

NEWS LETTER FROM DR. BEN YELLEN  
Brawley, Calif.

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Who owns the farmland in Imperial Valley?

70% of the land is owned by persons and corporations who do not live or have headquarters in the Valley. The Irvine Co. owning 25,000 acres worth \$25,000,000 is a good example. 20% is owned by local wealthy farmowners. Only 10% is owned by little farmers.

The absentee landowners in many instances do not farm their own land but lease it out to big corporations to farm. The absentee landowners, the big farming corporations and the local wealthy farmowners work together as a unit to exert political pressure to get low valuations for property tax purposes on their farmland. Since 300 persons and corporations own 90% of the farmland, the low valuations, often one fourth of what the farmlands should be valued at, gives these big landowners and especially the absentee landlords big savings in taxes. But taxes have to be collected to pay the expenses of government, so the 70,000 people living in Imperial Valley have to pay higher taxes to make up for those not collected from the big landowners.

I repeat that the absentee landlords who own 70% of the farmland are not paying their proper taxes and that the inhabitants of Imperial Valley have to pay higher taxes to make up for the absentee landowners.

The city people have no objection to the little farmowners getting a break on their taxes on their farms. With the savings in taxes, the little farmers come to town and buy from the merchants so that the city people get something out of it. The little farmers are having a tough time from the competition of the big individual farmers and corporation farmers. The little farmers are being squeezed out by the big outfits and the big landowners are buying the land and getting bigger.

The All American Canal was built to bring Colorado River water to the farmland of Imperial Valley. A lot of this desert land could not have been cultivated if the All American Canal had not been built. As of 1959, the towns of Imperial Valley used \$30,000 of water. The farms used \$2,000,000 of water. So you can see that the main purpose of the Canal was to bring water to the farmlands.

These big farmowners and big landowners control the Imperial Irrigation District, and are very clever. They had a small hydroelectric generator put on the All American Canal and put out propaganda to give the impression that this generator was a major source of electric power. Nothing is further from the truth. 70% of the Electric power is bought from the U.S. at Boulder Dam or made at power plants in El Centro and Brawley. The citizens were misled into believing that when the Calif.-Nevada Electric Power Co. was driven out, electric power would be cheap. This was all a smoke screen to conceal the contract that the Imperial Irrigation District made with the U.S. to buy the All American Canal for \$25,000,000 and pay for it out of the power receipts.

This meant that 300 persons and corporations who owned 90% of the farmland, would get very cheap irrigation water and would pay very little for electric power bills since there are not many homes on farms. The absentee landowners who own 70%, paid nothing for the Canal because they did not live here.

The 70,000 people who live here and buy here and do not own any farmland, are paying for the Canal with their electric power bills.