

I'd Rather Not Be on Relief

I'D RATHER NOT BE ON RELIEF

Lester Hunter Shafter, 1938

We go around all dressed in rags While the rest of the world goes neat, And we have to be satisfied With half enough to eat. We have to live in lean-tos, Or else we live in a tent, For when we buy our bread and beans There's nothing left for rent.

I'd rather not be on the rolls of relief, Or work on the W. P. A., We'd rather work for the farmer If the farmer could raise the pay; Then the farmer could plant more cotton And he'd get more money for spuds, Instead of wearing patches, We'd dress up in new duds.

From the east and west and north and south Like a swarm of bees we come; The migratory workers Are worse off than a bum. We go to Mr. Farmer And ask him what he'll pay; He says, "You gypsy workers Can live on a buck a day."

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We don't ask for luxuries Or even a feather bed. But we're bound to raise the dickens While our families are underfed. Now the winter is on us And the cotton picking is done, What are we going to live on While weirs waiting for spuds to come?

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Now if you will excuse me I'll bring my song to an end. I've got to go and chuck a crack
Where the howling wind comes in. The times are going to better And I guess you'd like to
know I'll tell you all about it, I've joined the C. I. O.