

## DO NOT HONOR CLAUDE FINNELL

The local newspapers of Sept. 16, 1987, have a headline, "Reception set to honor Claude Finnell". The reception will be held on Sept. 26, 1987 in the Abatti Produce Building.

Finnell has been the County Agriculture Commissioner since 1954. He has been paid by the taxes of the residents of Imperial County. Since 90% of the farmland is owned by absentee farmland owners whose property should be assessed at between \$10,000 to \$15,000 an acre and is not assessed at more than \$1,250 an acre, you can see that they escape paying at least 70% of the taxes. So the little taxes paid by the absentee farmland owners, did not pay the wages of Finnell so he could support his wife and children.

Claude Finnell is retiring Sept. 30th and will become the lobbyist for the Metropolitan Water District which is trying to steal the irrigation water away from us.

Your attention is now directed to Lyn Nofsiger who worked in the White House and is a close friend of President Reagan. He quit his job and began working as a lobbyist within one year of quitting his job. He is being prosecuted for a felony. Michael Deaver, another White House worker is also being prosecuted for a felony for perjury arising from an investigation of his lobbying. The City of Los Angeles also has such a law against lobbying right after quitting a job.

Now Imperial County does not have such a law. But as you can realize, he is morally wrong in becoming a lobbyist for the MWD. So you can see that Claude Finnell does not deserve any honors. At the present time, there is a bill going through Congress to honor a man who "blows the whistle" -- tells about the dirty work going on in government and the "whistle blower" is to be paid a reward and reprisals against him are to be prevented.

Let us see how Claude Finnell made out as a "whistle blower". He knows about the fake low assessments on the farmland, but he did not speak out. He knew that the Imperial Irrigation District is swindling the people resident here on the electricity bills so it could sell the irrigation water to the absentee landowners for 1/4 the correct price, but he did not speak out. He knew that the I.I.D. was not charging the farmland for electricity used to pump water to them, but Finnell did not speak out. Now there are 450 sumps where drainage water is pumped out to the drainage canals. The I.I.D. used our electricity and did not charge the absentee farmowners for the electricity, but Finnell did not speak out. Are we the citizens who paid the wages of Claude Finnell supposed to honor him when he betrayed us by his silence?

Despite my harsh criticism of Claude Finnell, I like him. He is an angel compared to the previous agricultural commissioner, "Red Harrigan" whose story of betrayal I will leave for another time. Claude Finnell is just like all of us-we have to keep our mouths shut or lose our jobs. You do not want Finnell's family to starve, do you? We are celebrating the birth of the Constitution now and it says you have free speech. But you only have free speech if you can fight for it and if you have money. For the average man like Claude Finnell, it is better not to speak out.

Ben Yellen, M.D.,  
Brawley, Calif.