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AGRICULTURE IN TRANSITION  
FROM WAR TO PEACE

Papers and Proceedings

of the

*Seventeenth Annual Conference*

of the

WESTERN FARM ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION

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*Edited by the President of the Association*

project would entail more public responsibility and cost for their success than would the settlement of an equal number of veterans among existing farms where they would have the benefit of local experience and institutions. A recent congressional investigation disclosed the superiority of individual farmer assistance by the Farm Security Administration, as compared to their group resettlement projects. In California, after the last war, the state land settlement colony at Delhi, which contained at one time 68 veterans among 260 settlers, was a costly and unsuccessful experiment. On the other hand, the California Veterans Farm and Home Purchase Program, under which the state financed about 500 veterans in the purchase of farms of their choice, was successful and economical. It is being continued for returning veterans of this war. If the goal in a veteran's farm aid program is maximum benefit to the greatest number of veterans with the lowest possible expenditure of public funds, then the program should be assistance to individual veterans in the leasing or purchasing of existing farms of their choice. Under such a program as many veterans can be cared for as can find gainful employment in agriculture and without the high cost of paternalistic colonies and overproduction of agricultural products from new land.

## REPORT OF WESTERN LAND UTILIZATION SECTION MEETING

*Prepared by MARY MONTGOMERY, Bureau of Agricultural Economics*

### IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED PROBLEMS

#### REPAYMENT EXPERIENCE ON FEDERAL RECLAMATION PROJECTS

It was suggested at the conclusion of this paper that the repayment record, while important, is only part of the story, since in some cases farmers who have been able to make payments, as shown by bank savings or by sale of their land at a profit, have not done so. It was pointed out that repayments are adjusted to the repayment ability of those least able to pay, perhaps necessarily, since the Bureau of Reclamation could not foreclose on more than about 25 percent of a community. However, it was emphasized that the repayment record is better on the projects containing the more productive land. In conclusion, three further points were made: 1) Responsibility for the repayment record rests largely with Congress because Congress in many cases approved projects condemned by the Bureau of Reclamation; 2) A comparison of private with federal irrigation projects might well show the former to have no better record; and 3) Some irrigation leaders think that one generation should not be called upon to pay the costs of a project which will serve several generations.

#### LARGE FARMS OR SMALL: THE SOCIAL SIDE

At the conclusion of this paper a point was raised in regard to the selection by intelligence of those moving from Dinuba to Arvin: it was suggested that perhaps the less intelligent, the unsuccessful, leave Dinuba for Arvin. The reply was that 1) on the contrary, not the laborer, but the successful farmer leaves Dinuba for Arvin; and 2) that on the other hand, the successful laborer is apparently the one who leaves Arvin, while the poorer laborer remains. Later in the discussion it was pointed out that the implication that newcomers to an area are selected from the less intelligent is not flattering to us in the United States and even less flattering to us in California.

During the discussion, the question was repeatedly raised as to why the farms in the Arvin area were large and those in the Dinuba area small. It was suggested that perhaps this was due to a difference in the type of farming. The idea was stressed that perhaps the cotton acreage in Arvin accounted for the larger size of farms there. It was further suggested that

perhaps what small farms there were in the Arvin area were to be accounted for on the ground that they were largely in fruit and vines. In the replies the following points were touched on: 1) Perhaps the tendency at the turn of the century for farms to be broken up into smaller units is less pronounced now, so that Arvin being newer would tend to have larger acreages. 2) New developments in Arvin going in under expensive wells would tend to create larger holdings. 3) A number of small farms do operate successfully in the Arvin area; about one-third of the population of Arvin lives on the smaller farms. 4) While the proportions differ somewhat, the same crops are grown in both communities; and while vineyards and tree fruits are to be found on the small farms, they are also to be found on the larger farms. 5) It was explained that further study will be made on the differences in the type of farming in the final report.

The question was raised as to whether Dinuba farms were adequate in size to support a family properly. The reply pointed out that the object of the study was not whether or not Dinuba was ideal, but simply whether or not certain differences between the two communities could be correlated with the differences in the average size of the farms.

The final question raised was how Firebaugh compared with the two communities used in the study. It was explained care was taken to select two communities for the study which were not too strikingly different in the size of farms by which they were surrounded.

#### DO WE NEED MORE FARMS?

The discussion hinged on the following points:

New irrigation developments *will* come into being; therefore, the problem is one of properly guiding such development.

As a nation grows the proportion of its population engaged in agriculture declines. Gains in agriculture tend to be capitalized in land values rather than in a more desirable standard of living. The problem, then, is how to guide people out of agriculture and into industry, trades and services so that they will be able to maintain a reasonable standard of living for themselves, and will, at the same time, produce needed goods and services. In agriculture growth will have to be in improvement of food; the principal growth in our economy will have to be growth in industry, trade and services.

Agriculture, then, should not be used as a dumping ground for unemployment in the post-war period.

The war has demonstrated that an enormous increase in production per man is possible in agriculture. Perhaps in the post-war period we will have people moving out of agriculture and should not consider putting veterans back on farms.