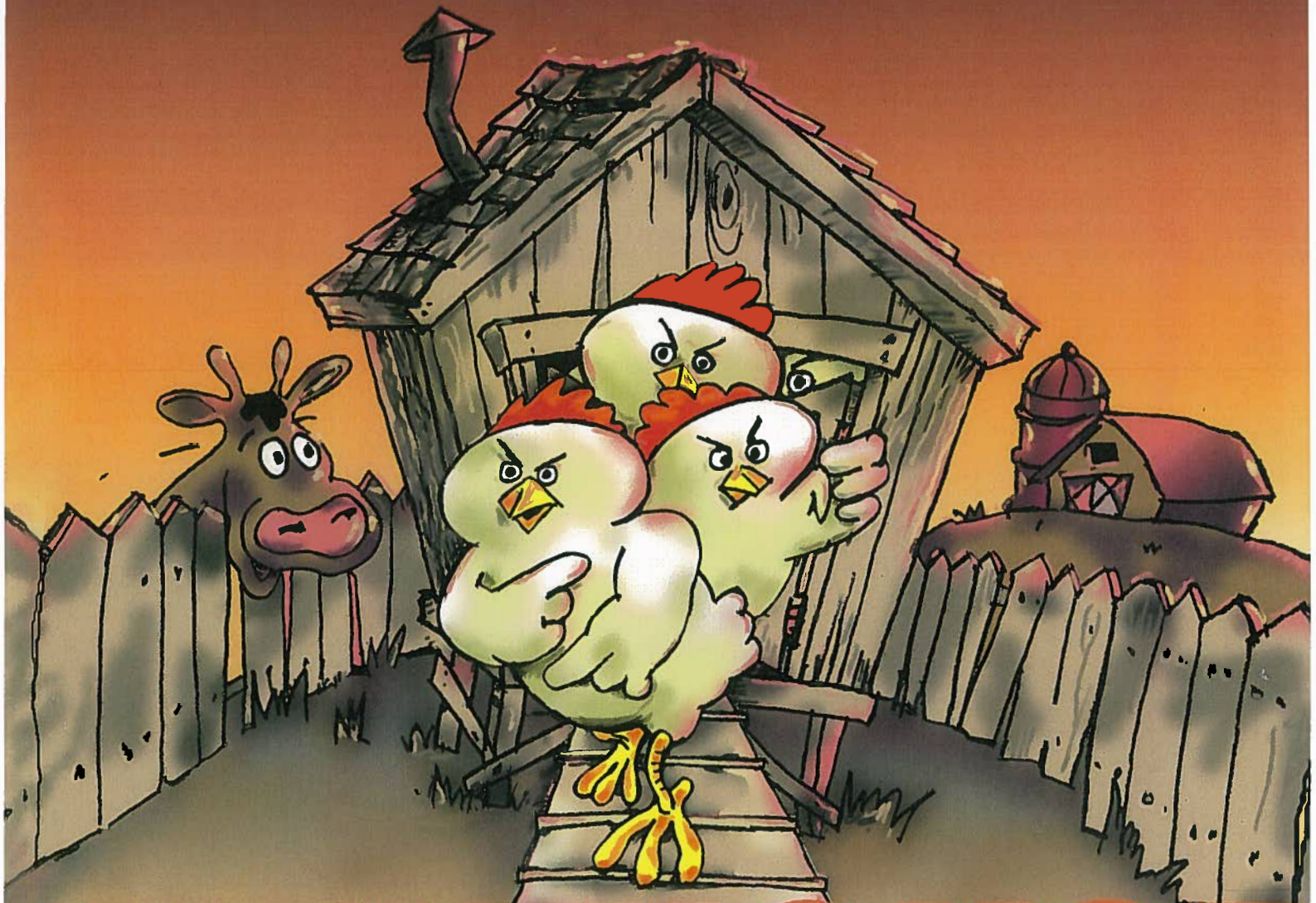


# TROUBLE

IN THE



# HEN HOUSE

A PUPPET SHOW



# Trouble in the Hen House



A Puppet Show  
for Elementary Labor Studies

## Lesson Suggestions for *Trouble in the Hen House*

*Trouble in the Hen House* is a puppet show about unions and how they work. It is suitable for elementary grades and can be a component of your Cesar Chavez Day (March 31) unit. Simple puppet patterns are provided.

K-1: The teacher can read the play to the class. Children can make and manipulate the puppets as the script is read to them.

2-3: Children can make the puppets and stage the puppet show. If children have difficulty memorizing their lines, or difficulty speaking and manipulating the puppets at the same time, the tasks can be divided. Some students can read the lines while others work the puppets.

4-5: Teachers may want to use the play in "readers' theater" format, or have students produce the play for a younger audience. The play can be a part of a schoolwide program in celebration of Cesar Chavez Day.

### Resources:

*Cesar Chavez*, by Ruth Franchere, Harper Trophy, 1970, 40 pages

*Cesar Chavez, Labor Leader*, by Maria E. Cedeño, Millbrook Press, 32 pages

*Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*, by Doreen Cronin, Simon & Schuster, 30 pages

*The Egg Ranch Gang and All About Eggs Activity Books and Videos*, by California Egg Commission, Upland, CA, 20-24 pages

*Let Me Tell You About A Man: A Short Biography of Cesar Chavez*, by Bill Morgan, 2001, CFT, One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440, Oakland, CA 94612, 16 pages.

*The Yummy Pizza Company: A Labor Studies Curriculum for Elementary Schools*, by the CFT Labor in the Schools Committee (see back of this booklet for ordering info).

*What is a Union?*, by Althea, Interform, 2700 E. 55th Place, Suite 8, Indianapolis, Indiana 46220, Attention: Stocky Cornelius. [\$1.05 each, 317-253-3250]

**Note:** The California Department of Education is developing a comprehensive K-12 curriculum on Cesar Chavez which will be ready by 2002.

# *Trouble in the Hen House*

## *A Puppet Show*

### **Characters:**

Henrietta Hen  
Hortensia Hen  
Chiquita  
Rudy Rooster  
Farmer Brown  
Daisy (Cow)  
Chicken 1  
Chicken 2

### **Vocabulary:**

producing/production  
inspire  
complaints  
demand  
union  
average  
recognize  
conditions  
cholesterol  
ungrateful



## **Act I** *(at the hen house)*

### **Henrietta:**

You know what I heard today? Farmer Brown told his wife that he was going to cut down our food because he needs to save money!

### **Chicken 1:**

All we get for laying eggs for him every day is this lousy corn, and now he's going to starve us? How does he expect us to keep producing?



**Henrietta:**

Wait! That's not all. He also said that we don't lay enough eggs, and whoever doesn't lay at least one egg a day is going to be chicken stew!

**Chicken 2:**

How can he be so mean? We sit here all day in this tiny hen house. Why, my nest is so small I can't even stretch my wings, but I still work hard to keep up my production.

**Hortensia:**

It's so dark in here I can't even see my food. What I wouldn't give for a window so I could see what's going on in the barnyard. Maybe that would inspire me to lay more eggs.

**Chiquita:**

May I make a suggestion? Why don't you guys go and talk to Farmer Brown? Tell him your complaints. Maybe after he hears what you have to say he'll change his mind.



**Hortensia:**

Shh, *mija*. You're too young to know what we're talking about.

**Chicken 1:**

No, she might be right. It's worth a try. You go, Henrietta, you're the bravest.

**Henrietta:**

Are you kidding? I'd be in the stew pot before I'd said two clucks.

**Chiquita:**

You go with her, Mama. You're Henrietta's best friend, and everyone knows you're the best layer. If you stick together, Farmer Brown won't make stew out of you.



## Act II (at Farmer Brown's door)

**Henrietta:**

I'm scared!

**Hortensia:**

Me, too, but don't let Farmer Brown think you're a chicken.

**Henrietta:**

Farmer Brown, may we have a word with you?

**Farmer:**

What do you chickens want now? You should be in the hen house laying eggs! Scram before I wring your little necks!

**Hortensia:**

Please, sir, it's important!

**Farmer:**

All right, two minutes. Then it's back to the hen house for you. I can't have my best workers wasting valuable time and energy.

**Henrietta:**

Farmer Brown, the hens have chosen me to speak for all of us. We found out you're planning to give us less to eat, but you want us to lay more eggs! We can't work under those conditions.

**Farmer:**

Why you ungrateful chickens...I give you food to eat, a safe home, protect you from foxes, and all I ask is that you lay a few eggs for me. Is that so hard? Where do you think the money comes from to give you all these things?



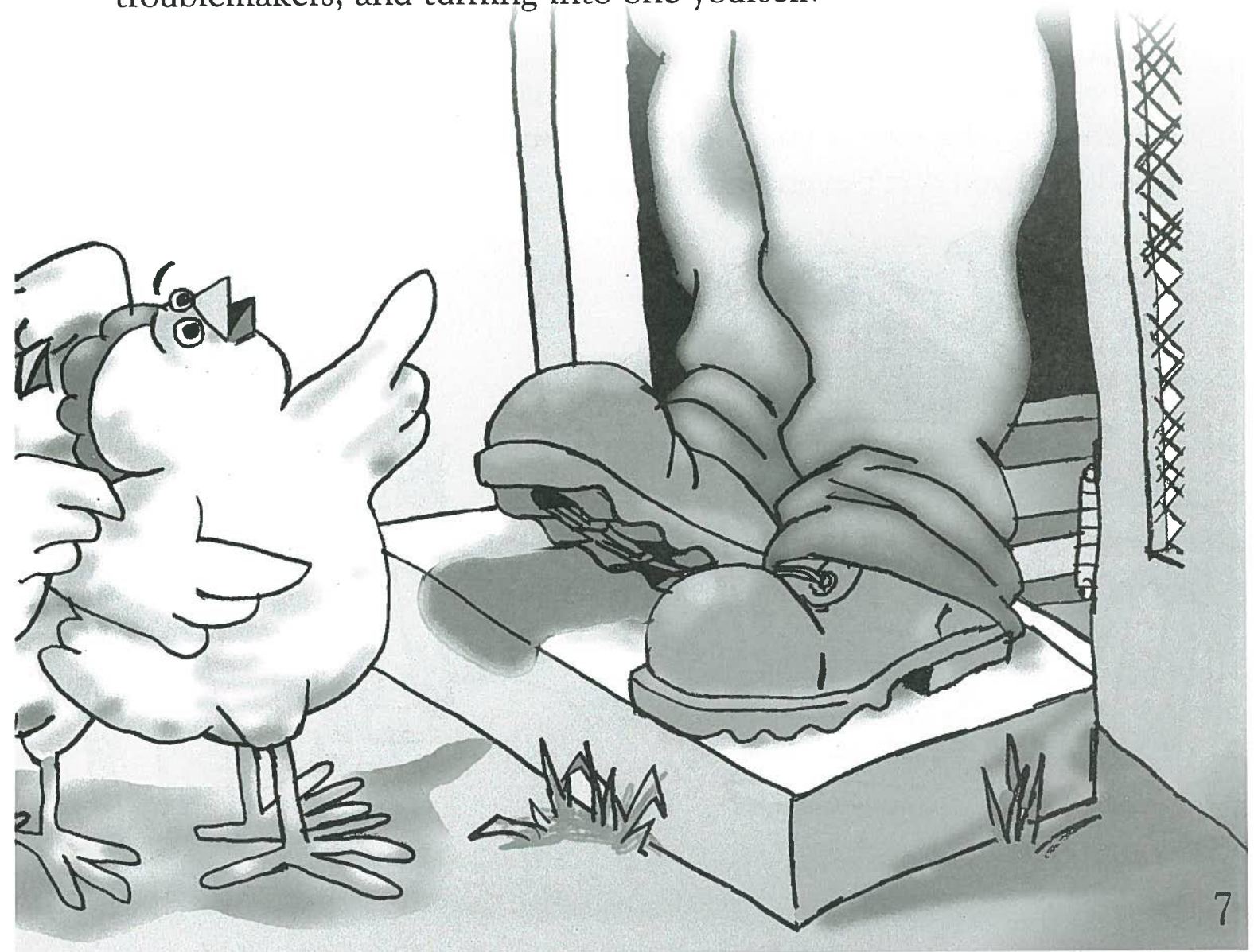


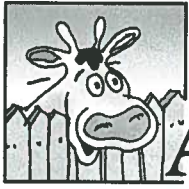
**Henrietta:**

But...

**Farmer:**

No more clucks! I'm not a rich guy, and to tell you the truth, I'm having a hard time making ends meet. Don't you know the demand for eggs isn't what it used to be, so I can't charge as much any more? Folks are scared of cholesterol, you know. So go back and tell your little friends that you're lucky I haven't sold more of you to the butcher! And just to remind you not to try this again, you'll all get half as much food for the next week. And you (*pointing to Hortensia*), you're coming with me. I won't have you hanging out with troublemakers, and turning into one yourself.





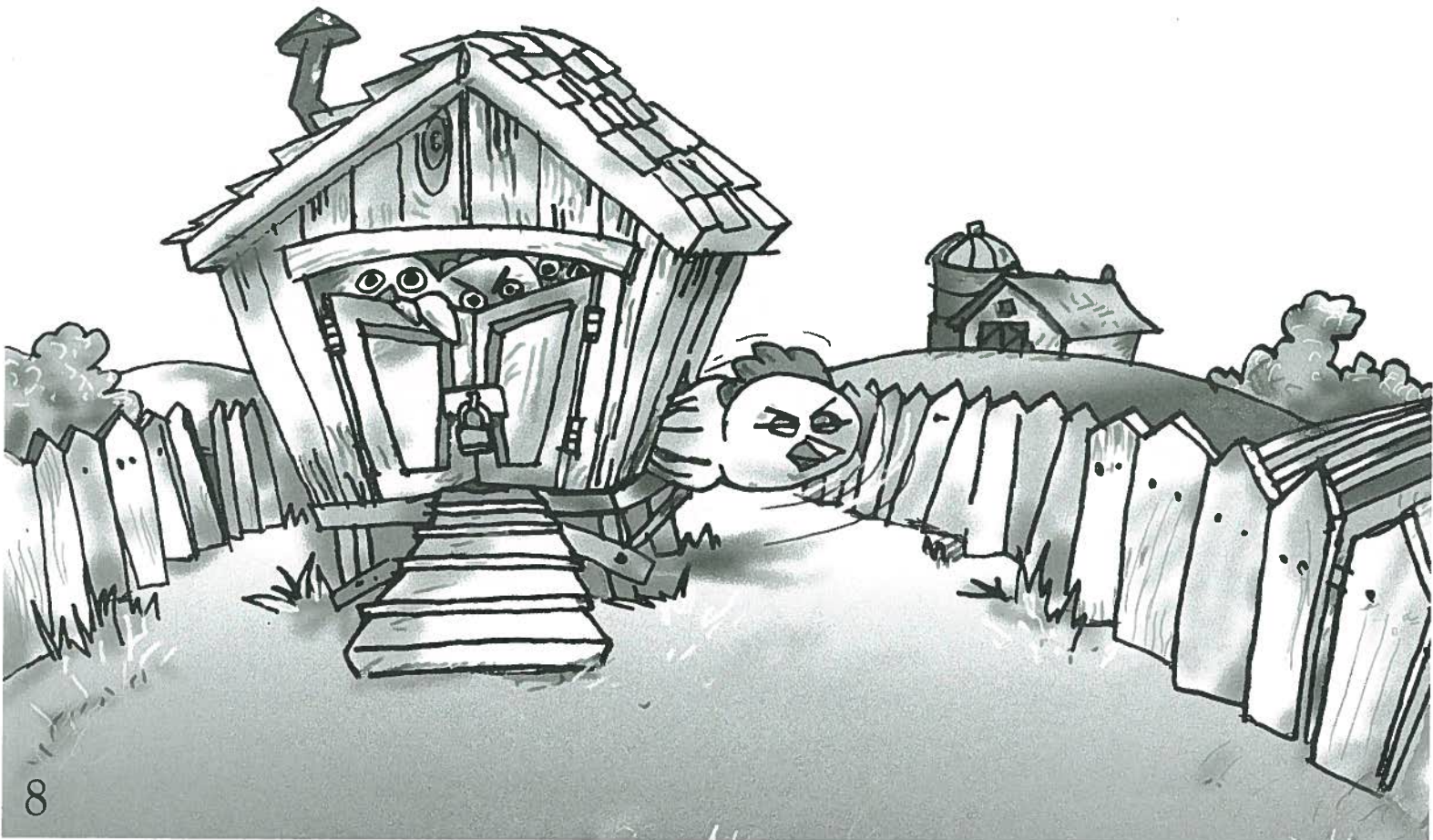
## Act III *(back at the hen house)*

**Chicken 1:**  
What happened?

**Chicken 2:**  
What'd he say?

**Henrietta:**  
He told us we were ungrateful little hens, that we were lucky we weren't dead meat, and we're only getting half our food next week. Then he...he took Hortensia somewhere! *(Starts crying)*

**Rudy:**  
Now look what you've done. I should have never let you start this foolishness. Because of you, we're going to starve to death, my wife is in jail, and you don't even know where.

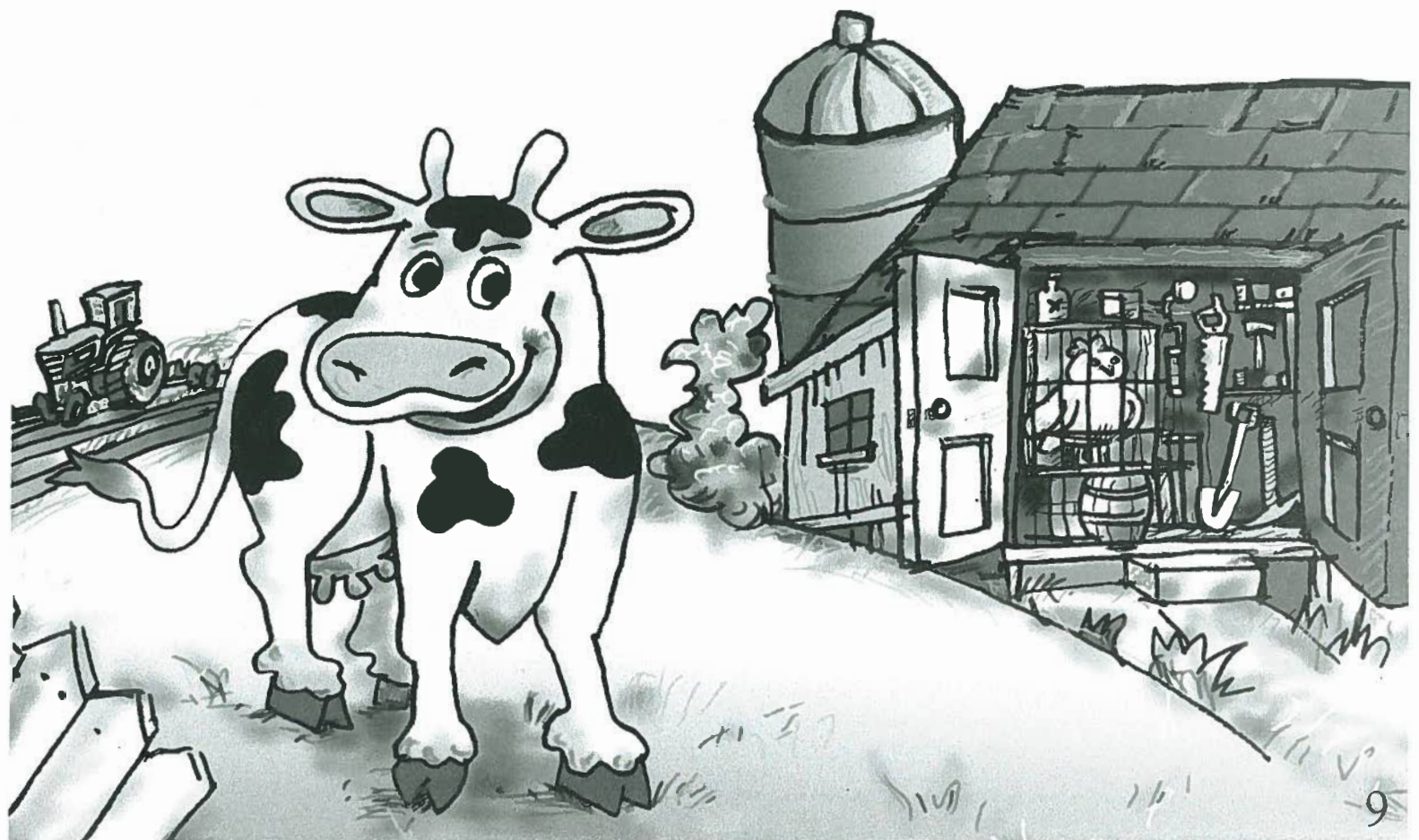


**Chiquita:**

Papa, please. Henrietta was only trying to help us. Let me go and try to find Mama. I can get out through that hole, and I'm so small no one will notice me. (*Goes out to yard*) Daisy, please help me. You're taller. Have you seen my mama?

**Daisy:**

As a matter of fact, I have. I was in the barn this morning giving my milk, and I saw her in a cage in the tool room. There's a crack in the door. You can see her. I'll show you.



**Chiquita:**

Mama, Mama! Can you hear me? Are you OK?

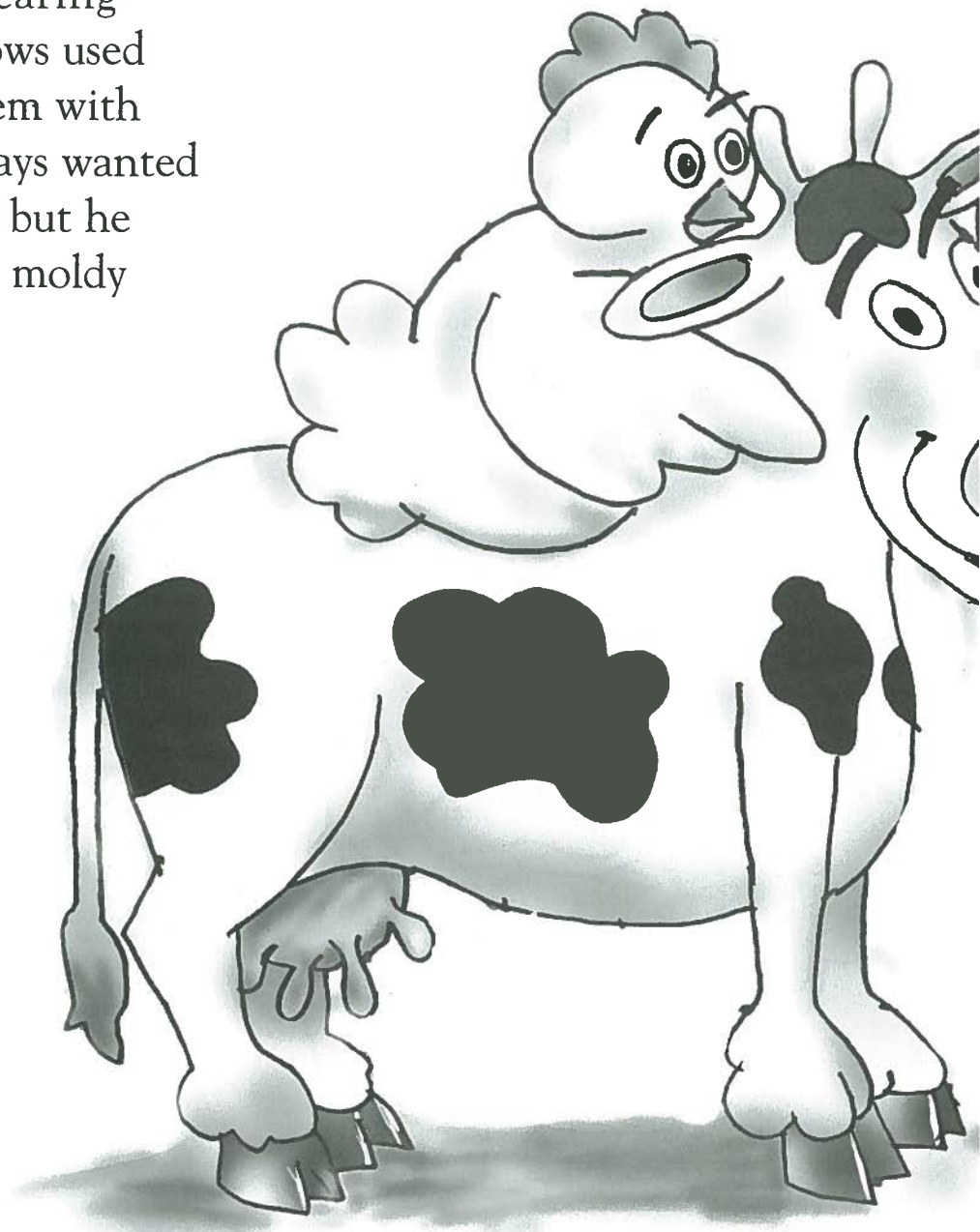
**Hortensia:**

Yes, *mija*, don't worry. I don't think Farmer Brown will hurt me, but I've got to get out of here to help the hens.

**Daisy:**

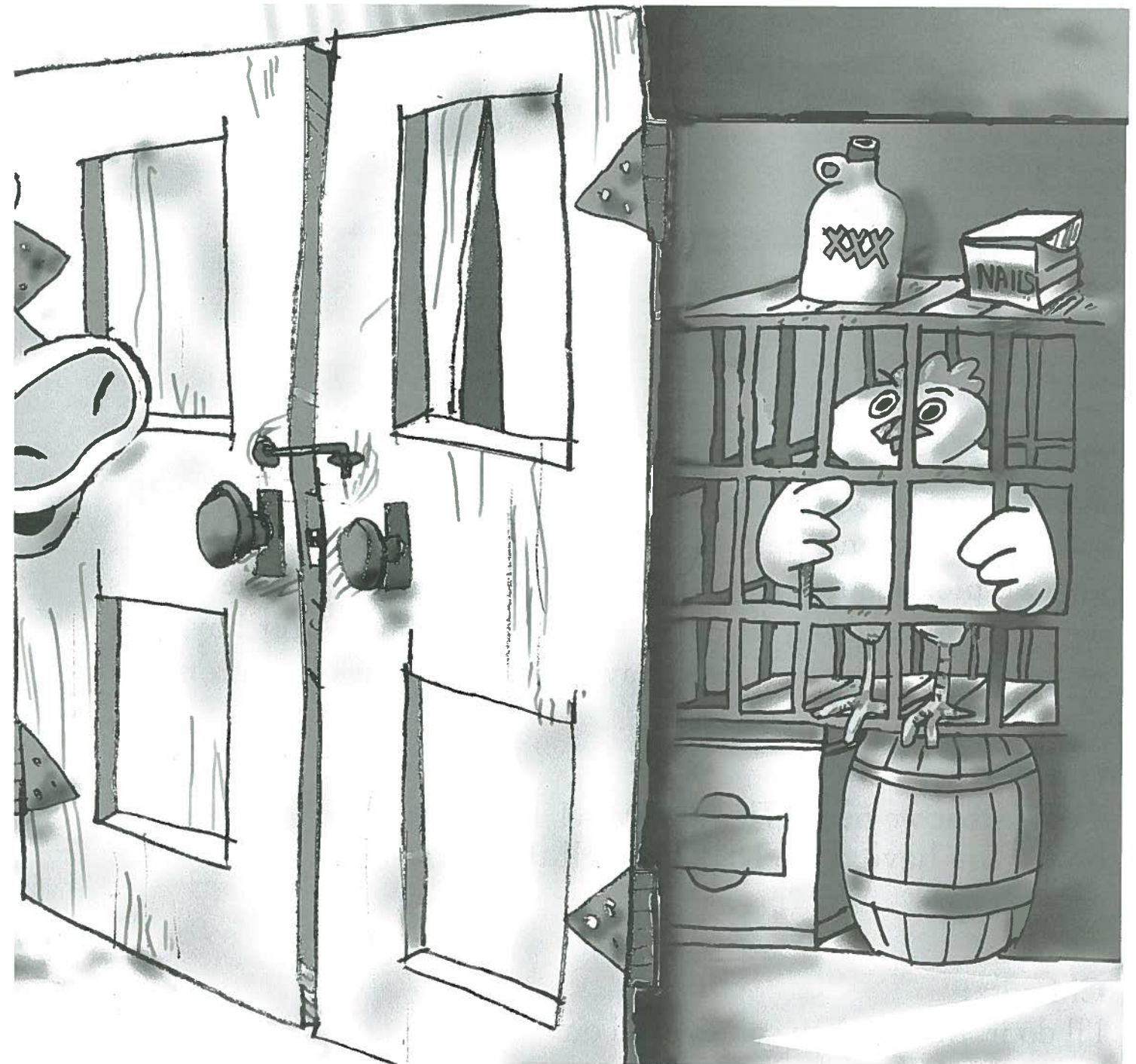
May I make a suggestion?

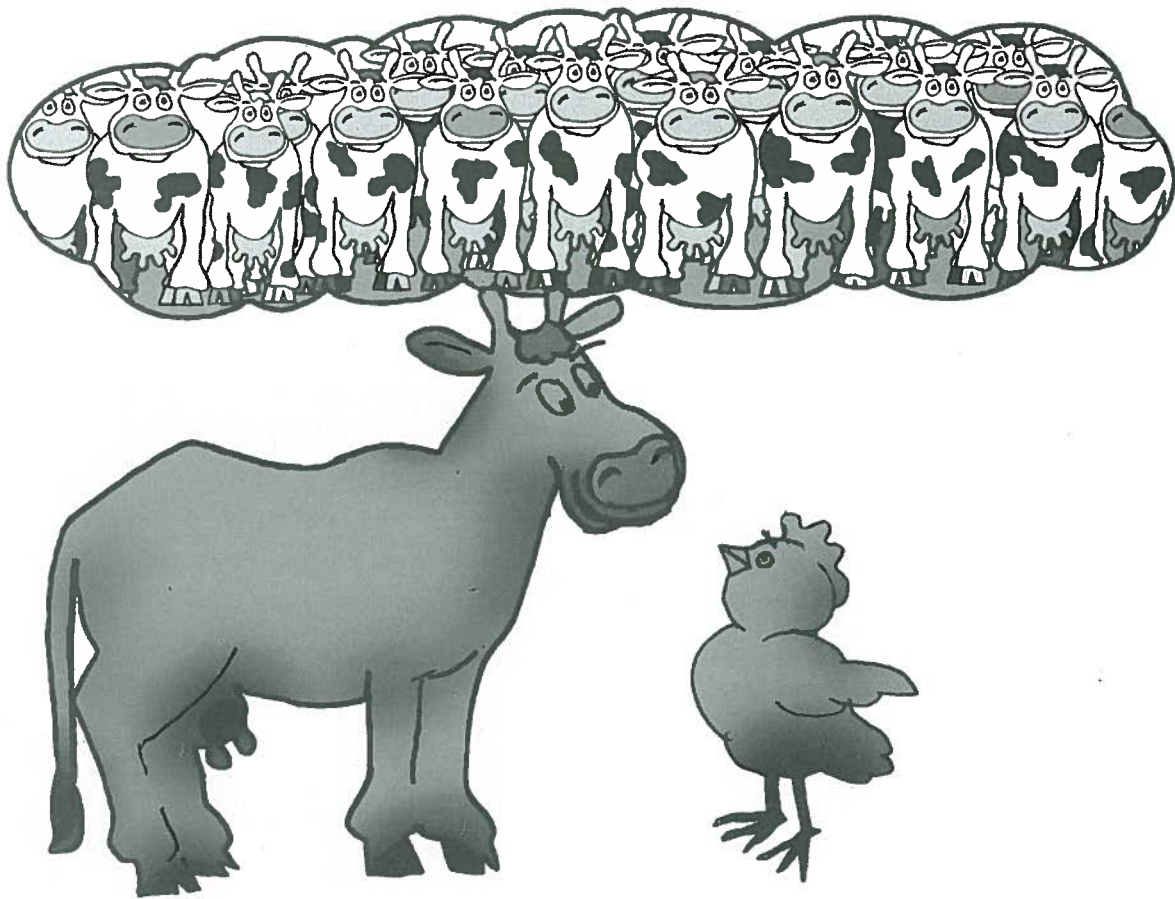
I couldn't help overhearing what happened. We cows used to have the same problem with Farmer Brown. He always wanted more, more, more milk, but he was so cheap he gave us moldy hay to eat.



It made us so sick and weak, our production went down, so he said he was going to send us to the slaughterhouse. Well, that did it! We made a union.

**Hortensia and Chiquita:**  
What's that?





**Daisy:**

We're a group of working cows. We're strong because we all stick together and help each other. We decide what we need, and we pick leaders to go talk to Farmer Brown, but he knows we stand behind our leaders. Now he gives us better hay, and we're not always tired from having to give him so much milk.

**Hortensia:**

That's what we need! Thanks, Daisy! Chiquita, I can't get out of here. You have to go back and tell the others. But please, be careful, *mija*.

**Chiquita:**

I'll do it, Mama. You can depend on me.



## Act IV (*meeting in the hen house*)

**Chiquita:**

Listen, everybody. I may be small, but I've got a plan. It's called a union. It means we all stick together to let Farmer Brown know what we want. I want my mama out of jail.

**Chicken 1:**

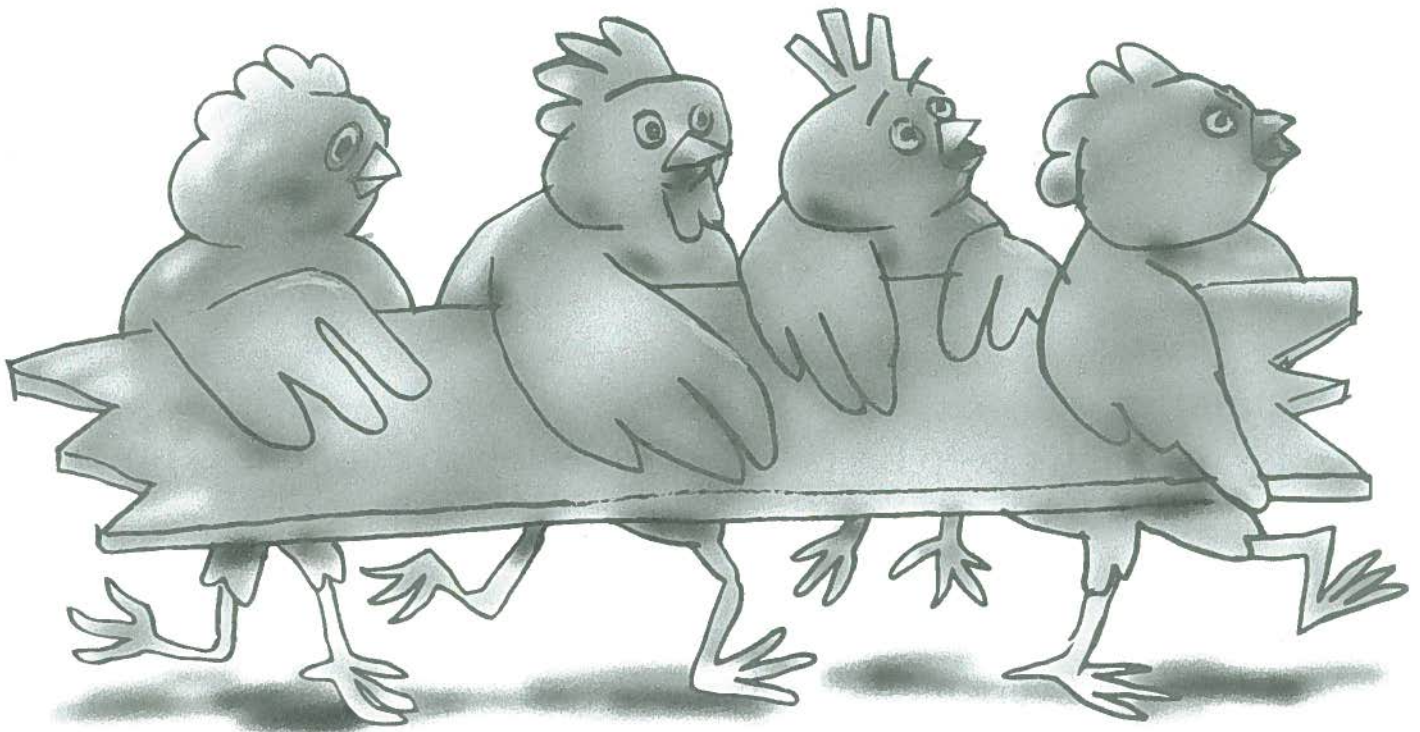
I want more food, no moldy corn, and no sand in my corn.

**Chicken 2:**

I want to be free to walk around outside and get some exercise. Maybe then I'd feel more like laying eggs.

**Henrietta:**

I want him to stop punishing us.





**Rudy:**

I hate to tell you girls this, but I know Farmer Brown. He might say yes, but he'll turn around and break all his promises without batting an eyelash.

**Henrietta:**

Then let's scratch it out on this board. He can only get an average of four eggs a week from each of us. We need rest, too. We'll make him read it and sign his name.

**Chiquita:**

And if he doesn't keep his promises, we'll tell the customers not to buy his eggs!

**Henrietta:**

Do we agree? Everyone, scratch your name here.



**Henrietta:**

Farmer Brown, we have something to say. This is what we chickens want:

1. More and better food. No mold, no sand in our corn.
2. Freedom to walk around outside and a bigger hen house.
3. Each hen will lay an average of four eggs a week.
4. Stop punishing us. Let Hortensia come back.

**Farmer:**

No way! Who ever heard of chickens telling a farmer what to do? Shut up and get back to the henhouse!

**Chickens:**

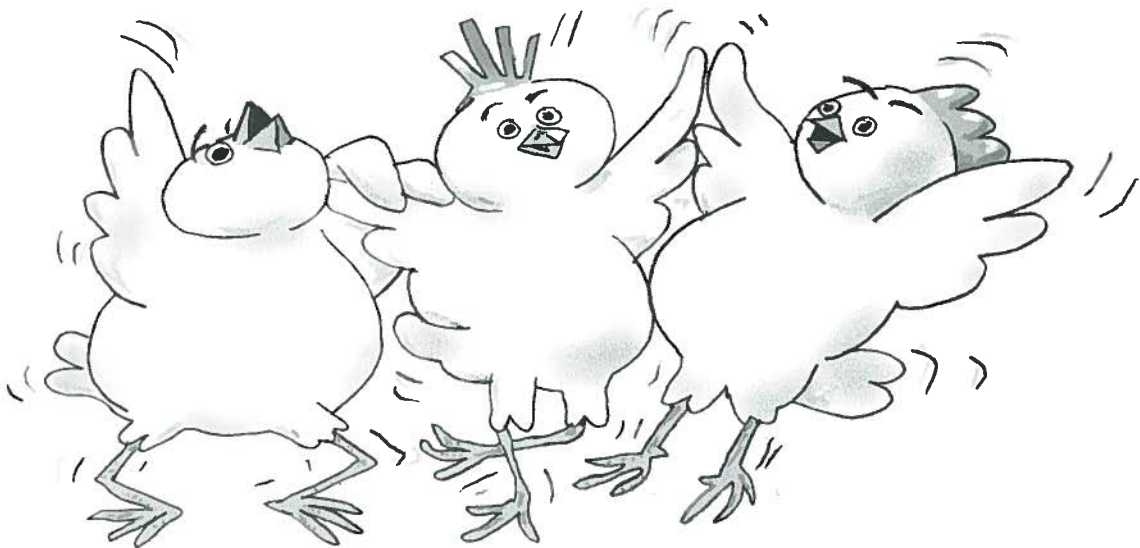
No, Farmer Brown, not this time! And besides those things, you have to recognize our union, Hens United, or we'll all stop laying eggs!

**Farmer:**

OK, OK, if I have no eggs to sell, I'll go bankrupt. We'd all starve, so I guess I'll have to do what you say. Since you're all together, what can I do? (*Farmer signs on the board and lets Hortensia out of the cage*).

**Chickens:**

We won! We stuck together and we won! *Si, se puede.*

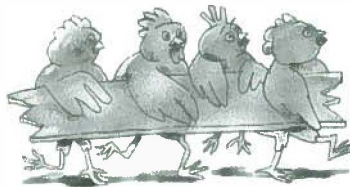


## What is the Labor in the Schools Committee?

The CFT Labor in the Schools Committee was formed to assist teachers in providing students with information about the history and current role of the labor movement in American society. The members of the committee are K-12 classroom teachers as well as faculty from community college and university labor studies programs. The committee meets several times a year to plan and evaluate various programs, including:

- providing a clearinghouse for teachers of curricular materials and labor in the schools activities around the state;
- development of lesson plans on labor subject matter;
- workshops for teachers to provide materials and training on teaching about labor;
- and
- workshops for unionists on effective classroom presentation.

The committee is available to assist teachers in all aspects of teaching young people about the labor movement, as well as working with unions on "adopt-a-school" programs. We welcome comments and suggestions.



*Trouble in the Hen House* was created by:

The CFT Labor in the Schools Committee  
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Layout/Design: Amy Gerber/Alliance Graphics  
Printing: Alonzo Printing  
Production Coordination: Fred Glass

# Hen, Chicken & Rooster Puppets (pattern page for copy)

(felt or fabric, white or yellow)



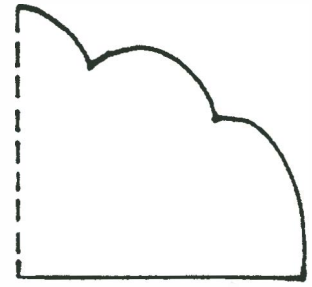
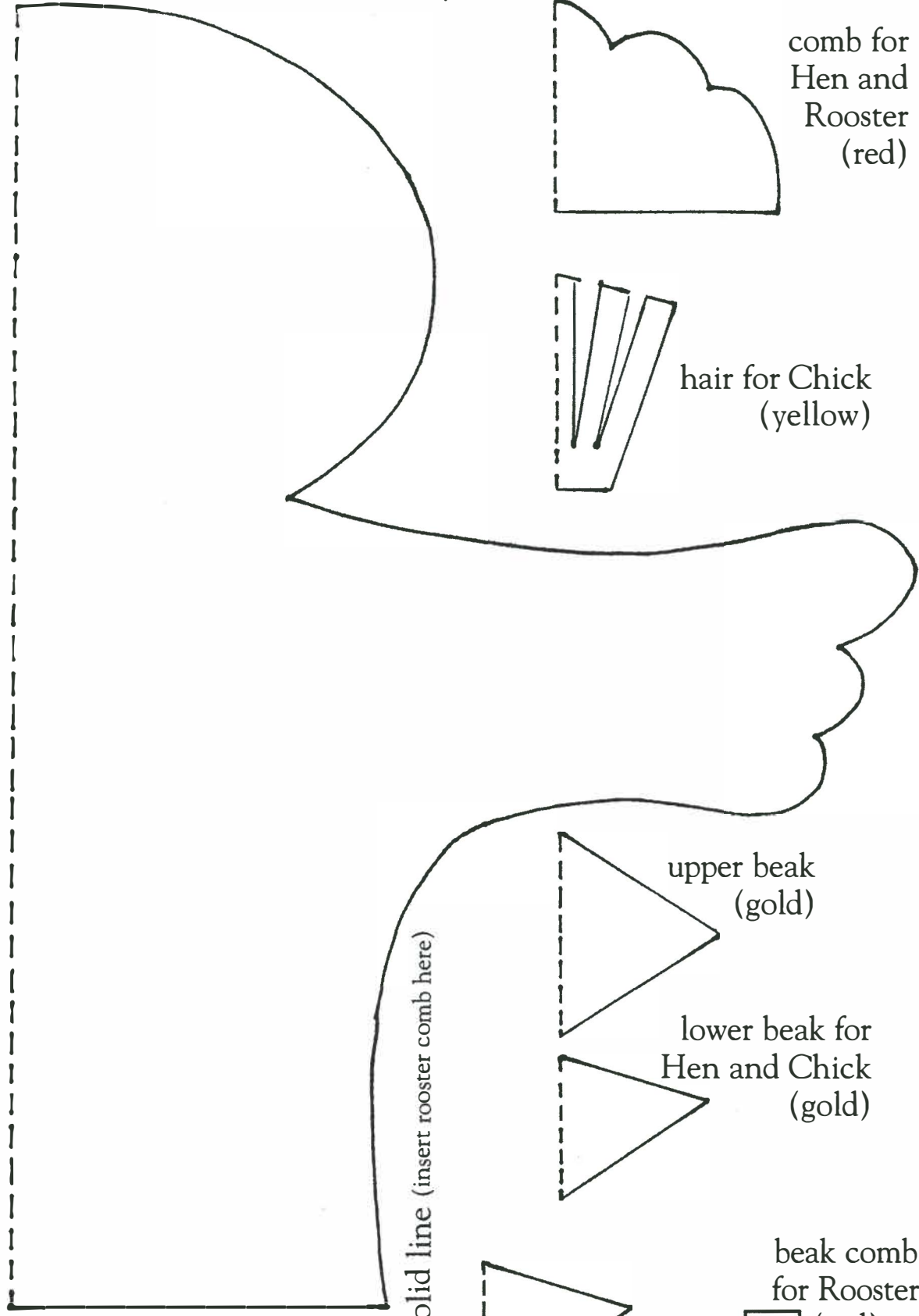
Hen



Chick



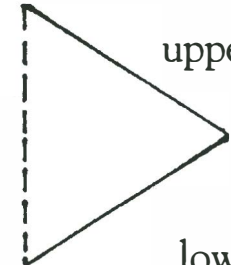
Rooster



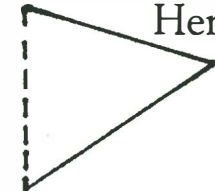
comb for Hen and Rooster (red)



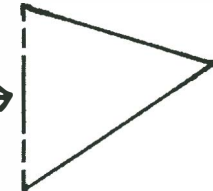
hair for Chick (yellow)



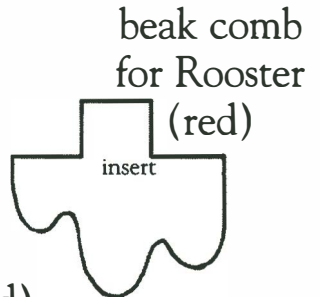
upper beak (gold)



lower beak for Hen and Chick (gold)



lower beak for Rooster (gold)



beak comb for Rooster (red)

fold

cut on solid line (insert rooster comb here)

----- dotted line = fold  
——— solid line = cut

*Trouble in the Hen House*  
EVALUATION

What grade level do you teach?

How many students do you have?

Which part of this lesson was the most successful?

Which part was the least successful?

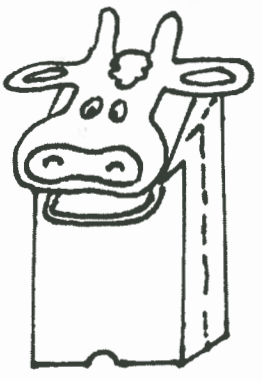
What problems did you encounter? (Be specific.)

What changes would you recommend to enhance this unit? (Be specific.)

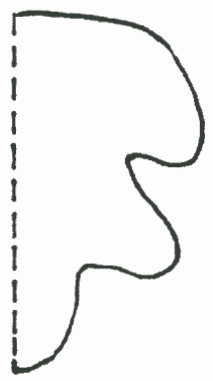
Other comments:

# Daisy the Cow (pattern page for copy)

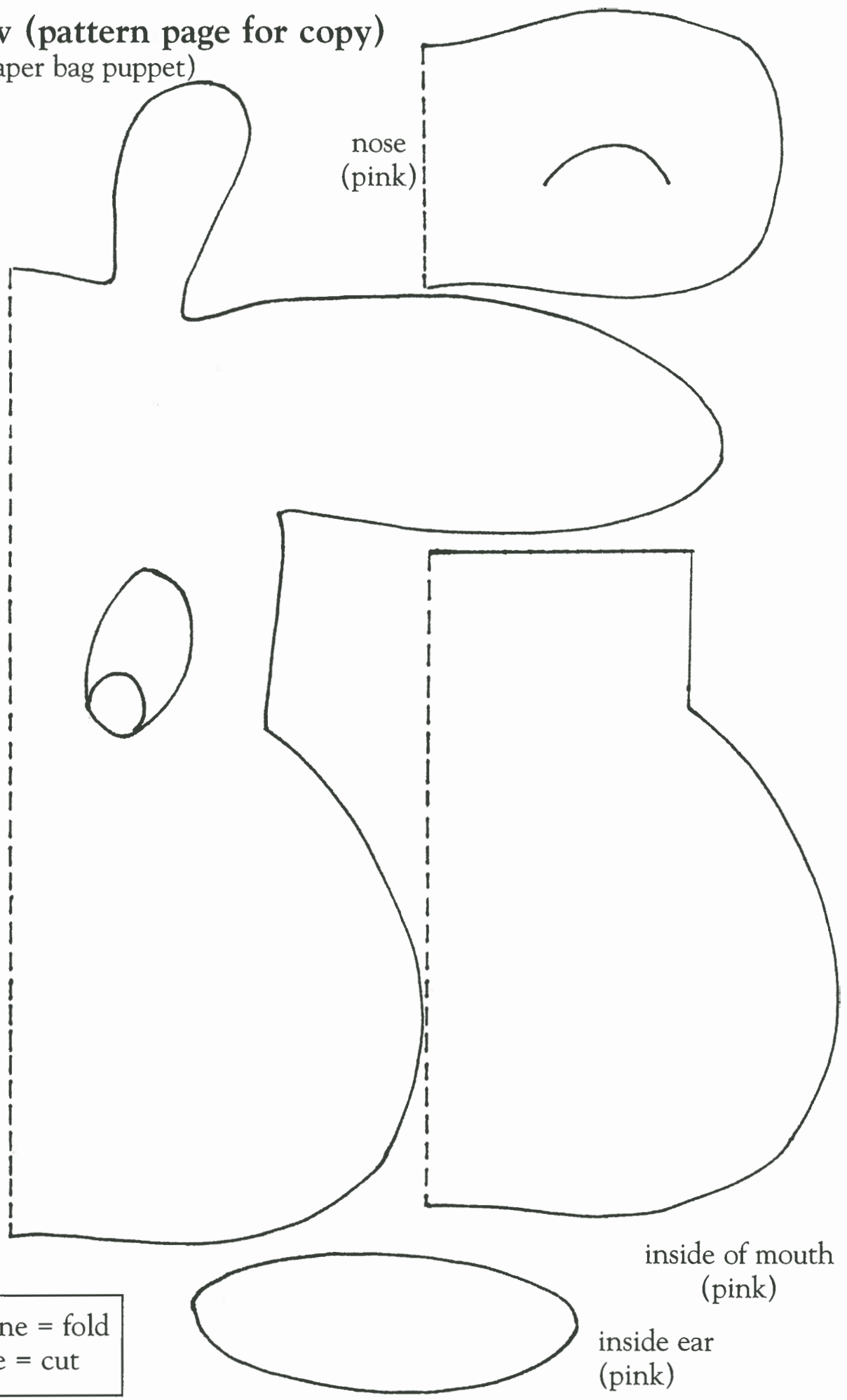
(paper bag puppet)



Daisy



hair  
(black)



nose  
(pink)

fold

inside of mouth  
(pink)

inside ear  
(pink)

----- dotted line = fold  
————— solid line = cut

# California Federation of Teachers

American Federation of Teachers/AFL-CIO

