Forty-Acre Farm Unit Enough

Secretary Lane Says He Will Not Approve One Bigger Than Eighty Acres.

EIGHTY acres will be the largest farm unit that will receive approval at his hands under an irrigation project, says secretary of the interior Franklin K. Lane. He says he rather prefers a 40 acre unit and that the projects showing the best returns from the land are those where the unit is smallest. The secretary says he favors the extension of time to twenty years in which payments for the construction of the projects may be made, but he is not in favor of extension of time to men who do not live on the land and are not cultivating it. He says on the completion of the various projects, he will appoint boards to audit all the costs and the water users will be given a chance to interpose objecting to any item that may be considered by them as too expensive.

These statements are all set forth in a letter to the water users of the county, just received by L. M. Lawson, project engineer of the Elephant Butte dam, which he is mailing to all persons having land under the project. In part it says:

It may be true that hitherto the government has expected too much of water users, and it may be equally true that water users have expected too much of the government. I would deal with you as you would deal with another, yielding nothing as charity, but dealing together as men and brothers on the basis of what is reasonable and just. Though there may be some among you who have hoped that eventually the government would not collect its due, I believe that most of you have never entertained a thought of escape from your obligations to the government.

Good Class of Men.

After personal contact with thousands of settlers on our reclamation projects, I find that we have gathered together from all parts of the United States a class of men and farmers above the average in ability and intelligence; they are generally men of high purpose, self-dependent and determined.

With the admission that the past conduct of affairs has not been unqualifiedly without error, and that future policies are subject to correction when found erroneous, I think we may fairly proceed upon common ground to reason together to the end that we may now agree as to what, in the light of present knowledge, appears to be just and equitable, as between you and the government.

Is For Small Farm Unit.

The most difficult duty imposed upon the secretary of the interior is that of determining the "area of land necessary for the support of a family."

By law and by traditions 160 acres have been considered necessary for the support of a family in the United States. But land was plentiful when this unit was established, transportation was difficult and conditions of farm life burdensome. Seldom in the pioneer days was a quarter of the 160 acres farmed. There was the wood lot, the pasture and the fallow ground. Even in humid regions good farm practice retired one-half the cultivated area each year for recuperation by summer fallowing. So that 160 acres of land even in the humid prairie regions was equivalent to an annually farmed area of only 80 acres.

80 Acres the Limmit.

I must therefore decline to yield to the demand from many quarters to fix farm units at 160 acres of irrigable land. In no case will I approve greater than 80 acres, except where existing contracts with private land owners made previous to my incumbency have been made upon a larger basis. The 80 acre farm unit will be fixed only in those regions where climatic, soil and market conditions make 80 large an area appear to be necessary, and even in such regions 40 acre tracts lying near to towns or prospective towns are deemed ample for the support of a family.

One great need of agricultural regions is agricultural laborers and artisans. If possible I would establish a few five and ten acre homesteads for such to relieve them of the disadvantages of tenantry and to encourage them to settle in the vicinity of the larger farms.

Big Farm Troubles.

The man who undertakes to pay the cost of reclaiming 160 acres must needs be a man of large capital to start with. Less is required for 80 and still less for 40 acres, so that as the size of the farm unit is reduced, the number of families on the land may be increased, so also is reduced the amount of capital required of that family to start with, and through larger population making easier many of the problems of pioneering.

In those fertile and hospitable southern regions, where the growing season is almost continuous there is no defence whatever for farm units in excess of 40 acres.

Though I am convinced that the farm unit should not exceed 80 acres on any reclamation project it does not appear to me to be just that entrymen who filed on government lands subject to the reclamation act should be compelled to surrender their holdings in excess of the established farm unit without compensation.

Must Sell Excess Lands.

By this means every man who now claims a quarter section could retain 160 acres for one year after successfully making final proof, but if the survey made four farms units of these 160 acres, he should be required within one year to sell three of those units. These irrigated lands are valued at $20 to $100 per acre. If sold at these prices the entryman will have from $2400 to $12,000 to invest in improvements on the unit he retains.

No Justice in 160 Acres.

There seems to be no justice in the demand to permit patent to be issued for 160 acres. To do so would encourage speculation and the withholding of irrigable land from cultivation.

Collecting the Payments.

Cost of operation and maintenance is a subject so vitally connected with size of farm units that it must be considered in connection therewith.

If authority shall be granted by congress I propose that hereafter no part of building costs nor betterment costs shall be charged to this account. Neither shall charges be assessed and collected in advance upon an estimate as to what may be the expense of a given year's service, exceept in case of default. Full and explicit monthly statements of the cost operation and maintenance shall be made monthly and posted in all the offices of the reclamation service on each project and in the office of the Water Users' association. The totals shall be carried forward from month to month and on November 30 of each year the total cost as shown by such statements shall be increased by five percent to cover the cost of collection and the total thus obtained shall be assessed proportionately to the amount of water used upon each acre of irribigle land in the project.

This minimum charge shall be assessed against the total irrigable area of each farm unit and shall be the same if the farm unit is uncultivated and uses no water as if it were cultivated and irrigated.

There should be a well ordered definite system as to such collections, and calculated to produce the best results. By providing a rebate or discount of five percent and not less than five cents per acre to the man who pays within 15 days, this burden is lifted from him. The delinquent, however, should be required to pay the full amount and one percent per month additional for each month, or fraction of a month, or his delinquency.

Will Force Payment.

It should also be provided that any water user who is delinquent for operation and maintenance charges for the year ending November 30 shall no be served with water for any ensuring season unless he shall on or before May 1 pay the operation and maintenance charges for the then current year on an estimated basis of 25 percent increase over the charge of the preceding year, ending November 30.

The man who tries to hold 160 acres and pay operation and maintenance charges has four times the burden of the man with 40 acres, and, while it is true that he has four times as much land, it is also true that no 160 acre tract ever seems to produe as much per acre as 40 acres. The projects which conform most nearly to the 40 acre standard have the highest average yields.

Too Much Water Destructive.

Perhaps the most vital question confronting the water user today, and really of greater importance to his future welfare than the question of deferred payments for the water used, is the determination of what is the proper use to be made of the water which is available for use upon the land.

The deleterious effect of the use of too much water upon the land is becoming more evident with each year.

The accumulation of ground water, with a resulting water logging of large areas, is but a reproduction of the natural conditions prevailing in humid countries where rainfall is excessive and the runoff limited.

If farmers will insist upon pouring water upon the higher lands in excessive quantities, not only will the plant food be leached from the soil, but the encroachment of the ground water will continue year by year, and eventually will neutralize the benefits of irrigation by destroying more land than is reclaimed.

Would extend time.

It is possible that congress may grant power to the secretary of the interior to extend the time for the repayment to the reclamation fund, so that the whole sum may fall due at the end of 20 years, instead of ten. I favor such an extension and have so advised congress in my annual report.

It is my intention to determine this cost as accurately as possible by means of a board of review or a committee on each project to consist probably of an engineer of the reclamation service, an expert accountant representing the secretary of the interior and an engineer or accountant or other representative of the water users, to be selected by the Water Users' association. All items of cost assessed against each project shall be thoroughly reviewed and any items that may be objected to by the water users shall be thoroughly examined into and the justice or injustice of the charge determined at an open hearing.

Against the Non Resident.

There is another important matter in which I think you will agree with me, namely, that any reduction of existing terms of payment should be extended, if at all, with caution, to those land owners who are neither residing upon their lands nor cultivating them.

There is, unfortunately, a class of investors, few in numbers it is true, who are holding areas of considerable size, including lands for which water has been provided at the cost of the project, and who are living in cities or remote localities. The result is that in the midst of a tract of highly cultivated small farms there is occasionally a section or quarter section of land which has been left untouched, or perhaps merely plowed up at some time. The presence of these deserted areas is not only an eyesore, but a direct financial injury to all of the neighbors.

Not Entitled to Benefits.

No one can argue that these men should have the benefit of extension of time in making payments, as through such benefits it will enable them to hold these lands still longer out of cultivation, advance the prices, increase the load on the newcomer and further delay the ultimate development of the community and its successful growth.

I am convinced of the justice of the very general demand that preference shall be given in the employment of assistants on various projects to the settlers upon the lands watered. In all capacities for which a water user is capable of qualifying under the civil service rules and regulations, he should be given the preference, but his application for employment should have the indorsement of the Water Users' association or of its board of directors.

Bandit Maximo Castillo, Responsible For Cumbre Tunnel Holocaust

The above cut is a splendid likeness of the bandit leader, but a peculiarity about it is that in casting it in the stereotype box, a "fault" appeared in the cut, as shown above, cutting the brand of Cain across the forehead and cheek of the man responsible for the death of 51 persons in Cumbre tunnel wreck last week.

WOMEN TO ATTEND DINNER TO BELLAMY

Playground and Recreation Expert to be Guest of El Paso Chamber of Commerce March 3.

Women will be invited to attend the chamber of commerce "dollar dinner," to be held March 3, at the Hotel Paso del Norte, at which George A. Bellamy, playground and recreation expert of the Cleveland, O., trade association, will be the principal speaker. Members of the chamber of commerce will be asked to bring women relatives to the banquet. This will be the second time that the business organization has played host to women at a dinner, the first time having been last January, when women attended the annual election dinner of the association.

Directors of the chamber of commerce do not intend to make a practice of inviting the "gentler sex" to the dinners. Their main reason for doing so this time is the fact that Bellamy's speech, inasmuch as it will concern the welfare of children from the recreation standpoint, will be of great interest to the women of El Paso. There will probably be one or two women speakers on the program.

Secretary Andrew Reeves has not announced any other features of the program for the banquet. He says that the speech and entertainment numbers will be so arranged as to end at 10 oclock sharp. The dinner will begin at 7:30. Bellamy's address will deal mainly with settlement and playground work.

COUNTRY CLUB TO KEEP WITHIN 350

Membership Is Limited and Standing Committees Reduced at Meeting; Officers for 1914 Announced.

Country club membership was limited to 350, the standing committees were reduced to five, and W. F. Payne was elected president at the annual meeting of the Country club members Saturday night at the club house. The club now has a membership of 339 and no more active members will be voted into the club after the total of 350 is reached. The committees were reduced from seven to five for better organization. These committees have not yet been announced by Mr. Payne.

The complete list of officers is: W. F. Payne, president; Henry S. Beach, vice president; Winchester Cooley, treasurer, and Allen Grambling secretary. The directors included these officers and Robert Holliday, A. N. Brown, Alves Dixon, L. G. Witherspoon, R. Ledwidge, C. N. Newman and Joseph Wright.

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Get from your pharmacist a fifty-cent case of Pape's Diapepsin and take a dose just as soon as you can. There will be no sour risings, no belching of undigested food mixed with acid, no stomach gas or heartburn, fullness or heavy feeling in the stomach, nausea, debilitating headaches, dizziness or intestinal griping. This will all go, and, besides, there will be no sour food left over in the stomach to poison your breath with nauseous odors.

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WARE IS ELECTED AS SPECIAL JUDGE

W. B. Ware was elected special judge of the 34th district court Monday morning. Judge Dan M. Jackson of the court, is out of town, and judge F. G. Morris, who presided last week, was unable to serve this week on account of other legal business.

The case of Robert Trammell, charged with murder, called for trial Monday morning was postponed until in the afternoon. Trammell's attorneys, Peyton F. Edwards and R. E. Thomason, were engaged in the trial of a case in the special district court.

Well Known Surgeon Dies.

Buffalo, N. Y., Feb 16.—Dr. Roswell Park, one of the best known surgeons in America, died suddenly at his home Sunday. The cause of death was heart failure. Dr. Park had been in apparently perfect health up to within 20 minutes of the end.

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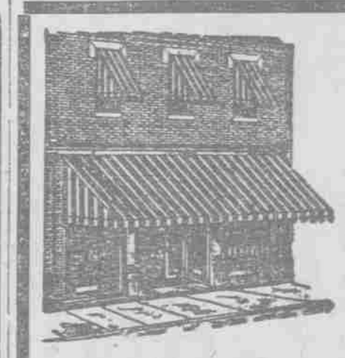

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