

February 25, 1973

THE ELMORE FAMILY

On Dec. 31, 1972 and Jan. 14, 1973, the MIKE WALLACE program entitled "60 MINUTES" was shown by the Columbia Broadcasting System coast to coast. About 20 minutes of this program was about the fight for the land and water in Imperial Valley, Calif. The battle by the little people is for the enforcement of the U.S. RECLAMATION LAW OF 1902 which if enforced here will be the signal for enforcement in the 17 Western States which includes all of Texas.

The U.S. Reclamation Law says that only persons living on the land or close by can get water from Federal irrigation projects and that one person can get only enough water to farm 160 acres. If this law was enforced, it would mean that big absentee corporations like the Irvine Co., United Fruit Co., Purex Co., Southern Pacific Land Co., Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Co., Tenneco, Inc. and many other smaller absentee corporations would not be able to farm here.

President Theodore Roosevelt when signing this law said, "The money is being spent to build up the little man of the West so that no big man from the East or West can come in and monopolize the land and water." But a New York Congressman made a speech against this law when it was being considered by saying, "Yes, we are told that the little people are going to get farms but it is going to end up with big, rich outsiders getting everything". Unfortunately, this prophecy came true for the rich and powerful were able to influence the U.S. Dept. of Interior not only to fail to enforce the law here but also in the other 16 states. Irrigation farming gives big profits and here in the Imperial County of California, the profit is \$50 millions yearly.

On the "60 MINUTES" program I was featured as the one asking for enforcement and Steven Elmore, a big farmer, advocated non-enforcement. Elmore claimed that a person could not make a living on 160 acres. Secretary of the Interior, Rogers C.B. Morton also asserted that a person could not make a living on 160 acres. But both of them failed to tell that a husband and wife and 3 children are entitled to farm 5 x 160 acres for a total of 800 acres. When it is realized that one acre here is equal in production to 5 acres in the Midwest, one knows this family is really farming the equivalent of 4,000 acres in the Midwest. Even a single man who farms 160 acres is really farming the equivalent of 800 acres in the Midwest. Secretary Morton is a big landowner in Maryland.

Steven Elmore insinuates that the Elmore family struggled for a living in the 1930's when he says in referring to my statements, "How can he know the conditions that existed in the 1930's?" Steven Elmore was a young boy in the 1930's. It was tough for everyone, city people and farmers then, but the Elmore family was having a life of ease at that time. That is why a history of the Elmore family is needed to show what occurred. But it is also necessary to give some history of Imperial Valley to show how farmers were ruined by lack of water.

The Colorado River is an interstate river and also a navigable river. As such, nothing can be done to it without permission of the Federal Government. A private company without the permission of the Government cut a notch in the West bank of the Colorado River about 1900. This watergate was just $\frac{1}{4}$ mile North of the Mexican border. There was a natural ravine which went into Mexico and ran parallel to the border and 20 miles South of it. Near Calexico, the ravine with the Colorado River water (the ravine with the water was now called the Alamo River) turned North and entered the United States. From Calexico, canals were built to distribute the water to Imperial Valley.

The Federal Government learned what had been done and trouble was brewing. So the private company got permission from the Mexican Government to make a new watergate below the border in Mexico. Mexico gave

this permission with the understanding that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the water was to be used for farming in Mexico. In this way, the private irrigation water company and the Imperial County farmers escaped the control of the U.S.

Mexican General Andrade was given a land grant which extended 80 miles from the Colorado River west to the mountains in Mexico. Andrade died and his family sold big pieces of the land to various foreigners. In 1915, here are the landholdings in Mexico by these foreigners: Colorado River Land Co. (the Los Angeles Times interests) 800,000 acres; Southern Pacific Land Co. 28,500 acres; Globe Mills Co. 12,000 acres; Imperial Development Co. (Cudahy Meat Co.) 16,000 acres; Daugherty Estate 10,000 acres; W.H. Harris & Son 2,999 acres; Weed & Laing 4,262 acres; H. De Nancy & Co. 1,657 acres; P.E. Williams 2,666 acres; Mount Signal Land & Cattle Co. 10,000 acres; Shintani Co. 8,000 acres; the Andrade Estate kept 50,000 acres. There were no small landowners!!!

Read carefully the above acreages for you are now bombarded with propaganda that because of modern farm machinery, profitable farming needs big acreages. But this was 60 years ago! Go back 200 to 400 years ago in England, France, etc. and the same big acreages were owned by Dukes, Counts, Earls, etc. It is the same old story through the centuries, the rich and powerful monopolize all the land. Before it was the nobility and now big corporations!!! No little Mexican owned land.

The flood waters of the Colorado River come in June, July, and August. The foreign corporation farms in Mexico and the farms in Imperial County would grow one crop in those months only. In December, January, February, and March, the Colorado River was very low. Whatever water was available, would be grabbed by the foreign farms in Mexico. Sometimes, there were rains in the mountains of Southeast Arizona, and this water would come down the Gila River to the Colorado River in the winter months. With the passage of time, the Arizona farmers put up dams and used the water for their own farming.

The foreign corporation farms in Mexico monopolized the Colorado River water and there was not much for Imperial County farms. In July 1934, the S.P. Railroad brought in many tank cars of water so people and animals could drink in Imperial Valley because of the shortage of water. Imperial Valley farmers lobbied Congress for 15 years to build the Boulder Dam and the All-American Canal so the water did not have to pass through Mexico. Since then the farms here grow at least two crops yearly. There is no water shortage.

Steven Elmore's grandfather came here in 1908. But he gave up farming and moved to the vicinity of Los Angeles. Elmore's uncle, Robert Graham Elmore quit farming here and worked for the Imperial County Road Dept. The uncle had 3 sons and none became farmers. Many farmers planted crops which died for lack of water and the farmers quit.

Steven Elmore's father, John Elmore, in the 1920's married a rich heiress of the Jameson family of Riverside, Calif. She came here to live and with her money, farmland was bought. The ranch was called Jameson-Elmore. As various children were born, the ranch name changed to just Elmore. In the late 1930's, the Imperial Irrigation District illegally in violation of the U.S. Reclamation Law sold 6,000 acres to the Jameson-Elmores. THIS FAMILY WAS RICH IN THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930'S!!!

So for Steven Elmore to insinuate that the Jameson-Elmores had a tough time in the 1930's is far from the truth. Their big ranch holdings really came from absentee money brought by the mother. John Elmore, the father, at present is an absentee landowner who lives at San Clemente, Calif. and his estate is next to that of President of the U.S. Richard Nixon. The father actually sold the President \$100,000 worth of land to help the President round out his estate.

It was only after the All-American Canal was built that the Imperial Irrigation District would supply water to virgin desert land. So the Jameson-Elmores got water to the 6,000 acres of virgin desert land they bought from the I.I.D. because of the All-American Canal. Before those who had land in cultivation, could not get sufficient water but now even virgin desert land could get water.

The Federal Government is very kind to the Elmores for it gives them \$1 million yearly in handouts of various sorts. But the U.S. Reclamation Law IS INTENDED TO SPREAD THE BENEFITS OF DAMS AND CANALS BUILT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE AND NOT ONLY TO THE ELMORES AND THE OTHER BIG CORPORATION FARMS.