



This typical North Carolina gully shows the ravages of erosion in terms of depth. (Soil Conservation Service Photo)

AAA Substitute Aimed to Hit Fundamental Farm Problem

By H. R. KIBLER

PASSED as a substitute for the AAA, the "Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act," signed by the President on March 1, strikes directly at the fundamental national farm problem. It seeks to end the terrific annual national loss from soil erosion. In this respect, it follows the permanent original intention of the AAA plan.

Interest in the temporary phase of the AAA, especially the immediate benefits to be secured through evaporation of farm surpluses and the resulting higher farm commodity prices had rather obscured this long-time purpose which had contemplated establishment of a wise land use to check the drain on the food resources of the nation.

Exhaustion of new land areas for farming development, a country-wide soil survey, and the dramatization of erosion by the choking, blinding dust storms that swept over half the nation in the summer of 1935, has brought city dwellers as well as farmers to the consciousness of the necessity for a national soil conservation policy.

National Action Demanded

The soil survey disclosed erosion had destroyed 51,465,097 acres of land for further use in crop production. In addition, it was found that practically all of the top soil was lost from 105,549,229 acres, and a total of 513,074,201 acres had been robbed of from one-fourth to three-fourths of its top soil. It is estimated that 3,000,000,000 tons of soil are washed out of our fields and pastures every year with a loss of not less than 126,000,000,000 pounds of plant food. The value of nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash lost amounts annually to \$2,000,000,000.

This destruction of rich food and fibre producing resources indeed constitutes a national calamity. It demanded national action. The new act of Congress deals directly with the problem. It seeks to:

Preserve and improve soil fertility; promote the economic use and conservation of land; diminish the exploitation and wasteful and unscientific use of national resources; protect rivers and harbors against the results of erosion so as to aid flood control and maintain navigability.

And finally, it seeks to re-establish the

ratio between the purchasing power of farmers and of people not on farms, which prevailed during the five year period, August 1909 to July 1914.

Individual Grants

To accomplish the purpose of the act there is authorized an annual appropriation of not more than \$500,000,000. Under the terms of the act, federal aid will be made in the form of grants direct to individual farmers to assist voluntary action for the stated purposes of the act until Jan. 1, 1938. After that date, grants will be made only to states upon submission of approved state programs.

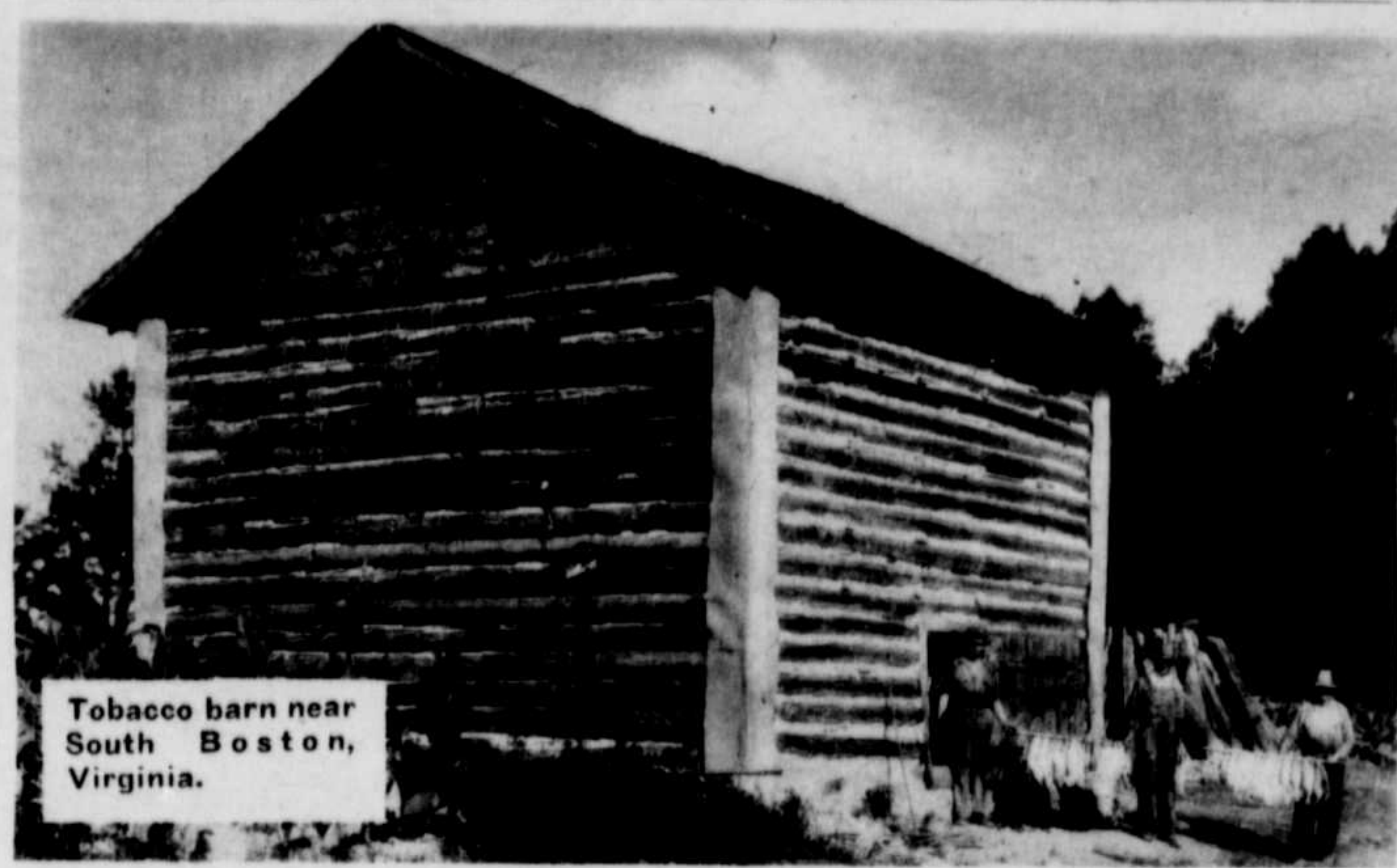
Methods of checking and stopping soil erosion on individual farms include terracing, the growth of cover crops and in some cases, reforestation. Economic pressure has for many years forced farmers to produce cash crops that not only sapped soil fertility, but exposed the land to terrific erosion losses.

The amount of soil and water loss from various cropping systems was effectively illustrated on test plots in the Spartanburg, S. C., area. Comparative figures on pounds of soil lost per acre from these plots show that from a given number of gallons of rainfall per acre, bare plots lost 56,522 pounds of soil per acre; cotton plots 37,745 pounds; corn plots 13,152 pounds, while on lespedeza plots the loss was 2,360 pounds and on Bermuda grass plots only 262 pounds.

Secretary Wallace Explains

Under the two-year or temporary plan of the new Soil Conservation Act, payments will be made to producers for treatment or use of land for soil restoration, conservation or erosion prevention; also for changes they make in the use of their land and for the percentage of their normal production of one or more designated commodities equal to the normal national percentage required for domestic consumption.

Secretary of Agriculture Wallace is quoted directly on this phase of the program as follows: "Payments will be made for the growing of erosion-preventing and soil-building crops, of which there is no surplus, rather than soil-depleting cash crops, of which there is a surplus. That is, a farmer who wishes to put a larger proportion of his farm into such crops as legumes and grasses and a correspondingly smaller proportion into



Tobacco barn near South Boston, Virginia.

New Virginia Tobacco Bill Similar to Equalization Fee

TO continue the benefits secured for Virginia tobacco growers under the acreage control provisions of the AAA, the Legislature of Virginia early in March adopted a bill creating a state Tobacco Commission and providing for the regulation of the sale, marketing and distribution of tobacco.

The new act will not become effective until the Congress of the United States has passed an act consenting to the establishment of compacts between the governments of the various tobacco growing states. After such federal recognition the Virginia act becomes effective with respect to fire cured tobacco upon the enactment of a similar measure by the legislatures of the states of North and South Carolina and Georgia; with respect to burley, upon similar action in North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee; and in respect to dark air-cured tobacco, upon action by Kentucky and Tennessee.

Equalization Fee Principle

The control method set up in the Virginia measure follows closely the old equalization fee principle, advocated nationally a number of years ago. It provides for the fixing of a marketing quota

for each grower. Marketing certificates for an amount of tobacco not exceeding the marketing quota for the farm on which the tobacco is produced would be issued by the commission.

Marketing certificates for tobacco surplus beyond the allotted quota would be sold by the commission for not less than 25 per cent or more than 50 per cent of the gross value of the tobacco.

Producers on Commission

The authorized Virginia Tobacco Commission will consist of not less than three and not more than seven members appointed by the government. A majority of the members shall be producers.

The Virginia act sets forth in detail methods for determining marketing quotas for each kind of tobacco for individual farms within the state for each year. For each farm for which a base tobacco production was determined by the United States Department of Agriculture, this base will be accepted after the making of such adjustments as are recommended by the local tobacco committeemen and approval by the state commission.

such crops as cotton, wheat, corn and tobacco will be compensated by the government for so doing. Without some compensation, many farmers could not afford to sacrifice any of their acreage of cash crops."

How Farmer Benefits

Thus, the farmer will be benefitted by direct payments for the development of soil conservation practices. At the same time, he will be building and conserving the value of his farm. In addition, he will receive an increase in yield of crops produced. The county agricultural agent of Yancey County, N. C., has surveyed this latter possibility and concludes that over \$200,000 annual increased crop income will be the immediate reward to farmers in that county resulting from the soil improvement and conservation program. Estimated crop increases are: Corn, 8 bushels per acre; wheat, 5 bushels; oats, 15 bushels; tobacco, 122 pounds; potatoes, 50 bushels, and hay 1-2 ton.

But the protection and conservation of our national food production resources, is of consequence to the entire nation and not to the farmer alone. The stark tragedy of China dramatizes unmistakably the effect of unchecked soil waste on an entire country.

In a final summarization of the plan of the new act, Secretary Wallace states: "I believe that under this new program, we can do a more constructive job of putting a firm physical base under our civilization than has ever been done by any great nation with a continental climate."

Decay of Nations Begins at Roots

By DeWITT C. WING

Wherever in the nation the loss of soil fertility (through water and wind erosion and growing soil-exhausting crops) outruns the restoration of soil fertility (through growing legume, grass, meadow and forage crops and trees, and the application of fertilizers and manures), the nation is decaying.

The decay of nations begins in the soil. A nation's strength, vitality, endurance and wealth are measured by its available soil fertility. Under the pressure of debts and fixed charges, aggravated by unprofitable prices for farm products, farmers, tenants and sharecroppers have been literally forced to abuse and exhaust the soil. Whenever farm income has decreased, the living standards of the masses of people have declined to deplorably low levels.

Mortgaged land that pays taxes and interest, and produces a living for farm families, is more likely to be further impoverished than improved or maintained. Debt-ridden farmers can take adequate care of their land only by working together under an effective national land use and land conservation policy.

In the 1923-29 period, agriculture's gross income averaged more than 11 billion dollars a year. In 1930 it dropped to approximately 9 1-2 billions. In 1931 it was less than seven billions and in 1932 about 5 1-4 billions. In 1933 it rose to nearly 6 1-2 billions; in 1934 it increased to around 7 1-4 billions, and in 1935 it exceeded eight billion dollars.

Terraced along contours, this North Carolina land combats soil erosion and attendant waste. (Soil Conservation Service Photo)

