

NEWS LETTER FROM DR. BEN YELLEN

Brawley, Calif.

Sept. 28, 1960

On Tuesday, Sept. 27, 1960 Mr. Carter, manager of the Imperial Irrigation District, had a press release printed in the El Centro Post Press and Brawley News.

This press release illustrates the propaganda methods of the big farmers and big landowners who control the Imperial Irrigation District. In this propaganda release, it was announced that the water rate to the cities of Imperial Valley had been cut from \$4.00 per acre foot to \$2.00. One would think that the cities were getting a big gift from the announcement. Mr. Carter in explaining this cut said that in 1932 "the assessed valuations of city land was much less than farmland--50% less in fact". This is given as the reason why the rate was doubled for the cities.

This statement of Mr. Carter is ridiculous and an insult to the intelligence of the taxpayers of the cities. The Imperial Irrigation District has an Assessor-Collector and he is not bashful about increasing the valuation of city property. As a matter of fact, his trouble is that he does not raise the valuation of farmland. So in 1932, the only thing he had to do was raise the valuation. This would have raised an uproar of protest from the city taxpayers. In 1932, there was the depression, and the Imperial Irrigation District needed extra money. Since the farmers control the District and are no fools, they would not tax themselves and could not very easily suddenly increase assessed valuations of city property in a time when all property values were falling. So the big farmers raised the water rate to the cities and in this way shifted the burden to the city taxpayers.

There has never been a time in the history of Imperial Valley when the farmers did not control the county government, the governments of the cities, and the Imperial Irrigation District. The city councils are controlled by the farmers so these councils raised no protest. City land did not in 1932 have lower valuations than farmland. City land has always been assessed higher so that for equal value (selling price) the city taxpayer pays 4 times the property taxes that the farmer pays.

Now why did the Imperial Irrigation District suddenly decide that the 70,000 inhabitants of the Valley were not as rich as the 300 persons and corporations who own 90% of the farmland. I have been investigating the water setup, the electric power setup and the property tax setup. I had visited Washington, D.C. and spoken to the Bureau of Reclamation how the taxpayers are paying for the All American Canal while the absentee landowners who get the water for 70% of the farmland, do not pay one cent. I mentioned how the cities pay \$4.00 and the farmers pay \$2.00. I also told them how the cities only buy \$30,000 per year for water while the farmers get \$2,000,000 per year of water and yet the city dwellers pay for the All American Canal thru high electric power bills. The District and Mr. Carter got news of all this and in order to avoid criticism, suddenly stopped the \$4.00 rate for the cities.

Let Mr. Carter now explain why the big farmers and big landowners and especially the absentee landowners who own 70% of the farmland, have such low valuations for taxes on their farmlands. This makes it necessary for the other 70,000 inhabitants to pay higher taxes to make up for the absentee landowners. Let him also explain why 70,000 electric power users who live, work and buy in the Valley are paying high electric bills for the All American Canal when the absentee landowners do not pay one cent and own 70% of the farmland.