Make It Easy to Hold Farms

Important Feature of Congressional Program; Make Renters Owners

By EARL GODWIN

WASHINGTON — One of the steadying legislative features of this congressional program will be the creation of a federl corporation to make it easy for folks to buy and hold their farms.

Scores of proposals on this subject will be presented to congress—but the inside track right now is occupied by the imposing figures of Senator Bankhead of Alabama (brother of Speaker Bankhead) and Marvin Jones, Texas congressman, and chairman of the committee on agriculture.

It's high time that a broad, sound, long-term policy be adopted to give to farming the ownership-stability which has been conferred on the city dwellers through the government's several housing agencies. The Federal Housing Administration has helped around 2,000,000 Americans to buy homes on easy terms, eliminating excess fees and making one mortgage transaction out of the loan—instead of dragging in the excess-profit second mortgage with its fees and the ever present menace of loss of the propoerty by the family.

The increase in farms rented instead of owned has aroused farm leaders to the importance of the matter. There was once much free land. It was handed around by railroads, government and states so liberally that a hundred years ago nearly every man owned a piece of land. Today nearly half the farms are operated by men who rent that land.

Fifty years ago a fourth of the farms were rented. At the present rate, which is speeding up by the way, only about a fourth of the farms will be owned by farmers living on them and operating them within a few years time.

Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, one of the deepest and clearest thinkers in Washington, is appalled at the vision of a nation of farm - tenants with the farms owned by life insurance companies or mortgage corporations quartered in Chicago and New York. Yet he fears that is exactly what will occur within a few generations unless there is a right-about-face in public policy so that the natural flow of events favors ownership instead of rental.

As the administration sees it, one of the sorest spots in the country is the south, where "share-cropping" is a custom. This is particularly a problem in Arkansas, and the plight of these "share croppers" for some reason has defied the best minds in Washington. Moreover, there has been considerable danger of communistic and socialist agitation among these "share croppers." The natural antidote being their own land, held by them and offering them the security which the land gives.

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FARMERS BECOME RENTERS.

The Department of Agriculture says that forty thousand farmers a year are passing from ownership to rented farms. If it were merely a matter of money, loans by a federal billion-dollar corporation could check this at an average loan of $4,000 per farm. That would require $160,000,000 annually until the movement stopped. Then, of course, there are those already in the tenant class who should be restored to ownership; and the estimates here set aside the sum of $50,000,000 annually for that purpose—a sum, by the way, which Henry Wallace believes far too small.

At the moment there are two plans which congressional leaders believe they could incorporate into a single bill—always preferable to a series of bills. The first would be the purchase by the government of large tracts of land, to be resold to farmers on credit; poor land to be withdrawn from use. The terms of sale would be easy and there would be a kindly governmental supervision over the whole area. The second plan is the outright purchase of individual farms and their resale to farm families on easy terms—easy enough to attract purchasers and keep families on the land. Provision would be made to protect these farms from getting into the hands of landlords who would rent them out—and that they should never get into the hands of families who would not live on the farms. The whole policy is to help farmers own land and live upon it.

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AS EXPERTS SEE IT.

Farm experts do not see the matter as merely one of money and credit. Along with farm ownership goes the important idea of making agriculture worth while. The complexities of the market in which farm produce is subjected to ups-and-downs beyond the farmer's control must be smoothed out by some means or other. No matter how much land a farmer owns it will not be much of a help with thirteen years of sagging prices such as this country experienced up to 1933.

This government has done a great deal toward raising the morale of many a man on a farm which was more of a millstone on his neck than anything else. The Resettlement Administration, about to become a regular bureau of the Department of Agriculture, has made several successful experiments in rehabilitating the old fashioned individualistic and isolated farm. It has tried out the idea of a farm community plan; it is endeavoring to find ways of bringing farm life up to date, attractive and secure.

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NOW OUT OF RED.

Secretary Wallace asserts that agriculture is now out of the red and on a nationally profitable basis; but he thinks we need a crop control even stronger than we had under AAA. The thing Henry Wallace wants to control is the great excesses of future production.

The markets of the world should be opened to American farmers if these ticklish farm problems are to be solved. Right now there is hanging in the air in the State Department a reciprocal trade treaty with Great Britain. Our hope is to increase our trade with the United Kingdom—our best customer. One half of our agricultural products except cotton went to the United Kingdom last year. To increase that proportion would be considerable of a stunt. Our general agricultural policy includes the world wide view of trade with other countries; there is a disposition on the part of the agricultural leaders here to be just a trifle critical of slow progress in trade treaties with those great industrial countries which could buy our farm products in huge quantities. And, to be frank about it, the agrarian spokesmen here point out that treaties so far negotiated have been mainly with countries which have a lot of farm stuff to sell. However, the State Department has a very difficult task in negotiating treaties anywhere. Europe is jumpy and nervous. Some of the nations are armed camps and want to drag us into European embroilments through trickery in these trade trieties For instance: We would love to negotiate a treaty with Italy—we could sell those fellows a lot of our stuff. But Italy wants to borrow a lot of money from us to keep that terrific war machine of theirs in order. They would like to do business with us—but they are frantic for money. Therefore, while we could sell them a lot more farm products, if we did so on their terms we would be right in the middle of their war program within a month. In other words, we would be lending them good United States money, which is so hard for most of us to gather in sufficient quantities—and altogether impossible to collect from Italy right now in repayment of the debt. Italy has owed us since the World war.

COLLECTING WAR DEBTS.

The business of collecting the war debts, (now about eleven billions owed us by European countries,) is extremely complicated. It is by no means as simple as owing your neighbor a couple of dollars and repaying him in 25-cent installments, or even paying him off in some sort of goods he wants. If Europe started to pay us in gold coin, which is the only way international debts can be paid if money is to change hands, we would actually not know what to do with the gold. We have now half the world's gold; so much that as we get more of it from Europe (sent by investors for safety) we have been issuing paper money against it. But now the paper money is getting rather plentiful—and a sort of inflation and cheapened money is in sight. So the government is to take the incoming gold from now on and put it in a corner by itself. That takes the money value out of it. So gold in repayment of war debts seems to be something like King Midas' gold—it has come to the point where it is a detriment instead of a help.

Cash payments therefore are out. Then there is the idea of repaying us in the goods and produce of those other nations. But the minute that is proposed labor and industry stop fighting between themselves and take a firm and violent stand against any such idea—because, naturally, this would be flooding the U. S. A. with foreign made goods. Competition with our own folks. So that's out the window, too.

Then there have been such ideas as this: Tourists planning to go to Europe would put their travel money in the United States Treasury which would issue an order on the other country—which would see to it that the tourist got around on the railroads and staved at the hotels.

And there is the larger and possibly more practical idea of arranging a trade treaty with one of those defaulting countries whereby we would ship our stuff to them—and they ship none to us. Just a one way agreement. The idea is that if any country would enter such an agreement, the Treasury would nick off a piece of the debt annually in accordance with the amount of business done with us on that basis.

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FROM WASHINGTON EVENING STAR

European Rivers

Of the European rivers, only one, the Volga, is more than 2,000 miles in length. Of the others, only the Danube, the Dnieper and the Don exceed a length of 1,000 miles.

Limes Traced to India

The lime is indigenous to India and was probably introduced into the Western hemisphere by Columbus on his second voyage. Some time later they were found growing wild in the Florida keys. In "The Log of the Mayflower," Azel Ames states that they were brought to Plymouth by the Pilgrims. Another record states that George Washington ordered a sloop captain bound for the West Indies in 1776 to bring back a barrel of limes, "if you find them good and cheap."

Bitter Literary Controversy

One of the bitterest literary controversies in history was over the identity of an unknown person who, under the pseudonym of "Junius," wrote a series of satirical political letters to the London Public Advertiser between 1769 and 1772. From that day, speculation has been rife and numerous books and pamphlets have been written to prove that he was at least forty different famous individuals.—Collier's Weekly.

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