

MARYLAND FARMERS Turn to Electricity

Told by

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Editor's Note: The joint authors of this story of the Rural Electrification of Maryland are A. V. Krewatch, Specialist in Agricultural Engineering, University of Maryland, and Mr. C. E. Wise, Sec. - Treas., Maryland Farm Bureau Federation. Both of these men have had an intimate part in the development of the State Rural Electrification program.

PROBABLY few if any problems pertaining to farming have received more universal or intensive study in the past years than that of the use of electricity.

The interest in rural electrification is not confined to the United States alone. It is world-wide. The questions naturally arise: what is this problem of rural electrification, and what is the occasion for such widespread interest at this time? The problem is primarily an economic one, although it has sociological phases of importance. In general, it consists in the finding of a way to provide electric service for the farm under conditions which will make its use profitable as well as pleasurable to the farmer and be sufficiently remunerative to the power company to warrant its service and investment costs. There are a number of reasons why this problem is attracting special attention at this time.

The American farmer is not a peasant. His standards of living are relatively high. His wants are becoming much like those of other persons in other occupations. In the past decade with the automobile at his command, he has seen more of city life, and has commenced to demand those things which make city life attractive including electricity. Perhaps the question might more logically be why should the farmer be the only one not using electricity?

To better answer this question we may go back for more than two thousand

The electric pump pictured at the right below, has replaced the old back-breaking hand pump and brought the convenience of running water into this modern Maryland farm kitchen. Incidentally, the electric pump will deliver more water for one cent than you can pump and carry in one hour.



years prior to the nineteenth century during all of which time there were relatively few changes in the methods of agricultural production. During the past hundred years, however, there has been a succession of inventions which have revolutionized farming and living on the farm. The steel plow, the mower, the reaper, the binder, the cotton gin, the gas tractor and the steam threshing machine are some of the innovations which have brought about greater saving in labor and changes in method than had been accomplished in all time previous to their discovery.

Further Progress Necessary

The introduction of machinery and power has greatly reduced the labor requirements of production. No longer is it necessary to work from daybreak until dark to provide the food necessary by the farm family, with only a tiny surplus left over to exchange for manu-

any agriculture in the world, but still further progress must be made. While we are much advanced beyond other countries of the world in our use of power and machinery, and in our productive capacity per worker, agriculture has not kept pace with American industry. The Department of Agriculture gives \$2,000 as the value of products produced annually by the farm worker in an average of 3,000 hours of work, while the worker in the factory turns out products worth \$5,700 in an average working time of 2700 hours. In other words the fac-

situation, however, was not to last. The attitude of the farmer has been changing as he gradually discovered that electricity can be employed to replace manual labor

and improve the efficiency of operations and consequently help put money into his pockets. During the past decade rural electrification has been steadily developing from its pre-war state of infancy and now is approaching the volume of consumption where power companies find its encouragement a profitable policy.

The present cooperation of utility companies and the Public Service Commission toward uniform and more liberal extension in Maryland is a big step forward in rural electrification. This proposed state-wide policy provides for a uniform monthly minimum charge and a guarantee that the person will use enough current so that the amount of their total bill each month will be about 1 1/2 per cent of the cost of

the line, sufficient for maintenance of good service; and for this guarantee, the company will build the line without the farmer putting up any money. Such a liberal policy along with reduced line construction costs should in Maryland make many additional extensions buildable. With the liberal extension policies to be put into effect in the near future, cooperation on the part of the rural groups, and the ability of these groups to get together, will be a deciding factor in getting electric lines built.

Electrification is Joint Problem

The Pass Key to Rural Electrification must be turned by both the utility and the consumer to open the way toward increased usage. Nearly every company in the State has reduced rates once during the last two years. Increased usage will bring about lower rates and lower rates should bring about increased usage if they are to remain low. A few of the practical uses that have proven their worth in time and labor saved, fire hazard eliminated, accidents prevented, health and living conditions improved, eye sight saved, delaying or putting off altogether the need of glasses, are illustrated herewith.

There is observable evidence as well as oral acknowledgement that Maryland farm families are considerable happier because of their electric equipment.



Electricity in the farm home immeasurably lightens the daily tasks of the homemaker.



On this Maryland dairy farm it took four persons one hour to milk 25 cows. An electric milking machine on the same farm requires one person one and one-half hours for the entire job. It takes one and one-fourth to three kilowatt hours per cow per month.



factured products. Eight years ago a handy man with a flail would thresh and clean six bushels of grain per day. Today with a small combine one man will cut, thresh, and clean three hundred bushels of grain per day. American agriculture today is the most advanced of

tory worker produces in one hour what the farmer must work 3.2 hours to pay for.

One way for agriculture to catch up with manufactures in efficiency, obviously, is by greater use of electricity. Until recent years the farmer generally regarded electricity as a luxury rather than an economical servant. The demand for electric service was small when it first commenced shortly before the World War. It was used slightly on the farm, and then chiefly for lighting and other "out of the pocket" uses around the house. The power companies were so busy supplying a rapidly enlarging market in the cities that they didn't care particularly to bother with rural development. It was a costly enterprise and frequently caused large losses, owing to the heavy mileage of transmission lines and the small consumption per mile.

Replaces Manual Labor

Thus, until a few years ago, the farmers who sought electric power often found the utilities reluctant or even unwilling to make the extensions. This

