

CONTINUATION OF THE ARTICLE "IMPERIAL VALLEY CONTROVERSY"

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IID: It would prohibit ownership of land by corporations because how could a corporation satisfy the residency requirements?

YELLEN: This is necessary to prevent the absentee ownership that now exists in the county. Absentee ownership now stands at 70 percent; 35 years ago it was 48%. California family farmers will eventually become tenant farmers unless this law is enforced and the growth of conglomerate corporations in agriculture is halted soon.

Dr. Yellen contends that if the law were in effect, it would give thousands of families job opportunities. And that it would take some pressure off the cities where people go when they can't find work and these people end up on welfare.

The opportunity is such that a man with experience in farming can secure a 40-year mortgage at five percent interest (a Senate bill has been introduced to reduce the rate to three percent).

The district claims if the law were enforced it would ruin the Valley's economy.

The doubting doctor further contends that a "conflict of interest" existed when the decision was rendered in 1971 in favor of the district (Imperial Irrigation District vs. U.S. government) in that the presiding judge had land holdings in an adjoining area.

And so the battle goes.

It is the intention of the American Irrigation Farmers Association to take a stand on this issue after additional research has been completed on the controversy.

We would appreciate comment from our readers on the issue in question as well as any comments you may have about similar farming regulations in your area.

It is the purpose of the American Irrigation Farmers Association to aid individuals and groups in improving irrigation practices throughout the nation. With a strong national organization backing a cause, individual effort is not as taxed and, at the same time, more can be gained through team effort.

In the case of Dr. Yellen and his one man fight, AIFA could, no doubt, have helped him. At the same time, association backing could benefit the district.

As the American Irrigation Farmers Association grows it will, no doubt, be behind an issue of vital interest to you. We, therefore, urge you to support this new national organization.

The above was the full article but I want to comment on some of the questions and answers for as the article admits, the AIFA wants to do more research before it takes a position on the Imperial Valley Controversy. The situation could be better understood if the Reclamation Act of 1902 had been given the name, "ANTI-TRUST LAW FOR IRRIGATION FARMING WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDES THE WATER".

Then it would be better understood what President Theodore Roosevelt meant when he made his historic statement when signing the Reclamation Act of 1902.

Now I answered a question by saying that 1,600 small farm families had been squeezed out in the last 20 years from Imperial County BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT GET A COTTON ALLOTMENT and not because you can not make a living on 160 acres which is the propaganda of the big farm interests. But there is more to it. The big farm outfits were paid big handouts to "withdraw land from cotton production". This land was supposed to lie idle. But the big Ranchers got the corrupt Dept. of Agriculture to make a regulation which has a "sleeper" in it. The regulation said that in order to keep the ground "withdrawn from cotton growing" vigorous, certain grasses (most of them exotic) could be grown on this "withdrawn land" BUT COULD NOT BE HARVESTED AND HAD TO BE FLOWED UNDER.

Here is where the "sleeper" was put in. The "sleeper" was alfalfa. The biggest acreage in Imperial Valley is planted in alfalfa. Since the little farmers had no cotton allotments, practically speaking, the

only crop they grew was alfalfa for hay to feed the milk cows that supply the milk to the cities of the West Coast. But the big farm interests control the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee of Imperial County just as they control the Imperial Irrig. Dist. Soon the "land withdrawn from cotton growing" for which they were being paid big handouts, THEY GREW ALFALFA AND INSTEAD OF PLOWING IT UNDER, THEY BALED IT INTO HAY AND CREATED BIG HAY SURPLUSES.

So the little farm family either made no profit or had to sell its alfalfa hay crop at a loss. So the little farmers had to sell out or were sold out by the banks. You probably have guessed who got their land--the absentee farm corporations or the mob of business people, professional people, actors, etc. who were looking for "tax shelters".

So you can realize that the IID answer that "Many corporations don't own the land they farm, they just lease it from individual farmers" strays far from the truth. The big corporations when they lease farmland, lease it mainly from the absentee farmland owners for these are the ones who own 70% of the farmland which they bought for "tax shelters". To call these businessmen, professional people, actors, etc. "individual farmers" and thereby insinuating that they are local residents shows how clever the propaganda of the big farm interests is.

Finally, there is another racket that the small family farmer suffered from. If you go to the Mexican border on which Imperial County is at 4 a.m, you will see a mob of Mexican farm laborers numbering between 5,000 to 10,000 crossing each morning to work in the U.S. The number depends on the season.

If they work in Mexico, they earn only 15 cents per hour. But their standard of living is 1/8 that of an average American worker. If you multiply the 15 cents by 8, you will get \$1.20 which is a very low wage for an American farmworker or any other worker in the U.S. to make a living on. There are many places in the U.S. where people particularly farmworkers, earn only \$1.20 per hour.

Now the big corporations use these Mexican laborers, whereas the little farmer and his family try to do their own work. You can see how discouraging it is for a little farmer to be competing in labor with a Mexican laborer from Mexico who is earning 60 cents per hour. Now you will be told about minimum wage laws but these are just words. A Mexican from Mexico working here for 60 cents per hour, is like a union worker in the U.S. who is earning \$4.80 per hour for you must remember that you must judge the wages in relation to the scale of living-- 60 cents times 8 gives \$4.80 per hour since the Mexican spends the money in Mexico where the scale of living is 1/8 that in the U.S.

BUT THIS DOES NOT HELP THE LITTLE FARMER AND HIS FAMILY WHO HAVE TO PIT THEIR PERSONAL WORK AGAINST MEXICAN LABORERS WHO WORK FOR THE CORPORATIVE FARMS. THESE CORPORATIVE FARMS USE FARM LABOR CONTRACTORS AND REALLY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE FARM LABOR CONTRACTORS PAY THE MEXICAN LABORERS.

If you go to look at the farm labor contractors books, you will be shown records where a Mexican from Mexico is being paid \$1.80 per hour but you are not told that he divides the money 3 ways with 2 other Mexicans who work alongside him. You can't get the Mexicans to testify because they hide in Mexico and to him he is earning big wages at 60 cents an hour whereas his fellow laborer who can not cross to work in the United States, only earns 15 cents an hour doing the same work in Mexico.

With this explanation, you now really know how the little farm family is squeezed out and fully realize why the big rancher propaganda "you can not make a living on 160 acres" is false.

These Mexicans who cross each day to work comprise 95% of the farm labor work force. You can also therefore see that the IID answer about the many on welfare in Imperial County is not "some available jobs" but practically all the jobs. Do not forget each of these Mexicans living in Mexico and working here, probably supports 5 dependents or a total of 40,000 to 50,000 people. So you see the profits of management (80%) leave here and the wages of labor leave for Mexico.