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management service agencies might sell this kind of planning assistance profitably to operators of family-size farms. Whether such planning and follow-up assistance were rendered by a private or a public agency, the farm plan would service both borrowers and lending agencies in a way to insure the success of this type of credit program.

As research and educational agencies are continually pointing out new developments that can

mean more efficient production, there is an ever-growing problem of combining managerial skill with natural and capital resources in order to take advantage of these developments. This problem involves the lending agencies and the agencies that assist farmers in developing farm plans, if credit is to attain its potential role as a major activating agent in promoting desirable adjustments in farming.

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## The War Records Project of the Department of Agriculture

By Wayne D. Rasmussen and Gladys L. Baker

*Current interest in experiences of World War II invites a report on the War Records Project of the Bureau, beginning with its establishment in the Department by the Secretary of Agriculture on December 31, 1941.*

THE DEPARTMENT PROJECT was one part of a Government-wide project initiated by the Bureau of the Budget after that agency found that the records of World War I were in an unsatisfactory condition as far as its needs were concerned. This feeling of the inadequacy of records of experiences in that war was widespread. The Extension Service, for example, when drawing up plans for the mobilization of local farm labor, found that records of a similar activity carried on during World War I were virtually nonexistent. Then it was recognized that careful and succinct analyses of current achievements were needed as well.

Thus, when the Bureau of the Budget requested the Secretary of Agriculture to compile a history of the administration of activities of the Department as they related to defense and war efforts, the Secretary responded by a memorandum dated December 31, 1941, which assigned the responsibility for the compilation of such a history to

the Director of Information, and asked all agencies of the Department to send quarterly concise histories of their defense activities to the Director.

After the entrance of the United States into the war, the Bureau of the Budget expanded its project. An Advisory Committee on the Records of War Administration was appointed as a result of a letter from President Roosevelt to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget dated March 4, 1942. The Committee had two primary functions: (1) to stimulate the major war agencies to set up historical units so as to develop and preserve full and accurate records of their war-time experience and (2) to advise the special research staff within the Bureau of the Budget on current analyses of administrative problems in major policy fields of the war. Subsequently, the War Records staff of the Bureau of the Budget, drawing in large measure upon materials collected and prepared by the War Records staffs of the Government departments and agencies,

summarized the administration of wartime governmental programs in a volume entitled *The United States at War*.<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1943, the Social Science Research Council decided that the work of the Government ought to be supplemented by the action of private groups. It established a Committee on War Studies to work with the Government projects and to interest qualified scholars in the plans. The Advisory Committee on Records of War Administration and the Committee on War Studies cooperated closely through the war's duration.

Both President Roosevelt and President Truman defined the project as an aid for improving governmental administration as well as an important historical undertaking. On January 25, 1944, President Roosevelt wrote in a letter to the Director of the Budget: "We need both for current use and for future reference a full and objective account of the way the Government is carrying on its wartime duties. . . . The best way to advance our knowledge of administration is through the study of actual experience. . . . There is much to be gained from our wartime experience for improving administration in the future." Later, on July 6, 1945, President Truman wrote: "I would like to see completed soon after the war is over an objective account of how problems of administration were handled. Both failures and successes should be analyzed. The development of governmental administration can be greatly aided by such investigation."

Meanwhile, the Office of Information had begun the collection of quarterly reports prepared by the agencies. But the enlargement of the project to include the collection, preservation, and organization of war records on a historical basis, combined with the pressure of other wartime duties on the Office of Information, led to the informal transfer of responsibility for the project to the history staff of the BAE by June 1942. Formal transfer was made by the Secretary in a memorandum of January 16, 1943.

The War Records Project staff of the BAE, with a special consultant, Dr. John M. Gaus, developed two major lines of work: (1) the collec-

tion, preservation, and organization of documents relating to the wartime administration of the Department, including the War Food Administration and (2) the preparation and assistance in the preparation of historical accounts of some of the major war programs of these agencies and of the wartime changes in various sectors of agriculture.

In other instances, additional material relating to key programs was obtained from the persons responsible for the programs. Officials were interviewed by staff members regarding programs and actions, both for aid in the interpretation of documents and for information on given programs that could not be derived from written records; reports of these interviews were placed in the file. Many of the items in the file are classified and are therefore available only to designated Government research workers. But a definite effort is being made to secure the declassification of some of the material.

In spite of these restrictions, the documents and the reports, organized according to a program outline, contain material that has been of considerable assistance to Department officials and research workers. At the present writing, the situation in Korea brings many requests for information that are filled by recourse to the file. It will eventually be transferred to the National Archives.

In the course of collecting and organizing material bearing on the wartime administration of the Department no attempt was made to duplicate archives in the agencies. In some cases, the quarterly reports were sufficient documentation for the activities of those agencies. However, because of the pressure of day-by-day war activities and constantly changing programs, none of the constituent agencies of the WFA made reports; but so far as possible copies of key documents relating to the programs of nonreporting agencies were made and placed in the file. Emphasis was laid on the selection of documents basic to the objectives of the project and on the collection of minutes of meetings of interagency committees dealing with basic war problems, copies of documents dealing with major decisions on policy, and other documents of the kind which often do not find their way into the regular files of the Department.

<sup>1</sup> UNITED STATES BUREAU OF THE BUDGET. THE UNITED STATES AT WAR; DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE WAR PROGRAM BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. 555 pp. Washington, U. S. Govt. Print. Off. 1946.



The project staff, never more than four professional workers, undertook to prepare narrative accounts providing a current description of administrative problems and developments of the Department and of the WFA's adjustment to the war crisis. These accounts were organized both by agency developments within the Department and by subject matter cutting across agency and departmental lines. Several of the accounts, limited in scope and in the time periods covered, were prepared for particular administrative uses. Other longer and more general accounts of departmental organization and programs were based in part upon classified records so their publication must await the declassification of such records.

During 1945, through a joint arrangement of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the College of Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin, and the Social Science Research Council, Walter W. Wilcox undertook a general study, the purpose of which was to give an integrated picture of the important economic forces affecting farmers of the United States during World War II. Professor Wilcox drew upon the file of the War Records Project in the preparation of the volume and other project staff members assisted in the work. In addition, specialists throughout the BAE, in other Government agencies, and in the University of Wisconsin, provided data and other assistance in their fields of interest. The volume was published by the Iowa State College Press in 1947 under the title *The Farmer in the Second World War*.

In connection with Professor Wilcox's project, a series of monographs was planned to present in detail the wartime changes in certain sectors of agriculture. Specialists in the Bureau and

elsewhere in the Department were asked to prepare studies in their respective fields under the leadership of the War Records Project. Seven such studies were published as a War Records Monograph series.<sup>2</sup> They covered farm machinery and equipment, soil conservation, sugar, veterans' preference for new farm machinery and equipment, the acquisition and use of land for military and war production purposes, production and price-supporting programs for fats and oils, and wool. The series was discontinued during the last year when publication matters in the Department were somewhat reorganized, and the next two monographs, covering citrus fruits and agricultural wage stabilization, have appeared in the new departmental *Agriculture Monograph* series.<sup>3</sup> Additional studies dealing with the Department's farm labor program, with meat and meat animals, and with the concentration of food authority, in addition to a chronology of the War Food Administration, are nearing completion and may be published during this year.

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<sup>2</sup> See War Records Monographs of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. 1. FARM MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT, by ERLING HOLE; 2. SOIL CONSERVATION DURING THE WAR, by GEORGE W. COLLIER; 3. SUGAR DURING WORLD WAR II, by ROY A. BALLINGER; 4. WAR FOOD ORDER 135, VETERANS' PREFERENCE FOR NEW FARM MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT, by F. M. JOHNSON; 5. ACQUISITION AND USE OF LAND FOR MILITARY AND WAR PRODUCTION PURPOSES, WORLD WAR II, by ALVIN T. M. LEE; 6. FATS AND OILS IN WORLD WAR II: PRODUCTION AND PRICE-SUPPORTING PROGRAMS, by ROBERT M. WALSH; 7. WOOL DURING WORLD WAR II, by JOHN W. KLEIN. 1946-48.

<sup>3</sup> HOLMAAS, ARTHUR J. AGRICULTURAL WAGE STABILIZATION DURING WORLD WAR II. U. S. Dept. Agr. Monog. 1, 140 pp. June 1950; PUBOLS, BEN H. CITRUS FRUIT DURING WORLD WAR II. U. S. Dept. Agr. Monog. 3, 77 pp. June 1950.