

tion tenancy. Everyone knows that when chattel slavery was abolished the plantations remained. Most of the Negroes became share-croppers and tenants on these plantations. They were actually prisoners, almost chattel slaves. Almost three-quarters of a century has passed since Emancipation. Has capitalism done anything to abolish this new slavery?

On the contrary! The plantation country to this day is like a prison, a veritable hell to which 5,000,000 Negroes have been consigned without any prospect of immediate escape. In fact, the slavery has even increased. In the cotton plantation area of the South, twenty-five years ago, 80 per cent of all the Negro farmers were croppers and tenants. But in 1930 their number had grown to almost 84 per cent.

There are those who say that President Roosevelt and the "New Deal" are changing this situation. But it is clear to every Negro in the plantation country that Roosevelt has been helping only the big planters. His policies have resulted in increased slavery.

When the crisis broke out in this country the large landowners in the South found themselves in a quandary. Many of the banks and credit merchants failed and those who remained refused to extend credit. Many of the small landowners, who lived from hand to mouth, were wiped out. From the beginning of the crisis to March, 1933, over a half-million forced sales and foreclosures took place in the Southern states.

Roosevelt came to the rescue of the large landowners by pumping tremendous funds into the South, most of which went to the modern slave-master — the plantation owner. In nine months alone the Farm Credit Administration advanced about \$300,000,000 directly to the planters. In this way, Roosevelt helped to bolster up the plantation, on which millions of Negroes are enslaved. The Federal Government took over many of the debts from private banks and insurance companies and is now the biggest holder of mortgages in the South. This means that it now has a direct hand in maintaining the plantation slavery, that it is part owner, together with the big planter, of a vast prison country.

The second step taken by Roosevelt was to increase the profits of the large landowners and the commission merchants by reducing acreage in the South. In 1933, while millions of people were in need of clothing, we were faced with the astounding

picture of ripe cotton being plowed under by poorly clothed farm workers. The croppers and tenants never saw the money which they were supposed to receive from the Government for this act of destruction. The plantation masters, the credit merchants, the bankers, got the government checks. This is what a government farm agent in Mississippi said:

"You know, the government in Washington caused me a little trouble here. By mistake they mailed some of the checks made out to 'nigger' croppers. They probably didn't know what they were doing when they did it. Imagine giving a check to a 'nigger' cropper! Of course, I turned these checks over to the landlords anyhow. They'll have to get the croppers to endorse them before they take them to the bank. But that won't be hard."

Acreage was cut again in 1934 under the Bankhead Bill. It is being cut again in 1935 as a result of a "democratic" election in which the plantation owners forced the Negro croppers and tenants to vote for reduction.

This is not only a decimation of crops; it is also a decimation of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Whole tenant families are being sent "down the road" by the planters, or are being permitted to eke out a miserable existence in their cabins doing forced labor for the government or the planter in return for some crumbs called relief. These landless and workless farm families are being "kept on hand" to be forced to work at plowing, chopping or cotton picking at starvation wages. Wages on most plantations are now between 25 and 50 cents a day.

Roosevelt's policies have had the effect of increasing the slavery of millions of Negro toilers in the South. Cotton, the need of millions of unclothed, a necessity of mankind, has been turned into the mark of Negro slavery by capitalism.

The Promise of the City

It seemed to many people, especially during the World War and the years immediately following, that city life and industry would offer a means of escape from slavery on the land.

The city and its industry had been practically forbidden territory for Negroes up to the World War. In the first place, the plantation masters and government agencies of the Black Belt kept the Negroes chained to the land and would not permit them to leave. Even when industry began to develop in the South, the factory gates remained closed to Negro workers. Hope was