt that it was a sign of weakness that the "Holiday" brought Coughlin in 1934 and Long in 1935 to the conventions ("This year Huey was the sideshow.")⁷⁴

At the meeting of Farm Holiday delegates the day after Long spoke, "...Reno...turned loose his fury on the national democratic administration..." He referred to Henry Wallace as "lord corn Wallace." Another speaker was R. L. Patrick of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who attacked "...the chiselers from Wall Street..." whom he charged with trying to block veterans' bonuses.⁷⁵

At this meeting, Reno ejected "...A half dozen alleged communists," whom he called "...Wall Street racketeers and henchmen of Soviet Russia." Later, one of those ejected said Reno could be "...classed with... Coughlin and Huey Long as 'tools of Wall Street.'"⁷⁶

Two days later, a Register editorial quipped: "Wall Street must certainly be perplexed by all these new associates."⁷⁷

In May of 1935, when farmer delegates from 25 states went to Washington, D.C., to support AAA, Reno remarked in Des Moines: "...Henry Wallace whistled his bird dogs into Washington to yap at the heels of congressmen."⁷⁸

⁷⁴Des Moines Register, May 4, 1935, p. 4

⁷⁵Sioux City Journal, April 28, 1935, p. 3

⁷⁶Des Moines Register, April 28, 1935, p. 1

⁷⁷Ibid., April 30, 1935, p. 6

⁷⁸Sioux City Journal, May 15, 1935, p. 1

In another twist in his political life in June of 1935, Reno stated that at that time he preferred Hoover to Roosevelt. He said that Republicans were "...defenders of the Constitution." With candor, he added: "I've always hated Herbert Hoover...but, if Hoover and Roosevelt were candidates for president again, I'd vote against Roosevelt." Reno said he still felt there would be a third party in the 1936 elections.⁷⁹

In a speech at Dubuque, Reno again attacked F.D.R. and Henry Wallace "...amid interruptions of members (of the audience) who failed to agree with him." The heckling that Reno received seems to indicate that farmers were less dissatisfied with the farm situation than they had been.⁸⁰

When Governor Talmadge of Georgia spoke in Des Moines and attacked Roosevelt as "communistic," one of his chief supporters was Reno. The two had their picture taken together after the speech.⁸¹

Reno spoke to 4,000 farmers in Kankakee, Illinois, and referred to the almost 4 billion dollar relief appropriation as "...a corruption fund."⁸²

Henry Wallace spoke in Des Moines and denounced "...reactionaries and hell-raising boys who claim to represent the views of left wing farmers." Reno immediately challenged Wallace to a debate, but the Secre-

⁷⁹Des Moines Register, June 11, 1935, p. 13

⁸⁰Ibid., August 16, 1935, p. 13

⁸¹Ibid., September 20, 1935, p. 1

⁸²Ibid., November 20, 1935, p. 9

tary declined.⁸³

At a state convention of the Farm Holiday in Des Moines, Reno once more called for "cost of production" and charged the AAA violated the laws of Iowa which prohibited "...waste of food products to increase prices." Again, he accused Wallace of "...turning traitor to the cost of production cause."⁸⁴

In January of 1936, Reno publicly endorsed the Townsend old-age plan.⁸⁵ Later that same month in Washington, D.C., he assailed the administration's suggested soil conservation program.⁸⁶

From an Excelsior Springs, Missouri, hospital, Reno attacked the AAA as "...a continuation of control of the farmer." He charged the government with "...turning loose a lot of half-baked experts who would starve if they had to make a living on a farm."⁸⁷

This was the last attack by Reno found in the three newspapers. Reno lived one month and three days after the last verbal blast from his sickbed.

Although Reno had called for "cost of production" during the 1930's with great frequency, there is little evidence in the press that he used the expression for more than a means of warming up his audiences. How-

⁸³Ibid., December 3, 1935, p. 1

⁸⁴Ibid., December 31, 1935, p. 1

⁸⁵Ibid., January 9, 1936, p. 3

⁸⁶Ibid., January 18, 1936, p. 2

⁸⁷Ibid., April 2, 1936, p. 2

ever, Dale Kramer mentioned in a private interview that Reno had made trips to Washington, D.C., to exert his influence with congressmen to have "cost of production" enacted.⁸⁸

Also, Reno's frequent demands for the resignation or ouster of Henry Wallace as Secretary of Agriculture never took any formal legal shape. At farmer rallies, Reno would often start a petition for Wallace's ouster, but the press never mentioned what became of these petitions. The reader can only assume that they died after they had been used at a meeting to arouse the audience.

⁸⁸Interview by author with Dale Kramer (Sigourney, Iowa, October 1956)

Figure 2. Editorial cartoon by "Ding" Darling, Des Moines Register,
September 2, 1932, p. 1

WHO WANTS TO BE NEXT IN LINE?



EPILOGUE

Milo Reno's death in 1936 came as something of a shock to both critics and admirers. He had been active until a little more than a month before his death.

The Register reported that he had entered an Excelsior Springs hospital on March 7, but it stated that he was being treated for rheumatism - not surprising at his age, 70. The affliction, it was said, was complicated by influenza.¹

On January 9, Reno had been arrested in Des Moines on a charge of intoxication, but never was tried because of out-of-town trips and, later, his illness.²

In early April, doctors reported Reno was "...slightly better..." though seriously ill.³ However, by the end of that month, an article that described Reno as "...always a fighter," reported the farm leader was steadily sinking.⁴

Reno's life had been turbulent. He did not treat his opponents gently and was likewise subjected to the jabs of his critics. Time referred to Reno in an article on the 1932 farm strike as: "...Tall, thin-lipped...belligerent former president of the Iowa Farmers Union...." "Bushy-haired Milo Reno, in baggy trousers and a five-gallon Stetson hat, made a loud fiery speech to 10,000 farmers...in cow-barn language...."

¹Des Moines Register, March 12, 1936, p. 2

²Ibid., January 21, 1936, p. 15

³Ibid., April 4, 1936, p. 1

⁴Ibid., April 29, 1936, p. 1

The article added that Reno was "...a radical exhibitionist who claims to be 'as poor as the rest of you farmers.'"⁵

In The Nation, Wayne Gard referred to Reno as "...the kingfish of the Iowa Farmers Union."⁶

A "letter to the editor" of the Register stated: "It (the leadership of the Farm Holiday) has all degenerated into pure fakism...nothing can come of any movement so selfishly promoted as the Farm Holiday movement."⁷

The novelist, Sinclair Lewis, used Milo Reno as the character for the American ambassador to France in It Can't Happen Here. He was described as the "...favorite social lion of the French Royalist party." Reno good naturedly commented: "...Lewis is simply writing good satire... I am just an old clodhopper and Sinclair Lewis knows it..."

By the time of Reno's death, Farm Holiday membership had dwindled from a high of one million members in 28 states to 50 thousand in 15 states.⁸

The thing that destroyed the movement in the Midwest was the Wallace corn-hog program that put money into the pockets of destitute farmers. However, because the Wallace plan fell short of Reno's goal of "cost of production" legislation, Reno fought it bitterly. He recognized that he would lose the farmers' support if they became less dissatisfied. The

⁵"Stomach Strike," Time, August 29, 1932, p. 13

⁶Gard, Wayne, "The Farmers Rebellion," The Nation, (September 7, 1932), p. 207

⁷Des Moines Register, September 25, 1932, p. 7-L

⁸Ibid., May 7, 1936, p. 2

Literary Digest, nevertheless, credited the Holiday movement with at least speeding up farm relief from Washington.⁹

In connection with Reno's criticism of the New Deal's AAA, Basil Rauch states that the program aided the large and medium-sized farmer, but did little to help tenants, small-scale farmers and migratory farmers. Reno often stated that the small farmer and the tenant realized little benefit from AAA. Reno probably would have appreciated the Farm Tenant Act of 1937.¹⁰

Broadus Mitchell writes in The Depression Decade that there was probably a closer organization of farmers in the Hoover administration's association of cooperatives than the AAA attempted.¹¹ Reno later in his career stated that Hoover understood the farm situation better than Roosevelt.

Mitchell agrees with the Reno view that there was little worthwhile in the AAA; he criticizes the program's "planned scarcity;" he also states the plan was ineffective, expensive and harmful¹² - so did Reno.

When Reno died, the Register, Journal, and Nonpareil carried news announcements.

"...Nominally a republican, Reno never let party lines hamper him in

⁹"Rural Strike Speeding Farm Relief in Washington," Literary Digest, (November 4, 1933), p. 8

¹⁰Rauch, Basil, The History of the New Deal, (New York, 1947), p. 102

¹¹Mitchell, Broadus, The Depression Decade (New York, 1947), p. 405

¹²Ibid., p. 197

his fight for what he thought agriculturally right," the Journal stated. "Reno's picturesque platform vocabulary won him the label demagogue from his enemies...." This article also mentioned Reno's recent political career from 1928 to the time of his death.¹³

"Tall, gaunt and fervent, Reno used to be a minister and was noted for the denunciatory character of some of his pulpit utterances....," the Nonpareil recalled. "...To his followers, Reno was a leader who braved all in their cause. Enemies called him a demagogue."¹⁴

The Register simply carried a news item about the cause of death, and funeral arrangements.¹⁵

In an editorial, the Register commented:

"The Register did not agree with Milo Reno on most things. It disapproved...some of his methods. But on the...principle the farmer deserved a fairer proportion of the good things... Mr. Reno and this newspaper had not the essence of a quarrel."¹⁶

The editorial continued: "...If he represented the more 'radical' farm group..., it was not because he created it, but because it was there and he directed it shrewdly and made it articulate."

The Journal reported that Iowa's Senator Dickinson, with whom Reno had not always been on friendly terms, stated in Washington: "...He knew the needs of the farmer and as an evangelist in the farm cause, he

¹³Sioux City Journal, May 6, 1936, p. 10

¹⁴Council Bluffs Nonpareil, May 6, 1936, p. 1

¹⁵Des Moines Register, May 6, 1936, p. 5

¹⁶Ibid., p. 8

had few equals."¹⁷

In a story of Reno's funeral, J. S. Russell, of the Register wrote: "Strong men of the soil, they were, tanned beneath the hot Iowa sun, who made no move to hide their grief over the death of the man they had followed in life."¹⁸

Twenty years later, Russell said of Reno: "He was a charlatan and a fake who enjoyed a sense of power when his farmers followed him." Russell added that he grew tired of being Reno's "whipping boy." Reno would spot him at a farmers' rally as he spoke. He would break his speech to point at Russell and shout: "There sits a representative of the capitalist press."¹⁹

Dale Kramer, the former editor of Reno's Farm Holiday News, said: "Reno wasn't a bully but a fighter."²⁰ On the other hand, Kramer feels that Reno was a "...throwback to the old criminal-syndicalists." He said that Reno at one time confided: "Kramer, all we need are a few good men and some sticks of dynamite. Then we could set this thing right." Reno had been drinking heavily at the time he said that, but Kramer felt the statement indicated (at least partially) the man's feelings.²⁰

Reno made good copy and the three newspapers sampled recognized this. They may not have agreed with him, but they, at least, presented his

¹⁷Sioux City Journal, May 9, 1936, p. 8

¹⁸Des Moines Register, May 9, 1936, p. 4

¹⁹Interview by author with J. S. Russell (Des Moines, November 1956)

²⁰Interview by author with Dale Kramer (Sigourney, Iowa, October 1956)

story many times. This writer observed an aspect of newspaper style in the stories that he had not anticipated after seeing the "interpretive reporting" of today's press. That was that whole stories on Reno might consist of his quotations with only attributives from the reporter or editors. This style appeared to be highly objective. However, the selection of quotations could be as subjective as the reporter or editor wished.

On the basis of value judgment, this writer would say that the Sioux City Journal was moderately pro-Reno in its coverage; the Des Moines Register was opposed to Reno's methods but, for the most part, objective in its coverage of Reno and the "Holiday." (The Register appeared to be quick in clarifying vague charges made against the "Holiday." It cleared the air in the "Red" accusation incidents and presented solid background material to show the "Holiday" was not a "radical" movement, but a protest to economic distress.)

The Council Bluffs Nonpareil was frankly opposed to Reno and the Holiday movement and appeared to slant its news presentation (and certainly its editorials) against the "Holiday" and Reno.

Kramer pointed out that Reno often did not know what his men were doing in the countryside. When violence would break out, reporters would rush to his office and ask him what he knew. He said he knew nothing of the incidents until they had told him, and the reporters did not believe him. They felt that he had directed every act of the movement.²¹

²¹Ibid.

J. S. Russell, as one of those reporters, still believes that Reno had known of and directed the violence.²²

From reading the coverage of the violence, this writer believes that Reno did not know of the violence beforehand, but that he must share the blame for whipping up the incidents by his fiery declarations. Reno, however, often appears to have been a leader who trailed his followers.

In a historical story of the farm violence of the 1930's that appeared in the Journal in 1953, Laurette K. Trauffler referred to the Farm Holiday: "...The organization under supervision of Milo Reno, an ordained minister who later engaged in farming, was intended to operate in Iowa, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Nebraska."²³

The Annals of Iowa carried Reno's obituary in a brief note in its section on "notable Iowans."

"Listed as a Republican, he disregarded party bonds, voting for Smith in 1928 and for Roosevelt in 1932, but soon became a caustic critic of the latter's administration, and spoke in support of the Constitution."²⁴

That was a matter of opinion. More probably, Reno spoke in support of "cost of production."

²²Interview by author with J. S. Russell (Des Moines, November 1956)

²³Sioux City Journal, April 19, 1953, p. 1

²⁴"Notable Deaths" Annals of Iowa (Des Moines, July 1936), p. 291

CONCLUSIONS

An evaluation of the objectivity, accuracy, and completeness of coverage of Reno and the "Holiday" by these three newspapers can proceed along at least two lines. One would be to compare newspaper coverage with accounts in secondary sources that were written with the advantage of time perspective. Another means would be to compare general performance among the three newspapers.

Objectivity

Of the secondary sources, the biography of Milo Reno by Roland White and The Wild Jackasses by Dale Kramer are two possible choices. The two books are not scholarly, however, and there is some question concerning the objectivity of the authors.

White portrays Reno as a kind, elderly gentleman, surrounded by his children and great grandchildren.¹ This is a picture not shown in the newspapers. White also shows Reno as a man with a quick, homespun sense of humor, but the press presented Reno most often as a grim, dour minister. The biographer also depicts his subject as a fighter and champion of the underdog. On this point, the newspapers' portrayal agrees with that of White - that Reno was a fighter.

White's biography was written under the auspices of the Iowa Farmers Union. It is more a eulogy of Reno rather than a true biography. White

¹White, Roland A., Milo Reno (Iowa City, Iowa), passim.

mentions his sources of material in his acknowledgments. These were the papers of Reno's daughter, widow, and secretary.

White is presently the editor of the Dubuque Leader, a labor newspaper. One of the sections of the book deals with Reno's associations with labor and the continuing close relationship between labor unions and the Farmers Union.²

Dale Kramer's book deals with radical Midwest farm movements. About one-fifth of his book is concerned with Reno and the "Holiday." He presents a sympathetic picture of Reno, but refrains from the unvarnished praise in which White indulged. He shows Reno failing as a farmer, but successful as an organizer for the early Iowa Farmers Union.³ He defends Reno's actions throughout the period of the farm strike and also pictures the "Holiday" as representing a downtrodden class, fighting for justice. Kramer, however, recognizes Reno's shortcomings as a leader, characterizing him as a man "of quick skirmishes and sudden retreats - rather than a single-purposed leader of a disciplined hand."⁴

Kramer had been personally associated with Reno during the period of the "Holiday" movement as editor of Reno's Farm Holiday News. After Reno's death, Kramer went to New York City, where he was connected with Heywood Broun, founder of the Newspapermen's Guild, a union of press writers. At

²White, Roland A., Milo Reno (Iowa City, Iowa) pp. 91-98

³Kramer, Dale, The Wild Jackasses (New York) p. 196

⁴Ibid., p. 220

the present time, Kramer is living in his home town, Sigourney, Iowa, working as a free-lance writer. He is also a publicist for the National Farmers Organization, a group established to protest low farm prices.⁵

Although White and Kramer portrayed Reno's personality more vividly and somewhat differently than the Register and the Journal, the two newspapers presented a more complete picture of the man. They showed him as a fiery, militant farm leader who was constantly in search of phrases that would excite the crowd. Of all the adjectives used to describe Reno, "militant" was probably the most frequently employed in the Register and the Journal. Another side of Reno that the newspapers presented was that of a man who aligned himself with political extremists and opportunists during his career - especially during the period of the Farm Holiday. Neither White nor Kramer mention Reno's association with Huey Long or Father Coughlin. For that matter, neither did Theodore Saloutos and J. D. Hicks in their Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West.

While White and Kramer had the advantage of perspective, they seem to have been overpowered by their admiration of Reno and his crusades. The Register and the Journal were more inclined to leave the evaluation of Reno up to their readers. The Nonpareil, on the other hand, was outspokenly opposed to Reno and the Holiday movement. For example, a Nonpareil editorial once questioned the literacy of Reno and the Holiday members in a tongue-in-cheek manner.⁶ Another editorial in that newspaper

⁵ Interview by Author with Dale Kramer (Sigourney, Iowa), November 1956

⁶ See above, p. 75

suggested that Reno deserved the title of the "Farmers' Worst Enemy."⁷

In view of White's and Kramer's backgrounds and careers, together with the omissions concerning Reno in their works, they do not present a reliable check of the accuracy, objectivity, or completeness of the press coverage of Reno and the "Holiday." In any such comparison, however, the Register and the Journal fare rather well.

Two other works dealing with the period of the farm strike are Howard Lawrence's The Farmers Holiday Movement and Frank Dileva's article, "Frantic Farmers Fight Law," but these two accounts, however, follow the "Holiday" only through its period of violence and direct action. Neither deals with the political activities of Reno or the Holiday movement. Dileva discusses the "Cow War" in southeastern Iowa, but sheds little light on the personal career of Reno. Lawrence is concerned only with the farm strike from 1932 through 1934.

Since a review of the secondary sources discloses little new material on the newspapers' objectivity, an examination of newspaper editorial pages and news articles might reveal objectivity or the lack of it. In editorial attitudes, the Register expressed sympathy with the farmers' plight during the Depression, but criticized the "Holiday's" methods of trying to improve farm conditions. In several instances, the Register took Reno to task for his bellicose utterances.⁸

The Journal, however, generally refrained from criticizing Reno on

⁷See above, p. 70

⁸See above, pp. 20, 24, 34

its editorial page. There is one notable exception. During the presidential election campaign of 1932, Reno publicly accused President Hoover of being responsible for the farmers' difficulties, and the Journal retorted with an editorial attack on Reno for criticizing the President.⁹

The Nonpareil made no effort to conceal its hostility toward Reno and the "Holiday." Its editorials were highly biased and emotional in their approach to the Farm Holiday and its leader. Not one of the Nonpareil's editorials that were read in this study was at all sympathetic to the "Holiday."¹⁰

In handling news stories, the Journal was prone to be more sympathetic to the Farm Holiday in its articles about the group's activities than was the Register. The Register usually referred to the Holiday men as "pickets" and "strikers", both words that carry a neutral, to adverse, connotation. The Journal, however, often used such expressions as "tillers of the soil" in referring to Holiday members.¹¹

Accuracy

There were some discrepancies among the newspapers surveyed concerning specific events. For example, the Register reported that 10,000 persons heard Reno speak at a rally in Des Moines. The Nonpareil stated that there were 20,000 present. The Register's story was by one of its

⁹See above, p. 56

¹⁰See above, pp. 46, 50, 62, 70, 75

¹¹See above, p. 15

own reporters; the Nonpareil's was from a wire service. One of three things happened: the wire service to the Nonpareil may have made the error; the Nonpareil may have erred in editing; or the Register and the wire service may have secured estimates of the crowd from different sources.¹²

Again, there was disagreement between the Register and the Journal regarding whether a strike truce was called by Reno at one point during the picketing. The Register flatly stated that Reno had called a halt to highway picketing, but the Journal reported that Reno said the strike would continue. The same Journal article also carried information concerning strike activity in the Sioux City area. This seems to support its report that Reno had called for the strike to continue.¹³

In spite of these and other minor differences, there was a high degree of agreement between the Register and the Journal in articles about the same event. This applies to stories that were gathered by different reporters for the two newspapers. It would, of course, be expected with the wire service stories, since both the Register and the Journal used the Associated Press.

Completeness

If the news accounts are compared with later secondary sources, the Register's and the Journal's coverage of Reno and the Holiday movement's

¹²See above, p. 75

¹³See above, p. 21

activities was quite satisfactory. The Register's statewide coverage was the better of the two. It often sent reporters and photographers to cover events far from Des Moines. (One of those reporters was J. S. Russell, who is now the Register's farm editor.)¹⁴ The Journal did an excellent job of covering news events first-hand in the Sioux City area. It was aided by the fact that so many of the farm strike's most dramatic breaks occurred in its vicinity. The Journal, however, relied more on wire service than did the Register. The Nonpareil depended almost entirely upon wire service for its news of Reno and the Holiday movement's activities. In its use of wire reports, the Nonpareil sometimes failed to print entire accounts as they appeared in the Register and the Journal.¹⁵

Of the areas covered by the Register, one of the most complete was that of the political activities of Reno and the Holiday movement. This news did not have the dramatic impact of the farm strike or the "penny sales," but it was important in evaluating the effectiveness of the "Holiday" and its leader. None of the secondary sources pay much attention to the "Holiday's" interest in politics or in Reno's political wanderings during the "Holiday" period.

While not referring specifically to the Register or to the Journal, a spokesman of a group opposed to Reno and the "Holiday" - "The Law and Order League" - criticized the press of the state for giving Reno and his group too much "publicity." The speaker felt that if the press ignored

¹⁴Interview by author with J. S. Russell (Des Moines, Iowa), November, 1956

¹⁵See above, p. 50

Reno and the "Holiday," they might lose their appeal to many farmers.¹⁶

Both the Journal and the Register printed editorials, depth reports, and background stories to supplement their news stories and to inform the readers more fully. The Journal, for example, ran an editorial explaining the economic situations that led to farm strikes.¹⁷ The Register published feature articles by authorities to explain events in the light of an economic and political background.¹⁸ The Register even went so far as to print an article under Milo Reno's by-line, expressing the farm leader's side of the story.¹⁹ This was done despite the fact that the Register often disagreed with Reno's methods on its editorial page. The Nonpareil's approach was less thoroughly documented and more opinionated. In the issues of the Nonpareil that were checked, there were no first-hand or syndicated background articles on either Reno or the Farm Holiday.

* * *

One of the problems confronting the contemporary reader during the period of the Holiday movement's activity was the group's structural organization. The three newspapers failed to explain that structure fully. While it is known that the idea of a farm strike was launched as early as 1927,²⁰ the origin of the Farm Holiday association was never completely

¹⁶See above, p. 31

¹⁷See above, p. 29

¹⁸See above, p. 52

¹⁹See above, p. 19

²⁰Kramer, op. cit. p. 222

presented. When the state was beginning to relax after the violence of the "Cow War," the "Holiday" seemed to suddenly appear on the scene. From January to March of 1932, there was no mention of the group prior to its first call for a mass meeting. When that call was issued, the association already had its officers. In what manner they were elected or selected is not disclosed.²¹ Also, at later conventions of the association, delegates from states with active membership were present, but their method of selection was not mentioned.²²

One of the reasons could be that the "Holiday" was closely associated with the Farmers Union. Perhaps the Farmers Union did not want to have the connection publicized because, if the group were labeled "Farmers Union," individuals who were members of the Grange or Farm Bureau might not join the Farm Holiday association. Newspaper accounts, however, occasionally mention that Farmers Union men were the most numerous at the "Holiday" meetings.²³

A possible theory for the separation of the Farmers Union and the Farm Holiday association was that the Farmers Union did not wish to be held liable for destruction resulting from violence. Although the Farmers Union had assets, the Holiday association had only the small dues collected from members. This theory presupposes that the organizers of the "Holiday" movement contemplated violence.

²¹See above, p. 12

²²See above, p. 76

²³See above, p. 13

The three newspapers in this study did not report any minutes of Holiday meetings or written proposals to legislative committees. The press did mention that various resolutions were passed at Holiday gatherings. White mentions only briefly that Reno made trips to Washington, but he does not state if these were to promote his case before Congress.²⁴

In view of the news sources the press had, the Register and the Journal fully utilized the news value of Reno and the "Holiday," but the Nonpareil only took the news that came to its door.

²⁴White, op. cit., p. 24

APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGY

Farm Holiday Association
and Milo Reno's Activities, 1932-1936

March 9, 1932 - G. B. Miller, president of Iowa Farmers Union, urged farmers to unite in a "...buying and selling strike."

May 4, 1932 - 2,000 farmers met in Des Moines and Reno was named Chairman of the Farmers Holiday association. Farmers Union men predominated the meeting.

June 26, 1932 - Reno called for a strike on July 4.

July 4, 1932 - The strike failed to materialize.

August 7, 1932 - Reno ordered a strike for August 8.

August 9, 1932 - The strike in Sioux City area got underway but had a slow start.

August 11, 1932 - Sioux City milk producers began a separate milk strike.

August 24, 1932 - Deputy sheriffs of Pottawattami county used tear gas to break up a strikers' barricade outside of Council Bluffs. The sheriff blamed outsiders for violence.

August 25, 1932 - Reno admitted the strike may have gone out of hand.

August 31, 1932 - President of Farm Bureau, E. A. O'Neal, said the strikers were misguided.

September 1, 1932 - Reno called for the strike to stop after 14 strikers were shot in Cherokee county, but violence continued even after Governor Turner called for law and order.

September 7, 1932 - Reno said he called for the truce because he could not see "...unarmed farmers shot and gassed along the road."

September 10, 1932 - Reno denied that the Holiday association was responsible for the strikes since September 1.

September 19, 1932 - Executive Council of Association called for a strike on September 20.

September 22, 1932 - Reno said the strike would not break the law.

October 5, 1932 - Reno and Holiday members campaigned and paraded against Hoover in Des Moines.

January 1933 - Farm chattel sales were halted near Le Mars, Webster City, Story county, and near Sioux City. No mention of Association in Sioux City Journal or Des Moines Register.

February 8, 1933 - Villesca Farm Holiday association mediated a compromise with a farm owner after the tenant's chattel sale was halted by a mob.

February 27, 1933 - Reno praised the appointment of Henry Wallace as Secretary of Agriculture.

March 13, 1933 - Farm Holiday association spokesmen said a strike would be called in May if there was not immediate, satisfactory farm legislation.

April 28, 1933 - Judge C. C. Bradley was assaulted at Le Mars. 800 farmers rioted near Denison.

April 29, 1933 - Reno said attack on the judge was deplorable, but that the farmers were desperate.

April 30, 1933 - National Guardsmen arrived at Le Mars. Suspects were being rounded up near Le Mars and near Denison. Governor Herring blamed violence on "professional agitators."

May 2, 1933 - Communist cell uncovered in Sioux City. Linked by state officers to Farm Holiday association. Several members of Farm Holiday association arrested by guardsmen for the attack on Judge Bradley.

May 4, 1933 - Reno blamed plight of farmers on "International Bankers" in a Des Moines speech.

May 10, 1933 - Minnesota Farm Holiday association called for President Roosevelt to oust Wallace because the Secretary was not backing "cost of production" plan. In Des Moines, Reno attacked the New Deal. He said its farm bill would reduce farmers to peasants.

May 12, 1933 - Reno called for another strike on May 13.

May 13, 1933 - Reno postponed the strike after President Roosevelt called for delay in farm foreclosures.

May 22, 1933 - Reno expressed his faith in President Roosevelt.

May 28, 1933 - A Chicagoan organized a "Law and Order League" to fight Farm Holiday association. He said the Farm Holiday association had communists in the background and he urged farmers to support the Farm Bureau.

- June 25, 1933 - A Register editorial stated that "red baiting" accomplished nothing. "...fundamentally farm protest in Iowa has been and is the very antithesis of communistic."
- July 8, 1933 - In a speech in Sioux City, Reno praised Roosevelt's public works program.
- August 11, 1933 - Reno attacked the plan to slaughter the "little pigs."
- September 10, 1933 - Reno attacked Wallace as "Secretary of Wall Street" and called for cost of production. Told farmers to shun NRA until they are shown same consideration.
- September 23, 1933 - Reno threatens another strike if cost of production is not passed into law.
- October 21, 1933 - Strike begins quietly.
- October 24, 1933 - R. R. Brotherhood pledges support of farm strike.
- October 30, 1933 - Picketing collapses - Reno calls for Midwest governors to establish embargo.
- November 5, 1933 - Strike is resumed - Reno accuses FDR of trying to 'make slaves out of farmers.'
- November 6, 1933 - Train halted near Lawton, Iowa
- November 7, 1933 - Railroad bridges were burned near Cherokee and Cleghorn.
- November 9, 1933 - Railroad bridge near Portsmouth burned.
- November 13, 1933 - Reno said, "Henry Wallace is a damned liar," after Wallace said that agitators were being paid to stir up farm trouble.
- January 6, 1934 - Reno called for a third party in a speech in Coopers Union, New York.
- May 4, 1934 - Reno attacked Wallace. He referred to the "Brains Trust" as a "group of political shysters and half-baked brain trusters."
- November 21, 1934 - Reno attacked Wallace in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He said: "The problems of American farmers will not be solved until they put guns on their shoulders and use force."
- April 8, 1935 - Reno announced plans for a conference in Des Moines with F. E. Townsend, Governor Floyd Olson of Minnesota, Huey Long and Father Coughlin.

April 28, 1935 - Huey Long spoke to 10,000 member Farm Holiday association rally in Des Moines. Long was introduced by Reno as "a man with guts." Representatives of Father Coughlin (his secretary and attorney) attended the convention.

April 29, 1935 - The Farm Holiday association convention called for formation of third party.

June 11, 1935 - Reno stated that if Hoover and Roosevelt ran against each other again, he would vote against Roosevelt.

January 9, 1936 - Reno publicly endorses the Townsend old age plan.

April 2, 1936 - From his sickbed in Excelsior Springs, Reno attacked the AAA and the "Brains Trust."

May 5, 1936 - Milo Reno died in Missouri of a heart attack following a long illness.

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