

Interview with Farmer Ernest Boney in South Carolina, 1938

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Durham had closed his store right after I left him, due to other interests. I did right well for two years. In 1924, I lost everything I had in the store, by fire. There was no insurance. Rates were so high out here in the country without any fire protection that I had never taken out any. I had gone in debt right deep to get the store started, and it took several years to get over the loss. I have never completely recovered from it.

“I have always been able to keep from mortgaging my home. As long as I can do this, I feel like I can feed and clothe my family. There has been plenty of times when we thought we just couldn't keep from it. Just this past fall, my third son, Ben, entered Clemson. He knew I couldn't help him out much, so he had been working for the past two summers, saving his money so he could enter. He just couldn't seem to get enough to get by the first year. Finally, he got some help from the National Youth Administration. But the expense of the freshman year is so large he had to borrow some extra money to carry him on through. He certainly has his mind set on finishing college. He is taking agriculture, and he wants to teach when he finishes. I wish I were able to send all my children on through college, but it is impossible. I have been able to let them finish high school and I am very thankful for that.

“I had a bad crop this year. I planted my entire cotton allotment, and in August, it looked like I was going to have a bale to the acre. It rained a good deal and the boll weevil ruined me. It's gotten to the place where it looks like it's impossible to kill the weevil. I sprayed my cotton as often as possible, but it still didn't do any good. I would have been better off if I hadn't planted a row. I averaged 236 pounds of seed 9 cotton to the acre, when I should have gotten a bale of ginned cotton. Oh, well! I reckon everything is for the best. I hear the government has more cotton on hand than they know what to do with. If everybody had made a big crop this year, the price would go down, and cotton is sure cheap enough as it is. I made more cash money on what I didn't plant than I got out of what I did plant.

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“Oh, yes sir? I certainly am in favor of Government Control. I'll tell you, we would be in a bad fix by now if we didn't have a control of some sort. The trouble is, people won't give it a trial. They just sit down and start kicking, just to have something to kick about. It makes it hard on people who are trying to abide by the rules. It's just like the relief in Blythewood. It's a fine thing for them that actually need it. What ruins it is that so many people who don't need it abuse it. For a time last summer, you couldn't get a Negro to work on the farm. They would get two or three days work on the W.P.A., and this was all they needed. It isn't just the niggers either. There are lots of white people around here who have farms but won't work them. With all the land around Blythewood that's lying idle, there could be plenty for all, but they won't work them as long as they can get work on the W.P.A. They won't even raise a garden at home. “

“Yes, we have plenty of churches around here. My entire family are members of old Sandy-Level Baptist Church, the church we have attended all our lives. My wife's parents and my parents are buried

there. All my family are regular church members. There are several churches in the community. Old Asbury Methodist Church has been here as long as I can remember. People don't seem to go to church nowadays like they use to. When I was a boy, it 10 seemed that everybody went to church on Sunday. Everything seems to have changed since then.

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“My life has been one of hard work. I have always been able to get enough to keep my family reasonably comfortable. If I can keep my health, I know I can provide for them in the fashion we have always lived. I want them to get all the education possible. They are all good, honest, and hardworking. And as long as they stay that way, I won't think our hardships have been in vain.”