

# The Joads Have Lots of Friends



**Arthur Hoppe**

**J**UD JOAD eased his tired, bony frame into the old rocker and sighed. "Looks like we got to tighten our belts again, Maude," he said.

"Well, with the price of vittles it's getting easier all the time," said his wife, "if'n you had a belt."

"Seems like the President wants us to pay more for our food stamps," said Jud, "on account of he needs a couple a hundred more million dollars to help out our friends. Like he says, 'We can't turn our backs on our friends.'"

"That's right Christian of him, Jud," said Maude, nodding approvingly. "Only I didn't know we had no friends worse off'n us. Maybe he means the McCaffreys down the road. Ever since their old milk cow died..."

"No, he means our friends over there in Vee-yet-nam."

"Now, I don't recollect having no friends over there," said Maude, frowning. "They from your side of the family?"

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**"YOU REMEMBER** them, old gal. Why, it weren't more'n ten years ago that Government Man dropped by and said in order to help 'em out we was going to have to choose 'tween guns and butter."

"What riles me," said Maude, "is we never got neither. But if'n the President's friends need our food stamps worse'n us..."

"He's not about to send 'em food stamps, Maude. He's going to send 'em guns."

"And butter, too, most like. What for they still need guns, Jud?"

"They got a war on, Maude."

"And if'n we give up our food stamps, that'll win the war for 'em?"

"Not likely. But the President says it'll keep it going for a spell."

"If'n they're the President's friends, how come he wants 'em to keep going on shooting at each other?"

"I don't rightly know, Maude. I reckon it's politics."

Maude nodded. "It sounds like it."

"Now, Maude, don't you fret. The President's got to know what he's doing. There's no feller more loyal to his friends than him. He's a fine man and we got to help him out."

"I reckon you're right, Jud," said Maude. "But what worries me is next year."

"Next year?"

"Well, if'n we got to give up food stamps this year so's he can send guns to his friends to keep the war going, then next year we're going to have to give up something else so's he can send guns to his friends to keep the war going. And, truth is, we plumb nigh run out a things around here to give up."

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**THEY WERE** silent a spell. "How far off is that there Vee-yet-nam?" Maude suddenly asked.

"A right far piece, I hear," said Jud.

"That's a pity," said Maude. "I was figuring maybe we could move over there."

"What in tarnation for?"

"Well, it sure would be right nice," said Maude, "to be one of the President's friends."