

NEWSLETTER FROM DR. BEN YELLEN  
Brawley, Calif.

September 11, 1971 /

# OPEN LETTER TO LOCAL FARMERS

In 1899, THE REFUSE LAW was passed by Congress forbidding manufacturing companies from dumping their industrial wastes into rivers. For 70 years, the biggest manufacturing corporations were able to prevent enforcement of this law and continued to pollute the rivers.

Finally, public opinion began to pressure public officials to enforce the law. The Los Angeles Times of Sept. 9, 1971 tells that a Federal Grand Jury has indicted the Anaconda Wire & Cable Co., the subsidiary of the Anaconda Co., one of the biggest corporations in the world, for polluting the Hudson River with its plant at Hastings, N.Y. This company would be liable for fines of \$1½ millions if convicted plus possible jail sentences for its officials.

The same non-enforcement has happened with the U.S. Reclamation Law of 1902 which has a provision in it which states that if the Federal Government builds dams like the Boulder Dam and subsidiary dams, and canals like the All-American Canal, to bring water to an area for farming, THEN ONLY BONAFIDE RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE AREA CAN GET WATER TO DO THE FARMING.

The failure to enforce this provision of the U.S. Reclamation Law has resulted in many outside landowners who own 70% of the land in Imperial and Coachella Valleys, the Palo Verde Irrigation District, and the Bard Irrigation District. These absentee landowners especially big corporations use these farmlands as "tax shelters" AND IN VIOLATION OF THE U.S. RECLAMATION LAW, GET WATER FROM THE COLORADO RIVER TO FARM THIS ABSENTEE OWNED FARMLAND.

I do not want to mention names but there is a farmer with 40 years experience in Brawley who was recently refused a loan by the bank and squeezed out of farming. There is another farmer who inherited 1,500 acres of farmland and recently went bankrupt. He had to go to Iran to get a job as a farmer for a new irrigation project. Then there is a local young man who went to agricultural college and instead of being able to come back here and go into farming, has also gone to Iran to work in the same project. What I tell you about the local farmers around the Brawley area, is also true in the other areas. Many local farmers are being squeezed by the absentee farmers who have tremendous financial resources, so that the resident farmers are on the verge of being squeezed out. Many local farmers have gone bankrupt already.

**THE BANKS KNOW THAT THE LOCAL FARMERS CAN NOT STAND THE COMPETITION OF THE ABSENTEE CORPORATIONS WHICH USE THE FARMLAND HERE FOR "TAX SHELTERS" AND THEREFORE REFUSE LOANS TO RESIDENT FARMERS ON THE SLIGHTEST EXCUSE.**

About 2 years ago, I caused to be filed the lawsuit, BEN YELLEN et al V. THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, to compel him to enforce the residency requirement of the U.S. Reclamation Law. If this was enforced, there would not be any absentee farmers. SINCE THERE WOULD BE ONLY LOCAL FARMERS HERE, THE BANKS WOULD BE FORCED TO GIVE THE LOANS TO THE RESIDENT FARMERS IF THEY WANTED TO STAY IN BUSINESS HERE.

Some of the biggest corporations in the United States are farming in the Imperial Irrigation District, the Coachella Valley County Water District, the Palo Verde Irrigation District, and the Beard Irrigation District, all of which use 75% of the Colorado River water allotted to the State of California. Here is a partial list of these big corporations: United Fruit Co., Purex Corp., The Irvine Co., Tenneco Inc., Dow Chemical Co., Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp., the Southern Pacific Land Co., CBK Industries, etc.

To prevent exactly this, Congress in its wisdom put the residency provision in the U.S. Reclamation Law of 1902 BUT IT HAS NEVER BEEN ENFORCED!!! The States of Kansas and North Dakota have laws forbidding farming by corporations to prevent exactly the situation which is going on here. Oklahoma and Wisconsin are trying to pass similar laws.

There is no chance for you local farmers who have been squeezed out or for young men to start farming here unless there is a favorable decision for local farmers and wouldbe farmers in the lawsuit **BEN YELLEN et al. V. SECRETARY OF INTERIOR**. Judge William Murray of Putte, Montana, presided at the trial of this lawsuit about March 23, 1971. My lawyer Arthur Brunwasser of San Francisco says he expects a verdict in our favor. In the very near future, Judge Murray will give his decision.

Under present conditions, one needs a lot of money to get into farming. But a favorable decision in this lawsuit will make it possible to get into farming with a very small sum of money since the absentee farmers will be forced out as they will not be able to get water for farming.

The Federal Government has had a program for many years whereby a person who knows farming, can buy farmland with the Government putting up the money and taking a mortgage for 40 years at 3% interest. But under present conditions, such loans could not be gotten for the Government knew you would go bankrupt in competition with the absentee landowners who own the farmland as "tax shelters". But with the absentee landowners chased out, the land will become available and you will be able to get the farmland even though you have no money to buy it. You are advised to go to the **FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION** at 143 South 6th St. El Centro, Calif. and make inquiries about such loans.

Of course you will need some money to operate the farm. In addition, it will now be possible to get bank loans as the banks will have no one else to give bank farm loans to.

There is an annual profit of \$100 millions on an annual agricultural production of about \$400 millions in these 4 irrigation districts. The merchants and the local businessmen know that if you make the profits, that you will spend most of it locally as contrasted to the absentee landowners who spend most of it outside these areas. So these local merchants and businessmen will be an extra pressure group to force the banks to make you farm loans.

When Judge Murray gives a favorable decision so that local farmers will be able to do the farming here, the big absentee land corporations will use influence to get the U.S. Dept. of Justice to appeal the decision. The Farm Bureau will help these big corporations. But the National Farmers Union, The National Grange, the National Farmers Organization, the Consumers Federation of America and the Sierra Club, etc. will come to the aid of you local farmers.

So all of you should get out of the local Farm Bureau. Invite one of these other farm organizations to set up a chapter here so that you can join it and have a strong voice in Washington, D.C. when the matter of an appeal comes up. Do not forget that the local merchants and businessmen have a strong interest in you resident farmers and wouldbe farmers winning out in this struggle.

I HAVE FOUGHT THE BATTLE FOR THE LITTLE MAN HERE PRACTICALLY ALONE.  
NOW IS THE TIME FOR YOU PEOPLE TO ENTER THE FIGHT BEFORE YOU ARE RUINED  
BY THESE ABSENTEE CORPORATIONS. GOD HELPS THOSE THAT HELP THEMSELVES!!!