

Feb. 29, 1972

SOUND TRACK OF NBC COAST TO COAST TV BROADCAST FEB. 6, 1972 ON IMPERIAL VALLEY

Franklin D. Schurz is the main owner of the SOUTH BEND (IND.) TRIBUNE. This is the same town where the UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME is located. Schurz also owns a string of newspapers in Coachella and Imperial Valleys of Southern California--THE INDIO NEWS, THE BRAWLEY NEWS and THE EL CENTRO POST-PRESS. Mr. Schurz lives in South Bend, Indiana so that you can see that he is an absentee newspaper owner as far as the California papers are concerned.

Both these valleys have a tremendous yearly agricultural production which yields annual profits of \$50 millions. The County of Imperial has a yearly agricultural production of \$300 millions which is more than the production of 12 states. For example, the big State of Maine has an annual farm production of \$225 millions.

But there is a most serious problem in Coachella and Imperial Valleys where the U.S. Reclamation Law of 1902 says that only persons living in the area are entitled to get water for irrigation farming and that each person should get enough water to irrigate 160 acres. BUT THE RECLAMATION LAW IS NOT BEING ENFORCED AND BIG ABSENTEE CORPORATIONS LIKE THE IRVINE CO., THE PUREX CORP., UNITED FRUIT CO., TENNECO, KAISER ALUMINUM & CHEMICAL CORP., DOW CHEMICAL CO., SOUTHERN PACIFIC LAND CO., and other absentee corporations of lesser size are farming in these valleys.

But Franklin D. Schurz (the report of his death was "greatly exaggerated") has kept up a CURTAIN OF SILENCE on this problem so that the local inhabitants would be fooled by the printed news in the local newspapers put in by the absentee farm interests.

On Feb. 6, 1972, NBC-TV News had a coast to coast broadcast on what was happening in Imperial Valley in relation to the Reclamation Law. Schurz had a complete NEWS BLACKOUT on this broadcast so that thousands of inhabitants should not learn about it. Therefore, the sound track of this broadcast was obtained to be printed in this NEWSLETTER to break the NEWS BLACKOUT. It is suggested that readers also see the Newsletter DR. YELLEN INTERVIEWED ON NBC NEWS-TV COAST TO COAST so that the scenes described in the sound track would be better understood.

Here is the sound track:

Fred Briggs, NBC Reporter speaking while the film is showing the All-American Canal and other canals, the farmland devoid of farm homes and Dr. Ben Yellen is distributing Newsletters---- Most of the land that has made California number one in agriculture, was once a desert good for growing sagebrush and not much else. The Imperial

Valley was one of the bleakest of those deserts, but like the others, it was tamed with irrigation. Canals tapped water from the Colorado River and turned the Valley into some of California's richest farmland.

Canals like this were monumental projects when they were built and most of them wouldn't have been built without help from the Federal Government. Initially, that help came 70 years ago under a law known as the Reclamation Act of 1902. The intent of the law was to encourage small farming in this area, in fact one provision of the law clearly stated that no farm enjoying Federal irrigation could be larger than 160 acres in size.

That was what the law said but that law is still on the books although sometimes around here, it is difficult to tell that. Most of the farms here and in other California valleys count their acreage in the thousands. The law also said that the owners of irrigated farms had to live on their land but few of them do. These are farms without farm houses--corporate farms with headquarters in New York, Dallas and Los Angeles.

Small farmers here as elsewhere, found it hard to compete. Many gave up altogether. The law that was supposed to keep farms small, was never really enforced.

Enter a most unlikely champion of small farmers Ben Yellen, a doctor who moved here from Brooklyn 30 years ago. For years he has been putting out pamphlets, passing them out, mailing them out, in a one man crusade against big government, big farming, big anything. He fancies himself as a rural Ralph Nader. Almost everyone else fancies him as a harmless eccentric. That was until 2 years ago when on his own, he filed suit in Federal Court asking the Government to enforce its own law. It was the beginning of what will probably turn into lengthy expensive litigation.

Dr. Yellen speaking while being interviewed: I felt I could with my own income, I could run the preliminary stages to get people interested and such has occurred. There is now an organization called The National Coalition For Land Reform, and the Sierra Club has come in, and the National AFL-CIO, and the National Farmers Union has come in to help. But prior to that, it was all my own money--and it worked out--but you know it is a case where fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Fred Briggs, NBC News Reporter speaking: One Judge ruled the 160 acres limitation did not apply but another Judge said the residency requirement--the owner living on his land-- did apply. Both decisions are being appealed and if Yellen and those who have joined him in this, win their case, it will bring quite a change to the Valley.

Sheldon Greene, Attorney in San Francisco, Chairman of the West Coast Chapter of the National Coalition For Land Reform speaking: You will see small, family farmers making a decent return rather than going out of business, or becoming dependents of large corporations. And you will see farmworkers becoming farmers, getting together and farming cooperatively, and you would see a shrinkage of the kind of welfare dependency and unemployment which now characterizes much of rural America and rural California.

Fred Briggs speaking again: The corporate farms and the California Agriculture Department say that 160 acres is too small for profitable farming. But since farming goes on all year round and there is no such thing as drought here, 1 acre here can be as productive as 5 acres in the Midwest. Small farmers are having a difficult time of it everywhere of course. But here because of an old law and a lawsuit to have it enforced, the family farm might well stage a comeback. Fred Briggs, NBC News in the Imperial Valley.

The above sound track was well timed and took 3 minutes and 40 seconds. NBC charges an advertiser \$11,000.00 per minute on a coast to coast broadcast like this. NBC-TV News donated \$40,000.00 in time to a problem which it thought should be seen by 25 million viewers.

Franklin D. Schurz has been in collusion with the big farm interests to keep the inhabitants brainwashed so they do not realize how they are being deprived of making \$50 millions annual profits. His NEWS BLACKOUT of this broadcast is a glaring example of the conspiracy.