

IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS

Official Paper of Imperial County

VOL. VII

EL CENTRO, CALIFORNIA, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1907.

NO. 36

RECLAMATION SERVICE MAY GET IMPERIAL VALLEY

Deal Between Government and Harriman For Sale of C. D. Co. Probably Consummated. Railroad Anxious to Unload and Get Money Back. Effect Upon Settlers' Rights and Interests.

Negotiations of vital interest to Imperial Valley are going on in Washington between the government and the Southern Pacific and between the United States and Mexico. A treaty with Mexico relating to control of the Colorado river and the use of its waters has been drawn and will be submitted to the Senate, and Mr. Harriman is trying to come to terms with the government for the sale of the California Development company.

The text of the proposed treaty has not been made public, but it is reported that its provisions include cancellation of the C. D. Co's concession for headworks and canals in Mexican territory; assumption by the United States of responsibility for damages caused by the break of the Colorado; the United States to take charge of controlling works on the river and to have the right to construct and maintain canals in Mexican territory. It is also reported persistently that negotiations for the purchase by the United States of a part or the whole of Lower California were conducted by Secretary Root, but alienation of territory being forbidden by the constitution of Mexico, it is doubtful that any such proposition has been made officially.

However, the Mexican constitution is not quite like the laws of the Medes and Persians; it has been nullified in one particular to the distinct benefit of the country and that the same influence which set aside one provision may be powerful enough to virtually abrogate another is not inconceivable. If the ruling class in Mexico favors the sale of Lower California to the United States, such a deal is not made impossible by any constitutional bar. The report of negotiations to that end is not absolutely incredible.

It may be assumed confidently that the rights and interests of settlers in Imperial Valley will not be affected injuriously by any treaty with Mexico. The United States will have due regard to the welfare of its own citizens in any arrangement it may make with a foreign power.

Negotiations between the government and Mr. Harriman are of more immediate importance. When President Roosevelt called on Mr. Harriman to close the Colorado break and save Imperial Valley from permanent inundation, he promised that he would ask Congress to pay the cost of work after the date of his request to the railroad. The President did not encourage the Southern Pacific to hope that he would advise Congress to repay the large

sums previously loaned by the railroad to the C. D. Co. or spent for its own protection.

The Southern Pacific's advances to the C. D. Co., for which it holds the property of the company as security, its expenses in moving tracks out of the way of Salton Sea, and the cost of building dams and levees on the Colorado are said to aggregate \$2,500,000. Presumably Mr. Harriman would like to get all that money back and unload the irrigation system, and he would be pleased if the government would pay him the full amount and relieve him of all responsibility for the continued good behavior of the Colorado.

Here the Reclamation Service comes into the story. According to a Washington dispatch to the Los Angeles Times, the government, through the Reclamation Service, declines to pay Harriman \$2,500,000, though it is known that negotiations are still on, and that Harriman is anxious to sell the property, and that the Reclamation Service officials are also anxious to gain control of the Imperial Valley irrigation enterprise.

The Reclamation Service has found the Yuma project too costly for the area of land reclaimable in Arizona under the Laguna dam, and it desires to attach Imperial Valley to the project in order to distribute the cost. Officials of the service contend that the Imperial Valley system should be supplied by a main canal from Laguna dam instead of from headworks in Mexico. Whether or not their plan is feasible is a question for engineers.

Whether or not Imperial Valley should pay any part of the cost of the Laguna dam and the expense of a new main canal is a question to be considered carefully by the people of Imperial county. That there would be distinct advantage to the valley in substitution of government control for the present management of the system is generally believed, but the settlers of Imperial county are not inclined to assent to the Reclamation Service programme until they know exactly what it means and what the cost will be. Moreover they will contend strenuously for recognition and strict regard for the rights they have acquired in land and water.

Owners of stock in mutual water companies have rights which cannot be taken from them by the Reclamation Service and it is doubtful that any share of the cost of the Yuma project could be charged against them or placed upon any land legally entered

in Imperial Valley without their consent. The mutual companies have contracts with the C. D. Co. for water and the C. D. Co's successor, whether it be the government or a corporation, must abide by its terms. No act of the government impairing the obligation of a contract could stand.

Until the purposes and plans of the Reclamation Service and the particulars of the deal between Mr. Harriman and the government are made known in full, judgment on the whole question must be suspended. There are reasons for believing that the deal is virtually consummated. The Times dispatch says: "It is believed by those in a position to know that within a comparatively short time the California Development company and all the Harriman interests in the irrigation system will be taken over by the United States government under some kind of an equitable arrangement which will give the railroad interests a fair return for their outlay and will place the Reclamation Service in a position where it can utilize and control the American share of the Colorado River, subject to the terms of the ratified Mexican concession made to the California Development company."

The terms of the concession are that sufficient water for irrigation shall be supplied to lands on the Mexican side, not exceeding half of the quantity diverted from the Colorado. So long as the headworks and canal in Mexican territory are used, the C. D. Co. or its successor in interest must supply water to owners of Mexican land.

LABORERS IN A PLIGHT

Canal Contractors Reduce Wages and Try to Withhold Money.

Last Wednesday the contractors, who are building canals for the C. D. Co. west of New River and getting paid with money advanced freely by the people of Imperial Valley through the mutual water companies, announced a reduction of wages to \$1.50 a day and between 200 and 300 men promptly quit the job and demanded the wages due them. The contractors gave to them checks payable on January 20, and arbitrarily and illegally stamped them "not negotiable."

The men went to Calexico and were unable to cash their checks or to get money with which to buy food. They announced that they were going to eat, money or no money, and as they were nearly 300 strong it looked as if they would make good at the expense of the residents of Calexico.

District Attorney Eshelman was notified of the state of affairs and went to Calexico to investigate. He found that the men had good cause to feel aggrieved and he convinced the contractors that their action was illegal as well as unjust. An arrangement by which the men obtained money for immediate needs was effected and the checks were made payable immediately on presentation in Los Angeles.

The action of the contractors in reducing wages and bringing about suspension of work immediately after money had been advanced to enable them to earn a bonus needs to be explained.

IMPERIAL COUNTY FAIR OUTGROWTH OF COLT SHOW

Steps Taken Toward Organizing Agricultural Association. Cotton Sample Sent to Los Angeles Encourages Projectors of Cotton Mill. Quality Pronounced Superb by Expert.

The remarkable success of the horse show held at El Centro last week by the Imperial Valley Stockbreeders' Association has given impetus to the movement for the organization of an Imperial County Agricultural Association to hold an annual county fair.

Preliminary work is being done and as soon as a general plan of organization can be formulated, a meeting of all interested will be called to discuss the project.

Messrs. Wilsie, Clark and Van Horn, the committee in charge of the first colt show held in the valley, showed what could be done with a very little money and a great deal of energy intelligently applied. At a cost of less than \$100 in money, they brought out more than 125 head of fine horses for exhibition, demonstrated that Imperial Valley is an ideal stock country, and held a successful Farmers' Institute. The results accomplished by them were worth to the county ten times the cost. To them and to the public spirited citizens who provided the funds out of their private purses, the people of the valley should and do feel grateful.

When the agricultural association is organized, the colt show will expand into a general county fair for the exhibition of all the products of the valley, continuing for two or three days and funds will be available for prizes and purses as inducements to farmers to enter their finest stock and make the best possible display of their products.

The value of exhibitions of products was proved by the results of E. E. Forrester's enterprise in gathering a few specimens, showing them in town and then shipping the whole exhibit to the Los Angeles chamber of commerce. An Alabama cotton manufacturer is promoting a scheme to build a cotton mill in Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Times says:

Cotton growing in California is likely to furnish the raw product for the mill. Successful experiments in the Imperial Valley point this way. Only yesterday there was received at the Chamber of Commerce a giant cotton plant, nearly six feet tall, literally covered with snowy white bolls. And they said this was only a "volunteer." What the "regulars" will do when they get busy can only be imagined.

It was to see this plant that the Alabama man called with his friends at the chamber. He said it was beyond anything he had ever seen in the cotton fields of the South, where the plants are so small that the negro pickers nearly break their backs in gathering the crop.

If the California cotton is to grow on trees like the one on ex-

hibition here, the pickers will have to use ladders.

This wonderful sample, said to be only a sample of what the Imperial country can produce, is a good deal like a Christmas tree covered with snow, so heavily it is laden with fluffy white cotton. It came with a big collection of other wonders from the El Centro Chamber of Commerce.

"If that is a sample of the cotton production we can expect in Southern California," said the manufacturer, "we shall not have to bring any raw product from the Southern States. The quality is superb; all we shall need is quantity."

Of the other products sent from El Centro to the Chamber of Commerce, the Times says:

One vine was brought in that bore eighty pounds of sweet potatoes. One of these spuds alone weighs twenty-five pounds, while others run down the scale to ten and five pounds, some of the smallest weighing one pound.

In the collection are fine specimens of table grapes—the second and third crop for one year. There are watermelons, cantaloupes, pears, pomegranates, egg plant, sugar cane, string beans and oranges. Alfalfa seven feet tall, Kaffir corn that would make the original Kaffir flush with envy. And so on and on.

But the cotton plant and its possibilities are the main features of the show.

DOWN WE GO

Akkoond of Swat Reduces Imperial County to the Forty-third Class

Another formidable looking document has been handed to the officials of Imperial County. Resident, Citizen, Voter, Taxpayer, Water Superintendent and Grand Panjandrum, L. F. Farnsworth serves formal, voluminous, vociferous and polysyllabic notice that he has reduced Imperial County from the 36th to the 43d class and the salaries of all county officers in proportion; that he declares the action of the Board of Supervisors, fixing the class of the county, void and of no effect; that the Auditor and Treasurer contumaciously threaten to continue their nefarious practice of issuing and cashing salary warrants as if they were officers of a thirty-sixth degree county; and that unless Imperial County desists immediately from pretending to be a county of the thirty-sixth class it will incur his extreme displeasure, law suits and other discomforts.

A proclamation by Lewis the Light, notifying Judge Cole that the law of gravitation has been repealed and that hereafter all loose articles shall fall up to the moon, is expected and will receive the attention to which it is entitled.