

July 3, 1965

MR. SARGENT SHRIVER

This Newsletter is addressed to you since you head the "ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM" (Office of Economic Opportunity) to inform and protest concerning the steamroller tactics of the big ranch interests in their attempt to control this program in IMPERIAL COUNTY, CALIF.

THESE BIG RANCHES ARE THE CAUSE OF MOST OF THE POVERTY HERE!!!

They are the ones which control the local county and cities governments and also the IMPERIAL IRRIGATION DISTRICT. Imperial County with a yearly agricultural production of \$214 millions, ranks 4th in the U.S. There are only about 75,000 residents here.

Here are some of the ways that the big farm interests create the poverty. By controlling Assessor-Collector John Bowman, they are able to have fake low assessments put on their farmland so that on the average they escape 66% of the yearly property taxes. This evasion amounts to \$8 millions yearly (confirmed by an independent analysis done by the Statewide Homeowners Assoc. of 953-8th Ave. San Diego 1 Calif.) and all the residents including the poor have to pay higher taxes to make up for the big agricultural interests which own 90% of the farmland. ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS have 70% of the farmland IN VIOLATION OF THE U.S. RECLAMATION LAW. They escape about \$6.5 millions in taxes at the expense of local residents who pay that much more to make up for the ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS.

The IMPERIAL IRRIGATION DISTRICT which does not pay income taxes, property taxes or dividends, charges prices for electricity which are just as high as those of investor owned utilities so that there are profits of \$14 millions yearly that are wiped out by the big ranches being furnished irrigation water at very cheap rates. THE POOR AND THE AVERAGE RESIDENTS ARE FORCED TO SUBSIDIZE THE LARGE FARMS' CHEAP IRRIGATION WATER.

Previous to 1965, the big agricultural interests through their organization THE IMPERIAL VALLEY FARMERS ASSOCIATION, imported thousands of Mexican farmworkers under Public Law #78. Thousands of Mexican-American, negro, and white farmworkers who lived here locally, were refused work and the farmwork jobs given to the imported braceros. Many Mexican-American families on the EASTSIDE OF BRAWLEY who owned small homes were unable to pay the \$5.50 monthly water charge because they were out of work. Their water was turned off. These families began to starve and had to leave Imperial County to look for work. They could not return and could not pay the property taxes on their abandoned homes. Lack of attention deteriorated the homes and the CITY OF BRAWLEY then demolished them. The Brawley City Council REFUSED TO BRING IN FEDERAL SURPLUS FOOD to help the starving.

At the present moment, the big ranches use "GREEN CARD MEXICANS" WHO LIVE IN MEXICALI, MEXICO, and are willing to work for any wage since if they work in Mexico they only earn 15 CENTS PER HOUR. So thousands of domestic farmworkers can not get work. Lack of space prevents giving other methods by which the BIG RANCHES EXPLOIT THE POOR AND CREATE MORE POVERTY...

Everyone is afraid to speak up in protest of THIS POVERTY WHICH IS CREATED BY THE BIG AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS. Merchants, lawyers, doctors and businessmen and just average citizens suffer from the HIGH PROPERTY TAXES AND HIGH ELECTRICITY BILLS. Merchants in particular suffer since thousands of local farmworkers and their families are short of money because of lack of work. Many stores have closed in all the cities and some of the towns resemble "GHOST TOWNS". BUT THIS UPPER ECONOMIC CLASS IS SCARED STIFF TO PROTEST THE POVERTY, THE HIGH TAXES, ETC.

Mayor Luis Legaspi and his group in the CITY OF CALEXICO with many poor, forced this city to bring in FEDERAL SURPLUS FOOD so that families

would not starve. Mayor Luis Legaspi presented evidence to Secretary of Labor Wirtz when he was here in March 1965 in order to prevent the importation of Mexican workers under Law#414. Dr. Ben Yellen and Mike Miranda were present at the same time to present evidence against importation of foreign farmworkers.

Dr. Ben Yellen has been printing this Newsletter for about 5 years in which he tells about the poverty and its causes. He has taken domestic Mexican-American, negro and white farmworkers to local Small Claim Courts and has financed them out of his own pocket so that they filed lawsuits under the Calif. Fair Employment Practices law against the Imperial Valley Farmers Assoc., the Desert Growers Assoc. and Calcot Inc. for discriminating against domestic workers because of country of origin. With Newsletters such as this, he has personally publicized these lawsuits when the local press nicknamed VIRGIL PINKLEY'S PROSTITUTED PRESS erected a CURTAIN OF SILENCE about these lawsuits.

These Newsletters have been given out in the thousands not only locally but to MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, CALIF. STATE LEGISLATURE, AND VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS INTERESTED IN THESE PROBLEMS. He receives requests from all over the United States for his Newsletters. The people of Brawley elected Dr. Yellen a Councilman in recognition of his activities. Edward P. Morgan on May 26, 1964 made a coast to coast news broadcast over the American Broadcasting Co. describing the efforts of the writer. On April 6, 1965, the Huntley-Brinkley News television broadcast had Dr. Yellen on it concerning the U.S. Reclamation Law which is not being enforced with the result that little farmers are being pauperized.

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POVERTY IN THE SOUTHWEST was held in Tucson, Arizona on January 25 & 26, 1965 and your own OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY provided funds for the organizational costs. Dr. Ben Yellen was an invited speaker to tell about poverty conditions in Imperial County. He is recognized by organizations as an expert in these matters. They also know of his activities to alleviate this poverty.

On Thursday July 1, 1965, Dr. Ben Yellen and Mike Miranda and Margarito Ruiz went to the formation meeting of the Imperial Valley Economic Opportunities Commission being held at the Health Dept. Building. Councilman Yellen had been told by Mayor Luis Legaspi to speak for him. It was found that with the exception of one labor union representative, everyone on this Commission is either a stooge of the big farmers or an intimidated person who can not open his mouth.

Dr. Yellen made a vigorous speech in which he told all these persons on the Commission that with the exception of the labor representative, none of them had ever made a vocal protest about poverty and where did they have the gall to become members of the Commission. Dr. Yellen systematically went from one member to another and showed where he was not qualified. He then demanded that Mayor Legaspi and himself be put on the Commission. He also requested that Mike Miranda and Margarito Ruiz be put on and further stated Mayor Legaspi wants several persons of his group on the Commission.

NO ATTENTION WAS PAID TO THESE REQUESTS. THIS COMMISSION IS STACKED WITH BIG FARMER ADHERENTS.

Here is what Virgil Pinkley and his PROSTITUTED PRESS reported in the July 2, 1965 issue, "Dr. Stanley J. Leland ---effectively quieting the lone objector to the evening's procedure, Brawley's Dr. Ben Yellen". Once again Virgil Pinkley, the big city Editor has erected a CURTAIN OF SILENCE to prevent the residents from learning that the big ranchers have stacked the ANTI-POVERTY COMMISSION so it does not cause them any trouble. THIS IS PINKLEY'S PROSTITUTED PRESS IN ACTION!

Here are some brief notes on a few members who help(?) the poor. Supervisor Tom Boley-voted in 1962 against the County bringing in Federal Surplus Food, so the ranchers were able to starve out the domestic workers and their families and force them to leave here. Nick Pricola and Joe Rodriguez were members of Brawley City Council which voted against FEDERAL SURPLUS FOOD and left the poor to starve. Wesley Bisgaard-big farmer and President of the Imperial County Farm Bureau. Master of the big farmers. MASTER OF EXPLOITATION!!