

## Water Subsidy...

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Farmers like Ramon and Cavazos, cannot get the small amount of water they need on their small plots, because the big and powerful growers get it all.

Ramon and Cavazos and many others like them receive water from the Pixley Irrigation District, which receives only the water that remains after the demands of the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District are satisfied. During the years 1966-1969, the plaintiffs have been unable to obtain from the Pixley Irrigation District the water they need.

"I can't make a living on my farm, because I can't get enough of this cheap irrigation water," UFWOC member Roman said. "The irrigation district tells me there isn't enough water, but I know it's because the big growers are getting it all. The result is that I have to work as a migrant laborer for these growers during much of the year. And until we win the grape strike, that's not much of a living."

### THE \$22,000 SUBSIDY

Irrigation water sells for about \$2.50 per acre-foot, while available underground well water costs \$12-\$15 per acre-foot to pump. Even with cheap water, can a farmer make a living on less than 160 acres? The plaintiffs think so, and cite a 1961 California Assembly study which found that a farmer could net \$10,000 a year with 112 acres of table grapes.

Just how much illegal water does M. Caratan, Inc. receive, and what does it mean to the taxpayer? In 1968 M. Caratan, Inc. received 2,288 acre-feet of water from the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District. If that water had been applied to only 160 acres, each acre would have received 14 feet of water per acre. The average amount of water per acre applied by California farmers to grape lands in the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District is 3.3 feet.

M. Caratan, Inc. owns 1,558 acres of land. If the corporation had applied 3.3 acre-feet of water to only 160 acres of that land, it would have



used 528 acre-feet of water. But the corporation used 2,288 acre-feet of water in 1968. The difference between the amount the corporation was legally entitled to use and the amount it did in fact use was 1,760 acre feet.

Now, what does all this mean to the taxpayer? It means that his money subsidizes the rich, while the poor continue to suffer. Irrigation water costs the grower \$2.50 per acre-foot. Well water costs \$15.00 per acre-foot. M. Caratan, Inc. now pays only \$4,400 for the illegal 1,760 acre-feet of water. If he had to use well water, he would pay \$26,000 for that 1,760 acre-feet of water. In other words, he is re-

ceiving a subsidy from the taxpayers of \$22,000 per year to illegally irrigate over 160 acres of land. Meanwhile, smaller farms do not get enough water.

"Millions of dollars have been wasted in this subsidy to the rich, corporate growers," said Farnsworth, "while the little farmers have been driven off their land into migratory farm labor. The government hasn't done anything about this, so the small farmers must enforce the law themselves."

And they will. The small farmers, like the farm workers, have joined in a common cause against exploitative corporate agri-business.

## "Rigged Electric Rates Subsidize Growers"

INDIO, January 30 --Residents of the Coachella and Imperial Valleys filed a suit in federal court today charging that the Imperial Irrigation District is overcharging electricity users by \$14 million a year in the Riverside - Imperial County area.

The suit, filed by Dr. Ben Yellen of Brawley and Raul Loya of Indio accuses the irrigation district, which is controlled by the big ranchers of the area, of selling the electricity at inflated prices in order to further subsidize the cost of irrigation water used by the ranchers in the area. Coachella and Imperial Valley growers have never abided by the 160-acre limit on water subsidies (see accompanying story).

Yellen points out that the elec-

tricity is bought from government hydroelectric projects such as Hoover Dam and Glen Canyon Dam. The low-cost government power, Yellen says, is being sold to 110,000 residents of the Imperial and Riverside Counties at prices higher than rates charged by Southern California Edison Company, a private utility.

The suit demands that the Department of the Interior intervene and regulate electricity rates charged by the irrigation district. Yellen has long crusaded for the rights of small farmers and farm workers, and has long protested the "subsidies on top of subsidies" enjoyed by multi-millionaire corporation ranch-

## HUNGER IN KINGS COUNTY

HANFORD, February 17 --Kings County farm workers staged a week of protests in this San Joaquin Valley county seat to draw attention to the hunger and poverty in Kings County and the refusal of county officials to deal with the problems.

Kings County is the poorest county in the state, and this winter, due to the heavy rains of 1969, much of the county's crop land is under water and there is no employment (or unemployment insurance) for farm workers.

Leading the protests is UFWOC member Jose Burelas of Corcoran, who is also president of the Kings County Economic Development and Community Association. The demonstrations have featured appearances before the County Board of Supervisors, marches, and sleep-ins on the court house lawn. The sleep-ins, attracting 40 to 60 people a night in the 40 degree weather, went on for several days.

Immediate object of the group is to convince the county to make available to farm workers and other poor people more and better quality surplus food or institute a food stamp program. "The surplus food program in Kings County is tokenism, just a few crumbs they throw to the poor, to meet the government regulations," said one demonstrator. "That food is no good, another complained. "Some of it has worms. There is no meat or milk or other good food." Furthermore, protestors complain, people on welfare are denied surplus foods.

The county claims it cannot afford to increase the food program (for which the Federal Government provides surplus agricultural products) and cannot afford a better welfare program or a food stamp program.

EL MALCRIADO says: The poverty and hunger of towns like Corcoran hit the casual visitor like scenes from another country. Yet three growers with headquarters in Corcoran receive over \$500,000 each a year in subsidies for not



Mirochers and oampers in Hanford.

growing cotton. J. G. Boswell gets \$3 or \$4 million a year. South Lake Farms generally tops \$1 million, and Salyer Land Co usually receives \$700,000 or more. Salyer and Boswell have their own private airports and private fleets of airplanes on the opposite ends of the town. Kings County, the poorest county in California with the lowest average wages of any county in the state, has nine other big agri-business ranches which collect over \$100,000 a year in cotton subsidies.

The County spent a grand total of \$19,878 on general relief for the poor in 1967, up to \$24,000 in 1968. Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1968 was \$2,713,388. Aid to the Disabled was \$667,800. J. G. Boswell alone generally collects more in subsidies for not growing cotton than the entire welfare budget for the poor of Kings County. And then the growers have the gall to protest about welfare costs.