IN THE END THE LAND:

SETTLEMENT OF THE COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT

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Abstract

In the End the Land:
Settlement of the Columbia Basin Project

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Federal reclamation of the nation's arid west was rooted in part in its potential to further the spread of the family-owned and family-operated farm. The Columbia Basin Project (CBP) in central Washington is the single largest reclamation project undertaken by the federal government. Its promoters envisioned the water of the Columbia River transforming over one million acres of desert wasteland into thousands of eighty-acre productive farms. This study is based on the premise that the history of the settlement of the CBP can provide insight into the debate over why and to what extent reclamation met or did not meet its social potential. At the center is a tension between idealism and environmental reality and the ability of government to respond to the difficulties the settlers encountered when they attempted to make productive farms from the land available to them.

Planning for the CBP began after environmental realities had forced reclamation proponents to modify their approach to settlement. CBP planners retained the goal of maximum opportunities but accepted that screening of both land and settler would be necessary if the family farm were to succeed. Land that did not meet minimal standards would not receive water. Potential settlers who did not

possess minimal qualifications would not have the opportunity to buy land. Still problems arose. Much of the land was found to be of marginal quality. Many existing owners withdrew property, often of good quality, from the project. The legislative framework and the administrative system that Congress and the federal bureaucracy established proved inadequate to deal with the resulting difficulties.

When the settlers arrived the disjuncture between project settlement goals, the environmental reality of the land on which they were to be realized, and the tools provided to implement them became clear. Individual farmers struggled and failed. In response, the government modified its ideas of and regulations governing who should settle and how they would be helped.

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I owe an equally large debt to the many librarians and archivists who helped me find material that in the beginning I did not even know existed. I am indebted particularly to Lawrence Stark at Washington State University.

Thank you also to Carl, without whose encouragement this would not have been possible.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Farm-in-a-Day

In early 1951 the long wait was almost over. The Bureau of Reclamation, after years of planning and preparation, soon would begin irrigating the arid lands of central Washington with water captured behind Grand Coulee Dam. Columbia Basin Project boosters were determined to celebrate on a grand scale. They dreamed of a symbolic event that not only would mark the coming of good times to the area but would generate public support for the project across the nation. Helped by the Columbia Basin Commission, a state sponsored agency whose mission was to promote reclamation and other forms of economic development in central Washington, local boosters planned and executed a Farm-in-a-Day celebration, a large-scale version of a barn-raising--an entire family farm built and planted in 24 hours. Organizers hoped this farmstead would symbolize both the agricultural and the social potential of the largest federal reclamation project in the nation's history. To this end, they would provide not only all the material necessities of a farm--land, buildings, equipment--but the farmer himself. They would give this farm to a deserving veteran.

The Farm-in-a-Day boosters intended the farmstead and farmer to function together as a symbol that would first capture the attention of the nation and then structure people's perceptions of the significance and meaning of the project. Fertile fields arising out of sagebrush covered desert would symbolize the power of a dependable supply of irrigation water to transform waste land into productive land.

The veteran and his family would symbolize the social benefits that ensued when, as a result of this transformative power of reclamation, deserving members of society were able to provide farms and homes for their families, which in turn would form the basis of a prosperous rural community.[1]

When the promoters of the Columbia Basin Project (CBP) devised the idea for a Farm-in-a-day, they perceived it as a triumphal symbol. It would illustrate a chronicle of environmentally and socially beneficent progress that boosters wished to tell about reclamation and the CBP. However, with an historical perspective leavened by the passage of a half century, we can now view their handiwork with a critical eye and identify other more complex and less celebratory narratives than they intended. What emerges are intimations of and clues to the contradictions and conflicts that plagued planning of the overall project and bedeviled and shaped its settlement. The Farm-in-a-Day endures as a symbol of reclamation, but a more problematic symbol than its creators intended. The triumphal paean to progress has been tempered by the compromises and more quiet failures that were as much a part of the celebration as were its successes.

The big event took place on May 29, 1952. Planning had begun over a year earlier, in March 1951.[2] To accomplish their goal within those fourteen months, organizers needed land; a farmstead plan, including the men and materials to

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[1]Hu Blonk to Hubert Walter, 25 September 1951, Box 3, Columbia Basin Commission Records (hereafter CBC Records), State of Washington Archives and Records Management, Olympia, Washington (hereafter WaA&RM, Olympia); Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952; Columbia Basin News, 30 May 1952; and Oscar L. Chapman to Donald D. Dunn, 11 April 1952, Box 266, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation Records, Federal Records Center, Denver, Colorado (hereafter USBR, Federal Records Center, Denver.)

[2]Herbert L. Rosenkranz to Hubert Walters (sic), 19 March 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

implement it in one day; and a farmer and his family to take over and live on the farm. The entire scheme depended first on the land. Immediately after the idea was conceived, two members of the Columbia Basin Commission, both of whom were landowners in the basin, met with the Bureau of Reclamation to identify a suitable piece of land. As part of its overall project planning, the Bureau had platted the project area to be irrigated into farm units and developed a long-term timetable for water delivery. At an absolute minimum, organizers had to secure a unit that would have water available at the time of the celebration.[3] Planning documents indicate they also desired a unit that would be easily accessible to the expected crowds and that would be photogenic.[4]

By the beginning of July 1951, the committee had settled on an 160-acre unit in Block 41. Northern Pacific Railway owned the property, and organizers appeared to believe, on the basis of informal phone conversations, that the company was willing to make it available. Although soil survey maps showed that the property had little very good or Class 1 land, it was quite level, and Herbert Parker, District Manager of the Bureau of Reclamation, sent a letter to the railway affirming the government's belief that the unit was "typical and proper."[5] He indicated that Northern Pacific's willingness to make it available was one factor in its selection, but also added that the property was particularly desirable because parking for the festival would be possible on part of the adjacent unit. John Toevs, Chief of the Land Development Section of the USBR, pointed out the unit's desirable topography,

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[3]Hubert Walter to Herbert Rosenkranz, 28 March 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[4]FARM-IN-A-DAY, unsigned typescript, n.d., Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

which, he believed, lent itself "very nicely for surface irrigation" and would not require costly sprinkler systems.[6] The Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce, which had taken on responsibility for overall Farm-in-a-Day planning, followed Blonk's letter with a formal confirmation of interest and an official request for the property. There is no indication that festival planners had any doubt about the availability of their choice, or, in spite of the dearth of class 1 land, its suitability. Representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation, the Washington State Extension Service, and the Soil Conservation Service were appointed to a subcommittee responsible for laying out the farm operation. By July they had begun designing a cropping program for the unit, which the Head of the Agricultural Sciences Institute at Washington State College stressed should be developed in accordance with recommendations being given to actual settlers.[7]

Then in the midst of this farmstead planning, celebration organizers learned they had been overly optimistic. In an August 20th letter to the District Manager of the Bureau of Reclamation, P. D. Edgell, Western Land Agent for the NP Railway, wrote, "I am sorry that we cannot cooperate with the celebration committee in its selection of Farm Unit 71."[8] The company had withdrawn from sale all land in Block 41, but Edgell suggested that it might be willing to consider substituting a unit in Block 40. Within three days the Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce had taken up

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[5]H. A. Parker to P. D. Edgell, 9 July 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[6] John L. Toevs to Hubert Walters (sic), 30 July 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[7] C. Knott to Hubert Walter, 3 August 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[8] P.D. Edgell to H. A. Parker, 20 August 20 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

the negotiations with the railroad. Omar Bixler, Secretary-Manager of the Chamber, wrote to Walter:

> (our men) . . . feel that we may be able to re-open negotiations with the NP railway for a more desirable unit than any they own in block 40. Hence want you to know what we may try to do . . . It might be, our directors think, that the N.P. Railway would be open to the idea of supplying a good unit in block 41, if the N.P. had something to do with the selection of the veteran to receive it; or if the Railroad could sell the unit at the appraised price to a veteran and we would fully equip it that might please them better. Anyhow, we intend to approach the N.P. about it immediately, and we may talk with them personally. We will no doubt be some time coming to any decisions, so you will have time to further advise us if you so choose. This letter will be kept to ourselves until we see you and the railroad.[9]

Of most significance in this letter is Bixler's allusion to the marginal quality of Northern Pacific's land in Block 40. Bixler hoped the Chamber might be able to get a unit from the company that was "more desirable" than any the company owned in Block 40.

Within two months, negotiators had agreed on another unit. Edgell wrote Bixler that for $1,447.91, the appraised value of the property, the company would deed a unit to the lucky veteran.[10] The final selection, however, was in Block 40, which Bixler had hoped to avoid, not in Block 41, which he had identified as more desirable and where the original unit had been situated. The selection, Farm Unit 167, in Block 40, contained a total of 136 acres, but government soil scientists had classified only 82 acres as irrigable.[11] Further, soil maps from the time show approximately one fifth to one quarter of the irrigable land as Class 3 (based on soil

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[9]Omar L. Bixler to Hubert Walter, 23 August 23 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[10]Omar Bixler to P. D. Edgell, 18 October 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Edgell to Bixler, n.d. (internal dating, November 1951), Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[11]Wenatchee Daily World, 6 March 1955 and Columbia Basin Herald, 8 March 1955.

problems), the lowest irrigable category.[12] The SCS gave the unit an overall Class 2 rating.[13]

Then, over the next few months, as planners prepared the land for farming, unanticipated difficulties arose. The Bureau's soil survey had identified only a limited problem with rocks, but in mid-April 1952 preparatory land chiseling uncovered numerous and widespread rocks in the plow area. To make it possible to level the "unexpectedly rocky" fields, Geo Delaney of the Extension Service organized 100-man crews of volunteers to pick out the stones by hand.[14] Even this extraordinary infusion of labor proved inadequate to solve the problem, and farmstead planners from the Bureau, Extension Service, and SCS decided sprinklers were necessary to irrigate two fields in which rocks continued to complicate leveling. Then, on the actual day of the celebration, heavy equipment operators uncovered more rocky ground forcing planners to convert one additional field from surface to sprinkler irrigation. By the time the lucky veteran took title to the farm, a total of 23 acres was under sprinklers.[15] Finally, one final, unpleasant complication confronted organizers on the big day. A gusty wind, unwanted but not unexpected for the area, arose and picked up the uncovered light topsoil, complicating planting and forcing workers to fight "choking dust."[16]

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[12]U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia Basin Project Land Classification maps, Block 40 SHT. 52, and Block 41, SHT.17, Bureau of Reclamation, Ephrata, Washington.
[13]Harold T. Rogers, "Miracle in a Day," The Washington Farmer, 5 June 1952, 4.
[14] Geo Delany, Washington State Extension Service, County Reports and Specialist Reports, Grant County, Monthly Narrative, April 1952 (hereafter, author, Monthly Narrative—date: Name County Extension); and Portland Oregonian, 30 May 1952.
[15] Harold T. Rogers, "Miracle in a Day," The Washington Farmer, 5 June 1952, 4.
[16]Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 30 May 1952. See also Portland Oregonian, 30 May 1952 and Harold T. Rogers, "Miracle in a Day," The Washington Farmer, 5 June 1952, 4.

Publicity surrounding the Farm-in-a-Day touted the overall project as a million-plus acres waiting only for water to make it fertile.[17] But, the actual experience of celebration planners provided hints that this conception was misleading. Much less land was actually available, and water alone could not overcome its physical limitations. When they tried to purchase a unit, planners confronted limited choices and were forced to make compromises. They had to settle for land of a lesser quality than they had wanted. Then, even after lowering their expectations, organizers were unpleasantly surprised, as they prepared the land for planting, by environmental complications they had not anticipated. They ended with a unit so rocky that it required unexpectedly large amounts of labor to clear the land and capital to purchase sprinklers. Neither had been anticipated, both were necessary. Then, on the day of the ceremony, even as they were confronted once again with more unexpected rocks, workmen were hampered by high winds that further complicated their progress. These problems, encountered in preparing the Farm-in-a-Day, symbolize not the project's agricultural potential but the drawbacks to the land that settlers would face and the additional effort and expenses each would have to shoulder alone. They would find no army of volunteers or contributions from the business community to fall back on as they developed their farms.

If the land were the setting--the stage--for the drama of the Farm-in-a-Day celebration, a veteran and his family would be the featured actors. Organizers intended that the choice of a veteran to receive the farm would dramatically symbolize reclamation's social beneficence, its ability to help deserving members of

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[17] Veterans of Foreign Wars Press Release, 14 April (1952), Box 15, CBC Records,

society. Yet, as with the land, the reality behind the symbol was less straightforward than the publicly stated purpose and offers clues, obscured by the rhetoric of the time, to the complexities and contradictions that bedeviled reclamation settlement in the postwar era. First, although there is no indication that anyone questioned the decision to limit the pool of potential recipients to veterans, various representatives on the Farm-in-a-Day committee emphasized different reasons when they expressed their support for awarding the farm to a veteran. Further, the criteria used to select the ultimate winner indicate that the event planners and judges were juggling a range of goals and beliefs as they worked to select a winner who was both the most deserving veteran and the best representative for the project then and in the future. The decisions they made and the background of the ultimate winner further indicate these goals were sometimes difficult to reconcile.

From the birth of the Farm-in-a-Day idea, organizers were unanimous in the decision that no one but a "worthy veteran" would receive this prize. In the early post war years, patriotic fervor was high. Elected representatives and Bureau planners, reflecting this public sentiment, had agreed that on the CBP veterans would be given first choice in the purchase of government owned farm units. Thus, the decision to award the prize to a veteran mirrored both official policy on the project as well as the mood of the country to honor veterans. Further, the participants with primary responsibility for selection of a winner were unequivocal and unwavering in supporting this decision. In the spring of 1951, Hubert Walter of the Columbia Basin Commission began working with Herbert Rosenkranz, Chairman of the Agriculture

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WaA&RM, Olympia, 3.

and Development Committee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Hu Blonk, Regional Information (public relations) Officer of the USBR, to organize and oversee the selection of a veteran to receive the farm.[18] Throughout the coming year Rosenkranz and Blonk appeared to have worked together quite amicably. Yet, from their written statements it is clear that although they both ardently supported the plan to give a farm to a veteran, they had different priorities and motivations both in supporting reclamation in general and the Farm-in-a-Day program in particular.

The VFW, represented by Herbert Rosenkranz, was primarily interested in reclamation nationwide because of the benefits it could provide veterans. The organization supported the CBP as a prime example of reclamation's potential to expand farming opportunities for returning soldiers.[19] In embracing the celebration and the farm give-away, the VFW explained that

> In the last year we added to our ever-expanding list of projects in community service and to aid veterans getting into worthy undertakings an agricultural and land development program. We were the first, and now we are the only veterans group, engaged in this field. Our help in getting veterans established in the farming vocation, if they so choose, fits into our rehabilitation program, which has been the major concern of the Veterans of Foreign Wars ever since its birth. . . ."[20]

Thus, the Farm-in-a-Day, as well as rewarding one particular ex-soldier, furthered VFW efforts to expand and publicize agricultural opportunities for veterans, among which were those that would be created on the Columbia Basin Project.

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[18]Rosenkranz to Walters (sic) 19 March 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Farm-in-a-Day, n.d., Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[19]Rosenkranz to Walters (sic), 19 March 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[20]Carbon typescript, n.d., no author (internal evidence indicates written by Rosenkranz), Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

On the other hand, in contradistinction to the priorities voiced by the VFW, other celebration organizers, most notably Hu Blonk of the USBR, focused on the value the project itself would receive from the choice of a veteran. They did not see the event as merely, or even primarily, a chance to expand opportunities for veterans or to reward one particular veteran as a stand-in for the service of many others. Rather, they saw the choice of a veteran as providing extensive, highly favorable publicity for the project. Blonk made no secret that he favored awarding the farm to a veteran because of the benefit that would accrue to the project from this connection. In his autobiography, written forty years later, Blonk asserted that he dreamed up the idea of awarding the farm to the "nation's most worthy veteran" and that his intent was to attain maximum national publicity for the project.[21] Whether or not he did originate the idea of awarding the farm to a veteran, some promotional material at the time, probably written by Blonk, did allude to the possibility that the intent was to use the veteran to help the CBP. A public Fact Sheet explained that the farm would be given away "in recognition of the contributions the soldiers of America have made toward the molding of the national solidarity that makes projects like the Columbia Basin development possible."[22] Veterans were to be rewarded because—in the rhetoric of the day--their sacrifice enabled the project to exist. The choice of a veteran was a blatant attempt to piggyback the CBP onto the patriotic goodwill the nation felt toward its ex-servicemen.

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[21] Hu Blonk, Behind the By-Line Hu: A Fiesty Newsman's Memoirs (Wenatchee, Washington, 1992), 171.

[22] Fact Sheet, n.d. Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

These different emphases articulated by Rosenkranz and Blonk are important because they illustrate that although its supporters could agree on the desirability of promoting reclamation, they brought different priorities to the cause in general and to the CBP in particular. At the time, however, supporters did not dwell on their differences in motivations, argue about priorities, or discuss which, if any, was of paramount importance. Their goals reinforced each other. Hard choices were not necessary. Still, although the goals of these men and the organizations they represented were symbiotic, it is important to realize that they were not identical. To Blonk, and most of the local boosters, the overriding goal was the health, well-being, and long term viability of the overall project. The primary loyalties of Rosenkranz and the VFW lay elsewhere--with the fortunes of the individuals, specifically ex-servicemen and their families, who would work the farms.

Although organizers had unanimously agreed that no one but a worthy veteran would receive the Farm-in-a-Day, it remained necessary to choose the "most" deserving from the ranks of the worthy. This required a selection process that would solicit appropriate applicants and rules and standards to guide the decisions of the judges who would decide among them. When the CBC first broached the idea of the Farm-in-a-Day celebration, Rosenkranz immediately offered the services of the VFW in the veteran selection process. By the end of the summer, the national VFW organization had voted to sponsor the search using its local posts throughout the country. Ottis Peterson of the Washington, D.C. office of the USBR, confirmed this plan, writing to Rosenkranz that the "selection of the most worthy veteran is the responsibility of the VFW and it is essentially your show." But in reality others

outside the veterans' organization exercised overriding influence in shaping the contest. In his letter to Rosenkranz, Peterson added that:

> The Bureau of Reclamation, like the Columbia Basin Commission, understandably is interested in tying in the search to the Columbia Basin Project celebration next summer and to the greater aspects of further development of the Columbia Basin and of reclamation generally. That is why our efforts must necessarily be closely coordinated and there must be a constant interchange of information. . . . [23]

Peterson believed that the selection process offered the opportunity to rectify a "lack of knowledge about reclamation programs generally, and the Columbia Basin Project specifically."[24] To take advantage of this opportunity, he offered prints of a Bureau of Reclamation film, "Water in the West," to any VFW post that wanted to arrange a public meeting to show it. Further, in a move that would have a more direct impact on shaping the meaning of the Farm-in-a-Day celebration, Hubert Blonk, rather than Rosenkranz, drew up a detailed set of instructions and an information packet for the VFW to follow in selecting the veteran. Thus, although Blonk had written that the search was the VFW's show, he would be responsible for drafting the selection rules. Rosenkranz reviewed Blonk's work, but concentrated on setting up the local, state and national machinery within the VFW to stage the contest. In this division of responsibility, Blonk had by far the greatest input in crafting the specific criteria that would be used both to limit the pool of applicants and to select the ultimate recipient. The requirements, thus, were drawn up by someone whose primary concern was the project, not rewarding and aiding a veteran.

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[23] Ottis Peterson to H. L. Rosenkranz, 4 September 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[24] Ottis Peterson to H. L. Rosenkranz, 4 September 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

By September 25th Blonk had completed a 47-page publicity and instructional package to be distributed to local VFW groups.[25] It offers clues to the balancing act the celebration organizers had to perform if they were to satisfy, or at a minimum not offend, all the participating CBP supporters with their varying goals and motivations. The threshold requirement, an absolute necessity accepted by everyone, was honorable military service during either World War II or the Korean War. An applicant was instructed to describe his war record in some detail, including, for instance, campaigns in which he had participated. Additionally, not-for-publication instructions to judges suggested that they also look for a veteran who had gone through an ordeal during combat. Blonk, however, in spite of his desire and that of other Farm-in-a-Day supporters to piggyback the CBP onto the patriotic feelings prevalent at the time, did not argue that a war record stand alone as the centerpiece of the search for the most worthy veteran. Rather, he stressed a more generalized sympathy factor, which he suggested would be built as much, if not more, on disaster and traumas in civilian life as on the consequences of military service to the country. Incorporating civilian hardship reflected a rationale for reclamation that had been prevalent during the heyday of the New Deal. During this time, proponents of the CBP, particularly within the government, had justified the project by suggesting that it would offer a helping hand to society's downtrodden, such as the dust bowl refugees, people forced into dire economic straits through no fault of their own. In this thinking, the government should provide people a farm because of economic hardship endured rather than service to the country. Seen in

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[25]Hu Blonk to Herbert Rosenkranz, 5 June 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia;

this light, the farm would be as much a compensation for lost opportunity as a reward for service rendered. He wrote that the winner should be:

> a veteran about whom everyone will say, "Isn't that it swell? It couldn't happen to a nicer guy!" His story should be one with a heart throb in it. It should be one about which newspaper men and people at large would say, "that fellow has gone through a lot. He deserved to win." As we see it, the winning veteran should be an ex-servicemen, who perhaps not only went through an ordeal in combat, but who upon his return to civil (sic) life, found life's path a rough one. We seriously question whether the ultimate winner will be a serviceman who won only because of his war record. We feel sure the winner will be one whose story of both the war and civil (sic) life afterwards is one that would elicit universal sympathy among the American people.[26]

Again, there is no indication that Blonk or those who accepted and followed his guidelines saw the two components of the sympathy factor in conflict. In fact he was promoting a synergistic combination which would maximize the public's awareness of and good feelings toward the project. Yet, though the same person may have both served the country valiantly and endured hardships in civilian life, these are two separate experiences. In the final analysis, as much as Blonk and others may have pushed to conflate the two goals embedded in the guidelines, the desire to reward those who had performed a service to the country and the desire to aid unfortunate members of society were not the same.

As well as emphasizing the importance of the sympathy factor, Blonk, in the not-for-publication instructions to the judges, stressed that the winner had to be available to participate in celebration day events. This was the only other requirement, beyond honorable military service, that he insisted was absolutely mandatory. He instructed the judges that:

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and Hu Blonk to Hub Walter, 25 September 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

> (T)o make conducting the 'Farm-In-a-Day' ceremony on the Columbia Basin Project feasible and practical it is necessary that the winning veteran be on hand to receive the farm and subsequently to operate it. Therefore, unfortunately, your Selection Committee cannot be allowed to pick as a winner anyone serving in the armed forces at the time the deadline of January 15 has been reached."[27]

Thus, although Farm-in-a-Day planners publicized this prize as rewarding the most worthy veteran, Blonk admonished judges to remember that the ability and willingness of the recipient to participate in PR duties the day of the celebration had to take precedence over any other qualities possessed by a veteran not available on that date. An active duty soldier serving the country in January, and, therefore, not guaranteed to be available in May, would not be eligible. Farm-in-a-Day might be honoring service to the country, but if this service conflicted with an obligation to participate in promotion for the project, public relations obligations won out over patriotic duty.

Blonk ended the guidelines for judges with a discussion of farming experience. He referred the judges to the USBR standards for purchase of a farm unit, which included a mandatory two years of full-time experience, but added that the VFW should "not feel that the veteran must meet the Bureau requirements. . . . " The judges did not have to abide by a firm standard, but rather should satisfy themselves that the "veteran is well enough informed on farming operations that he can take over the farm and do a good job." Placed in the context of the entire set of requirements, Blonk's approach to farming experience points to the balancing act project supporters were performing. While ability to participate in the PR ceremony to publicize the CBP was absolute, the requirement for sufficient experience to insure

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[26]Hu Blonk to Hub Walter, 25 September 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM. Olympia.

success as a farmer was flexible. At the same time, however, Blonk did want someone who was experienced enough to "undertake the operation of an irrigated farm by modern methods" and qualified enough to "do a good job" running the farm. As he went on to say, it would be embarrassing "to give this farm to a veteran who could not operate the farm machinery or take care of the crops after it is given to him."[28] Again, the concern was to avoid embarrassment to the project, not problems that inexperience might cause the settler in the future. Finally, the applicant had to agree not to sell or lease the farm for five years, except for bonafide health reasons. Financial distress for the farm family would not be sufficient justification to leave the project. Blonk gave no explanation for this requirement at the time. But Farm-in-a-Day planners recognized, as John L Toevs of the USBR wrote to Hu Walter during early celebration planning, that "the farm will be in the limelight for a number of years."[29] Press reports in later years reiterated that boosters feared adverse publicity in the future if a recipient decided to bail out for any but the most dire reasons.

Two points emerge from this analysis of the selection procedure. Blonk drafted, and the judges worked with, a set of rules and guidelines that were structured to incorporate and balance a variety of ideas about the goals of the CBP and the Farm-in-a-Day celebration. But these goals were sufficiently diverse that the regulations could not always work in tandem. Further, again there is no evidence

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[27]Hu Blonk to Hub Walter, 25 September 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[28]Hu Blonk to Hub Walter, 25 September 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. In his guide to the VFW, Blonk expressed this as an embarrassment to the veteran's organization, but it is reasonable to assume he was thinking of all sponsors' reputations.
[29]John L. Toevs to Hubert Walters (sic), 30 July 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaSt Archives.

available that the VFW in general or Rosenkranz in particular disagreed with Blonk or with the rules and regulations that he drafted. Yet, it is obvious that Blonk at the time recognized the possibility of a difference in interest between the veteran and the project and structured the requirements so that, if and when such a conflict might arise, the good of the project was to take precedence.

From the perspective of Farm-in-a-Day supporters, the end purpose of this entire procedure was to locate a veteran who could provide two benefits to the CBP. First, the winner should capture the imagination and sympathy of the nation and thereby generate positive feelings toward the project. Then, when he had moved onto the farm, he should help to structure public perceptions of the CBP by symbolizing its agricultural and social potential, including its potential to create a prosperous community. Thus, when picking someone to receive the farm and represent the project, the judges were expected to look both backward and forward: backward to reward past behavior or to compensate for past losses, and forward to identify someone who would have a good chance of success as a farmer on the project and help present to the world the image its supporters envisioned for it.

Donald Dunn was the lucky veteran who ultimately emerged the winner from this process, judged most worthy to receive the farm and most likely to represent the CBP in a favorable light to the nation. He prevailed in a selection process, in which, according to publicity from the time, over 20,000 veterans from 37 states participated. The judging was divided into three rounds--local, state, national. Both Blonk from the USBR and Hu Walter of the CBC, although they were not involved directly in the selection process, monitored the initial rounds quite closely. Having

decided that sympathy would gain the most publicity for the celebration, they worked to insure that the local posts kept the sympathy factor in the forefront of consideration. In at least one instance Walter pushed the VFW and Rosenkranz to ensure that a veteran with a particularly heart-wrenching tale be considered by his local post.[30] As judges in the final round, the VFW appointed five men who had distinguished careers connected to agriculture, including: Allan Kline, American Farm Bureau President; Herschel Newsom, Master of the National Grange; Dr. William T. Spanton, Chief of the Agricultural Education Service of the Office of Education; M. L. Wilson, Director of the USDA Extension Service; and Dillard Lasseter, Administrator of the USDA Farmers Home Administration.[31] Limited to the pool of applicants who had won out first at the local and then the state levels, these judges had the final responsibility for choosing the veteran who was most deserving and most worthy and who would symbolize to the nation the agricultural potential and social benefits of reclamation on the CBP.

To evaluate the significance of the choice of Dunn by the judges, it is important to consider both his personal story and his attitude toward and experience with farming. Certainly, measured by any standard, Donald A. Dunn had an honorable war record. His accomplishments in service to the country merited reward. He had, in fact, received three battle stars. Drafted into the army in August 1942 at the age of 21, he spent over three years in the military. He was an army

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[30]Hubert Walter to Adjutant General Julian Dickinson (sic), 26 November 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Julian Dickenson to John B. Powers, 30 November 1951, Box 3, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

tank driver with the Ninth Army during its initial drive through France, and his battalion was the first to cross the Ruhr River into Germany. He was one of only two men in his original unit who were not killed or wounded.[32]

As heroic and harrowing as his war experiences were, Dunn himself believed that it was the upheavals of his later civilian life that influenced the judges in his favor.[33] After being discharged from the army in December 1945, Dunn and his wife returned to their hometown in central Kansas to begin their life together as farmers. A year later they became parents of twins, a boy and a girl. But tragically the boy died of pneumonia three months later. During the next few years, the Dunns poured their energies into building a farm. But in July 1951, the Cottonwood River overflowed and flooded them out, washing away their crops, equipment and livestock and destroying their home. They were forced to sell off what they could salvage to pay their debts and were left penniless after five years of hard work. They borrowed $2,000 and headed west to make a new start.[34] Thus, the judges found in Dunn a winner whose background indicated the range of experience that Blonk and others believed would generate maximum sympathy. He was both a valiant veteran with military experience deserving of the reward from a grateful nation and a hard

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[31]Veterans of Foreign Wars Press Release, 14 April 1952, Box 15, Progress & Industry Division (hereafter P&I) Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Northwest Farm News, 17 April 1952.

[32] Veterans of Foreign Wars Press Release, 14 April 1952, Box 15, P&I Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Grant County Journal, 17 April 1952.

[33]William Dietrich, Northwest Passage: The Great Columbia River (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1995), 305.

[34]VFW Press Release, 14 April 1952, Box 15, P&I Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; Northwest Farm News, 17 April 1952; Grant County Journal, 17 April 1952; and Hugh H. Moncrieff, "Columbia Basin's Showplace," The Reclamation Era (September 1952): 214-217, 225.

working family man buffeted by personal tragedy and natural disaster, needing and deserving a helping hand to get back on his feet.

This private history did elicit great sympathy, and commentators at the time repeatedly elaborated on it when describing his selection. It is important to remember, however, that the veteran the judges chose to receive the Farm-in-a-Day would serve two functions for the celebration and the project. As a most worthy and deserving soldier he would generate sympathy from the public and extensive, favorable publicity for the project. But he was also picked to symbolize the future of the CBP, to be a stand-in during the public ceremony and later for all the settlers to come and represent what they would build together. As Michael Strauss, the Head of the USBR, said, the Farm-in-a-Day was the "symbol of greater things to come."[35] In the rhetoric of the time, the "greater things to come" that promoters envisioned was a CBP settled by modern pioneers who would build a garden land, a community of fertile farms. This flowery rhetoric was based on concrete numbers and described a very specific reality that CBP promoters envisioned: one million acres transformed into 13,000 farms, averaging approximately 80 acres each. The Farm-in-a-Day celebration was to symbolize the opening of this land of opportunity.[36]

Picked as "most worthy" to receive the Farm-in-a-Day, Dunn was also to symbolize the pioneers who were to create this land of farms and homes. His approach to farming and his personal goals as a farmer would shape how he would

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[35]Columbia Basin News, 30 May 1952.

[36]Strauss quoted in Portland Oregonian, 30 May 1952. These figures were in the press release sent out by the VFW to announce Dunn's selection: Veterans of Foreign Wars, 14 April 1952, Box 15, P&I Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. See also Oscar L. Chapman to Donald D. Dunn, 11 April 1952, Box 266, USBR Records, Federal Records Center, Denver.

contribute to the realization of the vision. Dunn was the son of a central Kansas farmer who owned 160 acres of land. When he returned from the war, Dunn decided to follow in his father's footsteps. He began by renting a farm of the same size as operated by his dad, 160 acres along the Cottonwood River where he grew the traditional crops for the area, wheat, corn, and alfalfa. However, Dunn was an innovative and ambitious farmer. He took advantage of the GI Bill to get on-the-farm training, experimented with new hybrids and set aside test plots to measure results. He was also interested in taking risks beyond his experience and willing to take advantage of new opportunities available to him. In partnership with a neighbor, he purchased a hay baler. With this equipment, they set up a side operation, baling and selling hay.[37] In addition to expanding his farming operation into a related business, Dunn during the next few years expanded the size of his farm by leasing additional land. By 1950 he was working 400 acres. This expansion required extensive credit, and Dunn took on a large debt in order to finance purchases of stock and equipment, both of which were quite expensive.[38] Thus, in his years farming in Kansas, Dunn showed himself to be a farmer interested in growing rapidly and expanding into ancillary operations, and willing to rely on credit to leverage this expansion.

At the time of the Farm-in-a-Day ceremony, Dillard Lasseter, Head of the Farmers' Home Administration and a member of the national panel of judges who selected Dunn, said that, although the choice between the finalists was very difficult,

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[37]Hugh H. Moncrieff, "Columbia Basin's Showplace," The Reclamation Era (September 1952): 217.

Dunn's qualifications were the highest in all respects. He specifically mentioned that the judges considered Dunn's record as a farmer to be outstanding.[39] Yet, this record, which Lasseter and the panel found so admirable, was of a farmer who expanded rapidly. Within four years after he began to farm, Dunn worked 2 1/2 times more land than his father had after a lifetime of farming in the same area. Thus, Lasseter and the rest of the committee--as well as the local and state panels that had passed Dunn's application forward--did not choose someone with a record indicating that he was content to farm on a small scale. Rather, they picked someone whose past actions indicated he believed that rapid expansion financed by extensive debt was a suitable way to approach farming. The publicists for the project and the celebration touted the desirability of limiting individual farms to a modest size of 80 acres, stressing that this policy maximized opportunities for all potential settlers. Yet, the judges rewarded and picked as a symbol of the project someone who thought big and had acted on his expansionary ideas to farm on as large a scale as he could.

This mismatach between rhetoric and action in the choice of Dunn symbolized not only an ambivalence among reclamation supporters about the type of settler best able to build a successful farm on the project. It also pointed to an ambivalence about the ultimate character of the project itself, including the appropriate distribution

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[38]VFW press release, 14 April 1952, Box 15, P&I Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Northwest Farm News, 17 April 1952.

[39]Wenatchee Daily World, 29 May 1952. Lasseter's comments are of particular interest, because the FHA was the federal agency responsible for providing the great majority of credit to the settlers on reclamation projects, including the CBP. His agency was, by statute (60 Stat 1062, 14 August 1946), directed to provide loans for acquiring, repairing, or improving "family-size" farms and had developed very rigid guidelines for judging both what was a proper family size farm and what type of farming practices would most likely lead to success.

and layout of property. If repeated on the CBP, under the rules in place in 1952, Dunn's inclination to expand rapidly and extensively would require leasing additional farm units. The irony was that leasing units would take them out of circulation and decrease the amount of land available for others to settle. Such an approach would work at cross purposes with the project's widely publicized goal to provide the maximum number of farming opportunities for deserving members of society. The central figure of the Farm-in-a-Day celebration, chosen to symbolize the goals and future of the CBP, was someone whose past behavior indicated a predilection to farm in a way that would decrease the number of opportunities for others. The choice of Dunn to represent the project symbolized, therefore, not only the potential for social beneficence that celebration organizers wanted the public to equate with the project but also a private ambivalence these same supporters harbored about what kind of approach to farming would be best for the project.

At the same time, the choice of the farm as well as the choice of a farmer to symbolize project settlement indicated the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality. CBP boosters and celebration organizers publicized the unit chosen for the lucky recipient as a symbol of the thousands of wonderful opportunities that would be available on the CBP for deserving veterans who hoped to take up life on a farm after risking it in defense of the country. The reality was different. Project organizers encountered difficulty in acquiring a farm. They had to settle for a unit in an area about which the expressed misgivings of at least one organizer proved prophetic. The land proved to be of a poorer quality than the Bureau had thought during its classification process. The unit was burdened with rocks so extensive that it took

hundreds of men and hours of machine work, resources of time and money far beyond the reach of most settlers, to prepare for planting.

Farm-in-a-Day was intended to illustrate the benefits of life on the CBP. But as the celebration unfolded, it came also to illustrate its drawbacks. It suggested the difficulties that would be encountered and the compromises and choices that would be required as the project was settled. It highlighted a mismatch between rhetoric and reality, including the reality of the land, that would prove troublesome for the farmers. In the end it was a more accurate harbinger of how settlement would unfold on the CBP than its planners and boosters intended.

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Throughout its history, federal reclamation has been dogged by controversy. Proponents have justified the effort, particularly the public spending required, by pointing to the many opportunities it would create for families to settle on the land and build a farm of their own. Critics, citing the number and identify of those who have been helped, have argued that the social promise and potential have been unmet. As I began my research, I had a very general question--what was and what caused the pattern of settlement that emerged on the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, the nation's single largest reclamation project. I subsequently broke this inquiry into four parts. Who and how many, was it thought, should settle on the project? How and to what extent should the government assist the settlers to succeed? Did the reality of settlement meet

goals, plans and expectations? If not, why not? In the end, I was surprised by the answer I found.[40]

Early in my research I discovered that although the history of project settlement in many cases overlapped it did not duplicate the history of the CBP. The casts of characters and the importance of their roles diverged. The actions of federal legislators, Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and irrigation district officials, landowners, and settlers were pivotal in both stories. Yet the history of settlement is both more expansive and more limited. Actors, such as social reformers, USDA officials, agricultural economists, and soil scientists, who had no or only a marginal role in chronicles I read of the project, took on positions of prominence in my research. Conversely, local promoters such as Rufus Woods, who were instrumental in securing project authorization, were only intermittently involved in discussions over who would settle and how they would be helped. Civil engineers, such as Frank Banks of the Bureau of Reclamation, without whom the dam and the irrigation infrastructure would not have been

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[40] Donald Worster and Donald Pisani have led the way in interpreting the history and effect of federal reclamation in the American West. They disagree over the efficacy of the federal government and the Bureau of Reclamation in particular. Worster argues that in cooperation with powerful private interests, the Bureau imposed a foreign hydraulic landscape on the arid west that fostered an unequal social order. Pisani describes a more diffuse and less efficient political bureaucracy whose efforts resulted in what he terms a fragmented west. Recently Mark Fiege, revisiting Worster's hydraulic landscape, finds nature more prominent in it than expected. See Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Donald Pisani, To Reclaim a Divided West: Water, Law and Public Policy, 1848-1902 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992): and Mark Fiege, Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.) (Hereafter Worster, Rivers of Empire; Pisani, Divided West; and Fiege, Irrigated Eden.)

Clayton R. Koppes discusses the "redistributive principle of reclamation" in "Public Water, Private Land: Origins of the Acreage Limitation Controversy, 1933-1953, Pacific Historical Review 47 (November 1978): 608.

possible, appeared only peripherally in these debates. Finally, water has dominated most studies of reclamation projects, including the CBP. Historians have investigated both the potential and the drawbacks of efforts to dominate and manipulate water in an attempt to transform what was perceived as arid waste into productive fields. Land, however, rose to the fore in my story. Rather than being a blank canvas for the action of water, it demonstrated the power and potential to shape in a variety of ways both the ability of people to manage the influx of "artificial rain" and the environmental and social consequences of their attempts to do so.[41]

The focus on settlement also led me to follow a different time line. It took me back to the first stirrings of interest in federal reclamation, to the turn of the twentieth century, before the Columbia Basin Project was even a gleam in the eyes of local promoters. Here in the often conflicting dreams of social redemption and economic development lay the beginnings of a half-century long debate over who should settle on federal reclamation projects and whether they should be helped. Should the goal be to aid the needy, reward the deserving or provide opportunities for the qualified? How and to what extent should the government aid the settler, whoever it might be?

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[41] The titles of the major studies by Worster and Pisani reflect this focus on water: Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); and Donald J. Pisani, To Reclaim a Divided West: Water, Law, and Public Policy 1848-1902 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992.)

For studies that, although not concerned with federal reclamation, do point out that the specifics of the land cannot be ignored in any history of agricultural transformation, see John Opie, Ogallala: Water for a Dry Land (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); and Richard White, Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington, 1992 edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992).

Until the mid-1930's, the debate over the goals and means of reclamation settlement continued to take place with little or no reference to the CBP. Advocates and opponents of soldier settlement after World War I argued over the merits and drawbacks of federally directed "scientific colonization" as a way to reward deserving veterans for service to the nation. Soon afterward, in 1923, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work appointed a panel of advisers, the Fact Finders, to find answers to difficulties that were pushing federal reclamation to the brink of collapse. They came to believe that problems grew out of an overemphasis on engineering and politics and a neglect of agricultural conditions and settler welfare. They argued for screening of both settlers and land and for government aid to the settler. In the late 1920's, as economic and later environmental hard times battered agriculture, partisans of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, which oversaw Reclamation, wrangled over whether or not the settlement opportunities reclamation made possible were a threat or a boon to existing farmers.

In 1935 construction began on Grand Coulee Dam, an undertaking irrigation proponents asserted would provide water for well over one million acres of land. At this time the Columbia Basin Project first enters into my narrative. Here the particular and the practical overtake and intersect with the catholic and the theoretical.

Land and landowner entered the picture. As they turned to the task of organizing the project, planners and legislators confronted the need to provide answers to questions of who should settle and how they should be helped for a

project whose vast acreage was primarily in private ownership and varied from dryland wheat fields to desert covered only with creosote bush. The full significance and extent of the roles the land and the landowners would play would emerge over time.

The magnitude of the undertaking also inflamed the long-simmering bureaucratic power struggle between the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture. This rivalry bedeviled and undermined efforts of settlement proponents to write a wide-ranging, coherent program of assistance into law and played into the hands of their opponents. It also drew the Extension Service and the land grant college in Washington State into the center of action to play a pivotal role in implementing settlement policy for the CBP.

In 1948, four years before the project officially opened, the Bureau brought water, on a test basis, to two irrigation blocks in the far south of the basin. By this time Congress had authorized a policy governing whom the Bureau would help settle and a limited framework for guiding the type and amount of assistance that would be provided to all project farmers. With the opening of the test blocks, the last major actor, the settler, arrived on the scene, and my narrative turns to a search for an answer to the question of whether the reality of settlement matched expectations. Increasingly the answer appeared to hinge on whether or not the type and extent of assistance the government would provide could meet the needs of actual settlers as they confronted the task of creating viable farms out of the land available to them.

Hints of the answer appeared in settler experiences during early years on the test blocks, but the full story did not emerge until after the project's official opening in 1952. It is important to recognize at this point that although my research focused on conditions specific to the project, I make no attempt to argue that settlement on the CBP took place in isolation. Early settlers on the test blocks began farming during a time of prosperity for agriculture. Those who entered after the project's official opening, however, had to make their way in a much more inhospitable economic environment, highlighted by an agricultural cost-price squeeze that stemmed in part from pressure to overcapitalize in order to take advantage of expensive technological innovations.[42] This reality lay always in the background. Still, circumstances particular to the project did rise to the fore. Settlers were faced with the consequences of decisions made earlier by politicians, bureaucrats, and landowners. Further, as these new irrigators proceeded, it became increasingly clear that they faced effects from these earlier decisions that often were compounded and exacerbated, in ways not anticipated, by the quality of the land on which they played out.

The plight of these individual settlers is at the very core of my attempt to explain the pattern of settlement that emerged on the project. Yet, it is the penultimate, not the concluding, step in my narrative. Individual cases, however traumatic and vital to each settler, by themselves were only personal tragedies or

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[42] In discussing what he describes as the "Great Disjuncture" in agriculture, John Shover highlights the connection between the introduction of "complex technologies" after World War II and "high production costs." John L. Shover, First Majority – Last Minority: The Transforming of Rural Life in America (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 7 and Part 2: "The Great Disjuncture," 141 ff.

triumphs. It was when they accumulated and reached a critical mass that they had consequences for the project as a whole. As the numbers grew, proponents of various positions on who should settle on and farm the project used them as ammunition in their arguments. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, policymakers reacted and chose sides, undoing earlier policies and establishing a new framework to guide future settlement.

A history as large as that covering the Columbia Basin Project can have many trajectories. The historical path down which my questions on settlement led me began with early dreams of the social and economic benefits of reclamation and ran for more than half a century until planners and settlers were confronted with the reality of farming the land found within the project. It ended with a choice between the good of the individual and the advancement of the project.

Chapter 2

The Rhetoric of Settlement

The landless man and manless land,
to landless, manless gold;
Forming to-day a trinity
of revenues untold
Thus saving the man, enriching the land,
and robbing the poorhouse too;
Giving the child, now running wild,
Something that he can do.
Colonization Song, Salvation Army War Cry 1904[1]

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, a group of visionaries found in the promise of the manless land the answer to the problems raised by the specter of the landless man. They embraced the idea that irrigation, backed by the commitment of the federal government, could reclaim the arid expanses of the American West, transforming what they saw as wasteland into productive farm homes for the many who so badly needed them. Among those entranced by this vision of redemption through reclamation was the Salvation Army. Acting on the sentiment expressed in the Colonization Song, Commander Frederick Booth-Tucker in 1904 worked to link the Army's mission to redeem the landless man with the recently passed National Reclamation Act of 1902, legislation which had been geared to filling up and building up the manless land, bringing the resources of the federal government to bear on that effort. During these early years of the new

century, Booth-Tucker argued that colonization of the unfortunate could serve as a "most valuable handmaiden to irrigation."[2] He wanted to incorporate colonization into federal reclamation programs. He believed that efforts to make the manless land productive and to redeem the landless man could work in tandem, to the benefit of both. But as Booth-Tucker and his followers were soon to find out, such dreams of synergy were not universally held nor easily made real.

Many proponents of western irrigation, both those focused on the empty, unproductive land and those who worried about wasted lives, turned during this same time to the federal government to realize their hopes and dreams. Private efforts in the latter decades of the nineteenth century had proved inadequate to the task of full-scale development of the region's arid and semi-arid land. Entrepreneurs had been unable to raise, on a reliable basis, the private financing necessary to carry out what had proved to be very expensive undertakings. Time after time developers went bankrupt either before farmers moved onto the land or after settlement, leaving families stranded without water or saddled with financial obligations far beyond their ability to meet. In the process surrounding communities saw their dreams of economic prosperity and growth dashed. When a company went broke investors lost not only the prospect of future returns but all funds that previously had been invested. Entrepreneurs, as a result, found it increasingly difficult to locate private capital. Financial problems fed on themselves. In order to raise enough money to pay off investors, developers charged farmers such high fees that the settlers

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[1]Clark Spence, The Salvation Army Farm Colonies (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 101-102. (hereafter Spence, Salvation Army.)
[2]Spence, Salvation Army, pp. 101-102.

abandoned or were forced to leave the farms. The result was disillusionment on the part of investors and hostility on the part of farmers. With this pathological business cycle already established, the depression of the 1890's appeared to doom large-scale private irrigation. Most existing private irrigation companies of any significant size either were already bankrupt or facing imminent economic collapse, and practical businessmen lost all interest in reclamation.[3]

In this unsatisfactory economic climate, Joseph Carey, a Wyoming irrigation entrepreneur, devised a plan that would bring the resources of both the state and federal governments to bear in assisting private development. His ideas, as incorporated into the Carey Act passed by Congress in 1894, provided that each state with desert land could select up to one million acres of the public domain for reclamation projects. The result was a compromise between and a mixture of private and public enterprise and control that enabled entrepreneurs to use the land as collateral. It was not only a way to assist private development, but was also an alternative both to cession of the public domain to the states and to federal control of reclamation. Each of these latter courses of action had vociferous opponents. The Carey Act, however, quickly proved to be a failure, doomed by localism and the inability and unwillingness of the states to provide financing. Also, even though small farm supporters, led by George Maxwell, were able to write an 160-acre limit into the bill, geared toward promoting ownership by actual settlers, cession foes were never satisfied with the Carey Act. They continued to view the bill as a first step

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[3]Donald J. Pisani, To Reclaim a Divided West: Water, Law, and Public Policy 1848-1902 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press,), 103 and 328. (Hereafter, Pisani, Divided West)

toward control by the states, which they feared would enable and encourage speculation and land monopoly.[4]

The many failures of private development, the continuing opposition to cession, and the dearth of progress under the aegis of the Carey Act galvanized a variety of proponents of western irrigation to transfer their hopes to the federal government. Both those interested primarily in economic development and those espousing societal and individual rehabilitation championed the idea of public supported reclamation. In 1902, as a result of their combined efforts, Congress passed the Newlands Reclamation Act.

A shared desire to lodge responsibility with the federal government, however, did not mean agreement on why this was desirable or on how such an undertaking should be structured. Small farm advocates, such as George Maxwell, believed that irrigation of the public domain could provide a safety valve for problems building in the nation's cities. To them, federal reclamation was a means to provide homes both for refugees from impoverished rural areas who were streaming into the city and for urban workers forced onto the street by mechanization and the forces of modernization. On the other hand, advocates of economic expansion, led by politicians from western states, hoped for a secure source of money that would supplement, though not necessarily supplant, private money and that could be used to transform the land and develop the country. To attract eastern congressmen and others skeptical of if not hostile toward reclamation, they were willing to adopt social

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[4]Pisani, Divided West, 251-272; Andrew Hudanick, Jr., "George Hebard Maxwell: Reclamation's Militant Evangelist," Journal of the West 14 (July 1975): 108-119; and Lawrence B. Lee, "William Ellsworth Smythe and the Irrigation Movement: A Reconsideration," Pacific Historical Review 41 (August 1972): 289-311.

welfare rhetoric, but the ideas behind it, emphasizing wide distribution of settlement opportunities and assistance to new farmers, were not their primary concern and did not figure prominently in the law they drafted. Instead their focus, which they succeeded in writing in the 1902 Reclamation Act, was to establish a revolving fund for project construction, supplied by money generated from the sale of public land.[5]

Many Congressional proponents of reclamation, in fact, evinced only a general, passing interest in the identity or fate of the settlers. They inserted language in the Act saying that water should be supplied to bona fide residents only and instructed the Secretary of the Interior to limit a public land applicant to acreage "arguably required for the support of a family," up to a maximum of 160 acres, but included no enforcement mechanism. Further, whether they were ignorant of the skills and knowledge necessary for successful irrigation farming or blithely chose to ignore the importance of these agricultural qualifications, legislators made no acknowledgement of them when discussing who should settle. Neither did the bill include any provisions to aid would-be family farmers, including those with little or no agricultural experience. In fact, it specifically stated that failure to make any two payments when due "shall render the entry subject to cancellation, with the forfeiture of all rights under this Act, as well as of any moneys already paid thereon."[6] The drafters, too, chose not to direct the Reclamation Service to use settler demand or agricultural viability and land productivity when selecting project locations. Rather, they bowed to western localism and directed the Reclamation Service to expend the

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[5]U.S. Statutes at Large, 57th Cong., 1st sess., Chapter 1093 (1902), 388 (hereafter Reclamation Act of 1902); Pisani, Divided West, 313; and Worster, Rivers of Empire, 163-169.

[6]Reclamation Act of 1902, 389.

major portion of the available funds in the sixteen western states mentioned in the law in proportion to the sales of public land within each.[7] As their critics argued two decades, legislators seemed to believe that the "construction of irrigation works could of itself create irrigated agriculture."[8]

Within two years, proponents of reclamation as a vehicle to aid the landless attempted to compensate for some of these lapses by writing their social welfare ideas into law. In the spring of 1904, Senator George Hoar of Massachusetts introduced a bill drafted with the assistance and guidance of Frederick Booth-Tucker of the Salvation Army. Not only did Booth-Tucker believe that the proper end of reclamation was homes for those in need, he was an advocate of large-scale colonization as the means to that end and an advocate of a central role for the federal government in this effort. He believed colonization of reclaimed land could stem, if not reverse, the flood of rural poor to the cities. Further, he was not willing to leave these unfortunates on their own once land was made available to them. He believed colonists should be "carefully selected, thoroughly prepared, trained for the object, and settled upon the land in happy, self-supporting communities."[9] He argued for a government role both in selecting at least some of the beneficiaries of reclamation and in assisting the settlers to succeed as irrigation farmers. In passing the Reclamation Act of 1902, Congress had agreed to invest millions of dollars

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[7]The law specifically said that the Reclamation Service was to "expand the major portion of the funds arising from the sale of public lands within each State and Territory hereinbefore named for the benefit of arid and semiarid lands within the limits of such State or Territory." Reclamation Act of 1902, 390; and Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xi.

[8] Senate Committee of Special Advisers on Reclamation, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation: A Report Submitted to the Secretary of the Interior, 68 Cong., 1st Sess., 1924, S. Doc 92, xii. (Hereafter, Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924.)

providing water for irrigation. Now, he argued, was the time to invest in the settlers who would live on the land.[10]

The bill Senator Hoar introduced called for the creation of a colonization bureau within the Department of the Interior and for "advances to actual settlers."[11] This agency would provide information, loans, building materials and livestock for potential farmers from poor but worthy families. As Hoar explained, the bill "comprehends not only providing for settlement on the public land of the poor of our cities, but it also provides a pretty large scheme of benevolence by national aid."[12] The bill, however, failed to get support from key western legislators--including the Chair of the Public Lands Committee, Senator Hansbrough of South Dakota--and died before it reached the floor of the Senate.[13] As in 1902, those from outside the government who warned of social upheaval and the need to provide homes for the homeless, were unable to persuade Congress, even those members who championed reclamation, to support government programs that would distribute the benefits of reclamation to a variety of settlers and aid them in making farms on the land.[14]

Over a decade later, renewed fear of upheaval in society again breathed life into the arguments of those who believed that the federal government, by joining together reclamation and colonization, could create a tool useful for mitigating

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[9] Spence, Salvation Army, 104.
[10]Spence, Salvation Army, 102.
[11]21 March 1904, Congressional Record, 58th Cong., 2d sess., 3455.
[12]21 March 1904, Congressional Record, 58th Cong., 2d Sess., 3455.
[13]Spence, Salvation Army, 102-105; and Pisani, Divided West, 84.
[14]Donald J. Pisani, Water, Land & Law in the West: The Limits of Public Policy, 1850-1920 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 180-194. (Hereafter Pisani, Water, Land & Law.)

societal problems and that a proper goal for reclamation was to provide land for the landless. But these wartime social planners called on the nation to apply reclamation in aid of a different beneficiary--the veteran. The returning soldiers had responded when the country called on them for assistance. The nation now faced the obligation and the challenge of re-incorporating these veterans into a peacetime economy. Further, helping these soldiers would simultaneously help to alleviate a looming problem for society. In May 1918, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane wrote to both President Wilson and Speaker of the House Champ Clark arguing that the United States then faced, just as had nations from Caesar's Rome to America after the Civil War, the question of "what could be done with the soldiers to be mustered out of military service."[15] The fear was that the economy would constrict just as veterans returned to look for jobs, with the result that widespread unemployment among them would follow demobilization. Further, defense workers as well as ex-soldiers would be caught in this post war economic slowdown. Without work, all those idled would be restless and clamoring--if not worse--for assistance.

To help stave off this potential social unrest, Secretary Lane suggested farms for the veterans. The nation, however, no longer had millions of unoccupied acres comparable to the "matchless public domain" of 1865 that had been used to reward soldiers of an earlier era. Thus, he argued it must turn to its arid, cut-over, and swamp lands, as well as to the remaining unentered public lands. The total could

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[15]House Committee on Public Lands, Disposition of the Public Lands: Letter from the Secretary of the Interior Relating to the Disposition of the Public Lands, 65th Cong., 2d Sess., 1918, H. Doc. 1157, 1. (Hereafter, House Committee on Public Lands, Disposition of Public Lands, 1918, H. Doc. 1157.)

reach 75 million acres. This remedy, he cautioned, required that the country plan in advance. But, fortunately, it had "in the admirable achievement of the Reclamation Service" abundant proof of what could be done to reclaim and transform wasteland into potentially productive agricultural land, if such planning were undertaken.[16]

The Secretary, however, did not wish to stop with re-engineering the landscape. He was an advocate of what was thought of at the time as scientific group settlement, promoted most publicly by Elwood Mead, who in 1924 became head of the Reclamation Service. In the hope that the veteran would be agriculturally successful and socially satisfied, Lane advocated government organized and directed colonization. He believed land availability alone was not sufficient. The Reclamation Act had been in operation for fifteen years, and, although the Reclamation Service had been successful in engineering water onto the land, it had neglected social engineering. The resulting projects had been at best a mixed experience for the settlers. Since the passage of the 1902 law, federal projects had experienced a high rate of farmer failure and turnover. For the government to abdicate again any responsibility for settlement in favor of a total reliance on the traditional pioneer method of scattered individual infiltration, as it had done in 1902, Lane believed would be unfair to veterans. A new approach, partnering colonization with reclamation, seemed necessary. In support of his plan, Lane quoted Elwood Mead who earlier had argued that:

> Science (should) have gone hand in hand with the settlement of the arid and semiarid country, and all that science could give would have been utilized, first in the creation of the conditions of settlement and then in aiding the

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[16]House Committee on Public Lands, Disposition of the Public Lands, 1918, H. Doc. 1157, 2.

> settler in difficult tasks. Because nothing was done, these heroic but uninformed souls were bedeviled by the winds, cold, drought, and insect pests. They wasted their efforts, lost their hopes and ambitions, and a tragic percentage left, impoverished and embittered. The tragic part of this history is that nearly all this suffering and loss could have been avoided under a carefully
> thought-out plan of development.[17]

Scientific colonization, directed by the federal government, would replace scattered individual settlement with cohesive communities. Community settlement would ensure that deserving veterans, when they moved onto the land, would not suffer the social and economic deprivations blighting so many of the country's rural areas. Instead, through cooperative action and with the guidance of the government, they not only would prosper as individuals, but would create the social amenities necessary for strong communities.[18]

Lane's arguments and approach found support in Congress. In October 1918, Senator Henry Myers, Chairman of the Public Lands Committee, asserted that land development and individual redemption could work in tandem for the greater benefit of each goal. In an appeal to the boosters of local and regional economic development who saw the empty land as an affront to their right to prosper economically, he stressed that the first step of Lane's program would be to provide what the Secretary referred to as a "rough survey" of the unused lands of the country. When identified, these idle spaces could be brought into production–by disposing of them to discharged sailors and soldiers. In words reminiscent of the Salvation Army's Colonization Song, Myers argued that "the land will need them and

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[17]House Committee on Public Lands, Disposition of the Public Lands, 1918, H. Doc. 1157, 3.
[18]Franklin K. Lane, "The Returning Soldiers," Reclamation Record (January 1919): 3-7; "Nationwide Appeal of Secretary Lane's Solider-Settler Plan," Reclamation Record (May

they will need the land." Rewarding veterans who had recently served their country by providing them an opportunity to procure farm homes would stimulate the development of the land. Finally, in the melding of colonization and development, reclamation could palliate one of the "great evils of the times in our country. . . the overcrowding and congestion of people in the cities. . . ."[19] The outcome would be a model synergy of three goals—economic development, individual redemption, and societal salvation.

These synergistic arguments did gather in a wide range of reclamation supporters. In 1904 Senator Hoar and the Salvation Army had drawn support primarily from other legislators concerned with the rehabilitation of the individual and society. Lane, however, was able also to secure as allies of land settlement for veterans members of Congress from areas of the west and south who were focused on economic development of their unused land. By mid-1919, senators and representatives had proposed over one hundred veterans' settlement bills. Eventually most joined together around H.R. 487, called the Soldier Settlement Act or the Lane-Mondell Bill.[20]

The bill promised both to enrich the land and to save the man. It provided that the Secretary of the Interior could select land in each of the several states in which feasible projects could be located. The governor or land commissioner of a state was to approve both the land and the price. If a state desired, it could, by

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1919): 195-202; and "Soldier-Settler Bill Favorably Reported," Reclamation Record (September 1919): 394-396.

[19]Senate Committee on Public Lands, Homes for Returning Soldiers and Sailors, 65th Cong., 2d Sess., 1918, S. Rept. 580, 1 and 8. (Hereafter Senate Committee on Public Lands, Homes, 1918, S. Rept. 580.)

[20]The legislative sponsor of the bill was Representative Frank W. Mondell of Wyoming.

providing 25 percent of the costs involved, assume responsibility for selection, acquisition and subdivision of the land; improvement of farms; and aid and direction of development after settlement. This provision enabled the state to be a partner rather than a total dependent. These sections appealed to supporters of regional development. Others appealed to those who believed in the social welfare benefits of reclamation. The Secretary of the Interior would divide state-approved land into plots suitable for support of a family. The government then would read farms for occupancy. In the reclamation of arid lands, this responsibility would include construction of an on-farm water delivery system; land clearing, leveling, and preparation; and construction of farm buildings. The congressional sponsor of the bill, Senator Mondell of Wyoming, estimated the value of each farm to be $5,000. An ex-soldier would be able to buy one at a cost of 5 percent down, with the balance payable over forty years. Loans with easy terms would be available to the settlers. Further, a purchaser would be offered employment during project development, enabling him to save the necessary down payment. Finally, in an attempt to stymie land speculation and tenancy, the bill stipulated that the Secretary of the Interior must approve any sale or lease of property that took place within five years of the original purchase by a veteran.[21]

In addition to fostering a community of interest among the disparate supporters of reclamation, however, sponsors of the Lane-Mondell bill, if they were to be successful, had to circumvent powerful opposition. First, farmers already on the land were opposed to any type of bill. Faced with an uncertain postwar agricultural

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[21]26 August 1919, Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 4369-4374. A copy of the

market, they decried the unfairness of government assistance to would-be competitors. At hearings on the bill, a Grange spokesman castigated soldier settlement, branding it as "fundamentally un-American, un-democratic, undesirable, and indefensible."[22] Further, supporters found themselves in a difficult bind when they tried to slant the bill to appeal to particular interests. If they described the measure as primarily a reclamation bill, downplaying its social mission, members of congress from midwestern and eastern states and urban areas attacked it as pork-barrel. These critics charged that it benefited only special regional and economic interests, specifically western and southern states with extensive arid or swamp lands and large landholders who stood to reap speculative profits.[23] However, recasting legislation as a social welfare measure engendered cries of outrage from conservatives who opposed colonization as both paternalistic and extravagant.[24] Typical were the remarks by Representative Hays White of Kansas who argued that colonization planned and directed by the government would lead to bureaucratic waste, at the same time thwarting the individual initiative that had created the nation's agricultural wealth.[25]

In their attempt to head off these criticisms, land settlement supporters blended all the standard agrarian arguments--both economic and romantic--and then

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bill was reprinted in Reclamation Record (September 1919): 394-396.

[22] House Committee on Public Lands, Homes for Soldiers: Hearings on H.R. 487, Part 1, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, 72-74. Also See Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959), 50-54. (Hereafter Conkin, Tomorrow a New World.)

[23] Representative Scott of Michigan asked rhetorically, "do you need a high-priced agent hired by the Southern Land and Development Organization to tell you what to do?" 26 August 1919, Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 4378.

[24] Bill G. Reid, "Franklin K. Lane's Idea for Veterans' Colonization, 1918-1921," Pacific Historical Review 33 (November 1964): 459-460.

leavened the mixture heavily with variations on the theme of patriotism. Over and over they re-iterated that the beneficiary would be a soldier who had served his country well. But even with this appeal to patriotism, they felt additionally the need to thwart charges of paternalism and anti-individualism and stressed that colonization of these reclaimed lands would not be "anything like charity to the soldier. He is not to be given a bounty. He is not to be made to feel that he is a dependent."[26] They stressed that the work required of veterans would benefit the nation as well as the individual settler. They harked back to the Civil War veteran, who had on his return from battle continued to serve the nation by opening up the lands of the West to settlement. The World War I veteran would follow in these footsteps and continue in civilian as in military life to serve the country. "Instead of destroying our enemies," Lane argued," he is to develop our resources."[27] These ex-soldiers would benefit the nation economically by breaking land now going to waste, and then building dams, canals, and ditches. Employing romantic agrarianism, bill supporters described the soldiers leaving military service to become homebuilders as extending the great national pioneer epic of western settlement, the farm home and rural community to areas not yet blessed with them. In fact, proponents argued, rather than abet socialism, land settlement would be a potent weapon in the fight against its worst existing incarnation–Bolshevism. Typical were the words of Senator Johnson of Mississippi, "You cannot find an anarchist or Bolshevist in the country on a farm, because there is no place on earth where patriotism and respect for law and

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[25]26 August 1919, Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 4375.
[26] Senate Committee on Public Lands, Homes, 1918, S. Rept. 580, 4.

constituted authority is taught like in the country home. . . It is the unit of our civilization."[28] Thus, if Congress rewarded the veterans in this way for their past efforts to save the nation, these ex-soldiers would in the future save the country once again.

Yet, these arguments, skillfully interweaving patriotism with both romantic and rational agrarianism, did not carry the day. As in 1904, proponents of colonization were unsuccessful. The Salvation Army and its allies in Congress had cast colonization of reclaimed land as a national benevolence that would provide the poor but worthy with the resources they could use to remake their lives. Fifteen years later the advocates of soldier settlement put forth colonization less as uplifting charity for the needy, and more as a reward for deserving veterans who had saved the nation. In both cases, supporters argued, helping the beneficiary--whether it be the needy or the deserving--would benefit the nation also by staving off social unrest. Neither combination of arguments was sufficient to overcome the opposition. Land settlement legislation in 1919 got more attention and progressed further through the legislative process than it had in 1904. But in spite of the political lure in this postwar climate of tying patriotism to agrarianism, no bill became law.[29]

In the wake of this failure, Congress did incorporate a scaled down version of soldier settlement in a bonus bill, later vetoed by President Harding. It also passed a bill, signed by the President, giving ex-servicemen who wanted to homestead lands under reclamation sixty days to make entry before other citizens would be allowed to

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[28]26 August 1919, Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 4376.
[29]A copy of Joint Resolution No. 29, 14 February 1920 appeared in Reclamation Record (March 1920): 134. Also see Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 97.

file. The demand by veterans under this provision far surpassed the supply of land available through the Reclamation Service. Further, six states, including Washington, developed land settlement programs. These too proved popular with veterans but were financial and political ordeals for the states.[30]

In spite of this seeming demand for land, especially by veterans, the entire reclamation program, a few years after the end of the war, was teetering on the brink of collapse. In September 1923, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work appointed a six-member committee of special advisers, often referred to as the Fact Finders, to study the problems facing the federal reclamation program and recommend revisions to existing legislation.[31] By this time, three projects had been abandoned, and several others were on the brink of failure.[32] A few months later, the Secretary

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[30] Washington's land settlement program became law in 1919. In 1921 the State Department of Conservation and Development chose a location on the southwest side of the horseshoe bend in the Columbia River, near the villages of Hanford and White Bluffs, for its initial land settlement venture. By the end of 1924 it had ninety-nine tracts, averaging twenty acres in size, irrigated either from wells or directly from the river. Fifty veterans were living on the land and seven more had made payments. By May 1925, however, the department had decided to stop all additional work. In 1926 it chose to cancel all contracts with the settler-owners and sell all other assets related to the project. Washington abandoned its venture into soldier settlement five years after choosing a location and after more than sixty veterans had taken up farms. The venture was a victim of the postwar agricultural recession, poor planning and inadequate understanding of the agricultural conditions, including soil conditions, and a change in gubernatorial administrations, which brought to power a government that considered the effort to be "uneconomic, un-American, socialistic, paternalistic, and contrary to the best interests of the settlers and State." State of Washington, Department of Conservation and Development, Third Biennial Report, October 1926, 69-70.

[31] The six members of the commission were Thomas E. Campbell, recent governor of Arizona who served as chairman; John A. Widtsoe, agricultural scientist and former university president; Oscar E. Bradfute, president of the American Farm Bureau; James R. Garfield, former Secretary of the Interior; Clyde Dawson, representing the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and Elwood Mead . Brian Cannon, "'We Are Now Entering a New Era': Federal Reclamation and the Fact Finding Commission of 1923-1924," Pacific Historical Review 66 (1997): 186-187. (Hereafter Cannon, "Fact Finding," Pacific Historical Review (1997).

[32] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xi; and Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on Development of Irrigation Projects and Deferring of Payments of Reclamation Charges, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 11 and 21 March

testified to Congress that if reform "were not initiated now, within 5 years, I think the reclamation system would fall of its own weight."[33]

Beginning in 1920, the farm economy had turned down. Demand and prices for farm commodities dropped sharply. Settlers were unable or unwilling to pay their obligations to the government. Many felt they had been "called upon to pay more than they expected to pay and more than they were told they would have to pay."[34] In extreme cases, they abandoned their farms. As a result of the farmers' problems, the chairman of the Special Committee of Fact Finders reported, "a large per cent of these projects can not meet the operating, and maintenance expenses of the projects, and the project costs from production."[35] The failures of individual farms, thus, were threatening a breakdown of entire projects and the viability of federal reclamation overall. In order that "impending disaster may be replaced by lasting success," the Committee argued that the causes of "dissatisfaction and failure" on the part of the settlers must be eliminated.[36]

Although the Fact Finders cited and discussed a myriad of reasons for this impending disaster, they traced the root causes back to a neglect of agricultural and socio-economic considerations and an emphasis in favor of politics and engineering, an approach that had pervaded both the siting and developing of projects. First, in locating projects, the government, both when writing and implementing the 1902

1924, 31. (Hereafter Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Development of Irrigation Projects, March 1924.)

[33] Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Development of Irrigation Projects, March 1924, 9.

[34] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xii.

[35] Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Development of Irrigation Projects, March 1924, 31.

[36] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xi.

Reclamation Act, had given political demand precedence over agricultural productivity and the needs of the settlers. It also had confined the investigation of irrigation possibilities "almost wholly" to the determination of river flow and water storage and had given "relatively little attention, if any," to climate and the physical and chemical composition of the soil. No surveys, either alone or in cooperation with the USDA, had been made of these factors before project authorization. The result too often was the irrigation of "soil so worthless that nothing of value can be grown." In such circumstances farms could not support settlers, settlers could not meet their repayment obligations, and the government lost its investment.[37]

Further, the Fact Finders argued, in developing the projects "a fundamental error was made in believing that the construction of irrigation works would of itself create irrigated agriculture. The reclamation act was based on that assumption."[38] It was assumed, they charged, that "once water were available the settler could easily do the rest."[39] The committee admitted that "there can be no irrigated farm without the competent engineer," but it stressed that "there will be no payment for the works nor community development under them without the successful farmer," and concluded, "the engineering structures of the Federal irrigation projects have been substantially built and maintained; but the farmer's needs have been incompletely met."[40] Many of the recommendations from the Fact Finders were intended to rectify this bias in favor of politics and engineering. After two decades of federal

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[37] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xi, 44-45, 64-65, xii, xiv, 4-5, and 125.
[38] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xii.
[39] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 46.
[40] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924 xii, 46, xii.

reclamation, they believed, there was a need to focus directly on the settlers--who they were and what their needs might be.

In an attempt to ferret out the opinions of actual settlers, the Committee held eleven days of hearings in Salt Lake City during January 1924. Most small farmers, who had been enshrined in rhetoric as the legitimate beneficiaries of federal reclamation, however, had neither the resources nor the time to travel to Salt Lake City. Rather, the majority of those who testified were either large project landowners or realtors and merchants from adjoining communities. They requested straightforward, across-the-board financial relief, specifically a lessening of the charges against the land and an extension of the time required for repayment. The commission appeared to recognize that the actual make-up of the delegations was skewed. The Field Commissioner of the Reclamation Service, Miles Cannon, who was assisting the Fact Finders, commented on the "large crop of millionaires" from Washington's Yakima project who purported to testify on behalf of beleaguered irrigators.[41]

Although the commission did recommend the immediate and permanent financial relief desired by those who testified, it also indicated that these changes would meet only incompletely the needs of all the farmers and the nation's obligations to them. Working from this perspective, the advisers argued that a "singleness of purpose," focused on helping the farmers, should motivate reclamation. First, care should be taken to ensure that the landless men were not settled on projects of "doubtful merit" and expected to make a living from soil not

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[41]Cannon, "Fact Finding," Pacific Historical Review (1997): 185-211, quotation pp. 197-198.

fertile and productive enough to repay their "laborious and expensive labor."[42] Second, attention should be given to the selection of settlers fit to undertake irrigation farming and aid and assistance provided to those allowed to settle on the reclaimed land to as much as possible assure their success as they built their farms.

Many delegates to the hearings in Salt Lake City agreed that land quality and agricultural productivity had posed a problem for entire projects as well as individual settlers. On a number of projects quality varied significantly, with settlers in one area prospering and growing good crops on good soil while those in a nearby area were saddled with poor soil where crops "do not pay the cost of cultivation." Some of the most damning testimony in this regard came from representatives of the Okanogan project in central Washington. Approximately one-quarter of the land included in the project had "soil so worthless that nothing of value can be grown," and was referred to by the locals as the "sand flat." Such testimony showed, the Committee concluded, that "a soil survey is as much needed as an engineering survey."[43]

After their investigations the Fact Finders concluded that a new attention to land quality was essential. Two of the four primary steps they proposed to remedy project distress, in fact, required a stepped up focus on the quality of the land: the scientific study, classification, and valuation of land; and the adoption of a scientific plan of repayment based on land productivity.[44] They also included in a draft bill submitted to Congress specific recommendations for solutions to the problems posed by the varying agricultural productivity of the land.

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[42]Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xiii-xiv.
[43]Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 125; and Okanogan Independent, 29 January 1924.
[44] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xiv.

First, the proposed bill stipulated that the government should authorize new projects only after a full investigation that covered not merely engineering and water supply but also soil; climate; crop adaptability; and the costs of land development, marketing and production. In this task the Secretary of the Interior should rely on the expertise of the departments of Agriculture and Commerce as well as Interior.[45] Second, the Secretary of the Interior should undertake for all projects, including those already in existence, a "comprehensive and detailed survey" to classify lands according to their productivity and ability both to support the farm family and to repay the construction costs owed the government. Lands classified as "unfitted for agricultural purposes" would not be included within the irrigable area of a proposed project.[46] Further, the various classifications of the land deemed irrigable would be used to determine the annual repayment obligation owed for construction costs: "the more fertile the soil is, the higher may be the actual charge." The bill proposed by the Fact Finders specifically authorized the Secretary of the Interior "to fix different construction charges against different classes of land under the same project for the purpose of equitably apportioning the total construction cost." The committee hoped that when enshrined in law, this approach would both improve the odds that the government would recoup its investments and, by taking soil variations into account, eliminate a system wherein "some settlers get water rights at bargain prices; others pay more than they are worth."[47]

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[45] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 3, 45, 65, 204-205.
[46] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 4. Construction repayments for land in an existing project determined unable to support a family would be suspended and the owner would "be allowed to exchange it for land on the same or other projects. This exchange privilege applied to unpatented land only.
[47] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 7, xix, 205 125.

Unlike the Fact Finders' belief that problems had resulted because inadequate recognition had been given to agricultural aspects of reclamation, their emphasis on selection and aid to settlers was not a high priority with many who attended the Salt Lake City hearings. Rather, most delegates believed that experienced farmers did not need "some one to tell them how to do better."[48] Settler selection and assistance, however, were core beliefs of one member of the Committee, Elwood Mead, the country's most energetic proponent of reclamation and Secretary Work's choice to be the new Commissioner of the Reclamation Service. His ideas dominated the Fact Finders. He firmly believed that reclamation's over-riding purpose was to aid the landless man and that colonization, organized and directed by the government, was the appropriate means to that end.[49]

Not only did the Committee of Special Advisers argue that settler selection and settler assistance should take precedence in the future, they censured drafters of the original reclamation act for omitting both concepts. That law, they argued, "authorized no selective power with respect to the intending settlers which would insure the placing on these farms of men equipped by experience, character, and financial ability to succeed." It was also regrettable, they argued, that "no provision was made for selecting project settlers who really intended to make a homestead." Instead, in their eagerness to fill up the land, reclamation officials "used every effort to place people on the land without giving due consideration to the results that unavoidably would follow settlement by an unselected group." Neglect of the settlers by the Reclamation Service continued after they moved onto the land. Instead of

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[48]Quoted in Cannon, "Fact Finding," Pacific Historical Review (1997): 197.

helping these pioneers, the government left the difficult tasks of reclaiming the land and building a homestead to "the farmer without sufficient technical aid to guide him in overcoming difficult conditions with which he was often unfamiliar, and all too frequently without sufficient capital in the form of implements or cash to enable him to make a fair start toward success." The Reclamation Service even had fallen short in engineering, the area in which it excelled. Leveling and smoothing the land, much of which was rough and rolling, the committee argued, was "really an engineering problem," which had to be solved before water could be applied successfully. Rather than ending their work with the construction of water delivery systems, the Reclamation Service also should have taken on responsibility for land improvement. The judgement of the Fact Finders was that the drafters of the original act had neglected all these conditions necessary for successful settlement, assuming instead that "once water were available the settler could easily do the rest."[50]

Having concluded that a major failing of both the original reclamation act and the approach to development taken by the Reclamation Service was neglect of settler welfare, it is not surprising that when they turned their gaze from the past to the future the Fact Finders stressed the need for the government to take responsibility for settler selection and assistance. In laying the groundwork for this public role, the advisers limited their arguments neither to the need to allay problems facing individuals nor to the benefits that would accrue to them, their families, and their communities. They stressed, as well, the need to stem the damage to the federal reclamation program, arguing over and over that a successful project

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[49]Cannon, "Fact Finding," Pacific Historical Review (1997): 201-202.

required a successful farmer. "There will be," they asserted, "no payment for the (irrigation) works, nor community development under them without the successful farmer."[51] Project success depended on farmer prosperity and community stability, which in turn required both that the settlers be carefully selected before they moved onto the land and that they be aided as far as possible as they attempted to establish their farms and homes. The advisers, thus, appeared to believe that justice for the settler, stability for the community, and ultimately success for the reclamation program all were dependent on selection and assistance to the settler and that these three goals were inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing and supportive. They gave no indication that they entertained the possibility of a conflict emerging among them.

Thus, when the Fact Finders turned their attention specifically to settler selection, they argued that to neglect to "fix conditions as to the qualifications of settlers" was "indefensible from a humane standpoint and foolish from a business one." The question then became what these qualifications should be to ensure as far as possible "reasonable prospects of succeeding." Their conclusion was that successful settlement required "industry, experience, character and possession of a part of the capital needed in improving their farms," and they wrote these general ideas, without further explanatory detail, into their proposed bill. Section 4 read:

> That the Secretary is hereby authorized, under regulations to be promulgated by him, to require of each applicant for entry to public lands on a project, such qualifications as to industry, experience, character and capital, as in his opinion are necessary to give reasonable assurance of success by the prospective settler. Any person not having the qualifications

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[50] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 38, 46, 112, 113.
[51] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xii.

> so prescribed by the Secretary shall not be entitled to make such an entry or an application therefor(sic).[52]

In the bill, the Fact Finders left the details of implementation to the Secretary of the Interior, giving that official as a benchmark only the need for a reasonable assurance of success. The report provided some additional guidance on the experience needed, indicating that some was necessary, but the threshold need not be high.[53]

When they turned to the question of capital, however, the Fact Finders were much more explicit and detailed, though at times appeared torn between ideology and reality. They praised the reclamation act of 1902 as a "great dream," which had been "nobly conceived" to enable "thousands of families with love for the land, but with little capital. . . to establish homesteads upon the land and to live the wholesome life of the open country." Still, while lauding this noble goal, they concluded that "it is clear that the man with no capital, who enters the business of homestead making on the Federal irrigation projects does not enjoy a fair opportunity to succeed, but undertakes an almost impossible task." The causes, they argued, lay both in the times and in the settlers. In the nineteenth-century heyday of homesteading and even, they believed, during the first years of federal reclamation, the costs of both agricultural development and homemaking had been only a fraction of what was required in 1924. Between 1910 and 1920 the average price of irrigated land more than doubled. In the postwar world other expenses were rising rapidly too. A settler, for instance, faced development costs ranging from $170 an acre for alfalfa to over

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[52] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xiv, 128, 5, 205.
[53] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 93, xiv-xv.

$200 an acre for orchards.[54] The Fact Finders concluded, therefore, that a farmer in 1924 undertaking to reclaim raw land on a federal irrigation project must have at an absolute minimum $1500 in cash or the equivalent and that "he would do much better if he had $2500 or more." It was not only because of increased costs, however, that the settler needed this nest egg. Rather, expectations had risen along with expenses. While in the past a homesteading couple would be content to spend a lifetime building a farm and a new life for children, post-war pioneers were more impatient, expecting to savor the rewards themselves within a few years. Possibly because their call to screen prospective settlers on the basis of capital accumulation flew in the face of the nation's pioneer ideology, the advisers turned to the experiences of other countries for additional support and justification of their recommendation. They cited Australia in particular, where Elwood Mead had worked, arguing that in that country, where the conditions facing reclamation were very similar to those in the United States, "requiring the settler to have some capital has proven to be an advantage to both the Government and the settler."[55]

In their proposed bill the Fact Finders limited the required qualifications for settlers to character, industry, capital and experience. Yet, they did not consider these criteria, though necessary, to be sufficient. Rather, they stressed repeatedly and in various contexts throughout the report that "as far as possible only those should be encouraged to enter upon project settlement who are desiring of making homes on the land." Petty speculators and those who would live at a distance and rent their land out should be discouraged. The goal was to minimize both turnover

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[54] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 127.

and tenantry. Their conclusion was that "in the settlement of future projects some process of selection should be applied by which the bona fide homesteader is given the preference in securing project lands." Yet, unless they intended that this preference requirement be subsumed under the general rubric of character, they gave no indication how to identify those desirous of making homes on the land or how to ensure that only those bona fide homesteaders, and not petty speculators or small scale absentee owners, were allowed to enter the projects. They resorted to generalities, recommending merely that "intention to build homes upon the land should be made a test."[56] They did not suggest any specifics for this test.

Neither did they incorporate into their draft bill any provisions that would have regulated behavior after settlement to assure homemaking prevailed. They had before them, in the recent soldier-settlement proposal, an example they did not follow. The Lane-Mondell bill had included a section mandating that the Secretary of the Interior approve any lease, sale or other transfer of project land within five years after initial sale. Such a regulation would give the government the authority to prevent petty speculation or tenancy during a project's early years if the settler selection process had been unable to weed out those with such proclivities. The Fact Finders, however, did not even discuss such an approach.

Finally, a settler selection program, no matter how detailed and precise the requirements it incorporated, would be ineffective if the government had no control over the sale of the land. In 1902 Congress in debating the Newlands Act had envisioned the reclamation of public lands. Contrary to that vision, however, the

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[55] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 36, 116-117,125, 127.

great majority of lands the Reclamation Service actually had developed had been in private hands. Federal reclamation of private lands also would be the reality for the future, and to ensure that the social and economic results desired from this public investment would go to settlers, new legislation was necessary. To enable Reclamation to meet this obligation under these circumstances the advisers drafted a section for their proposed bill providing for the disposition of property in private hands. No money would be expended for construction until all irrigable land "owned by any individual in excess of one hundred and sixty irrigable acres" either had been "conveyed in fee to the United States free of encumbrance to again become apart (sic) of the public domain" or had been sold "to actual bona fide settlers at not more than the value thereof." In both cases the price was to be determined by government appraisal that showed the "actual bona fide value of all such irrigable lands fixed without reference to the proposed Government development."[57] If this regulation were enforced, the government eventually would control disposition of the land, able to place any requirements it wished on the sale to settlers. By incorporating into their draft bill a mechanism to enforce limits on acreage ownership the Fact Finders had progressed beyond unsupported rhetoric. But without regulations requiring that purchasers lived on and worked the land and prohibiting resale for an extended period of time, petty speculators and tenancy would be as likely as before. In their announced desire to secure for the project bona fide settlers

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[56] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 96-97,115-116.
[57] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 133, 205. Brian Cannon points out that the Fact Finders, however, did not recommend that landowners on existing projects be required to sell excess lands at prices appraised by the Bureau as a precondition for negotiating a new repayment contract. This decision, he argues, reflected

who had a reasonable chance of success, the Fact Finders were bolder and more precise in identifying and writing provisions directed at securing settlers who had the money and the other qualifications needed to provide that reasonable chance of success than they were in screening out those who were not bona fide settlers.

Analysis of the arguments made by the Fact Finders, both within the report and in the legislation, makes clear that the purposes they envisioned for settler selection varied somewhat from those espoused by turn-of-the-century social reformers and by Franklin Lane at the end of World War I. Except for a passing mention of a preference for veterans in the exchange of lands found unsuitable for cultivation, the Fact Finders did not suggest that ex-soldiers or others who might deserve the gratitude of the nation should be rewarded or singled out in any way for preference in settlement. Further, although throughout their report they stressed that only applicants desiring to be legitimate settlers should be considered, the advisers drew up a bill that specified that only those qualified to succeed should be chosen. In their proposed bill, they made no mention of homemaking intent. Neither did they trumpet, even in the report, the idea, at the heart of the plans of Frederick-Booth Tucker and other social reformers, that the deserving poor should be settled on reclamation land. In fact, they appeared to exclude the most needy by stipulating that a minimum amount of capital should be required. By screening the applicants for experience and resources before they entered onto farms, the advisers may have hoped to forestall any later conflict between settler welfare and project welfare.

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the clout of the large landholders. Cannon, "Fact Finding," Pacific Historical Review (1997): 206.

Any interest they had, therefore, in individual redemption was moderated by their strong concern for the salvation of the reclamation program.

As important as the Fact Finders believed settler selection to be, they devoted even more of their report to settler assistance. Permeating it was the belief that if it were easier for settlers to succeed they would be less likely to rent out their land or try to recoup investments of time and money by reselling at inflated prices. The advisers thus saw a direct tie-in between government-provided settler assistance and their desire to limit settlement on projects to bona fide homemakers. Criticizing the laissez-faire approach toward reclamation settlement that previously had prevailed, they argued that:

> The inexperienced farmer should have been given more and better information and advice; the poor farmer, with honest courage but little or no capital, should have been provided with proper credit facilities; the farm with a rough, rolling surface, should have been leveled; the greedy owner of private lands, ready to trade upon the natural desire of vigorous, hard-working men, for independent homes, should and could have been squelched; the good farmer, with small business capacity, should have been given the assistance of cooperative organizations for buying and selling; all should have been supplied with intimate advice, from competent official advisors, on all farm matters; and by every effort, the way should have been made easier for the water user. . . ."[58]

Further, they believed the laissez-faire approach to be unfair not only to the settlers but ultimately to the projects too. They explained that although they had found numerous causes of project distress, they believed that four courses of action were key to reversing the declining fortunes of the projects. Second on this list was "aid and direction given in agricultural development."[59]

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[58] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xiii. See also p. 125.
[59] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, xiv. The other three central suggestions were: the lands of the projects be scientifically studied, classified and

Reflecting the central role they envisioned for settler assistance, the Fact Finders included in their draft bill a section devoted exclusively to it that gave the Secretary the authority "to employ trained farm and economic advisers who will give farming and business advice to enable water users on the projects to increase their farm incomes and organize for cooperation in business and social affairs."[60] Although this section of the bill was relatively concise the advisers supported it with extensive and repeated discussions in the body of the report, laying out at great length the specifics of such aid and direction. The Reclamation Service had attempted in the past to employ agricultural and economic advisers on projects, but abandoned such attempts when it was determined that the reclamation law did not authorize them.[61] The Fact Finders, however, argued that irrigated agriculture was a specialized undertaking and that even extensive experience in other types of farming would not prepare the settler for this new endeavor. Assistance was necessary, and the law should be changed to allow it. It was of foremost importance to train the farmer so he would not fail through lack of knowledge. They stressed the importance of cooperation with the departments of Agriculture and Commerce and the agricultural colleges in order to disseminate widely among the project farmers the latest agricultural knowledge and to carry on research into the specific problems of irrigated agriculture. They further recommended that this research should be tailored to the particular climate, soil and economic conditions on each project. To provide this level, extent, and particularity of assistance, the Fact Finders recommended that

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valued; water users assume project management; and a scientific and adequate plan of repayment be adopted.

[60] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924 207.

[61] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 102.

the government establish experiment stations on each project to develop local agricultural knowledge and make it available to the settlers.[62] They also recommended that the Reclamation Service supply agricultural and economic advisers, not connected with the experiment stations, to assist the farmers in agricultural production, in business management, and in organizing for cooperation in business and social affairs.[63]

In discussing assistance the government should provide settlers, the advisers evinced ambivalence about their decision to screen potential settlers on the basis of financial resources. "This Nation," they argued, "resting upon the principle of equal opportunity, has held that no man shall be barred from the benefits that will come from a Federal irrigation project because he has no capital. Our country still looks with favor upon the courageous young man who stands ready with all his strength to win a future for himself."[64] But they also argued that the penniless faced an "almost impossible task," one defined by "temptations rather than opportunities."[65] The upshot was that although the Fact Finders were determined not to limit the opportunity to develop a reclamation farm only to those fortunate enough to have accumulated all the necessary resources, they also believed a settler should have a minimum of capital before beginning the venture.

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[62] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 98-102.
[63] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 8. The Fact Finders did not limit their call for advice to settlers to matters of agricultural production and economics. Though they did not specify how it should be accomplished, they argued that "conditions leading to social contentment must be somehow provided if the farmer is to do his work well and to make reclamation successful." They stressed, in particular, the need to address the special problems confronting women. Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924,108-111.
[64] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 117.
[65] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 117 and xv.

Their solution to this conundrum was that the government should establish a credit fund for settlers on each project. "Loans for development," they argued, "should be made a part of the reclamation policy." The ability to borrow money on easy terms would reduce the minimum amount of capital a potential settler would need in order to move onto a project. In their report the commissioners suggested that this fund be used to secure both long term loans for permanent improvements and short term borrowing to enable purchase of equipment and livestock. In the draft bill, however, they included only the short term financing.[66]

Finally, although the advisers stressed the need for the government to provide credit in part to aid farmers who otherwise would not have the financial resources to take up irrigation farming, they did not envision limiting financial assistance only to the poorest among the farmers. Farmers who came to the project with capital of their own could move just as rapidly and just as far into debt, either because of unforeseen outside circumstances or because they attempted to farm on a larger scale. In the past, the Fact Finders argued, "those who came with some capital began perhaps on a larger scale, went into debt and found themselves in about the same condition as the pioneer without capital." If such persons were left unchecked or unaided, the result was land speculation and turnover as these farmers tried to extricate themselves from debt. It was necessary, therefore, to provide credit for all legitimate project irrigation and to educate every borrower in

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[66]Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 9, 97, 123, 207. The Secretary was authorized "to make short-time loans from the reclamation fund to entrymen upon projects, not to exceed $800 at any one time to any person, for the purchase of necessary livestock and equipment." Repayment was to be in amortized installments during a period of not to exceed five years with interest on deferred payments at 5 per centum per annum. . ." (207)

sound financial management. Further, if the government provided money, it must also monitor how it was expended to forestall the inexperienced from wasting it.[67] The advisers, thus, were detailed, direct, and comprehensive when they discussed the need for loans to settlers.

The Fact Finders were less explicit in their instructions when they turned to the question of implementing land re-engineering. In the body of the report they faulted the Reclamation Service for shirking this responsibility in the past and argued very strongly that in the future the government, rather than the settlers, should prepare the land for irrigation. It was ruinous and inefficient, they believed, to leave this work to the farmer who lacked the equipment, skills and capital to level land and make it ready for the application of water. Land preparation required engineering knowledge available to the government and heavy equipment, which the government had the resources to purchase. Leaving it to a farmer without either the necessary experience or financial resources could bring obstacles and discouragement severe enough to drive settlers off the land. The advisers' solution to this problem, however, was not to include this responsibility within the category of settler assistance. Rather, they suggested at various places in the report that the government incorporate land leveling into project construction. The expenses involved in government leveling, thus, would be made part of the construction costs levied against each irrigable acre. In the draft bill the commissioners made no direct mention of this arrangement. Instead they specified only that approval of project construction be lodged with the Secretary of Interior who was also to have the

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[67] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 118, 130.

authority to fix the construction costs chargeable against the land. For such an arrangement to result in government leveling of land required a Secretary of the Interior sympathetic to the transfer of this responsibility from the settler to the Reclamation Service.[68] It is quite likely that the advisers devised this approach with the expectation that Elwood Mead would soon become Commissioner of Reclamation and would set the policy the government would follow in the future.

Overall, the import of the recommendations put forth by the Fact Finders was to bolster with detailed policies and programs the political rhetoric that had surrounded public reclamation from its inception and that proclaimed the farm family to be its chief concern. The advisers accepted the idea that the goal of federal reclamation, since the passage of the 1902 Act, had been to provide farm homes for the landless, but, they argued, this goal had been undermined because Congress had failed to include in legislation the means necessary to ensure the realization of the successful farm home. In their report, they proposed specific means to rectify that omission and to realize that goal. The Fact Finders were, further, quite progressive in their recommendations, adopting many of the ideas propounded by Mead and other proponents of government supported land settlement. At the same time, however, whether in genuine agreement with or in deference to the conservative political climate of the Coolidge era, they both abstained from invoking the rhetoric of colonization to characterize the policies they proposed and, in the letter of transmittal, alluded in passing to the perceived threat of paternalism posed to individual initiative by government planning.

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[68] Senate Special Advisers, Federal Reclamation by Irrigation, 1924, 38, 128-129, 4 and 58.

Yet even this rhetorical genuflection to the political realities of the time was not sufficient to garner full acceptance by Congress. As they had since 1902, federal lawmakers co-opted and trumpeted the ideology surrounding the family farm. Yet though they went further than before in involving the government in settlement activities, the legislators again failed to support fully their rhetoric with policy, refusing to incorporate into law many of the specific actions to assist the settler that the Fact Finders had recommended. The Special Advisers submitted their report to the Senate Committee on Reclamation and Irrigation on April 21, 1924. In December Congress passed legislation, referred to as the Fact Finders' Act, modeled on the draft bill prepared by the Advisers, but with significant omissions. Two years later, after prodding by Mead, who was by then Reclamation Commissioner, it responded further.

First, in the 1924 Act, the lawmakers gave the government a role in settler selection. They embraced the idea that settlers should be qualified and included verbatim the advisers' proposal authorizing the Secretary of Interior to require of every applicant for land, "such qualifications as to industry, experience, character, and capital, as in his opinion are necessary to give reasonable assurance of success by the prospective settler." Further, they went beyond the Fact Finders' proposals and sketched out the rudiments of a settler selection process, specifically authorizing the Secretary " to appoint boards in part composed of private citizens, to assist in determining such qualifications."[69] Further, while discussing applicants' qualifications, Congress expanded on the committee's recommendations by alluding to the

[69]U. S. Statutes at Large, 68th Cong., 2nd Sess., Chapter 4 (1924), 702.

possibility of "preference rights for ex-servicemen." The commissioners had made no mention of veterans in their draft section on settler selection.

By 1926 selection of settlers for federal reclamation projects had become national policy. The government established a rating system that required potential settlers on public land to meet minimum requirements of two years' experience and $2,000 in capital. Additional financial resources or more experience would garner an applicant a higher rating. An examining board, based on oral examination and written references, also rated the industry and character of an applicant.[70] Thus, although the standards that the government adopted eliminated the poorest of the urban refugees--those whom turn-of-the-century social reformers had hoped to aid--Congress had accepted the arguments of colonization proponents that a federal bureaucracy had a legitimate part to play in settler selection.

Second, the lawmakers did agree that increased attention had to be given to land quality and productivity, but were selective in accepting the recommendations of the Fact Finders. Congress included in the 1924 law the requirement that the Department of Interior collect information on water supply, engineering features, cost of construction, and probable cost of development before passing on the feasibility and suitability for settlement of a proposed project. It omitted, however, any requirement that the Secretary secure from the USDA a report detailing the climate, soil, crop adaptability and land productivity and from the Commerce Department a report on a range of economic factors including markets and transportation.

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[70]Alfred R. Golze, Reclamation in the United States (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 360-363 (hereafter Golze, Reclamation); and State of Washington, Joint Legislative Committee, Report under House Resolution No. 5, Extraordinary Session of 1925-26, Washington State Library, Olympia, 33.

Lawmakers did acknowledge the problems land quality could pose for projects and agreed to a system of land classification, based on productivity, to be used to determine repayment obligations. They also agreed that where lack of soil fertility, inadequate water supply, or another physical drawback would prevent a settler from meeting the repayment obligation, the Secretary was to investigate and report to Congress with corrective recommendations. Further, individual settlers were to have the right to exchange a unit deemed insufficient to support a family.[71] In the Omnibus Adjustment Act of 1926 lawmakers responded to the corrections they had requested, eliminating from a list of authorized projects thousands of acres of land found to be unproductive due to a variety of causes, including fertility. They continued silent on the need to investigate soil, climate and productivity before project authorization.[72]

Finally, Congress, with the exception of some movement on curbing land speculation, proved most reluctant to follow the lead of the Fact Finders on questions of settler assistance. While it may have been possible that in 1902 Congress was blithely ignorant of the obstacles confronting families as they attempted to make farms on reclaimed land, in 1924 ignorance could not explain its decision to omit settler assistance. The advisers' report contained extensive analysis of the problems encountered in turning reclamation land into productive farms, of the consequences of neglecting to aid settlers in this endeavor, and of how and why the government should help. Further, Mead testified before the House of Representatives that the bill Congress was considering did not include

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[71] U. S. Statutes at Large, 68th Cong., 2nd Sess., Chapter 4 (1924), 702-703.

recommendations "that are of fundamental importance to future development," arguing in particular that:

> a fund must be provided from which advances can be made to help in the improvement and equipment of farms of selected settlers who lack all the capital required. We now appropriate immense sums of money to be repaid without interest, for the construction of works which improve the landed possessions of private owners, but we do nothing to help the farmer of small means become the owner of that land. Our terms of payment for works are the most generous of any country. Our aid to the settler and for farm development is the least. The time has come for a reversal of the objects of the Government's liberality.[73]

Still, Congress ignored the Fact Finders' recommendations. It omitted entirely any mention of agricultural or business advice. Neither, as the advisers had suggested, did Congress authorize the government to make short term loans to settlers. Thus, the need to have a minimum amount of capital in order to qualify for reclamation land would not be moderated by the availability of government-provided credit to help those with no financial resources. Without this guaranteed source of funds for farmers, those responsible for settler selection would have to increase the minimum amount of capital required in order reasonably to assume that a settler had the financial resources needed to make it through the first years. Further, rather than give the Secretary of the Interior the power to set construction charges, Congress reserved this authority to itself.[74] This change to the advisers' draft effectively eliminated the possibility that the Reclamation Service could undertake land preparation and leveling as part of its construction tasks without explicit approval from Congress, forestalling another aid to settlers during the difficult early years. Finally, Congress included no mention of government

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[72] U. S. Statutes at Large, 96th Cong., 1st sess., Chapter 383 (1926), 636-646.
[73] 3 December 1924, Congressional Record, House, 68th Cong., 2d Sess., 88-89.

acquisition of privately owned land or regulation of price when excess acreage was sold. Without these measures, proposed by the advisers, the legislation contained nothing that might have combated land speculation and aided small farmers and actual homemakers over speculators and absentee landowners.

During his tenure as Commissioner of Reclamation, Elwood Mead continued to promote the Fact Finders' recommendations on settler assistance and tried to persuade lawmakers to revisit these issues. He was unable to convince Congress to pass legislation that would commit the federal government to provide credit or any type of agricultural or technical help to the settler. In May 1926, however, his efforts to curb speculation met with some success. Congress incorporated into the Omnibus Adjustment Act a provision authorizing the Commissioner of Reclamation to require owners of more than 160 acres on new projects to enter into a contractual obligation to sell their excess land at prices approved by the government. The legislature, however, balked at adequate enforcement, leaving this responsibility to local jurisdictions. Further, it neither endorsed nor authorized any mechanisms to facilitate government purchase and re-sale of these lands, which, as a result, would remain in private hands and outside the purview of any government settler selection process.[75]

Thus, twenty-five years after the passage of the Reclamation Act, the country had taken the first hesitant steps away from a laissez-faire approach to reclamation

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[74]Cannon, "Fact Finding," Pacific Historical Review (1997): 207.
[75]U. S. Statutes at Large, 96th Cong., 1st sess., Chapter 383 (1926), 649-650; State of Washington, Joint Legislative Committee, Report under House Resolution No. 5, Extraordinary Session of 1925-26, 33-35; "Reclamation Settlement and Development Conference," New Reclamation Era (March 1928): 34-39; Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 56; and New Reclamation Era (July 1929): 98.

land settlement, moving from unsupported platitudes to specifics of how the government would be involved. Charged with investigating the precarious state of federal reclamation, the Fact Finders had directed attention both to the importance of the land and to the needs of the land. They had drawn attention to the problems that resulted if agricultural viability were not granted equal importance with engineering possibilities and politics when analyzing a project's potential. They had identified as crucial the questions of who should farm the reclaimed land, the quality and price of the land that would be available to them, and the type and amount of aid and assistance, including credit, the nation should give those settlers. Their work provided the framework that would focus thinking and guide planning for future reclamation settlement.

Over the next decade, the Columbia Basin Project would evolve from a dream held by local boosters to the construction of the most massive concrete dam in the world. Planning for its settlement would take place within a context buffeted by broad economic and land use questions facing agriculture. Yet, its focus would flow from and build on the work of the Fact Finders.

Chapter 3

Problems of Planning for Settlement

In 1935 the Columbia Basin Project turned the corner between dream and reality. President Franklin Roosevelt proposed, and Congress funded, construction of a high dam at Grand Coulee on the Columbia River that would provide water sufficient to irrigate over one million acres of land.[1] Four years later the Bureau of Reclamation assembled a staff--drawn from forty federal, state, local, and private agencies—and charged it with determining how the project could "most soundly" be developed and settled.[2] Drawing attention to the multi-agency staffing, the Bureau referred to this planning effort as the Columbia Basin Joint Investigations.

In 1946, Marion Clawson, who had served on the Joint Investigations as the lead representative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the only agency outside the Bureau whose participation was so extensive as to necessitate on-location oversight, told the American Sociological Society that he and his colleagues had

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[1] In 1933 President Roosevelt had secured funding through the National Industrial Recovery Act for a low dam capable of generating power but not of providing water needed to irrigate the project. Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes issued the order changing Grand Coulee from a low to high elevation dam on June 5, 1935. Congress passed the Rivers and Harbors Act on August 30 of that year (49 Stat. 1028, 1039), authorizing the funding. In 1937 Congress passed an anti-speculation bill dealing with acreage restrictions and repayment of construction charges, much of which was later changed. See Paul Pitzer, "Vision, Plans, and Realities: A History of the Columbia Basin Project" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1990), 33-37 (Hereafter Pitzer, Visions); and Paul Pitzer, Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream (Pullman; Washington State University Press, 1994), 269 (Hereafter Pitzer, Harnessing).

[2] Ronald Weinkauf, "The Columbia Basin Project, Washington: Concept and Reality, Lessons for Public Policy" (Ph.D., diss, 1977, Oregon State University), abstract (hereafter Weinkauf, "Columbia Basin Project," 1977); and Carl Taylor, "The Sociologists' Part in Planning the Columbia Basin (with discussion by Marion Clawson)," American Sociological Review 11 (June 1946): 331 (hereafter Taylor, "Sociologists' Part").

been "planning for a group about whom we knew very little." Although when planning for settlement began, the Columbia Basin Project was, as Clawson told the sociologists, "authorized and under way," people interested in it held ambivalent, ambiguous, and at times blatantly contradictory conceptions of who should and would farm on it. "The President, Congress, and local people," Clawson argued in 1946, "either had not expressed a direct preference on this point or were in disagreement." They could not agree on whether the beneficiaries of the project were to be needy people or people of means.[3] At the same time, knowing with little certainty who would settle or even whom the decision-makers thought should settle complicated efforts to determine what type of assistance these eventual farmers should be given and how the government should provide it. Further, although not mentioned by Clawson, the agencies actively involved in planning--particularly the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture–had themselves developed no historically consistent approach to agricultural land settlement. Thus, as the planners strove to design specific programs and policies to help future settlers, they were forced to do so with no agreed upon conceptions of either the people who would farm or the character of the aid to be provided.

Much of the uncertainty plaguing the work of the planners reflected the country's ambivalence about the proper role of reclamation in agriculture's past and future. Agriculture had not participated in the good economic times the country in general had enjoyed during the 1920's. Responding to the growing demand for food and the concurrent rise in prices, farmers had boosted production after the outbreak

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[3]Taylor, "Sociologists' Part," 330-331.

of war in Europe in 1914, often taking on extensive debt. The extraordinary wartime boom for agriculture, however, lasted less than two years after hostilities ceased. By the summer of 1920 farming had begun its fall on hard economic times. Buyers in overseas markets turned to other suppliers, and domestic demand flattened. Still, farmers continued wartime rates of production. The resulting crop surpluses depressed prices. At the same time agricultural costs rose as the industrial sector boomed. Farm bankruptcies and foreclosures reached record levels. Such desperate economic conditions, coupled with growing mechanization, pushed ever-increasing numbers of people off the farms and into the cities. From 1920 to 1930, the nation's farm population fell by 6.25 million people. Agriculture, thus, already was in a weakened and precarious state when the economy crashed in 1929 and the rest of the country fell into the great depression.[4]

In these difficult years, though there was agreement that agriculture was facing hard times, there was less agreement on what remedy to these problems would be best for the farm population and for the country at large. Attitudes toward the proper role of the government colored and divided opinions on solutions to the full spectrum of social and economic problems facing the nation. Further, as the twentieth century entered its second quarter, conceptions of agriculture's particular--

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[4]David B. Danbom, Born in the Country: A History of Rural America (Baltimore; The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), chapter nine (hereafter Danbom, Born in the Country); U. S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Volume VI, Agriculture (Washington, 1922), 292; and U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture: 1935, Reports for States, Volume II (Washington, 1936), 912.

In the state of Washington, although the number of people on farms continued to grow during the 1920's, the rate of growth slowed dramatically. While from 1910 to 1920, the state's farm population increased by approximately 20 percent, In the following decade, the increase dropped to approximately 6 percent.

even unique--role in society were rapidly diverging, complicating even more opinion on how farmers in particular should be aided.

Since colonial times a belief in the primacy and centrality of agriculture had loomed large in the national identity. Agrarian ideology, which granted to the nation's farmers a position of prominence, had always contained, however, two strands of thought--economic and cultural. Originally, they worked in tandem. As the twentieth century progressed, they co-existed in an increasingly uneasy alliance.

Economic agrarianism originally stressed the farmer's fundamental role as the "primary producer" of society's most basic needs--food and fiber--and the ultimate source of wealth. This producer philosophy, tinged with moral overtones, saw the farmer as the economic bedrock on which the material well-being of society rested. In its inception, on the other hand, cultural agrarian thought defined farming as a way of life, not as a business, no matter how vital. These agrarians also revered the farmer as a producer, but because his work enabled a self-sufficient life for his family. The personal virtues necessary to farming--independence, industry, husbandry--were noble and made farmers, as Thomas Jefferson argued, " the chosen people of God" and the perfect citizens to colonize and maintain a true democracy. A nation blessed with a large population of these independent and virtuous farmers would long endure. These two strands of agrarian thought--economic and cultural--entered the twentieth century working in tandem in support of agricultural expansion.

In the face of the financial disruptions and social dislocations that followed World War I, however, economic and cultural agrarian thought envisioned

increasingly divergent futures for agriculture in the modern world. Cultural agrarians were among the critics of modernism, seeing, in rising urbanization and industrialization, threats to the traditional world they idolized. Societal change led them to reaffirm their commitment to the moral life and traditional virtues they believed were spawned by working the land; this traditional life became ever more important as a bulwark for the nation against menacing forces of deterioration and decay. Not only should the independent farm life be cherished, it was important to continue to extend the opportunity to as many people as possible. Those who viewed agriculture primarily as an economic endeavor, however, had begun by the 1920's to modify and reshape their ideas, no longer relying entirely on the idea of the farmer as "primary producer." As mechanization spread, overproduction mounted, and farmers became more and more dependent on inputs from off the farm, economic agrarians saw farming thriving in the future only as an integral component of the nation's larger capitalist system. As part of this vision, they broadened their justification of the farmer's fundamental place in the nation's society to encompass his role as consumer as well as producer. In this mutating version of economic agrarianism, the farmer was a commercial man, important to a strong and vital economy, but with no more claim on moral authority than any other business person.

Thus, as the depression fell over the nation, decimating an already weakened agriculture, agrarian thought was becoming less cohesive. Cultural agrarians opted for tradition and continued unchanging in their belief that the essence of farming was a virtuous way of life. They continued to support its spread both as an antidote to social collapse and as the path to ensuring the future moral

authority of the nation. Economic agrarians, on the other hand, accepted that agricultural survival required the ability to function fully and profitably in the modern socio-economic order. They drew farming ever more firmly into the nation's industrial and business system. Mutual support and exchange of ideas between these economic and cultural arguments weakened.[5]

In their pure forms, these two approaches had differing demographic and financial ramifications for agriculture. Cultural agrarians could be satisfied by subsistence agriculture supplemented by minimal disposable income. They did not ignore economics, but their goal was to provide, for the benefit of individuals and society at large, as many opportunities for a self-sufficient farm life as possible. Numbers of family farms were more important than any income beyond self-sufficiency they produced. More self-sufficient farmers meant more citizens possessing the virtues of independence and industry that would strengthen a democratic society. Agrarianism built on an economic foundation, however, particularly as it came to include consumerism as part of its contribution to the nation's economic system, required extensive commercial production and disposable income that could be used to purchase the products generated by other parts of the economy. The goal was not merely the maximum number of farmers. Of

[5]Clifford B. Anderson, "The Metamorphosis of American Agrarian Idealism in the 1920's and 1930's," Agricultural History 35 (October 1961): 182-88. Anderson discusses at length the transition from production to consumerism as the basis of agrarian economic fundamentalism. See also Gilbert C. Fite, "Historical Development of Agricultural Fundamentalism in the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Farm Economics (December 1962): 1203-1211; David C. Danbom, "Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth Century American," Agricultural History 65 (Fall 1991): 1-5; Joseph S. Davis, "Agricultural Fundamentalism," in Norman E. Himes, ed.. Economics, Sociology and the Modern World (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1935), 3-17; and Richard S. Kirkendall, "The Central Theme of American Agricultural History," Agricultural Guide (February 1984): 825 ff.

equal, if not greater, importance was the amount of money pumped into the economy.[6] Thus, economic fundamentalists were committed to a financially healthy agriculture and did not necessarily support the call for a large farm population, while cultural agrarians were focused primarily on maximizing the farm population and only peripherally on income.

This clash within agrarian thought rose to political prominence during the New Deal era. When the administration of Franklin Roosevelt came into office, its officials were faced with an agricultural problem that had burgeoned in the immediately preceding years. As the rest of the country fell into depression in 1929, the city no longer functioned as an escape hatch for excess farm population or as a stimulus to the farm economy. Instead, the countryside, even in its weakened state, increasingly became a draw for people who found themselves facing intolerable situations in the city. The migration from farm to city, which had accelerated in the 1920's, reversed as urban dwellers returned to the agricultural countryside where they hoped for at least minimal subsistence.[7] Soon, however, a drought descended on much of the nation's farmland; the worst ever recorded in the nation hit during the 1930 growing season.[8] Thus, as shrinking opportunities elsewhere were driving people back to the land, a deteriorating agricultural environment compounded the problems of a deteriorated agricultural economy, forcing those who had remained on the farm to confront an ever more precarious future. With people turning for

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[6]Richard S. Kirkendall, "The Agricultural Colleges: Between Tradition and Modernization, " Agricultural History 60 (Spring 1986): 3-6, points out the differing opinions on farm population size held by those he refers to as traditionalists and as modernizers.

[7] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture: 1935. General Report, Statistics by Subjects, Volume III (Washington, 1937), 18 and 142.

salvation to a land under mounting natural and socio-economic stress, agricultural settlement questions--who should farm and what assistance the government should provide--took on an added urgency and a new complexity. People within the government, holding diverging visions of agriculture's role in society and at odds over the consequences of settlement, found compromise elusive. As pressure built, debate over settlement became increasingly contentious, with the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Reclamation taking up opposing positions.

Disagreements over whether government land settlement in the modern era was desirable or damaging had strained interaction between the USDA and the Bureau for a number of years, as agricultural problems had multiplied and worsened. After Elwood Mead, the nation's leading advocate of land settlement became head of the Bureau of Reclamation in 1924, the agency rededicated itself to the expansion of homemaking opportunities. At the same time the Department of Agriculture rejected its traditional commitment to farmland expansion, a goal that had guided the USDA since its creation in 1862. Instead by the mid 1920's the department came to believe that, in the present deteriorating circumstances, "unnecessary loss and misery" attended the process of agricultural expansion.[9] Conflict between the two agencies over settlement was inevitable.

Throughout the last half of the 1920's and the early 1930's, the Bureau orchestrated an incessant public relations campaign extolling its efforts at land settlement. With near messianic fervor, it cloaked reclamation in the mantle of cultural agrarianism. Typical were the articles in New Reclamation Era, the

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[8] USDA, Yearbook of Agriculture: 1931 (Washington: GPO, 1931), 1.

Bureau's official publication, which preached the idea that the mission of reclamation was to ensure the homemaking opportunities that would save and elevate both individuals and the nation. In this time of overproduction and low prices, little was said of agriculture's economic problems. Rather, reclamation would "make homes for worthy people." From these reclamation-created homes would spring "in waste places new organic communities of healthy, happy Americans, enjoying an American standard of living and creating and adding to the political and economic strength of the country."[10]

From the perspective of the Department of Agriculture, however, the path Reclamation trod with such fervor put the two agencies on diametrically opposing sides of the farm issue. The USDA, in the face of endemic overproduction and low commodity prices, was firmly committed to finding economic relief for the nation's existing farmers. In these circumstances and by the time Mead took over as Commissioner of Reclamation in 1924, farmland expansion had become, for Agriculture, a problem rather than a blessing. Economists within the USDA, particularly L. C. Gray and others in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), insisted that under current economic conditions more land was in farms than could be cultivated profitably. They saw a policy of limiting, if not reducing, the amount of land devoted to farming as key to the department's overall strategy for reversing agriculture's downward spiral. They advocated a slow, cautious approach to land development and settlement that directly challenged Mead's colonization dreams. By the end of the decade the USDA declared its intent to render "reclamation as little

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[9]USDA, Yearbook of Agriculture: 1925 (Washington, GPO, 1926), 28.

harmful as possible to agriculture," and to reconcile national reclamation policy "with the need of restricting farm production."[11]

A few years earlier opponents of Franklin Lane's attempt to establish a nationwide soldier settlement program had prevailed in part by arguing that it was unfair to established farmers for the government to provide financial and other material support to new farmers who would go into competition with those already on the land. Agriculture Department officials had agreed. Many opponents of public land settlement for servicemen had argued also that public colonization was not only inequitable but reeked of government paternalism. These political conservatives were offended by any government participation at any time in settlement decisions. To them such a course was socialistic, always threatening to individual initiative.[12] USDA officials, however, did not share this across-the-board antipathy to government involvement. To them, public planning and control in general posed no problem. Rather, they believed that the wrong government officials--reclamationists--were in charge and were guided by the wrong goal--maximization of farm home opportunities. When the homemaking ethic drove land settlement, proper land use and sound economics fell by the wayside. USDA's solution was not to bar government participation in land settlement but to change the agency responsible

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[10] New Reclamation Era (August 1928): 114; and New Reclamation Era (July 1929): 98.
[11] Richard S. Kirkendall, "L.C. Gray and the Supply of Agricultural Land," Agricultural History 37 (October 1963): 206-216, 208 (hereafter Kirkendall, "L.C. Gray"); Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 77-78; Yearbook of Agriculture, 1931, 38-39; Theodore Saloutos, The American Farmer and the New Deal (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1982), 32 (hereafter Saloutos, American Farmer).
[12] In 1924-1925, Earl Barnes of the Washington State Department of Conservation and Economic Development, when dismantling the state soldier settlement project at Hanford-White Bluffs, decried repeatedly the paternalism and bureaucratic inefficiency he saw accompanying publicly directed land settlement.

and the criteria used to make decisions. The need was better direction for, not necessarily permanent elimination of, publicly controlled land settlement."[13] Agriculture officials should direct land settlement--both public and private—and would do so to ensure proper land use and an economically sound agriculture equitable first for established and then for new farmers. Under current economic conditions this goal would mean curtailing reclamation until new projects would no longer harm existing agriculture.

In 1931 the desire to arrogate to itself responsibility for land settlement drove the USDA to the precipice of a public rift with the Bureau of Reclamation. Secretary of Agriculture Arthur Hyde and the executive committee of the land grant colleges convened a November conference on land utilization. Although the Bureau of Reclamation and the western railroads were represented, the overwhelming number of attendees were from USDA agencies, the agricultural colleges and agriculture interest groups. Following the department's lead, conference participants adopted a series of recommendations among which were two direct challenges to existing approaches to land settlement; specifically that all land development enterprises be licensed and regulated, and that Reclamation confine itself to completing projects already begun, with no new projects undertaken until justified by the country's agricultural needs.[14]

To implement these and other changes in land utilization, participants recommended that the Secretary of Agriculture establish two permanent multi-

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[13] Yearbook of Agriculture, 1932, 467.

[14] Kirkendall, "L.C. Gray," 211; Proceedings of the National Conference on Land Utilization (Washington, D.C.: 1932); and USDA, Yearbook of Agriculture, 1932, 461.

agency committees—National Land Use Planning, and Advisory and Legislative. During 1932 the Advisory and Legislative committee proposed that no new reclamation projects be developed and that the USDA, working with other public agencies, take responsibility for guiding settlement and colonization. Elwood Mead and other Department of Interior (DOI) employees who had been invited to serve on the Planning Committee but not on Advisory and Legislative, threatened to resign. Interior Department displeasure over the attempt to curtail reclamation prompted Agriculture officials to backtrack publicly. However, in the 1932 Yearbook of Agriculture, L.C. Gray of the BAE and a long-time proponent of a new approach to land utilization re-iterated that the two departments had "reached a parting of the way in the matter of reclamation policy," and another BAE employee suggested the creation of an Agricultural Expansion Service Agency within the USDA to take responsibility nationwide for "better directed land settlement."[15]

Thus, by the time Franklin Roosevelt assumed the presidency, the Department of Agriculture had staked out a position on farmland expansion at odds with the policies of the Bureau of Reclamation and had asserted publicly the right to plan and direct all agricultural land settlement, including specifically the expansion and settlement of reclamation lands. Then, as the events of the 1930's and the New Deal's reaction to them unfolded, the dispute over land settlement became at once more intense and less clear-cut. First, within months of Roosevelt's inauguration, reclamation enjoyed a tremendous growth, aggravating the opposition of many within the USDA who were focused on the economic health of existing commercial

[15]USDA, Yearbook of Agriculture, 1932, 460, 467-470; and Kirkendall, "L.C. Gray," 212-

farmers. Conversely, as agriculture's economic and environmental problems became increasingly severe and proved intransigent to solution, ideas on settlement became more complicated and less clear-cut for others within the USDA. Finally, during this same time, reclamation's growth and the opposition it spawned led many of its proponents to suggest modifying settlement policies in order to address the needs of those most in the public's eye, the indigent and unfortunate.

Reclamation's new lease on life began when the federal government, under the authority of the National Industrial Recovery Act of June 1933, commenced financing reclamation projects directly from general treasury funds. No longer did expansion and construction have to depend entirely on the limited money available from the revolving fund, fed only by repayments from water users.[16] The effects of this change were astronomical. In 1933 and 1934 the government pumped nearly as much money into reclamation as had been spent in the prior thirty years since passage of the Reclamation Act in 1902; by 1940 the Public Works Administration (PWA) had invested over $156 million in reclamation construction.[17] With this tremendous increase in available money, expansion was nearly unlimited, and the Bureau pushed ahead on two of the nation's largest reclamation projects, the Central Valley in California and the Columbia Basin in Washington.

Where reclaimed land was in public ownership, the USBR decided who would settle on new projects on the basis of policy set up in the wake of the laws passed after the Fact Finders' report. Following the reasoning laid down by Elwood

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[16]By the beginning of 1933 this fund was nearly exhausted.

Mead, the Fact Finders had argued that a selection procedure was necessary in order to screen out candidates with little likelihood of succeeding, although this policy was somewhat at odds with a pure cultural agrarianism. The intent was to reduce the number of settlers who failed to establish a successful farm. Such failures undermined the independence and self-sufficiency at the heart of arguments in support of cultural agrarianism. Further, not only were these failures harmful and discouraging to the individual settlers who lost their farms, they were costly in terms of both money and prestige to the Bureau of Reclamation. Thus, the Fact Finders and the Bureau qualified their cultural agrarian belief in the virtue of an expanding agriculture--one of the pillars supporting reclamation--with the caveat that settlement should be limited to those apt both to support their families and to repay their obligations to the reclamation program.

From 1925 to 1941, therefore, candidates for a farm on a federal reclamation project were required first to complete a three page application and then to appear before an examining board composed of the project superintendent, the county or agricultural adviser, and a successful local farmer or businessman. The board rated each would-be settler on the basis of farm experience, capital, industry, and character. From the beginning, capital and experience enjoyed an edge in the ratings, and in 1936, in an attempt to improve the chances of a settler's success, the Bureau revised the guidelines, giving them even more weight. The minimum financial requirement remained at $2,000, but an applicant with $10,000 could garner

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[17]Richard S. Kirkendall, Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt (Columbia; University of Missouri Press, 1966), 86 (hereafter Kirkendall, Social Scientists); and Golze, Reclamation, 83-84, 106.

30 rather than 25 percent of the maximum possible points, while two or more years of recent experience in "responsible charge" of an irrigation farm could be worth 35 percent of the total points. At the same time, the maximums allocated to character and industry were lowered to 15 percent and 20 percent respectively. The practical result under the original standards and even more under the revised standards was to favor applicants with extensive farm experience and significant capital. [18]

The system also favored local applicants. The Bureau included no guidelines to this effect and made no mention in its public notices of giving preference to nearby farmers. But with a personal interview required, the practical result of the process would be to deter those who had to travel long distances to meet with the selection board, leaving from out of the area only those who had sufficient resources to undertake a journey. Whatever the intent of the organizers of this process, the result was to dampen the expectations and participation of financially precarious farmers from remote parts of the country, such as those suffering through drought on the Great Plains, no matter the extent of their experience. As had been intended by the Fact Finders, the system favored those most likely to succeed over the merely needy.[19]

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[18] Originally, minimum ratings for experience and capital were given three times the weight accorded the lowest industry and character ratings. Further, since applicants selected land in order of ranking, those with less experience and capital were relegated to choosing from among the least desirable farm units, if any remained available. Golze, Reclamation, 362-364.

[19] Golze, Reclamation, 362-64; and John B. Holt, "An Analysis of Methods and Criteria Used in Selecting Families for Colonization Projects," USDA, Farm Security Administration and Bureau of Agricultural Economics Cooperating, Social Research Report No. 1 (Washington, September 1937), 33-36 (hereafter Holt, "Selecting Families").

A 1934 report on federal reclamation mentioned in passing that "other things being equal the man with $10,000 has a better chance to succeed than one with only $2,500,"

Thus, in the early New Deal, Reclamation had a settlement process in place that favored settlers with some capital and experience. They would be better able to support their families and build prosperous communities. Their efforts also had a greater possibility of redounding to the benefit of the Bureau. They could repay their obligations and, therefore, would contribute to the agency's favorable image with Congress. At the same time, however, settlers who ranked highest in a selection process giving weight to capital and experience more likely could compete successfully in the commercial agricultural market than could applicants coming to a project with more limited resources; they had the potential to undermine curbs on production sought by the USDA. Finally, with the nearly unlimited funding available from the PWA and general federal treasury, the Bureau had the means to greatly expand the number of opportunities available to farmers of this type.

During this same time, the USDA continued its mission to make it possible once more for established commercial farmers to operate at a profit. As it had since the farm depression hit in the early postwar years, the department saw the low prices received by these rural businessmen as the major impediment to the financial recovery and continuity of a commercially viable farm economy. The accepted path to realizing these goals also remained the same--reduced production through acreage limitations. Under President Roosevelt, however, the department pressed for an enlarged and more active government role. At the administration's instigation, Congress in May 1933 passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the linchpin of the

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particularly if acquired through hard work and thrift. John W. Haw and F. E. Schmitt, Report on Federal Reclamation to the Secretary of the Interior (Washington, 1935), 117. At the same time, settlers with adequate financial resources were able to bypass the system altogether and purchase land from a private seller.

new agricultural program. At its core were direct monetary payments to farmers for reduced acreage. A few months later Roosevelt, through an executive order, created the Commodity Credit Corporation, which provided no-interest loans to farmers who participated in the acreage reduction program. Although participation was not mandatory in either program, there was considerable pressure on farmers to cooperate and take their land out of production.[20]

For the federal government to pour money into a reclamation program that would expand farmland at the same time it was encouraging, if not pressuring, farmers already on the land to curtail production and take acreage out cultivation and to vest this effort in a Bureau predisposed to favor settlers with capital and experience was anathema to the USDA. This schizophrenic government behavior also engendered resentment among the farmers being asked to scale back, even if being compensated to do so. The National Grange, for instance, opposed any expenditure of public funds for new reclamation projects until there was "evident need for additional agricultural land" or until there was "a demand at profitable prices for the products that such lands will produce."[21] The Columbia Basin, the largest project ever envisioned by the Bureau of Reclamation, was a particular lightning rod. In 1932 when the Army Corps of Engineers presented its first report on Columbia River dams, Former Secretary of Agriculture Arthur Hyde, "in vigorous and forthright

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[20]The basic commodities covered by the AAA were cotton, corn, hogs, wheat, dairy, rice, and tobacco. For discussions of the production control and commodity programs in agriculture during the early years of the New Deal, see Danbom, Born in the Country, Chapter 10; Richard S. Kirkendall, "The New Deal and Agriculture," in John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody (eds.), The New Deal: The National Level, Volume One (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), particularly pages 84-89; and Saloutos, American Farmer, Chapters 3-9.

language," opposed irrigation of basin lands.[22] In the fall of 1933 Albert Goss, the outgoing Washington State Grange Master, lobbied the Roosevelt administration for a low dam at Grand Coulee. This would enable public power, a Grange crusade, but "defeat irrigation of any lands."[23] Farm group criticism reinforced Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace and his lieutenants, such as L.C. Gray, in their belief that reclamation projects and settlement must come under the purview of the Agriculture Department, which could then develop a coordinated and integrated long-range land use policy free of contradictory pressures. In 1934 they proposed a transfer of responsibilities with the Department of Interior that would bring the Bureau of Reclamation, as well as other land use agencies, under the control of the USDA.[24] Although the swap never materialized, farm organizations endorsed the proposal. The National Grange, for instance, resolved that "the Bureau of Reclamation should be transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture."[25]

The USDA's opposition to reclamation's expansion flowed from its long-standing concern over the low incomes of commercial farmers, which department officials believed threatened the viability of the entire agricultural economy. From the

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[21]25 January 1934, Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1307; and 17 January 1935, Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Sess., 540.

[22]Charles McKinley, Uncle Sam in the Pacific Northwest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952): 145.

[23]Billy Clapp to Willis Batcheller, 25 October 1933, Box 5, Records of Willis Batcheller (hereafter Batcheller 195), University of Washington Manuscripts and University Archives (hereafter M&UAD, UW). A high dam was necessary to store water for irrigation.

[24]Kirkendall, Social Scientists, 74-76 and 86-87; Paul W. Gates, "Comments", addendum to Kirkendall, "L.C. Gray," 214-216; and Donald C. Swain, "The Bureau of Reclamation and the New Deal, 1933-1940," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 61 (July 1970): 138. Other agencies considered for transfer to the USDA were the Soil Erosion Service, Subsistence Homesteads, Government Land Office, and National Park Service.

earliest days of the Roosevelt's tenure, however, many within his administration argued that agriculture faced two other threats--a decline in the number of family farms and widespread rural poverty. These threats were seen as particularly ominous in those parts of the country where land and environmental conditions, regardless of larger systemic economic problems, made it difficult if not impossible to establish a successful permanent agriculture. These precarious areas, some small, others quite extensive, were referred to as submarginal. Further, it soon became apparent that although these three problems--low commercial income, rural poverty and decline in the number of family farms--were closely related, they were not identical and did not always move in tandem. Reclamation settlement, seen as a threat to the commercial farmer, did not necessarily aggravate the problems of either rural poverty or the decline of the family farm. At the same time, the policies of the AAA--acreage reduction and production control--intended to benefit the commercial farmer could aggravate the pressures that were driving many marginal farmers into tenancy or off the land altogether. Steadily, then, throughout Roosevelt's first term in office, farm tenancy and its flip side, farm ownership, rose to the surface as a discrete issue in the minds of both the public at large and many within the administration, separate from the income problems of commercial farmers. An effect of the increasing recognition that people were descending the agricultural ladder down to tenancy rather than ascending it up to ownership was to focus attention on

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[25]17 January 1935, Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Sess., 540.

land settlement as a solution rather than a problem and to complicate the previously bifurcated debate over this issue that had split USDA and USBR since the 1920's.[26]

In November 1936, President Roosevelt appointed A Special Committee on Farm Tenancy. Three months later it reported back with recommendations geared both toward opening the doors of ownership to tenants who had the requisite ability and experience and toward preventing small farmers who owned farms from slipping into tenancy.[27] Both goals assumed that the farmers to be helped were in peril not because they were inadequate or marginal agriculturists but because they faced the combined and overpowering economic and environmental pressures of

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[26]The administration had included the rural as well as the urban poor equally in its relief programs. The main purpose of the Subsistence Homestead Program, authorized in the National Industrial Recovery Act of May 1933, was to provide a mixed agricultural-industrial economy, combining small garden homes adjacent to industrial employment, for both displaced rural and urban workers. Roosevelt appointed M. L. Wilson, who would later serve on the FID selection committee, as its administrator. By Executive Order in May 1935, Roosevelt created the Resettlement Administration, making it the repository for a number of relief programs including Subsistence Homesteads and rehabilitation programs in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. This agency was transferred to the USDA at the beginning of 1937 and renamed the Farm Security Administration.

Farm Population and Rural Life Activities, a review of the research and projects of the Farm Population and Rural Life Division of the USDA, provides a good overview of the concerns and thinking of economists and sociologists concerned with rural poverty during this period.

See Kirkendall, Social Scientists, for an analysis of the role social scientists played during the Roosevelt administration in agricultural planning, including in support of the rural poor. See Rexford G. Tugwell, "The Resettlement Ideas," Agricultural History 33 (October 1959): 159-164, and Marion Clawson, "Resettlement Experience on Nine Selected Resettlement Projects, " Agricultural History 52 (January 1978): 1-92 (hereafter Clawson, "Resettlement Experience") for two divergent views on efforts to aid the rural poor written by leading participants. Clawson notes that the National Resources Committee designated distressed rural areas as "submarginal" in a 1934 report (p. 14).

[27]Kirkendall, Social Scientists, 126; and House Select Committee on Agriculture to investigate the Activities of the Farm Security administration, Report on Activities of the Farm Security Administration, House Report No. 1430, 78th Congress, 2d Sess., 1944, 67 (hereafter House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944).

depression and drought.[28] Realizing each goal also would require that the government provide liberal credit and technical assistance.[29] Further, in what would prove to be a controversial recommendation, the committee proposed that the federal government purchase land for settlement; specifically, the Secretary of Agriculture was to "acquire suitable farm land, subdivide or otherwise create from it the various types of holdings hereafter recommended and provide for requisite improvements." To guide the selection of settlers for this land, the committee recommended that it be made available to disadvantaged farm families who would be chosen "on the basis of reputation for integrity, industry, thrift, necessary experience, health and other qualities."[30] Financial resources were not a requirement. The report also recommended that the government purchase and retire from production submarginal farmland not capable of supporting a family and that preference for settlement be given to people who had lived on the land to be retired. Finally, the committee recommended that the Resettlement Administration (RA), a previously independent, rural relief agency established in 1935, be responsible for these programs. The RA had recently been transferred to the USDA and was to be re-named Farm Security Administration (FSA).

The report, with its support of widespread farm ownership, served to crystallize opinion on farmland expansion and land settlement. Critics attacked its

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[28] An economist with the Bureau of Reclamation, L. H. Mitchell, made this distinction very blatantly in an article entitled "Preparing for the Destitute" in the March 1935 issue of The Reclamation Era, 60. Submarginal land could drive deserving farmers off the land. A submarginal farmer on the other hand was "one who has not been successful even when climatic conditions were favorable and prices for farm products were generally satisfactory."

[29] Franklin Roosevelt to Congress of the United States, 16 February 1937, reprinted in appendix to House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 67-68.

recommendations, either as timid or as excessive. Charles Johnson, an academic sociologist, embraced fully the recommendations of the report geared toward "measures to facilitate farm-home ownership." He feared, however, that the decentralized administration proposed by the committee might be twisted in operation to exclude the most needy--specifically "Negro tenants and sharecroppers." His interest was in ensuring that farm ownership be extended as broadly as possible and reflected a belief in an inclusive cultural agrarianism and the positive benefits of widespread farm-home ownership for the individual and society. On the other hand, Henry C. Taylor, an agricultural economist and the first chief of the BAE, argued that the proposals contained "the possibility of doing more harm than good to the farming population of the U.S." Taylor adhered strictly to the economically oriented belief in the farmer as an agricultural businessman. Assisting people to own farms, he feared, would increase competition by "encouraging people to be farmers who should enter other occupations." The result would be to damage the overall agricultural economy, making it more difficult to "secure parity incomes" for established farmers. Though Taylor was no longer with the USDA, his opinion reflected the department's policy, formulated in the 1920's, which had driven creation of the AAA program; specifically, that containing rather than expanding farm ownership would be better for the nation and the agricultural economy.[31]

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[30]House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 77-78.

[31] House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 86-89. Farm organizations tended to mirror these pro and con positions. In a minority report, a representative of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union echoed the pleas of Johnson for federal oversight to ensure that the benefits of farm ownership were extended to the truly needy. Edw. O'Neal, President of the Farm Bureau, on the other hand, objected to two provisions intended to ensure long-term ownership by as many of the needy as possible--specifically the prohibition on early resale of land at a profit and the provision of liberal

In an indication of a shift in USDA policy, however, there was little official dissent to the committee's recommendations from within the department. Secretary Wallace and L.C. Gray signed onto the report, evidence that the Department had come to accept the idea that support of its clientele, existing farmers, meant assuming an active role in helping at least a portion of the marginal, as well as the still commercially viable, farmers. In the 1920's, the USDA consistently opposed land settlement as a threat to established farmers. It was seen as adding new competitors to an already crowded field. By the second half of the 1930's, as drought as well as depression decimated the farm community and increasing numbers of previously stable farmers were forced into poverty, land settlement could be viewed not as a way to bring new people into agriculture, but as a way to aid existing farmers by providing those being driven off ravaged land with an opportunity to remain in farming. President Roosevelt underlined this theme when forwarding the report to

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credit. O'Neal centered his objections on the restrictions these provisions would place on farmers' ability to dispose of their land.

This split between Henry Taylor and Charles Johnson parallels a divergence in opinion on the future of agriculture between economists and sociologists found in a 1938 BAE study. The authors found that agricultural economists and rural sociologists held strikingly different opinions on the desired structure of farm life. The sociologists believed that family farms should be the goal of American agriculture even if the small size of an agricultural operation meant small cash income. By two to one, they envisioned a future in which farmers produced less for the market and more for farm and home consumption. Only 30 percent of the economists agreed. Over 70 percent of the sociologists but only 41 percent of the economists agreed that "the small family sized farm, operated by an owner-farmer even though he has only a small cash income, should be the goal of American agriculture." On a very generalized basis the views of the economists informed the work of those pushing for production control and the need to reinvigorate the commercial farmers. Attitudes expressed by the sociologists in this survey were held by those who were working to help the rural poor stay on the land. See Carl C. Taylor and Charles P. Loomis, "The American Rural Culture of the Future," Farm Population and Rural Life Activities (Washington, Bureau of Agricultural Economics) XII (15 October 1938), 1-2.
See also Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 74-76 for a brief biographical sketch of Taylor.

Congress. He suggested that Congress consider retiring submarginal land and authorizing the government to resettle the farmers thus displaced on new homes on good land. He further urged legislators to attack immediately the growing problem of farm tenancy by providing technical advice and liberal credit both to existing tenants who wished to buy farms and to farm owners who were in danger of losing their land.

Congressional reaction to the report was mixed. A majority favored keeping people on farms, while at the same time rejecting government purchase of land and colonization as an acceptable means to that end. In July the legislature enacted the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act intended, as later explained, "to encourage individual farm-home ownership and to aid and assist in the rehabilitation of destitute farm families on individual family-sized farms."[32] The Act had two separate but interconnected goals. First, it was intended specifically to rehabilitate not the urban destitute but only those already farming--"farm tenants, farm laborers, sharecroppers, and other individuals who obtain, or who recently obtained, the major portion of their income from farming operations." The path to this end was the second goal, the acquisition of farms of a size that would "enable a diligent farm family to carry on successful farming."[33] To accomplish these objectives, Congress authorized the FSA to provide credit on liberal terms to farmers who were unable to obtain it from private sources or existing federal lending institutions. Families could use this credit both to acquire a farm and to make necessary repairs and improvements. Further, Congress also authorized the USDA to insist that the loan

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[32] House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 5.

[33] Public Law 210, The Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, 22 July 1937, U. S. Statutes at Large, 50 Stat 522-523. The program, thus, was not intended to help the urban needy take up a new way of life on the farm.

recipients follow farming practices the department deemed proper--a form of mandatory agricultural advice and direction.

Yet, in spite of imposing this bureaucratic oversight on the farmers, legislators remained leery of government paternalism. They rejected both the construction of farmsteads by the government and any communal approach to farm ownership and operation. Existing projects, which the RA had begun under executive order, were federally organized and administered enterprises. The government cleared and leveled land, constructed farmsteads and homes, provided easy access to government credit, and established or assisted in establishing a range of social institutions and activities. Some were organized as communes. Congress, spearheaded by the House Committee on Agriculture, had no wish to continue this approach to resettlement. Thus, it specifically authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to complete and administer only programs of this type for which funds already had been allocated. The department was to begin no new ones. [34]

While Congress equivocated, the FSA, in the aftermath of the report on farm tenancy, accepted wholeheartedly the goal of helping the destitute and needy remain in farming, preferably as owners and not tenants. The agency, which (as the RA) had originated and evolved outside the Department of Agriculture, as well as those who supported its work, represented a point of view on agricultural settlement that diverged from both the policies established by the USBR and the positions developed in the postwar era by economists within the USDA. It opposed the idea at the heart of the AAA, that under present economic circumstances the number of

farmers on the land should be limited.[35] Rather, the FSA shared an interest with the Bureau in providing new farming opportunities, primarily and specifically for those with a background in agriculture. The agency did not agree, however, in all regards with established USBR policy about who should settle on new farms. Concerned with the plight of marginal farmers and those driven from submarginal land, the FSA did not subscribe to the Bureau's regulations that emphasized financial resources in deciding who should be chosen for settlement. On the contrary, the FSA chose settlers largely on the basis of need and on the desire of the family to own a new farmstead. The result of its policy, according to Marion Clawson, was to prevent "selection of the ablest and most well to do farmers." Finally, although Congress accepted this conception of who should be aided in settling on a farm, the agency was at odds with legislators over the proper means. The FSA endorsed rather than rejected the resettlement projects begun by its predecessor, the RA. In spite of Congressional directives to the contrary, it experimented with government organized, communally operated colonies that went far beyond credit and advice in aiding settlers.[36]

Further, new and diverging opinions were not confined to the USDA. As concern with the rural poor intensified, people within the reclamation community also

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[34]U. S. Statutes at Large, 50 Stat 522, 524; House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 1-28; and Clawson, "Resettlement Experience," passim.

[35]The Supreme Court had declared the original AAA program unconstitutional in 1936. But much of its emphasis on acreage reduction was continued in the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act that replaced it. This legislation put more emphasis on environmental than on economic motivations, for taking land out of production, but had similar results.

[36]Brian Q. Cannon, Remaking the Agrarian Dream: New Deal Rural Resettlement in the Mountain West (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 20-21; Holt,

began to espouse positions that strayed from established policy. In the midst of economic depression and devastating drought, the plight of the marginal farmer and the specter of increasing tenancy resonated across the country. In an opinion poll conducted in late 1936, the drought's worst year, a remarkable 83 percent of the people interviewed believed that the government should take action to enable tenant farmers to buy land.[37] The Bureau and reclamation supporters outside the government were not blind to the significance of the public's interest in saving the rural destitute. The massive boost in funding available for reclamation development prodded opponents to step up their attacks, often to stress the argument that reclamation damaged existing farmers by increasing competition.[38] To counteract these charges, proponents of reclamation, and of the CBP in particular, increasingly invoked the plight of existing farmers--but the marginal who were losing their land. While the Bureau's official policy favoring those with financial resources as well as experience did not change, reclamation spokesmen began to suggest that settlement on reclamation projects could play a significant role in the nation's campaign to rescue experienced but destitute farm families.[39] After the FSA took on resettlement in the wake of the investigation into farm tenancy, factions within the USBR as well as the USDA spoke directly of the possibilities of a symbiotic

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"Selecting Families," 44-50; Clawson, "Resettlement Experience," 16-17; and House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944.

[37]Saloutos, American Farmer, 166.

[38]Representative Culkin of New York led the attack on reclamation. Typical are his comments referring to reclamation as "one of the greatest and most destructive economic errors in the history of this or any other civilization" in 27 February 1935, Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st sess., 2675.

[39]The Bureau had revised its settler selection criteria to give more emphasis to financial resources only a few months before the President convened the Commission on Farm Tenancy.

relationship between the two agencies in aiding the existing, though threatened, farmer.

Supporters of reclamation, from local boosters up through the President, recognized the value of this precarious, marginal farmer as a rhetorical device in support of their cause. As far back as 1934, locals had suggested, as a way of convincing the President and Congress to approve a high dam at Grand Coulee, that the government could use the Columbia Basin Project as a destination for marginal land farmers.[40] Three years later federal officials cited the marginal farmer as they tried to firm up support for the CBP. Typical were the comments of Nathan Margold, general solicitor for the Department of Interior. During 1937 congressional hearings, when criticism of the project was peaking, he stressed to sometimes skeptical legislators that the idea was that the project be "as widely available to farmers who have suffered from drought and who have been farming submarginal lands, as possible."[41] The President was a committed spokesman for this point of view. In October 1937, for instance, months after the legislature had approved a bill to prevent speculation in project lands, he argued the CBP would aid the "thousands of families in this country in the Middle West, in the Plains area, who are not making good because they are trying to farm on poor land." It would give first opportunity "to

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[40]H. I. Johnson to Willis Batcheller, March 1934, Box 5, Batcheller 195, M&UAD, UW. To head off criticism from the Grange and other farm organizations that opposed the project in these early days, proponents in Washington State stressed that many marginal-land farmers, who would like to move onto irrigated lands, already lived nearby. James O'Sullivan, Harnessing a Mighty River," n.d., Box 5, Batcheller 195, M&UAD, UW.

[41] Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, To Prevent Speculation in Lands in the Columbia Basin: Hearings on S.B. 2172, 75th Cong., 1st sess., 21 April 1937, 26.

these American families who need some good farm land in place of their present farms."[42]

During this same time, some within both the USBR and the USDA, specifically the FSA, went beyond public relations rhetoric and looked for specific ways to meld their interests and objectives. John C. Page, who succeeded Elwood Mead as Commissioner of Reclamation in 1936, signaled his willingness to bring Bureau policy in line with the goals of resettlement advocates. In October 1938 in a speech to the National Reclamation Association he both argued for easing settler selection requirements and called for reclamation boosters to cooperate with the USDA. "Many of you," he stressed:

> are familiar with our regulations for the settlement of land. You realize that some modification of procedure must be made to assure that the penniless, though worthy, drought refugee can obtain land on a Reclamation project. This we are attempting to work out with the Farm Security Administration. I feel confident that it can be done without sacrificing any of the advantages to the projects of the selection system we have established and maintained. We ask the cooperation of the West in this endeavor.[43]

Some local projects seemed receptive to this plea both for modification of settler standards and for cooperation with the FSA. They accepted the distinction Page made that a farmer who was penniless was not necessarily unworthy; rather he might be driven off the land and be in need not because of personal ineptitude but because devastating environmental forces beyond his control compounded systemic economic weaknesses. A field report from the Bureau's Owyhee Project,

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[42]Franklin D. Roosevelt, Public Papers and Addresses, 1937 Volume (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), 396.

[43]John C. Page, "Homes or Havoc," The Reclamation Era (November 1938): 220. The Bureau published in its December 1937 issue of Reclamation Era a synopsis of a FSA study indicating that the greatest need of dust bowl migrants to the Pacific northwest was additional land for settlement (p. 283).

straddling the Oregon-Idaho boundary, told of the local community's pride in dust bowl settlers with limited financial resources who had made good. Highlighted was a story of a farmer who arrived in July 1934 with $180, a family, and an old truck. By the end of 1938 he was "well established in a growing community." He and others without resources were able to succeed in part because local people organized an association to market privately owned land. Though accepting the desirability of adequate financial resources the local association was not bound by the USBR's requirement that a settler have a minimum of $2,000 in capital. Instead it allowed experience and proven ability to compensate for limited finances.[44] In late 1938 Marion Clawson and Carl Heisig of BAE studied the settlers on the Owyhee and neighboring Vale federal reclamation projects. FSA clients, who made up over one-third of the total settlers, had at the time of settlement and purchase of a farm, financial assets averaging $1565, significantly below the $2,000 minimum specified in the USBR settler selection requirements. Further, one-third of these FSA clients had a net worth at time of settlement of less than $1,000. Within five years, though they were forced to endure difficult living conditions in the beginning and their progress was slower than that of their neighbors with larger capital reserves, FSA clients had raised their net worth to an average of $3750. Heisig and Clawson suggested that liberal government credit for those who could not secure it elsewhere would go far to help the poor but worthy overcome hardship and improve their likelihood of ultimate success. [45]

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[44]Walter K. M. Slavik, "The Human Side of the Owyhee Development," The Reclamation Era (May 1939): 97.

[45]Carl P. Heisig and Marion Clawson, New Farms on New Land, Migration and Settlement on the Pacific Coast, Report No. 4 (Washington, USDA, January 1941), 74-

Federal reclamation officials appeared to accept both the potential of many settlers with limited capital and the possibility that liberal credit could overcome financial shortfalls. In 1939 the Department of Interior joined with the USDA to support legislation enabling the FSA to advance funds to settlers on public lands. Settlers could use this money not just to develop and operate the farm, but the Bureau would accept it as meeting "all or a portion of the capital required of settlers" under the Fact Finders Act of 1924.[46] Described by Senator Wheeler of Montana as "intended to provide that the Department of the Interior may come to an understanding with the Department of Agriculture in reference to persons settling on some of the lands on reclamation projects in the West," the bill, referred to as the Wheeler-O'Connor Act, easily passed Congress.[47] It was not the only instance during this period of the USBR and the USDA cooperating to aid drought stricken farmers. In 1938 a Presidential committee on the Northern Great Plains, chaired by Harlan Barrows who later headed the Joint Investigations, recommended that the WPA, the USBR, and the USDA work together to construct and settle small irrigation projects not authorized under existing reclamation law. The hope was to improve farming conditions in environmentally stressed locales so farmers would not be forced to migrate elsewhere. Congress passed Great Plains legislation, known as

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77 (hereafter Heisig and Clawson, "New Farms"). Non-FSA settlers had an average net worth at time of purchase of $3188.

[46]Public Law 307, U. S. Statutes at Large, 53 Stat 1238, also known as Wheeler-O'Connor Act. See also Golze, Reclamation, 380.

[47]18 July 1939, Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 9411.

the Wheeler-Case Act, in 1939 authorizing this cooperative approach, leaving it to the agencies to work out exactly how to provide for the welfare of the settlers.[48]

Although Wheeler-Case did not apply to projects built under the auspices of the Reclamation Act, It did authorize the Bureau to participate along with the Department of Agriculture in helping farmers without financial resources, who otherwise might be forced onto relief. The Act specified that construction was the responsibility of the USBR and bestowed on the USDA a generalized authority to locate and settle the farm families. Then in 1940 Congress amended Wheeler-Case to delineate more specifically the responsibilities of the USDA. It authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to "extend guidance and advice to settlers. . . in matters of farm practice, soil conservation, and efficient land use. . . and. . . to arrange for the improvement of lands within the project boundaries, including clearing, leveling and preparing them for distribution of irrigation water."[49] With this legislative enumeration of tasks, Congress appeared to set a precedent for the type of aid beyond liberal credit that the government would be willing to provide needy farmers and how it might be provided. Under this special legislation, destitute marginal farmers would settle on some projects built by the USBR, but the USDA, not the Bureau, would be responsible for aiding them with money, advice, and improvements.

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[48]Public Law 398, U. S. Statutes at Large, 53 Stat 1418; and House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Amendment to Great Plains Act: Hearings on H.R. 10122, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., 1940, 31 and passim. In 1946 Charles Brannan, then Assistant Secretary of Agriculture recalled that the USDA "urged the cooperative formula for development of projects which was adopted by the Congress in 1939." See Testimony of Charles F. Brannan on H.R. 5434, Box 5, Hugh Mitchell Acc. 281 (hereafter Mitchell 281), M&UAD, UW, 6.

[49]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Amendment to Great Plains Act: Hearings on H.R. 10122, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., 1940, 31, 3; and Public Law 848, Statutes at Large, 54 Stat 1119 (quotation p. 1122).

One year later Congress mandated an easing of the requirements, established by the Fact Finders Act of 1924, governing settler selection on reclamation projects. In the appropriations bill for the Department of Interior, passed in June 1940, the legislature stated that:

> It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress that, in the opening to entry of newly irrigated public lands, preference shall be given to families who have no other means of earning a livelihood, or who have been compelled to abandon, through no fault of their own, other farms in the United States, and with respect to whom it appears after careful study, in the case of each such family, that there is a probability that such family will be able to earn a livelihood on such irrigated lands.[50]

In this policy statement, with the phrase "probability that such family will be able to earn a livelihood," Congress elevated need to a position of prominence in selection of settlers. It did appear, however, to assume that the Bureau would screen potential farmers in order to assist, in the words of Commissioner Page, "people who are qualified to accept the responsibilities which go with the opportunity to develop new farms by irrigation."[51] Congress, further, did not clearly state whether it intended to eliminate, to ease, or to make exceptions to established requirements for financial resources.[52]

Although Congress and many within the federal bureaucracies responded favorably, reclamation supporters did not universally accede to the call of Commissioner Page for compromise on settler selection. By 1938 Congress had approved the Columbia Basin Project. After approval, many supporters appeared to

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[50]H.R. 8745, U.S. Statutes at Large, 54 Stat 406 (quotation p. 439).
[51]John C. Page, "Reclamation Offers Solution for Migrant Farmer Problem in the West," The Reclamation Era (November 1940): 308.
[52]U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia Basin Joint Investigations, Problem 14: Financial Aid for Settlers (1945), 2. (Hereafter CBJI, Problem.)

drop support for the needy and to favor those who had the financial resources to increase both their likelihood of success and their contribution to the local economy. The President of the Quincy-Columbia Basin League, in May 1939, in a form letter soliciting financial support, argued that once the project was assured "thousands of families, physically and *financially* able, will bring their millions to Washington and begin building farms and homes (italics added)."[53] Delegates to the annual meeting of the Washington Irrigation Institute in late 1939 specifically rejected settling the needy and destitute on reclamation projects, including particularly the CBP. They argued conversely that:

> Where projects are settled by men experienced in farming and so equipped financially and otherwise as to require the minimum of assistance, the future success of the settler and the project is practically assured. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that where settlers have neither experience nor finances, but must be provided with practically everything in the way of housing and equipment, the chances for success are extremely remote. . . . endeavoring to provide for the needy and the destitute by establishing them as settlers on a reclamation project is the most costly form of relief.[54]

Unlike Vale and Owyhee locals who welcomed impoverished but hard-working dustbowlers to those projects, these delegates gave no indication they believed perseverance and commitment could compensate for lack of money. They also evinced skepticism that the destitute refugees from submarginal farms had the

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[53]J.W. Wheeler 20 May 1939, Box 5, Batcheller 195, M&UAD, UW. During this same time, one prominent CBP proponent tried to have it both ways. At a rally to pressure Congress to fund reclamation and to press for an immediate water contract to cover part of the basin lands, James O'Sullivan argued first that prospective settlers who were "the sons of irrigation farmers and have ample means" as well as hundreds of thousands of migrant families forced out of the dust bowl and currently on relief in the northwest both were eagerly awaiting development of "the irrigation features of the Columbia Basin." Seattle Times, 20 August 1939.

[54]The Reclamation Era (January 1940): 28.

technical and managerial expertise to succeed.[55] Thus, while some within the reclamation community seemed to find a union of interests with resettlement advocates focused on expanding opportunities for the rural needy, others continued to hold to the belief that opportunities on reclamation land should be carefully allocated and available only to those with the financial resources and proven experience to take full advantage of them.

Thus, by the end of the decade, with agriculture buffeted by drought and depression, attitudes toward settlement had become more nuanced and complicated. When the 1920's had drawn to a close, the dominant attitudes toward land settlement had fallen into two camps defined by strong pro and con beliefs. Those who asserted they spoke for existing farmers propounded an economic fundamentalist version of agrarianism that limited farming to those likely to be commercially successful. They believed settlement should be discouraged if not prohibited. Reclamation enthusiasts espoused the expansionist tenets of cultural agrarianism. They believed settlement should be encouraged, though limited to those with resources adequate to indicate likelihood of success. Within a few years, a third position had emerged that espoused settlement while professing at the same time to speak for existing farmers, but specifically those who had been shunted aside in the original debate. Drought on top of depression had raised the numbers of existing but precarious farmers to the point the nation could no longer ignore them. Their sheer numbers, however, prevented all from being helped and complicated

[55]Although suggesting that these migrants should be aided rather than rejected for settlement, a report on FSA project settlers prepared in the early 1940's described many of the FSA clients, including those who resettled on reclamation projects as lacking

decisions about who among them should benefit from public action. From what point along a continuum, ranging from maximum need to maximum resources, should settlers come? How should worthiness be factored in to discriminate among the needy? Who among the needy were victims of their own ineptitude, and bound to fail again at farming? Who, on the other hand, were victims of environmental disasters and economic catastrophes beyond their control and could benefit from assistance and a second chance? With the emergence of this third position opinions mutated and alliances shifted. As conceptions about who settlers should be evolved and multiplied, supporters of established agriculture and proponents of reclamation no longer divided along a line between those who believed that agriculture first of all must be financially strong and those who believed with equal fervor in an expansive and open agriculture. Attitudes toward settlement, rather than serving as a wall between advocates of reclamation and proponents of established agriculture, demarcated fissures within each camp and served as the basis for alliances that crossed institutional boundaries.

At the same time, two major questions dominated debate about settler assistance: how extensive should the role of the government be and what agency should be responsible? While accepting the idea that those who needed help should be among those who settled on new lands, Congress developed a somewhat schizophrenic attitude toward how these settlers should be aided. When lawmakers included, as part of the 1941 Department of the Interior appropriations, instructions that the USBR settle dust bowl refugees on reclamation projects, they did not include

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"technical skill and successful managerial experience" as well as capital. Clawson,

any funding for credit to compensate for the settlers' lack of financial resources.[56] This policy continued the approach Congress had adopted in the wake of the Fact Finder's report when lawmakers refused to authorize the Bureau to provide any of the recommended forms of aid, whether it be credit, land preparation, farmstead construction or homemaking and farming advice. Yet, Congress did temper its opposition to assistance when offered by other government agencies. In the 1930's, although lawmakers steadfastly opposed government directed colonization programs, they agreed, as part of the Bankhead-Jones Act, that the FSA could provide financing and technical assistance in aid of indigent resettlement clients. Then, legislators wrote into the Wheeler-Case Act details on the specific assistance the USDA should provide settlers on these reclamation projects. In both situations, the tasks Congress approved for the USDA were very similar to what the Fact Finders had recommended–but the legislators had not approved--be carried out by the USBR. The stage was set not only for the government to play a larger part in aiding settlers but also for the USDA to assert it should have a significant role in the settlement of reclamation projects, including the CBP.

With land settlement enmeshed in this flux and uncertainty, the Bureau of Reclamation organized and carried out the Columbia Basin Project joint investigations. Bureau leaders argued that an extraordinary planning effort was needed to ensure that settlers could develop new farms that would enable them to earn an income sufficient both to support their families and to repay the government an agreed upon portion of the project's cost and do so without damaging the land.

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[56] "Resettlement Experience," 56.

Immediately after conceiving of the need for these studies, Commissioner Page approached Harlan Barrows, chair of the Geography Department at the University of Chicago, to head the program. To bring coherence to the undertaking, Barrows, who had been involved in various planning activities since 1933, divided it into twenty-eight separate problems. These covered the farm economy, water use and requirements, farm size and layout, allocation of repayment costs, control of project lands, rate of development, and development of villages and public facilities. Study teams, drawn from forty different agencies, were assigned to each of the twenty-eight problems.[57] Such a wide-ranging effort at land settlement planning, however, called for more than a structured division of workload. It wanted also agreement on basic assumptions—about both the quality of the available land and the people who would settle and farm it. Arriving at them proved problematic.

The Fact Finders had found that a major cause of settler failure, and by extension the difficulties facing federal reclamation, had been neglect of agricultural productivity and land quality in project planning. Too often, politics and engineering had prevailed and land so worthless nothing of value could be grown on it was included within a project. When he reviewed the joint investigations in 1946, Marion Clawson re-iterated this point, stressing that planners, in order to be effective and constructive, must "understand and take account of the basic physical facts."[58] The effort to provide this basic physical information for the CBP originated before the creation of the Joint Investigations. In 1937 the Bureau organized field tests of

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[56] CBJI, Problem 14, 7.
[57] CBJI, Character and Scope, 1-2.
[58] Taylor,"Sociologists' Part," 332.

project land under the direction of W. W. Johnston. In 1938 the Reclamation Commissioner appointed L.C. Wheeting of Washington State College, Macy Lawlor of the USDA's Division of Soil Surveys, and H. C. Davis, a Yakima Valley farmer, to a soils advisory board to develop standards, covering soil texture and depth, topography, alkali context, rocks, drainage and other features affecting land productivity, that would be used in a soil survey.[59] Johnston, commenting on the land classification effort in 1940, mentioned that it was "for instance . . . important to know to what extent the sandy soils of the area were suitable for irrigation development." [60] The purpose of this survey was two-fold, first to eliminate land not suitable for irrigation and second to classify the land that was deemed irrigable. In 1939 Harlan Barrows incorporated the survey into the work of the newly organized joint investigations.

By the summer of 1941, the Bureau, under Johnston's direction, had classified 1, 234, 748 acres as irrigable, out of a gross acreage of over 2.5 million acres.[61] Of the arable total, 33 percent was determined to be Class 1 (best), 40 percent Class 2 (average) and 27 percent Class 3 (least desirable arable). Land could be placed in either Class 2 or Class 3 because of problems with soil (s),

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[59] J. H. Miner to C. Orval Stott, 3 August 1939, Box 564, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and S. E. Hutton, "Land Use Problems and Policies in the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, paper presented to Joint Symposium, Ecological Society of America and Society of American Foresters, University of Washington, 19 June 1940, 9. [Hereafter S. E. Hutton, "Land Use." In July 1940 Harlan Barrows and William Warne disseminated this paper as an official Memorandum to all participants in the Columbia Basin Joint Investigations. Depth to various subsoils was considered, including to gravel, sand or cobbles; to solid rock; to caliche hard pan; and to a penetrable calcareous zone.

[60] W. W. Johnston, "Land Classification: Columbia Basin Project, Washington," The Reclamation Era (June 1940). (Hereafter, Johnston, "Land Classification.")

[61] This figure was less than the estimates of early project boosters. Later surveys reduced it further. Johnston, "Land Classification."

topography (t), or rocks (r). The various land classes were not distributed evenly among the three project districts. The survey found that the East district had significantly more of the best land and significantly less of the poor land than either the Quincy or South district. Forty-three percent of the Class 1 land was in the East district, with the remainder nearly evenly divided between the East and South districts. Conversely, poor land occurred disproportionately in the project's western side. The Quincy district was home to 37 percent of the Class 3 land, while only 19 percent was found in the East. [62]

The results, not unexpectedly, raised some controversy. As Johnston admitted, "land classification involves many matters of judgment as well as of fact." Criticism came from the joint investigators on Problem 2. They were responsible for determining the types of farming "best suited to the project area" and in this endeavor were to consider soils, climate, topography, and various economic and market factors.[63] In the spring of 1941 they requested that the advisory board be reconstituted to consider the reclassification of "shallow 3s soils" that the Bureau had deemed irrigable. The Soil Conservation Service, as a result of a field survey and study it did at the request of a Problem 2 sub-committee, questioned the ability of

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[62] Supervising Engineer to Commissioner, 26 December 1940, Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; Department of Interior, Columbia Basin Joint Investigations, September 1941 Monthly Progress Report (Ephrata, Washington, 15 September 1941), 6 (Hereafter monthly progress reports will appear as CBJI, Month/year Progress Report); Memorandum for the Commissioner, 7 May 194, Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and Weinkauf, "The Columbia Basin Project," 69-71. Weinkauf (p. 69) describes Class 1 as the best lands, which are smooth, gently sloping topography and deep, fertile soil free from alkali and rock; Class 2 as average land, which still makes good farm land but is inferior to Class 1 in one or more respects; and Class 3 as the least desirable arable land, being inferior to both Class 1 and Class 2 in one or more respects.

[63] CBJI, January 1940 Monthly Progress Report, 5.

these soils "to remain permanently in production."[64] SCS believed that "soils with less than three feet to gravel, coarse sand or impervious rock or hard pan should be excluded from the irrigable acreage of the project."[65] It argued that such soils would "not be permanently productive" because irrigation would quickly leach the soil rendering it infertile.[66]

The Bureau and Harlan Barrows opposed any reclassification. Barrows wrote that the position of the SCS on the cultivation of shallow soils was "untenable."[67] Frank Banks, project supervising engineer, speculated that reclassification could result "in the reduction of the irrigable acreage under the Columbia Basin Project by as much as 338,000 acres of land now classed as arable." Both were concerned that "rejection or retention" of up to 25 percent of "acreage now classified as irrigable" would be of importance not only to the "welfare of many prospective settlers" but could "seriously affect the feasibility of the project."[68]

During the second week of July 1941 a five member advisory board appointed by the Bureau convened to review the standards for classification of shallow Class 3s soils.[69] Members met with SCS personnel and determined that a major area of disagreement centered on the lighter textured soils. These were the

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[64] Commissioner to Supervising Engineer, 8 April 1941, Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[65] Irrigation Engineer to Supervising Engineer, 26 April 1941, Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[66] Memorandum for the Commissioner, 7 May 1941, Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[67] Harlan H. Barrows to Commissioner, 21 April 1941, Box 542, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[68] Supervising Engineer to Commissioner, 8 April 1941; and Harlan H. Barrows to Commissioner, 3 May 1941, both in Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

soils Johnston had referred to a year earlier when illustrating the need for standards to determine suitability of land for irrigation development.[70] The Board also conducted a series of field trips comparing nine areas in the Columbia Basin with five similar irrigated areas elsewhere in Central Washington. At the end of its investigation it concluded there was no need to revise the classification of disputed Class 3s soils. Members, however, acknowledged that these soils had a "general deficiency in organic matter" requiring "frequent humus renewal;" that in some areas underlain by an impervious subsoil, acceptable drainage would require sloping topography; and that in areas of rapid filtration, permanent production would be possible only if proper care were taken to avoid leaching. They concluded that shallow sandy soils or deeper, poorly drained soils should be used only for community pasture or other supplementary purposes and recommended that when possible the "most desirable lands in the project" be developed first.[71]

The existence of the soil survey indicated that reclamation supporters had accepted the call of the Fact Finders for greater attention to agricultural productivity and land quality. Yet when the results indicated that over a quarter of the project land deemed irrigable was of the poorest class, the various reactions revealed disagreement over how high land quality standards should be and how the needs of the project and of individual settlers should be weighted. Further, the reaction by the SCS and others revealed uncertainty not only about whether this marginal land

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[69]Three members were from the agricultural colleges of Oregon, Utah, and Washington; one was a USDA soil scientist; and one was Bureau Project superintendent at Klamath Falls, Oregon.

[70] The light soils included loamy sand (80 to 85 percent sand) and sandy loam.

[71] CBJI, Foreword and Memorandum No. 12: Report of the Advisory Technical Board on Shallow Class 3s Soils, 31 August 1941.

should be included in the project, but about its proper use if deemed irrigable and the demands farming it would place on the settlers. Even the Advisory Board and others who believed it was irrigable, recognized that special care would be required for productive farming. Planning would take place with this added element of uncertainty.[72]

Arriving at working assumptions about settlers proved even more problematic. Marion Clawson spoke to this point also, writing in a 1943 article that "the first requirement for a sound resettlement program is a clear-cut definition of the groups that the program is designed to assist."[73] Reaching agreement, however, proved extremely difficult. In part because of the shifting and evolving positions and alliances that had emerged over the years on this issue, the architects of the CBP planning process proceeded with no concerted attempt to define either who would or who should settle. Whenever they turned to the question of settler identity, the joint investigations' leaders evinced schizophrenic and at times contradictory attitudes.

When the question was framed objectively as who would settle, the response was to emphasize the almost certain diversity of future settlers and the futility of any attempt to determine who they would be. Bureau and investigation leaders did make a few tentative attempts to identify with some precision who might actually settle on the project. All, however, faded into obscurity, and organizers promoted and

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[72]In the summer of 1941, the chairman of Problem two suggested that as part of the process of amending the CBP act provision be made for establishing community pastures. CBJI, June 1941 Progress Report, 6.
[73]Marion Clawson, "Resettlement Experience," 79.

proceeded with the joint investigations on the basis that no matter who the settlers might be, they would need assistance in establishing their farms.[74]

Neither did investigation organizers develop any overall policy for approaching or answering the more subjective question of who should settle on the project. The President periodically stressed that he wanted the government to open the lands "only to relief families or families which for many different reasons have abandoned their homes. . . . to the 'Grapes of Wrath' families of the nation."[75] Barrows brought this perspective to his post, asserting that "provision must be made

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[74] In spring 1941 project leaders announced a program to identify future settlers by investigating who was showing interest in the CBP. In conjunction with the BAE, the Bureau would organize inquiries it was receiving to identify all possible information that could be gleaned from the letters. CBJI, April 1941 Monthly Progress Report, 8. Implementation of the idea, however, appeared limited to tabulations of state of origin. The results got only cursory mention. Tabulations began on 29 August 1941. The state of origin tabulations mentioned above appeared in the December 1942 and December 1943 Progress Reports, with notes that inquiries had fallen off since the outbreak of war.

In February 1942 USBR attempted to identify attitudes of potential settlers by questioning basin residents. The wording assumed that the respondents might be future settlers. Only 38 people completed the questionnaire, and 15 were high school students. The local farm bureau offered to disseminate the questionnaire to its members but the results never appeared in the progress reports. CBJI, February 1942 Progress Report.

The Problem 9 committee authorized a study on "Standards and Levels of Living" that extrapolated from research on past settlement on other projects to the future population of the CBP. The author admitted that extrapolation was a "hazardous undertaking," and Carl Taylor of the BAE pointed out that because of the war the results of ten recent settlement projects were never finished. The study was completed two years after Problem 9 was published. CBJI, Standards and Levels of Living: Studies by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for Problem 9 (1947), 3, v.

See also, CBJI, Character and Scope, 1-2; and S. E. Hutton, "Land Use, "7-8.

[75] Franklin D. Roosevelt to Harold L. Ickes, 21 December 1939, in Edgar B. Nixon, (ed.), Franklin D. Roosevelt & Conservation, 1911-1945, Volume Two: 1937-1945 (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 406. The President, though supporting planning for the project and echoing Barrows' ideas about who the government should be planning for, seemed unaware at this time of work begun by the joint investigators. In his memo to Ickes, written months after the investigations were organized, he argued it was time to begin planning for the project and suggested the National Resources Committee take on the responsibility.

for poor or even destitute settlers."[76] Yet, neither he nor other investigation leaders made any effort to enshrine this social welfare approach as policy. Nor did they make settler selection an investigation problem. Rather, Barrows told various researchers who raised the issue that "none of the 28 problems is concerned specifically with settler selection."[77]

The result was that the hands-on planners worked with no consistent guidance from the leadership nor with any shared and agreed upon definition either of who was likely to settle or who should benefit from this public undertaking. As a consequence, researchers, who came from a variety of disciplines and agencies, projected onto the specific problems they were studying the varied and particular perspectives they brought with them about who should and would settle.

Researchers for Problem 14, charged with how to extend financial aid to needy settlers, included social scientists and USDA personnel involved in relief work. They argued that both congressional policy and public desire "precludes adherence to the requirement that public land applicants have $2,000 cash or the equivalent in

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[76] Harlan H. Barrows to John C. Page, 29 July 1939, Box 2, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. Barrows had served on the Mississippi Valley Committee of the Public Works Administration and the National Resources Planning Board and had led the Northern Great plains committee that made recommendations later included in the Wheeler-Case Act.

[77] As reported in CBJI, June 1941 Progresss Report, 34. Two months later, the monthly progress report announced a proposal that the USBR and BAE study existing reclamation projects with an eye toward "developing simple but objective aids to the selection of settlers on the Columbia Basin Project." Though the report suggested that the study could be completed in a year, no mentions appear in later reports. CBJI, August 1941 Progress Report, 4.

In the fall of 1939, Walter Duffy, Portland Regional Director of the FSA, wrote Barrows that "the problem of family selection deserves intensive study, including participation by a competent social worker" and suggested that it "be explored under a study problem." Walter A. Duffy to Harlan H. Barrows, 6 October 1939, Box 88, RG 187, National Archives, Seattle.

equipment and livestock." They recommended instead that settlers "be required to have $500 in cash or a readily convertible cash equivalent," qualifying even this reduced prerequisite by asserting that public and official opinion would wish provision for the poor, even destitute who were otherwise qualified.[78] Problem 15 researchers, headed by the USBR District Counsel and charged with determining how best to control private land within the project, argued on the other hand that "experience has proved that a prospective settler must have a minimum of $2,000 in cash or the equivalent in equipment and livestock, and also at least two years experience as a farmer to insure his success as an irrigation farmer on a reclamation project." They acknowledged others might want to provide for "dust bowl" refugees.[79] Researchers for Problem 2, who had pushed for the reclassification of marginal, shallow soils, were agricultural specialists from Washington State College and the Experiment Station. They supported settler selection to identify managerial and technical ability.[80]

Most other researchers avoided taking a position on the issue.[81] The result was that scattered throughout the different problem studies--and in memos, public

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In 1941, Catherine Bauer, U.S. Housing Authority, suggested various studies to date indicated the "need for settler selection." CBJI, June 1941 Progress Report, 34.

[78] CBJI, Problem 14, 7, x. Also CBJI, Plan of Investigations, Memorandum No. 8, 15 May 1940, 18; and CBJI, July 1940 Progress Report, 11 Team member Catherine Bauer of the U.S. Housing Authority described "opening up settlement opportunity for farmers without capital" as a "policy to which the Bureau of Reclamation is committed by Congress since 1941 and which the President has often stated to be the primary purpose of the basin." New Republic, September 1942, 280.

[79] CBJI, Tentative Report on Problem No. 15, 17-18, 20. (Hereafter CBJI, Problem 15.) They specifically suggested the same standards and weighting then in use for other projects: character 15%, industry 20%, capital 30%, and farm experience 35%. The report authors expounded for two pages on the need for this established settler selection system, but mentioned "competent and worthy" dust-bowl farmers in only one paragraph.

[80] CBJI, Problem 2, xxi, 172-174 and passim.

[81] CBJI, Problem 9, 78-79. Problem 9 researchers, for instance, postulated that sentiment "may" dictate rather than "will" demand relaxing capital requirements, while

speeches, and monthly reports--were a variety of assumptions about the settlers. Avoiding the task of settler identification, however, could complicate the ultimate goal of the investigations, the "efficient adjustment of settlers to their new environment."[82] By proceeding to focus on how to provide aid, without agreeing on who would be aided, the joint investigators put forth a number of discrete proposals for settler assistance programs rather than one coordinated, overall plan.

Everyone connected with the investigations, however, agreed that the government should assist the settler. Individual initiative alone would suffice for no one who wished to farm on the project, no matter his qualifications. The very existence of the studies was a rejection of the laissez-faire approach to reclamation settlement. Following in the wake of the Fact Finders, those who conceived and worked on the joint investigations believed that preparing in advance for settlement would reduce to a minimum the human privation and physical waste that had accompanied pioneering in the past and would help "every settler who casts his lot on the project" to increase the likelihood of success and attain a standard of living significantly above subsistence.[83]

Providing settler assistance, however, required decisions on the type of help the government should provide, the amount of control it should exercise over the individual farmer, and the agency that would be responsible. Planners would find it

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assuming that settlers would be selected "in part upon their possession of a certain minimum of capital and capacity for work, " for neither of which they ventured any specifics.

[82]Hutton, "Land Use," 4.

[83] "Joint Investigations, Columbia Basin Project," Reclamation Era (August 1940):,219-220; and CBJI, Problem 2, 177. Problem 9 was charged with determining an acceptable standard of living. Its findings were widely cited by investigators on other problems,

easier to decide on the character of the help than on how and by whom it should be administered. Discussions of appropriate types of assistance ran the gamut from planning new communities to researching fertilizer use, but most investigators agreed on a few key points that the Fact Finders had raised to the forefront of discussion more than a decade earlier.

First, control of privately-owned lands within project limits was essential. Investigators for Problem 15 were charged with determining what methods "exist or could be developed for establishing the requisite control." In June 1940 they submitted a "tentative" report, recommending that the government acquire as much land as possible. Public ownership would enable a uniform program of land sale and development and would safeguard rights of both buyers and sellers. The government could apply to land purchasers whatever method of settler selection it wished, whether one requiring experience and capital or one providing for "dust bowl" refugees. Further, dryland wheat farmers, who owned "some of the best lands in the project," would be able to sell their land in one transaction to the government rather than "piecemeal" to individuals and consequently would be more willing to join the project. Finally, investigators recommended that a newly-created public agency comprised of representatives from the irrigation districts and the state and five appointees chosen by the Reclamation Commissioner, or alternatively the Secretary of Interior, be charged with this responsibility. A representative agency could also

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such as Problem 2 who assumed that subsistence farms would be of "negligible importance." (p. 75).

study and deal with the "many problems of land settlement, development and cultivation and financing" that were to be expected.[84]

Second, during the development period many settlers would require credit and financial assistance far beyond that available from family, friends, private banks, and other governmental agencies. Problem 14 investigators assigned to this task alluded specifically to the conclusion of the Fact Finders that "loans for development should be made part of reclamation policy" and assumed that settlers would require extraordinary financial aid and special guidance and assistance. They proposed a period of "special aid," starting on day one and running for ten years. Within this period assistance would be flexible and adjusted to match the settler's "capital assets, his preferences in housing, and the requirements of the farm unit," including special development period requirements. For the neediest settlers and those uncertain of their long-term commitment to farming, the government would offer an opportunity to lease a farm on a trial basis, though leasing would be limited by the amount of land in public ownership.[85]

Third, settlers would need agricultural and technical assistance and advice. Early on, the investigators were divided over the extent to which the government should prepare the land and farmstead for the settler. Harlan Barrows and others predisposed to an activist role for the government suggested that a public agency carry out wide-ranging land and farmstead preparation before the arrival of the

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[84] CBJI, Problem 15, 17-20, 26. Further, the government could more easily divide tracts of land along lines conforming to contours and location of infrastructure

[85] CBJI, Problem 14, 2, xiv, x, xii, 10, 71-72.

settlers.[86] Eventually, most investigators agreed the government should have only a limited role, restricted to what was termed heavy leveling of the publicly-owned lands, including planting cover crops to prevent blowing of the light soils so prevalent in the basin. The settler would be responsible for all other development, including clearing and finish leveling of the land, ditching, and construction of fencing and buildings.[87] It was also agreed that the government should provide settlers with detailed information, particular to irrigated agriculture in the basin. New farmers would need such information if they were to convert the range of desert lands they would confront into productive farms without damaging soil and water resources, at the same time generating income sufficient to support their families and repay their obligations to the government.[88] Agricultural scientists serving on various problems were charged with determining proper land use and farming techniques, water requirements, and crops best suited to the soils, climate, and topography of various

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[86] CBJI, June 1940 Progress Report, 22-23. Barrows' suggestions followed in the footsteps of the Salvation Army, Franklin Lake, the FSA, and the president's Committee on Farm Tenancy.

[87] Most investigators agreed the benefits of early development by the government would not offset the great indebtedness that would fall to the farmer. There was also fear of environmental damage from widespread, intensive clearing and leveling. See, for instance, CBJI, Problem 9, 7-8.

[88] Included among the areas investigated were proper leveling gradients for different soil conditions, types of farm economy including crops and crop rotations best adapted to specific areas within the project and the different financial requirements of each, optimum fertilization, the role of livestock, optimal water requirements for the recommended crops and land use programs including lengths of runs for rill systems and costs and benefits of sprinklers, availability of suitable markets and transportation systems, market competition with other farmers in the area, building and farm layouts, domestic water systems, farm and home budgeting, and even house designs that could easily be expanded as need demanded and resources allowed. The arguments that the joint investigators made that the settlers required special educational and credit assistance paralleled closely the recommendations of the Fact Finders fifteen years earlier.

basin areas. They were also to devise "practicable and equitable means" of insuring their implementation.[89] This latter responsibility engendered controversy.

The two remaining questions of settler assistance confronting the joint investigators--how much control the government should exercise over settler behavior and what agency should be responsible--had fractured the larger debate on the issue. Project planners, too, found both hard to resolve. They also found the answers to be interconnected.

Controversy over the question of government control attended the birth of the investigations. A September 1939 interchange between Barrows and John Haw, Director of Agricultural Development for the Northern Pacific Railway, one of the largest landowners in the Columbia Basin, laid out the dilemma facing planners. Haw cautioned Barrows against paternalism:

> While I recognize that farming, commercial and industrial opportunities created by the project are of government making and that further governmental aid, direction and control is both necessary and desirable in preliminary stages of development, I do trust as much as possible of individual enterprise and initiative will be preserved. In other words, it seems desirable to be cautious of carrying control of everything to the point of abject regimentation in our desire to achieve an ideal in community planning. Mental as well as physical qualities atrophy with non-use. Control and direction of some settlement projects have been as detailed and so absolute as to result in the better settlers moving away due to curtailment of liberty of action, while those remaining became indolent and complaining wards of the governing agency. I hope in the Columbia Basin we may plan rather definitely the point where the tow rope is released and the settler moves forward under his own power.[90]

In response, Barrows asserted he did not lean toward either extreme:

> On the one hand we must try to avoid unnecessary paternalism and on the other hand we must help the settler to help himself successfully. We must

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[89] CBJI, Problem 3, 1.

[90] John Haw to Harlan Barrows, 29 September 1939, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

> try to avoid both 'control' that would prove unnecessary and 'individual freedom of action' that might prove inimical to private and public welfare.[91]

Inexperienced settlers should not be left to their own devices.[92] Other settlers might "place their own judgment above that of the expert. . . or. . choose to follow antisocial courses that lead to their own temporary profit."[93] As they approached their various problems, investigators were faced with the question of when to loose the tow rope. To avoid destructive land use, financial problems for the government, or damage to the financial and social interests of fellow settlers, when was control necessary, when were demonstration and advice sufficient? Answers proved elusive.

Agricultural scientists serving on Problem 2, concerned with proper land use and farming techniques, based much of their work on the assumption that settlers would have experience. They also looked to settler selection as a way to identify and place such experienced farmers on the project. During their analysis, they often postulated this experienced farmer and exhibited a bias toward minimizing government oversight. At the same time, however, they were committed to protection of land and water and when directly confronted with reconciling settler independence with the good of the resources, were inclined to be vague and ambiguous:

> It is further assumed that settlers will be given guidance, particularly during the settlement period, in the selection and development of their farm enterprises, but that, except for restrictions necessary to prevent the abuse of land and water resources and to protect the security of lending agencies,

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[91] Harlan Barrows to John Haw, 13 October 1939, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[92] Harlan Barrows to John Page, 29 July 1939, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[93] CBJI, Problem 2, 4.

> farmers ordinarily will have free choice in the selection of crop and livestock enterprises.[94]

They gave no specifics on what these restrictions and guidance might be.

Problem 3 investigators, responsible for devising "practicable and equitable means" of insuring proper land use, opened their report by asserting that "ignorance is usually at the bottom of most land use abuses" and that most settlers when "fully informed" would "appreciate the long-term wisdom of observing proper land use practices" and would "cooperate voluntarily."[95] Believing that education not coercion should be the primary tool, they turned for guidance to the experiences of USDA agencies that dispensed advice to farmers.[96] They concluded that the Extension Service should serve as the locus of assistance in farm development, including land preparation, irrigation, and soil improvement. Such help, they argued, would be absolutely essential during the early settlement years. They touted a cooperative USBR-Extension program, established in 1940 on the Owyhee and Boise projects, as a well-working example of how to educate settlers during the development period.[97] They also recommended that the settlers should organize soil conservation districts to introduce an element of self-imposed, cooperative regulation. These investigators, on the other hand, gave only cursory attention to government imposed restrictions. They suggested that public as well as private lending institutions might

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[94] CBJI, Problem 2, 75, xix.
[95] CBJI, Problem 3, 1.
[96] Examples of these existing institutions and programs affiliated with or administered through the USDA included the AAA and Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act subsidies, loans through the Production Credit Corporation and Farm Credit Administration, Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Smith-Hughes courses in agriculture,

insist, as part of loan agreements, that proper land use standards be followed.[98] They mentioned that federal ownership of project land "would permit" the government to include in leases or sales contracts "special controls running with the land." But beyond cautioning that such controls "need be limited only by consideration of practicability and equitability (sic)," they did not specify what they might be or how similar controls could be applied to the much larger acreage that remained in private ownership.[99] Thus, although not rejecting control, these investigators directed most of their attention to the mechanics of an advisory approach. They also opted for the USDA, primarily through the Extension Service, as the proper institution to take responsibility.

Although also ambivalent, Problem 14 investigators, charged with determining "how may financial aid best be extended in conservatively adequate amounts to needy settlers," were more inclined, because of both client group and staff, to rely on control. First, they postulated settlers with a "wide range of needs, including "those without substantial experience," whose ability could be in question. Second, prominent among the staff were personnel drawn from USDA social welfare agencies, particularly the FSA. The FSA had instituted close supervision on its

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[97]A memorandum of understanding signed on 12 June 1940 between the USBR and the Extension Service provided that the Bureau would make funds available to Extension for special agents. CBJ, Problem 3, 7-8.

[98]Participants at a January 1940 conference on types of farm economy, when discussing the problem of control, pointed out that supervised loans by public farm credit agencies provided considerable possible control and if there were well recognized and established plans, private credit agencies could be expected to insist their borrowers follow the recommended path. (n.a.), Notes summarizing discussion with reference to investigation to determine types of farm economy most suitable for CBP, 20 January 1940, Box 238, College of Agriculture Acc. 15 (hereafter Coll. of Agr. 15), MASC, WSU.

[99] CBJI, Problem 3, 16.

resettlement programs for marginal farm families, believing the majority lacked not only capital but "technical skill, and successful managerial experience" as well. Many of the investigators thought that agency's experience could serve as a guide. They acknowledged criticisms of "shockingly bad" conditions on some FSA projects and widespread settler dissatisfaction with administrative control, but responded by searching for a way to make supervision acceptable as well as effective—to balance settler morale with the need to attain the goals for which credit would be extended.[100]

In the loan program they proposed, a settler would have to produce results satisfactory to the government in order to get additional funding. Credit would be extended on a per acre basis as development was completed, but would be "contingent on results satisfactory to the financing agency." Thus, the ability of a farmer to qualify for a larger loan would depend on the agency determining the work to be "satisfactory" and on the value placed on the improvements. Those who did not develop their farmsteads in a manner satisfactory to the government would find their capacity to borrow additional money curtailed. Problem 14 also included a trial program under lease for settlers financially unable to buy, with limited experience or uncertain about their commitment to the project. The government would exercise significant control. Settlers would be unable either to renew a lease or to convert to a purchase contract if the government deemed their work unsatisfactory. Investigators

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[100]CBJI, Problem 14,1, xii and ix; CBJI, June 1940 Progress Report; Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Farm Population and Rural Life Activities, Annual Report (October 1941), 35-36; Clawson, "Resettlement Experience," 56, 2-3, 11; and CBJI, September 1941 Progress Report. L. N. Fryer of the FSA suggested Wheeler-Case programs as a model that emphasized local control and tended to raise settler morale. CBJI, June 1941 Progress Report. Participants at a September 1941 conference authorized further research on the problems, specifically studies of credit agency and settler relations on the Yakima and Boise

argued this procedure would function as a type of settler selection. Settlers would be able to renew or purchase only if they satisfied certain conditions: prepared land for irrigation and completed buildings and fencing improvements in a satisfactory manner; used specified soil and moisture conserving practices; and paid each annual obligation in full.[101]

Their final report, however, was ambivalent and ambiguous. Details of the lending and leasing programs pointed to a relationship between the settlers and the government, primarily during the development period, weighted toward control. A summary statement in the introduction, however, highlighted farmer independence and eschewed government paternalism. It asserted that the purpose of financial aid was neither to give the settler "something for nothing" nor to compel acceptance of "particular ways of living and doing."[102]

Problem 14 was one of the last to be completed. As an adjunct to their recommendations on financial aid, the investigators proposed that the government establish a special agency to handle all assistance programs during the development period. It would be, they argued, merely an extension of the public corporation their colleagues on Problem 15 had considered the best way to handle land purchases and sales, including settler selection.[103] The success of a credit program depended heavily on how well settlers developed and improved their lands and began farming. Thus, they recommended that this super agency be responsible

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projects. Other agencies of the USDA including the BAE and the Farm Credit Administration were represented as was the USBR.

[101] CBJI, Problem 14, x, xii, 42-45, 71-72.

[102] CBJI, Problem 14, ix, 21.

for overseeing not only financing but activities to educate, guide, and assist the farmers in these early years. This proposal contradicted the recommendation made by the investigators for Problem 2. It left day to day administration of education with the Extension Service, but took ultimate oversight and responsibility for settler assistance away from that agency and placed it with a body on which the USDA had no guarantee of representation.[104]

Thus, the joint investigators, when they turned to settler assistance, agreed on the need for and the general type of aid that should be provided. But just as with settler identification, some basic questions were left unresolved. There was no decision on what agency should provide assistance. Neither was agreement reached on where to draw the line between government control and voluntary action. The Joint Investigators expanded on the work of the Fact Finders, applying many of the recommendations of the earlier panel to the CBP, but their task was complicated by the highly charged and often divisive political context in which they had to operate and the need to apply general recommendations to very specific conditions within the project. They were heterogeneous in their ideas and far from single minded in their approach. In many ways, they mirrored rather than resolved the country's ambivalence about agricultural land settlement. Many hard questions on who should settle on the project and how they should be helped were left unresolved. The difficulty of resolving them would become increasingly clear as planning met the realities of politics and the environment.

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[103] CBJI, Tentative Report on Problem 15, 21-30; and CBJI, Problem 14, 118-120. Problem 15 investigators submitted this report while Problem 14 was still in the organizational stage.
[104] CBJI, Problem 14, 108, 114-115, and 119.

Chapter 4

Legislation: Planning Meets Politics

There might be hidden in this bill a program whereby the Department of Agriculture might be taken over by the Department of the Interior. Some of our boys are afraid of that
Congressman William Hill of Colorado, 1942.[1]

In January 1942, the hard decisions on project settlement moved to the forefront in legislative debates. Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes introduced for the consideration of Congress a bill to amend an act passed in 1937 "to prevent speculation in lands of the Columbia Basin." The earlier legislation had been intended to limit farm size, prevent spiraling increases in land prices that could drive costs out of the reach of many deserving settlers, and assure repayment of construction costs.[2] Yet, soon after passage, even adamant supporters of these goals had come to see the 1937 law as "unworkable and confusing in a number of major aspects."[3] Limitations on farm size were too rigid and made no allowance for

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[1] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, The Columbia Basin Project Act, Hearings on H.R. 6522. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942, 37. (Hereafter House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522.)

[2] 50 Stat 208, 27 May 1937. The full title was "An Act to prevent speculation in lands in the Columbia Basin prospectively irrigable by reason of the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam project and to aid actual settlers in securing such lands at the fair appraised value thereof as arid land, and for other purposes. It provided that an individual could own a maximum of 40 acres (or a husband and wife together 80 acres); that an owner must sell all land above that allowable limit at prices set by the government; that the government appraise all land within the basin to determine these values; that no one who bought land after 1937 at a price above these appraised values could receive irrigation water without paying a penalty; and that each landowner sign a recordable contract, running as a covenant with the land title, agreeing to sell all excess land at the appraised value. The law also set up a mechanism for collecting part of the project construction costs from the landowners, by requiring them to form irrigation districts with the authority to sign contracts with the federal government guaranteeing repayment of the costs of project construction allocated to irrigation;

[3] Harold L. Ickes to the Speaker of the House, 30 January 1942, in House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522. 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942, 9.

variations in land quality. Anti-speculation provisions were too open-ended and penalties for noncompliance fell too heavily on the buyer rather than the seller. Little accommodation was made to ease problems facing existing owners required to dispose of excess property in order to receive irrigation water. The bill that the Secretary proposed to Congress in 1942, sought to rectify these weaknesses and flaws and open the way for progress in the stalled contract negotiations between the federal government, the districts, and the landowners.[4]

The 1937 law limited each individual, including husband and wife separately, to one farm unit of 40 acres. Pointing out that the soils of the project varied greatly in agricultural value, critics argued that this uniform limit, which applied to existing as well as future owners, did not provide "sufficient elasticity."[5] Under the proposed bill the CBP was to be platted into farm units "sufficient in size for the support of an average-sized family at a suitable level of living." Taking into consideration the variety in quality and topography of the land, a farm unit could contain from ten to 160 acres of irrigable land. An individual, corporation, or family could own and receive water for one such unit. The 1937 law enabled evasion of acreage limits through the ownership of farm units by minors, which was legal in Washington State. To plug this loophole, a family was defined as husband and wife and all minor children.[6] In response to concerns of district officials that "wheat men, stock men,

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Commissioner Page (p.41) emphasized that the burden of penalties for sales violating anti-speculation provisions fell on the buyer rather than the seller, and the limits on the maximum size of farm units were too restrictive and inflexible.

[4]Only when these contracts were signed would Congress release money for project construction.

[5] Irrigation Engineer to Acting Supervising Engineer, attachment, 28 July 1939, Box 564, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[6] Memorandum for Commissioner, Re: Section by section analysis of H.R. 6522, 20 April 1942, Box 509, Denver, 3 and 8; Field Coordinator to Commissioner, 6 March 1941, Box 511,

and sheep men" would be driven out of the basin, existing owners could retain a maximum of 160 acres no matter the quality of land.[7]

To replace the open-ended anti-speculation prohibition in the 1937 law, the bill stated that no land could be sold at a price exceeding the government appraisal during the ten years after water became available. To protect buyers, it specified that such sales would be "invalid and unenforceable" by the seller. To protect sellers, however, it eliminated restrictions on sales after ten years, "after the land has had adequate opportunity for full development." [8] The new bill also guaranteed that existing landowners who owned more than 160 acres and were required to sell holdings above that amount before receiving irrigation water would have the opportunity to sell the excess land to the government in a single cash transaction.[9] This provision was of great importance in the East and South districts. These areas contained "about 300,000 acres of the best land in the Columbia Basin project. . . now being farmed in large units. . .as dry wheat lands."[10] District directors and

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RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and Harlan H. Barrows to Commissioner, 20 December 1940, Box 504, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[7] B.B. Horrigan to John Page, 12 November 1940, Box 504, RG 115, National Archives, Denver. Horrigan, a South District director, argued that such people, if they remained, "would be the nucleus of successful settling and developing the country, and . . . would furnish employment to some of their more needy neighbors and enable them to get started through utilizing their labor at a time when it is not necessary on their own small farms."

[8] John C. Page to Hon. J.F. Robinson, 25 November 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver, Colorado.

[9] In Section (2) the Secretary was given the authority to purchase excess land from existing landowners for cash under an arrangement which would allow the existing owner to sell for cash and to transfer "substantially contemporaneously the possession of all excess land which is both owned by him and operated as a single operating unit for dry farming or grazing purposes." House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 3.

[10] Harlan H. Barrows to Commissioner John C. Page and enclosure, 27 February 1942, Box 509, RG 115, Federal Archives, Denver.

federal officials were concerned to forestall existing owners from withdrawing "as much as one-third of the better area" from the project.[11]

The Department, however, did not limit its draft legislation to rectifying problems in the existing law. Rather, it presented to Congress a much more comprehensive bill that authorized government land settlement, a task not contemplated in the 1937 Act. The bill anchored this new function to a general grant of authority given the Department of Interior to acquire land in the name of the U.S. government.[12] The intent was that by owning the land the government would be able to control both development and settlement.

Section (4) focused on settlement. It opened with a list of purposes justifying the powers given to the Secretary of the Interior: "providing opportunities for permanent settlement of farm families, rehabilitating farmers on the land, protecting the project lands, facilitating the development of the project, preventing speculation in project lands, and providing for the general welfare." It then vested in the Secretary of the Interior the authority to carry out tasks needed to realize these purposes. As well as acquiring and administering lands, he was authorized to sell or lease them; to clear, level, and prepare them for the handling of irrigation water; and to disseminate information. Further, on an experimental basis, the bill bestowed on him the power to loan operating funds to settlers and construct improvements on farmland including buildings, fences, and wells. A separate subsection bestowed on

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[11] John C. Page to J. W. Robinson and enclosure, 25 November 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver, 3.

[12] In Section (4) the Secretary of Interior was authorized "to acquire in the name of the United States, by condemnation or purchase at prices satisfactory to him, such lands or interests in lands, within or without the project area, as he deems appropriate for the protection, development, or improvement of the project." House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 5-6.

the Secretary almost unlimited freedom of decision and action in the settlement of farmers. As provided in the Fact Finders Act of 1924, he was to prescribe the "qualifications of applicants for the purchase of land for purposes of irrigation farming." In a very open-ended mandate, however, he was authorized to regulate not only the selection of such applicants, but "other matters of administration of the settlement and development of the project." The final subsection directed the Secretary of the Interior to act "in collaboration" with the Secretary of Agriculture and other "concerned" departments and agencies in preparing a program of "land acquisition, development, and settlement" and "provide for the participation" of these collaborators in carrying out the authorized work. [13]

Thus, the Department proposed to Congress in 1942 a bill, H.R. 6522, that vested wide-ranging authority for land settlement with the Secretary of Interior, authority not contemplated in the 1937 legislation. When Secretary Ickes unveiled

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[13]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 5-6. The specific wording opening Section (4) was: "the Secretary is authorized, subject to the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, as an experiment for which his authority shall extend only to lands located in the first three irrigation blocks, to construct improvements on public lands and lands acquired under this subsection, including, without limitation by reasons of this enumeration, buildings, fences, and wells, and to loan to settlers funds which in the judgment of the Secretary are necessary in their operations during the development period of the irrigation block in which the land involved is located." The bill also limited the amount of money that could be loaned: "Such loans for operations to settlers within any irrigation block, plus the cost of any improvements constructed by the United States on the lands of settlers in said block, plus all other extensions of credit (exclusive of construction charges, land sale prices, and costs of clearing, leveling, and preparing lands for the handling of irrigation water) made by, or guaranteed by, the United States or any agency thereof shall not average more than $4,000 per farm unit, in said block, in connection with which such loans, improvements, or other extensions of credit are made." A later subsection expanded on the Secretary's discretion in leasing "during the development period of any irrigation block or during the first five years of irrigation of any tract of land owned by the United States."

Although specific wording did not appear in the draft bill, H.A. Parker, an irrigation engineer with the Columbia Basin Project, when addressing the irrigation districts in the spring of 1941, had described the power of the Secretary to lease farm units as being "for the purpose of testing out the fitness of settlers." Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Minutes, 6 May 1941. (Hereafter QCBID, Minutes)

the bill to Congress, he argued first that it was needed because the "inauguration of a sound land-settlement policy" was of "foremost importance to the economy of the Nation, the Pacific Northwest, and the Columbia Basin." He also sought to portray the effort behind it as the work of many hands, not merely the Department of Interior. He argued that the bill might be said "to emanate" from the Joint Investigations and that its final form reflected suggestions made and incorporated in response to "preliminary drafts" circulated to "others who are interested in one way or another in the Columbia Basin project." [14] Commissioner Page, in opening testimony on H.R. 6522, expanded on Secretary Ickes' comments tracing its genesis to the Joint Investigations, specifically identifying Problem 15, which had been completed and circulated to "all participants" in the Joint Investigations in mid-July 1940.

Officials in the Washington office of the Department of Interior released the first draft of the bill in February 1941 to a limited number of recipients. Throughout the rest of the year, an expanding number of interested parties commented upon and revised later drafts before agreement was reached on a final bill to be presented to Congress. An examination of this year-long bill-making process provides insight into the extent of influence the joint investigators and others, particularly the Department of Agriculture, had in crafting the bill. It also brings to the fore differences of opinion among Bureau personnel. The evolution in drafts makes clear that agreement on what land settlement functions the government should carry out and how and by whom they would be administered was difficult to come by.[15]

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[14]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 9 and 11.
[15] Commissioner to Supervising Engineer, 24 February 1941, Box 511, RG 115, National Archives, Denver. In February copies were sent to Bureau officials in the Columbia Basin, the Bureau counsel in Portland, the Chief Engineer in Denver, and to Harlan Barrows.

No one drafting or commenting on the bill appears to have disagreed with the recommendation made by Problem 15 investigators that the government should purchase private land and resell it to settlers.[16] In the case of the tasks the government would perform for settlers in the development of farmsteads, however, the bill took an entirely different approach than most joint investigators. Problem 9 researchers, in a decision endorsed in the summer of 1940 by other investigators, determined that the Bureau should strictly limit its on-farm development work to rough preliminary leveling only.[17] In 1941, the Problem 14 planners responsible for devising a solution to the settlers' financing needs, beyond determining that private credit was inadequate, had only begun their work. They eventually left unsettled what agency should extend credit.

Beginning with the earliest drafts, however, the Bureau suggested that the Secretary of the Interior should have the authority "to improve such lands or other lands in the project area by clearing, leveling and preparing them for the distribution of irrigation water."[18] By July, when a draft was presented to Secretary Ickes, these tasks had been expanded to include the construction of "buildings, fences, wells, ditches, and other improvements essential to the occupation and utilization of the lands."[19] After discussions with the Bureau of the Budget and the USDA, the final

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Commissioner to Director of Information, 18 June 1940, Box 504, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[16] Harlan H. Barrows to John C. Page, attachment, 27 February 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[17] CBJI, June 1940 Progress Report, 22-23.

[18] W.O. draft, 25 February 1941, Box 491, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[19] Director of Information to Commissioner of Reclamation, 18 March 1941; District Counsel to Commissioner, 14 April 1941; and Field Coordinator to Commissioner, 6 March 1941, all in Box 511, RG 115, National Archives, Denver. Harlan Barrows, Director of Information William Warne and Field Coordinator Edward Torbert suggested the changes. Bureau District Counsel B. E. Stoutemyer, who had headed Problem Group 15, opposed them. He wrote,

draft specified that these tasks were to be carried out only on an experimental basis in the first three irrigation blocks and only with the collaboration and participation of other federal agencies, particularly the Department of Agriculture. During this redrafting process, provisions written by William Warne were included to permit DOI to make loans to settlers during the development period.[20]

Answers to the question of who should have authority to administer authorized land settlement functions also evolved during the drafting process. Problem 15 Investigators, singled out by Commissioner Page, recommended that a public agency be established to take responsibility for the purchase, administration and sale of project land and that it be made up of nine members, including the presidents of the three irrigation districts, the Washington State Director of Conservation and Development, and five appointees of the Secretary of Interior. They suggested also that this agency might participate in other settlement functions. If such a public agency were unacceptable to Congress, the investigators suggested that its powers be granted to the Secretary of Interior and that an advisory board,

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"another power provided in this bill which I hope will not be used much, if at all, is the authority for improving the farm units at government expense by leveling, ditching, seeding, building houses, barns and other structures. This has been tried a number of times, such as in the case of the Durham and Delhi projects in California, and has always resulted in the loss of the money involved in such attempts by governmental or state agencies. . . I certainly hope that we do not try the Durham and Delhi plan on the Columbia Basin project."

[20]The assumption, as spelled out by William Warne in talks with the Bureau of the Budget, was that approximately three-quarters of the settlers would obtain such loans, which would average $4,000. Warne also argued that settlers with access to a minimum amount of capital had a "larger measure of success" and that without such financial assistance were unable to obtain "even minimum standard houses. . . until the passage of about 10 years." John C. Page, Memorandum for the Secretary, 28 January 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and William E. Warne, Memorandum for the files, 10 October 1941, with attachments, Box 510, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

constituted as recommended for the agency, be established to offer counsel and advice.[21]

The original draft prepared by the Washington Office of the Department of Interior directed that the Secretary "shall" establish a nine member advisory board, not an agency. In addition to the irrigation district presidents and the state official, it was to include three members to be designated by the Secretary from the personnel of the Department of Interior, and "two members to be designated by the Secretary of Agriculture."[22] In March, the Denver office of the Bureau recommended that the entire subsection be deleted, essentially vesting all land purchase, administration, and sale powers with the Secretary of Interior. However, Harlan Barrows, Bureau Director of Information William Warne, and other Bureau officials connected with the joint investigations rejected this proposal. They argued that the advisory board was necessary "to get support for the bill and to avoid trouble in the joint investigations," suggested it would "pay dividends in smoothness of operation," and pointed out that it held particular appeal for Fred Cunningham, a Spokane attorney who represented the irrigation districts.[23] Their changes appeared in the draft presented to Secretary Ickes in July.

Throughout the remainder of the year, this section underwent major revisions, propelled in large part by the USDA. In September, Marion Clawson wrote the Field Coordinator of the Joint Investigations that a number of individuals in the Department

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[21] See Chapter 3 preceding.
[22] W.O. draft, 25 February 1941, Box 491, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[23] Director of Information to Commissioner, 18 March 1941, Box 511, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

of Agriculture would appreciate the opportunity to review the draft.[24] Over the next few months William Warne exchanged drafts and proposals with Gilbert White and E. H. Weicking of the USDA. In November Weicking sent Warne two proposed drafts of a portion of Section 4 dealing with the administration of settlement functions. Both began by stating that "it is the intent of Congress" that other federal departments should participate in land development and settlement. One mentioned the USDA specifically.[25] White later told Warne that the objective of the USDA was not to limit the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to perform his duties, but to insure that any rules he promulgated that affected the work of other departments were made cooperatively.[26]

The final wording governing the administration of settlement differed significantly from the draft presented to the Secretary in July. All provisions for an advisory board were dropped. This decision engendered disappointment and criticism from at least one member of the Problem 15 committee, Ben Kizer of Spokane, Washington, who feared a downgrading of the local role.[27] At the same time, the requirement that the Secretary of Interior collaborate with other federal agencies and irrigation districts in planning land acquisition, development and settlement was written to highlight the role of the Department of Agriculture. The bill

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[24] Edward Torbert to John C. Page, 16 September 1941, Box 510, RG 115, Federal Archives, Denver. Torbert's letter appeared to insinuate that distribution of the draft had been very limited up to that time.

[25] William E. Warne, Memorandum for the files, 10 October 1941 and attachments, Box 510, RG 115, Federal Archives, Denver; and E. H. W. to Bill, 21 November 1941, Box 510, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[26] William E. Warne, Memorandum regarding Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Act, 30 December 1941, Box 510, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[27] Ben Kizer to E. N. Torbert, 25 February 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and Commissioner to Planning Consultant H. H. Barrows, 12 March 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

also specifically required the participation of the USDA and other federal agencies in any agreed upon programs.[28] In October Milton Eisenhower had told Warne that the USDA would not oppose the bill.[29] By January Warne wrote Commissioner Page that with the most recent changes, he believed the "Department of Agriculture now will actively support it."[30] Commissioner Page, when forwarding the final draft to Secretary Ickes, wrote that these changes, which restated in "stronger terms" that other federal agencies "shall" participate, "represent some compromises, but I feel. . . that it is definitely in the interest of sound project development to embrace the compromises reached as a working basis among the several interested Federal agencies." [31]

In January 1942, therefore, Secretary Ickes presented to Congress a bill, H.R. 6522, that in matters directly related to in land settlement varied significantly from the recommendations of the joint investigators. Functions to be performed by the government were increased. The administrative structure downgraded local participation and strengthened the role of federal agencies, particularly the USDA. The bill ran into immediate opposition, and the land settlement provisions took the brunt of the assault. As this attack continued over the next year, few if any staunch supporters came forward in defense. Enemies proved to be much more committed than friends. The one exception was the authority given the Department of Interior to buy land. This had adamant supporters, most importantly irrigation district officials.

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[28] William E. Warne, Memorandum for the Commissioner, 8 January 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[29] Chief, Division of Information, to Acting Commissioner, 21 October 1941, Box 510, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[30] William Warne, Memorandum for the Commissioner, 8 January 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

Opposition to land settlement provisions came primarily from two sources, Congressional conservatives and, and, in spite of the compromise worked out to gain its support, the Department of Agriculture. The politicians were overt, incessant and often caustic in their criticisms. Congressional opponents made clear they had little use for either the intent of the bill or the bureaucratic mechanism it created. The bureaucrats were less forthcoming. USDA partisans were at best lukewarm friends and at worst clandestine enemies questioning the bill behind the scenes. The USDA supported land settlement, but increasingly made clear that it wanted this function to remain its responsibility and not be taken over by the Department of Interior.

By March, H.R. 6522 was the focus of hearings held by the House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation. In this venue, abetted by a cadre of equally committed opponents, Representative Henry Dworshak of Idaho led the attack.[32] Dworshak and his cohorts hammered away on two fronts, ideological and financial. On ideological grounds, they raised the specter of land settlement as a Trojan horse sneaking paternalistic socialism into a reclamation program they characterized as a fount of pioneer individualism.[33] They saw it as a radical departure from established policy, contaminating the proven irrigation and agricultural goals of reclamation with elements of rehabilitation and relief. Seizing on the bill's stated purpose of "rehabilitating farmers on the land," they argued it would eliminate the "best farmers,"

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[31] John C. Page, Memorandum for the Secretary, 28 January 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[32] Harlan Barrows to Commissioner, 26 May 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver. Barrows wrote Commissioner Page that "I think the members of the subcommittee, with the exception of the gentleman from Idaho, would be influenced by any firm and urgent statement you make."

[33]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522. Dworshak started this line of attack with his first questions of Commissioner Page (pp. 26-28), and he and his allies continued it throughout the entire series of hearings.

those who had been "courageous, industrious and successful and have not appealed to the government for assistance and aid," and would substitute the "drifters" and the "alleged victims of dust bowls."[34] They raised the specter of a paternalistic federal government undermining self reliance and engendering dependence in settlers who had proven personal and financial resources and were capable of succeeding on their own.[35] Dworshak and his allies championed reclamation farms as a home for the self-reliant; the bill's land settlement program they believed would fill the project with the dependent.

Turning from ideology to money, Congressional opponents argued that land settlement, as introduced in H.R. 6522, posed a financial threat both to the overall reclamation program and to individual settlers. Most members of the House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation were allies not enemies of reclamation. Although somewhat skeptical of government purchase of land, they accepted the argument that existing farmers deserved and needed this opportunity to dispose of their property. They relentlessly questioned, however, whether requesting money for loans, land leveling, and farmstead preparation would undermine the tenuous acquiescence reclamation received from representatives of urban areas and non arid farming regions. Henry Dworshak asked all supporters of reclamation whether they could:

> win the support of the eastern area by coming in with a program which admits that if reclamation development is to continue to be successful it will be necessary to adopt innovations which not only take cognizance of

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[34] Rep. Robert Rockwell of Colorado and Rep. Dworshak used these specific terms. House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 37 and 28.

[35] To underscore this point, Rep. Clinton Anderson of New Mexico referred to the 1924 Fact Finder's report which had claimed farmers came to depend on and expect the federal government to bail them out during difficult times. House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 201.

> financial aid for actual development but also the necessity for financial assistance from the Federal treasury for the colonization and settlement.[36]

Shifting their focus to the reclamation settler, land settlement critics asked if the programs envisioned in the bill would not require the individual to assume debt obligations too burdensome to honor. In the recent past, settlers unable to meet existing repayment obligations had demanded a moratorium. Why, these critics wondered, should the government now propose to obligate Columbia Basin settlers to assume additional financial burdens for land leveling or farmstead development carried out by the government?[37]

Ideological and financial opposition to resettlement was aggravated by and caught up in growing strife between Congress and the Farm Security Administration. To Congressional enemies of the FSA, the land settlement program envisioned in H.R. 6522 raised the specter of a bureaucratic clone of their current bogeyman. This idea, in fact, had been broached during the joint investigations by FSA officials, including northwest regional director Walter Duffy who had argued that "it would seem most desirable for the FSA to project its ideas and experience into the planning and settlement of any new reclamation undertakings in this area."[38] Such a possibility was anathema to many in the House who were incensed by a recent opinion issued by Comptroller General Lindsay Warren, who faulted the FSA for embarking without authorization on a program of farm family relocation which should

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[36]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 180.
[37]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 91. In this critique they were jointed by those on the joint investigations who had opposed a program that would have mandated government land preparation before settlement and obligated the farmers to pay the government to do work that an individual settler might best have used his own labor to accomplish.
[38]Walter A. Duffy to Harlan H. Barrows, 6 October 1939, Box 88, RG 96, National Archives, Seattle.

have been approved by Congress.[39] In their eyes, Warren had convicted FSA officials of malfeasance in office, when he found that "they had purchased large tracts of land and had created a corporate device, without authority, to accomplish indirectly that which had been prohibited by acts of Congress." [40] Clinton Anderson, representative from New Mexico, professing his support for the anti-speculation and repayment features in the bill, cautioned supporters of "colonization" on the Columbia Basin Project that they might find they were "running into the teeth of a violent storm." They could endanger their entire bill if they indulged "in any of the practices of the Farm Security Administration against which there was such violent complaint."[41] Possibly even more repulsive to these critics was the chance that somehow the FSA might co-opt this new program and become entrenched in, and to their mind, contaminate federal reclamation. Dworshak asked supporters to consider the consequences that might arise "if the Farm Security Administration should take over responsibility for the settlement," particularly if supporters needed to come to Congress for additional funding.[42]

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[39] House Select Committee of the House Committee on Agriculture, To Investigate the Activities of the Farm Security Administration, 78th Cong., 2d sess., 1944, H. Rept. 1430, 97. (Hereafter House Select Committee, Report on Activities of the FSA, 1944.

[40]House Select Committee, Report on Activities of the FSA, 1944, 46.

[41]House Select Committee, Report on Activities of the FSA, 1944, 173. Representatives had reason to believe that this proposal mimicked the FSA program. Although he made no such comparison during these original hearings, in January 1943 during Senate hearings on a much stripped down bill, Commissioner Page testified that "the first draft of the bill set up machinery similar to that by which the Farm Security Administration operated every settlement program." U. S. Congress, Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 408, Speculation in Lands of the Columbia River Basin Project, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 8. (Hereafter Hearings on S. 408).

Back in Washington State, the editors of the Seattle Times conjured up an agricultural peonage system populated exclusively by grapes of wrath settlers and presided over by "Czar" Harold Ickes. Seattle Times, 5 February 1942.

[42]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 109-110, 134, 181.

While many in Congress feared that the proposal to establish a land settlement program on the Columbia Basin Project could lead to an increase in FSA influence, Department of Agriculture partisans feared a decrease in the influence of USDA agencies. Early in the hearings, Commissioner Page had acknowledged under committee questioning that a logical interpretation of the bill as written would place sole authority for administration of land settlement in the hands of the Secretary of Interior and give him the power to administer the program more or less as he deemed fit.[43] Supporters of the Department of Agriculture saw in this interpretation the potential for the USBR to make inroads into and usurp the USDA's sphere of responsibility. They were not opposed to the government leveling land, developing farmsteads, or loaning money to settlers, but it was important that Agriculture and not Reclamation carry out these tasks.

USDA reaction to the bureaucratic balance of power in the bill became clear both through what its representatives omitted to say as well as through their overt comments. The omissions were consistent. Grover B. Hill, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, wrote to the Chairman of the Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation that "the Department of Agriculture approves and endorses the objectives of this bill."[44] Throughout the hearings, USDA officials couched their general endorsements of the bill similarly, mentioning only the goals and purposes. Missing was any reference to mechanisms to reach them.[45]

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[43] Page made these comments in response to inquiries from Congressman Thomas Winter and Congressman Charles Robertson. House Select Committee, House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 23 and 33.
[44] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 215.
[45] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 215. See also testimony of E. H. Wiecking, Associate Land Use Coordinator, USDA, (p. 143).

When they did discuss the specifics of the bill, champions of the USDA adopted two approaches to the question of means to desired ends. They expressed their support for vesting the USBR with the legal authority to control speculation in land prices and limit the size of farms. However, when the question of land settlement functions arose, those testifying from the USDA asserted their department's superior ability in that realm. While the USBR explained to the Committee that other agencies, including the USDA, might be permitted to participate, Agricultural officials pushed for certainty. E. H. Wiecking, USDA Associate Land Use Coordinator, testified that Agriculture interpreted statements of USBR representatives during bill negotiations and the testimony of Commissioner Page to the Committee "to mean that the Department of Agriculture, because it has the experience, the personnel, and the facilities—in fact is the only agency that has—will be called upon to perform the agricultural functions under the bill, including credit." Joseph Smart, of the Farm Security Administration, stated that "without criticizing the bill, we feel that such field is within the province of the Department of Agriculture, and . . . we expect to participate and carry out those phases of the program that are in our field." He specifically included the loaning of money to settlers. As he explained, "The bill says that the agency best qualified to do a thing shall do it. It seems obvious to us that the Department of Agriculture is best qualified in this connection." Agriculture officials repeatedly alluded to the Wheeler-Case Act as establishing a precedent for division of responsibilities between the two agencies. In that legislation, the division was by task and geographic. The Bureau of Reclamation was responsible for engineering and construction of project-wide irrigation systems. The USDA was responsible for all agricultural tasks, but also for

engineering tasks, such as leveling and preparation of water delivery systems, that occurred on-farm.[46]

Such circumscribed endorsements and attempts to establish an interpretation of H.R. 6522 that would vest authority for land settlement in the USDA obscured as much as revealed the extent of Agriculture's opposition to the bill. On the first morning of the hearings, Congressman Thomas Winter of Kansas announced that it was his "understanding that the Department of Agriculture is not satisfied with the pending bill." Winter's comment, if anything, appeared to understate antipathy to the bill within the USDA. Later that day Congressman William Hill of Colorado, a former agricultural extension agent, raised the possibility that "there might be hidden in this bill a program whereby the Department of Agriculture might be taken over by the Department of the Interior. Some of our boys are afraid of that."[47]

Commissioner Page reacted to Winter's comment by trying to publicly downplay any schism between the departments, testifying he thought the USDA was "in agreement with the bill generally, though there may be some provision with which it is not wholly satisfied." Later, when addressing the question of the USDA's role in land settlement he referred to the bill as establishing a principle of participation or containing provisions that anticipated and contemplated participation. Yet, in spite of these reassurances to the Department of Agriculture, he remained committed to a

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[46]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 145, 101, 136, 104, 157. E. H. Wiecking testified (pp. 156-157) that "statements were made by representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation during discussions of the draft bill to the effect that the Department of Agriculture could very definitely expect to actively and fully cooperate with the Bureau of Reclamation in the agricultural operations under the bill, including credit."

[47] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 37. James Ford of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, reporting to the irrigation districts after a trip to Washington, D.C., noted some fear among bill supporters that the USDA believed the Bureau

procedure that vested final authority over the entire land settlement program with the Secretary of Interior. "Any such program," he argued, " has to be put into the hands of somebody." Neither he nor any other sponsor of H.R. 6522 proposed amending the bill to guarantee a division of responsibilities that would put land settlement squarely into the hands of the Secretary of Agriculture.[48]

Even before H.R. 6522 was introduced, rumors spread that in spite of its role in drafting the bill, the Department of Agriculture was opposed to passage. Marion Clawson, the USDA's top official on the joint investigations, appeared to believe that an intractable bureaucratic power struggle fueled USDA's opposition. He was reported to have told Washington State officials that from the time the bill was introduced into Congress, Agriculture was "fighting it quietly but vigorously." Its passage through Congress would be "a fight to see which bureaucracy shall control."[49] As soon as the hearings began, the rumors intensified. As early as March 9, Commissioner Page wrote Harlan Barrows describing the testimony of Joe Smart as "equivocal" and complaining that it came "despite assurances given the day before by Mr. Eisenhower to Mr. Burlew that the Department of Agriculture was in favor of the bill. These assurances had been solicited when it was rumored that the

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of Reclamation was usurping its powers and would quietly oppose the bill. QCBID, Minutes, 7 April 1942.

[48] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 24, 21. There is little question that the USBR was aware of USDA dissatisfaction. In early March, H. W. Bashore, Assistant USBR Commissioner, wrote to the Secretary of the Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District that the USDA was not wholly satisfied with the bill. QCBID, Minutes, 7 April 1942.
There was a model already in operation in the Wheeler-Case Act dividing responsibilities on small reclamation projects; the USBR would be responsible for engineering and construction and the USDA for agricultural assistance to settlers.

[49] B. H. Kizer to P. Hetherton, 9 January 1942, Box 30, State Planning Council, WaA&RM, Olympia.

Department of Agriculture was opposed to the bill."[50] The next month a railroad official wrote the acting Bureau Commissioner that although he had heard from USBR representatives that "most of the differences between Agriculture and Interior have been adjusted. . . other sources make me fear at (sic) may not be so."[51] Irrigation districts, responding to reports brought back from the capital by representatives of the State and the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, discussed the rift at joint meetings in the spring and summer of 1942.[52]

Still, in spite of their differences over who should be in charge, the USDA and Interior agreed on the desirability of a land settlement program for the CBP. Defenders of the bill from both departments countered the ideological opposition to land settlement by arguing that learning from the hardships settlers faced in the past and calling for modifications to meet changing needs were not attacks on reclamation's tradition and would not undermine the nation's pioneer heritage.[53] They also developed a three-part argument that skirted this rhetorical and ideological battleground. First, they argued, reclamation law had never been static but had evolved and changed over the decades since 1902. Moreover, Congress itself had authorized policies that were precedents with which bill drafters were now merely trying to comply. Finally, they tried to mold to their benefit the identity of the

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[50] Commissioner to Planning Consultant, 9 March 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[51] R. W. Reynolds to H.W. Bashore, 3 April 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[52] QCBID, Minutes, 7 April 1942 and 9 July 1942; and H.A. Parker, Memorandum to Supervising Engineer, 14 April 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver. Ed Davis of the Washington State Department of Conservation and Development and James Ford of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce reported this rumor to the irrigation districts.
[53] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 187.

beneficiaries of these programs, including metamorphosing them from needy dust-bowl refugees into deserving ex-servicemen.

When Representative Dworshak and other critics of land settlement asked if the proposals in H.R. 6522 were not a "radical departure from the principles followed heretofore in setting up reclamation projects," supporters painted the bill as much less earth shaking. William Warne, Chief of the USBR Information Division, saw at the most a "conservative" departure or "mere extensions" of present authority, which "would not reverse previous reclamation policy in any respect," but would be only the latest evolutionary step in a progressively improved program. He and others reminded Congress that it had adjusted to changing conditions in the past. Warne pointed out that in providing credit to reclamation settlers, Congress had "started the broadening process. . . a few years ago." Harlan Barrows reminded the committee that the "National Reclamation Act of 1902 was subject to early amendment, and it has been amended repeatedly and extended," most recently in 1939 when Congress established variable repayment in order to ease the financial burden on settlers. The most telling piece of evidence and the one to which speaker after speaker turned to support the argument of on-going evolution in reclamation law was the Fact Finders Act of 1924. Howard Stinson, USBR general counsel, and William Warne argued that the settlement policy embodied in H.R. 6522 conformed with reclamation policy laid down in the 1924 act. In that law Congress, following the recommendations of the Fact Finders Commission, had authorized a major shift in reclamation settlement policy. The prior guiding principle of "first come, first served" was replaced with a policy designed to ensure that every successful applicant for public land possess

"industry, experience, character, and capital." At the same time it also had vested in the Secretary of the Interior the authority to regulate the selection of settlers.[54]

Further, bill supporters argued, not only had Congress modified reclamation law in the past, H.R. 6522 did not even establish new policies. Rather, in the changes it proposed, the bill followed precedents set by Congress in recent related legislation. The drafters were merely trying to comply with the wishes of the legislature. Congress had recognized in the Wheeler-O'Connor Act, the 1941 Appropriations Act, and the Wheeler-Case Act the need for policies that aided in the settlement and rehabilitation of those who would take up reclamation land. Congress had already declared its opinions on the issues that dominated the hearings—giving preference in selection to the needy and providing settlers with loans and assistance in developing the land and farmstead. In the Wheeler-O'Connor bill Congress authorized the Bureau of Reclamation to accept FSA loans, in whole or in part, as satisfying the requirement for capital, thereby both approving government loans to reclamation settlers and expanding opportunities for the indigent. Further, Congress, in the 1941 appropriations bill, specifically directed that in the opening of new reclamation land the Bureau give preference to the needy who through no fault of their own had lost land elsewhere. Finally, in the Wheeler-Case Act of 1941 Congress had introduced many of the specifics of settler assistance incorporated in H.R. 6522. That bill directed that the Secretary of Agriculture, "pursuant to cooperative agreement with the Secretary of Interior," aid in settlement of persons in need; extend agricultural advice and guidance; and clear, level and prepare lands for irrigation water." The argument of bill supporters, thus, was that the bill merely made

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[54]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 22, 27, 110, 127,

rational and specific to the CBP, land settlement activities that Congress had instituted in a haphazard manner up to this point.[55]

The last line of defense adopted by the bill's supporters went directly to the question of the identity of those who might be given preference in settlement of reclamation land. They adopted a two-pronged strategy that simultaneously downplayed preferences and shifted the focus away from the dust bowl refugee. Nothing in the bill, they pointed out, mandated that the Secretary of Interior give preference to the needy. It was merely, as Assistant Chief Bureau Counsel Howard Stinson responded in reply to a question, an "implication," not a "correct conclusion," that the bill required that failed farmers be given preference. Supporters downplayed the significance of the phrase "rehabilitating farmers on the Land," which appeared in the bill, repeating and repeating that H.R. 6522 was not a relief bill. They emphasized that comments, such as those of the President Roosevelt favoring "Grapes of Wrath" settlers, would not be binding on the interpretation of the bill. Harlan Barrows, who on numerous occasions had reiterated the President's comment, told Congress he would "strongly object. . . if a sizeable block of the proposed area were occupied by those folks." Supporters turned to the history of

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163, 162, 85, 209, 93, 186, 190, 83 and 153.

[55]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 164, 27. Committee members, however, questioned the precedent value of these laws, most particularly the 1941 appropriations bill. "The Committee on Appropriations has no authority to write law that should be framed in a legislative committee. Something that is simply slipped into an appropriation bill for the purpose of granting relief to settlers should not be regarded as establishing or proclaiming a policy of a committee." (pp. 93-95)

To the Bureau of Reclamation, Wheeler-Case might be a double-edged sword. Although, USBR witnesses cited it as establishing a precedent for land settlement assistance on reclamation projects, they were leery of the authority it vested in the Department of Agriculture. Howard Stinson of the USBR argued that although Wheeler-Case established that Congress approved such assistance, the law did not set a legal precedent for the Columbia Basin Project, because "it was self-contained and sets up the required authority

reclamation to elaborate their defense against this attack. The Bureau had proven on previous projects that it could discriminate between those who had failed through no fault of their own and those who were not capable of succeeding.[56] Thus, because the Bureau was under no compulsion to settle these people, it could limit such opportunities only to those who were not only needy, but were proven capable of taking advantage of the opportunity. They also suggested they would be willing to write into the bill absolute limits on the number or percentage of people who could receive such preferential treatment.

The second part of the strategy was to exhort Congress to look forward not backward in judging the settlers that preferences might serve. It was unsafe to assume, William Warne told committee members, and reflected a blinkered vision directed exclusively to the past, that the government would be interested in rehabilitating only people "with a Dust Bowl background." Rather, if one looked to the future, the logical beneficiaries would be "farm boys with the very best of experience, of fine character and high determination to succeed" who were or soon would be in the military serving their country. These "fine, young people," E. H. Wiecking of the USDA stressed, would have "good character and farm experience" but would need capital and credit. The government would be "the only place they could get it." Without this legislation, Warne argued, "these boys automatically would be excluded from the Columbia basin project." H.R. 6522, thus, should be judged not as a backward looking relief and colonization bill designed to aid the failed needy, but a

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only for definite class of small projects." It was, thus, a precedent that played to the feud between the USDA and the USBR. (p. 104)

[56] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 83, 33, 141, 155, 164, 187, 210. One method Commissioner Page suggested was quite heavy-handed—

forward looking resettlement program that could help the deserving veteran who, if needy, would have come to that state through years of brave service to the nation.[57]

These arguments were not sufficient, however, to overcome Congressional opposition to the bill's settlement provisions. Representative Winter of Kansas advised supporters to "get down to a different plan if you expect to get this through the Congress." On April 29, at the end of the hearings, the committee approved a motion, offered by Representative James O'Connor of Montana, that the chairman appoint a subcommittee "to redraft H.R. 6522 limiting its operations to the scope of anti-speculation in the land affected and giving the Government the right to acquire from private owners the land in this project required under this bill, and that this legislation provide for making the contracts with the duly organized irrigation districts."[58]

One month later the subcommittee met to consider a bill redraft submitted by Commissioner Page. Although eliminating some controversial settlement features, this new version was not the stripped down bill containing only the bare essentials laid out in the Committee's directive. Bureau redrafters, in an attempt at compromise not only with the Committee but also with the USDA, did exclude all authority to make loans to settlers and to construct farmstead improvements such as buildings

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affidavits and the testimony of the neighbors. "In a rural community," he argued, "there are very few things the neighbors do not know."(pp. 30-31.)

[57]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 163, 164 and 155. William Warne and E. H. Wiecking were not the only witnesses who trotted out the veteran to justify the bill. Commissioner Page and Howard Stinson of the USBR and Joseph Smart of the USDA, as well as committee members who supported the bill re-iterated that the settlement provisions could aid the veteran. (pp. 28, 83, 99, 138, and 196.)

[58]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 182, 217.

and fences.[59] In other areas, however, the new draft skirted committee wishes. The redraft retained Interior's authority to improve land by clearing, leveling and preparing it for handling of irrigation water. "Rehabilitating farmers on the land," a phrase distasteful to many members of Congress, also remained among the list of purposes. The new version even expanded on some aspects of land settlement. It gave the Interior Department an added authority, to provide domestic water to settlers. Also, while there had been no direct reference to preferences in the original bill, the redraft gave the Department, when selecting settlers to buy publicly owned land, the authority to establish preferred classes of applicants, including first veterans and also families forced off their land.[60] Not surprisingly, this attempt at partial accommodation did not satisfy Congressional critics who opposed resettlement on ideological grounds or who wanted to divest the Department of Interior and Secretary Ickes of any authority in that area.[61]

With the failure of the redraft, erstwhile supporters of land settlement began to urge more concessions. Representative Compton White of Idaho, Chairman of the Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation and sponsor of the bill, called for significant cuts to the redrafted version to address the concerns of the critics. The three

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[59]Also, in accord with the committee's directives, although authority to acquire land was retained, the reference to condemnation was omitted. No changes were made to the authority to lease land.

[60] The redraft stated "preference among applicants, otherwise qualified, measured by standards so prescribed, may be given to persons in various classes, including as classes persons who have served in the armed forces of the United states in wartimes and have been honorably discharged or separated therefrom or placed in the reserve forces and persons who have been forced by economic circumstances beyond their control, to abandon farms in other parts of the United States." Sales of land to settlers selected on a preference basis was limited to 75 percent of the land offered in any one irrigation block. House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 218-227.

[61] Ed Davis, Director of the State Department of Conservation and Development, who had visited Washington, D. C. during the hearings reported to the irrigation districts that he

irrigation districts sent resolutions to both the Washington Congressional delegation and Secretary Ickes urging all objectionable features of the bill be dropped. They also voted to send their attorney, Fred Cunningham, to Washington, D. C. to help write a new bill that would speed through Congress.[62]

In mid-September Cunningham journeyed to the capital. He and Howard Stinson, Assistant Chief Counsel for the Bureau, assisted a special House subcommittee to redraft a scaled-down bill that followed the directive issued in May by the Irrigation and Reclamation Committee. This new version reached the House in October. Striking the clause on leveling, clearing and preparing the land for water, the committee removed the last vestiges of settler assistance.[63] It also cut from the list of purposes any mention of rehabilitation of farmers and eliminated the discussion of preferences that had been inserted in the redraft, replacing it with language that directed Interior to select settlers on the Columbia Basin following the guidelines on experience and capital that governed all other projects. Although leaving in the general authority mentioned in Section (4) for the Department to acquire land, the subcommittee, when discussing purchase of excess lands in Section (2), omitted any language directing the Department of Interior to acquire the entire holdings of a dryland operator.[64] Finally, in a move that would later prove to

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believed some Committee members "wanted to take a crack at Secretary Ickes." QCBID, Minutes, 9 July 1942.

[62]QCBID, Minutes, 9 July 1942, 3 September 1942 and 6 October 1942.

[63] As did the redraft written in June, this version of the bill eliminated all references to loans and the construction of farm improvements such as buildings, fences, and wells. They committee also eliminated any machinery for collaboration between the Department of Interior and the USDA believing it unnecessary since all settlement functions had been removed. Assistant Chief Counsel, Memorandum for the Files, 15 October 1952, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[64] During hearings, Representative Dworshack again questioned giving this authority to buy land to the Department of Interior, but allies on the committee countered that it was the desire

be of marked significance, the subcommittee insisted that the bill reduce from ten to five years the period during which land could not be sold for more than the appraised price. Stinson and Cunningham had prepared a draft that retained the ten year limit, but the Congressional representatives believed, as Counsel Stinson explained, that five years would control speculation "without restricting land transfers after the land has had adequate opportunity for full development."[65]

The districts accepted without a murmur of dissent the decision to eliminate any references to rehabilitation, preferences, and loans and other forms of settler assistance. On the other hand, they did object to the elimination of language guaranteeing current landowners the opportunity to divest themselves of all their excess land in one cash transaction.[66] Yet, it is important to recognize that in taking on this fight to aid large landowners reduce their holdings with the minimum of difficulty, the concern of the directors was that as much acreage as possible remain in the project. Acquiring land for the project was of paramount importance at that time. Disposing of it to settlers was a problem for the future. This mechanism for excess land purchase was the only provision benefiting existing landowners for which they fought. They accepted with little, if any, dissension the provision in the bill that limited to 160 acres the amount of land pre-1937 owners could retain. They did not demand that those already owning land be able to irrigate larger holdings. They did not question the change from ten to five years in the anti-speculation policy

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of "most conservative farmers" in the local area. House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522 (part 2) and H. R. 7722, 77th Cong., 2d Sess., 16 October 1942, 244.

[65]Assistant Chief Counsel, Memorandum for the Files, 15 October 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and Office of the Commissioner, Memorandum for the Irrigation Subcommittee on Redrafting H.R. 6522, 1 October 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

when members of Congress insisted, but no one from the local area had played any role in effecting it. Their primary focus was the land, not the landowner.

Bureau officials, although "sorry" to see the reduction from ten to five years in the anti-speculation holding period, accepted the concession as "worth while" if it were necessary to secure passage of the bill.[67] They also accepted without a fight the elimination of preferences.[68] The Bureau, however, fought for other provisions. Believing that if forced into "piecemeal surrender" of their lands, owners might withdraw "as much as one-third of the better area of the project," It joined the districts in urging the reinstatement of language authorizing large-scale purchases.[69] It also mounted a vigorous campaign to retain its authority to clear, level and prepare land for irrigation water. Officials argued that if the agency had this authority, labor costs would be cut in half and production would double, specifically in the early years as land was brought into the project.[70] The Bureau of Reclamation also had been arguing since the Fact Finders made their report two decades earlier that leveling required engineering not agricultural skills and was, thus, a natural part of the functions performed by the Reclamation Service . With the collaboration of sympathetic senators, this provision was re-inserted in the version of the bill submitted to the Senate. Commissioner Page appeared to believed that the "House

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[66]QCBID, Minutes, 3 October 1942.

[67] District Counsel to Commissioner, 20 October 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver. Stoutemyer did bemoan in his memo to the Commissioner that the change would "leave unlimited opportunities for speculation at unlimited prices after the 5-year period is over."

[68] Representative Murdock indicated he was introducing a bill that would authorize preferences for veterans on all reclamation projects. House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522 (part 2) and H. R. 7722, 235.

[69]John C. Page to J. W. Robinson, 15 November 1942 and enclosure, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

Committee had no objection to it" and that "the local people feel that it is especially desirable to reincorporate this provision."[71] He testified in hearings held in November before the Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation that the House committee had "left out" such authority "by inadvertence." It would, he said, be recommended for inclusion in the House bill.[72] The full Senate approved the bill with this provision in it.[73]

Congress adjourned before the House voted, and in January when the legislators returned, the 1942 elections had produced a strengthened coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats more determined than ever to quash any hint of social engineering or bureaucratic freedom of action.[74] The result was that even the bare bones bill that adhered tightly to the dictates of the previous session's House Committee could not make it through the new Congress.[75] Further concessions were necessary.

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[70] James O'Sullivan, Report On Status Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Bill, 6 February 1943, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. O'Sullivan, sent to Washington, D. C. by the irrigation districts to facilitate passage of the anti-speculation bill, prepared regular reports.
[71] Commissioner to Fred J. Cunningham, 21 November 1942, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and John C. Page to J. W. Robinson, 25 November 1942, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[72] Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Prevention of Speculation in Lands of the Columbia Basin Project, Hearings on S. 2904, 77th Cong., 2d sess., 1942, 16.
[73] James O'Sullivan, Report On Status Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Bill, 24 January 1943, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. See also QCBID, Minutes, 5 January 1943, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[74] James O'Sullivan, Report On Status Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Bill, 7 February 1943, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. O'Sullivan advised the districts that "the coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats has already begun to function in the House, showing a majority of about 60 votes last week." In April the House established a select committee to investigate the FSA to determine whether it was acting in accordance with the policies set by Congress.
[75] In January 1943, Commissioner Page testified to the Senate Committee that "the House Committee practically dictated the form of this bill." U. S. Congress, Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 408, 1943, 7.

Parliamentary procedure prohibits the carryover of bills from one session of Congress to the next. Thus, when the 78th Congress convened, sponsors were required to introduce a new Columbia Basin Project bill. Designated H.R. 839 and S.408, the new bill, according to the Secretary of the Quincy irrigation district, required a great deal of work before securing clearance from the Bureau of the Budget and the Department of Agriculture.[76] Specifically, it eliminated features that had roused opposition in the past. The USBR, for instance, did not fare well; the new bill contained no authority for the agency to clear or level land. In response, when hearings began in January, Commissioner Page once again appealed to the Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, convincing it to re-insert language authorizing the Bureau to improve lands within the project "by clearing, leveling, and preparing them for handling of irrigation water." The effort was futile.[77] The bill did address, however, the objections of the irrigation districts on land acquisition. It re-instated a provision guaranteeing that existing property owners could sell to the Department of Interior at one time and for cash "any area of excess lands then operated as a single unit for dry farming or grazing."

The House Committee, led by a coalition of new and old members, who it was rumored were disposed "to crack down" on giving anything to Secretary Ickes,

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[76] James O'Sullivan, Report On Status Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Bill, 24 January 1943, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[77] Senate Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 408, passim. At House hearings, various senators spoke on the desirability of such provisions, and James O'Sullivan, the irrigation districts' representative in the capitol, reiterated his belief that the "land leveling provisions will be of great benefit in enhancing the feasibility of the project. However, Senator Robinson, who had spoken with Commissioner Page, and Bureau Counsel J. Kennard Cheadle, admitted that if insisting on them would endanger the entire bill, they would not fight their removal and would look to future opportunities to secure the desired authorization. J. Kennard Cheadle, Memorandum for the files, 2 March 1943, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

was not satisfied even with the bare bones bill that had been dictated by its predecessor. It went on to remove additional authority from the Department of Interior.[78] Arguing that the phrase "providing for the general welfare" might allow a Secretary of Interior to "do the things that we tried to keep him from doing in the other bill," three members refused to vote favorably. They cited specifically their fear that preferences might be given to special categories of settlers. To avoid weakening the bill with a divided opinion when it went to a vote of the full House, all committee members agreed to remove the reference to general welfare.[79]

The stripped down House version prevailed in the full Congress, becoming law on March 23, 1943.[80] It remedied the flaws in the 1937 legislation and allowed the districts to sign contracts with landowners, setting the stage for construction to begin at the end of the war. But after almost three years of effort, proponents of a Columbia Basin Project Act that would establish the basis for the Department of Interior to organize and administer a land settlement program had almost nothing to show for their efforts. Their one gain was the authority given the department to purchase land from existing owners, but Congress had jettisoned all settlement functions Interior officials had hoped to perform if they had control of the land. Under the shadow of war and confronted with a dedicated cadre of opponents, advocates of land settlement had faced a difficult battle. But as this fight played out, friends as well as enemies had a hand in the defeat. There were many in Congress who were

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[78] James O'Sullivan, Report On Status Columbia Basin Anti-Speculation Bill 21 February 1943, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. O'Sullivan reported to the irrigation districts that "The House is very touchy and disposed to crack down anything giving authority to the so-called bureaucrats and especially to Ickes."

[79] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 839, Columbia Basin Project Act, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, passim and 17 and 25.

unalterably opposed to the expansion of social welfare programs of this or any type. To overcome this core of antipathy, friends of land settlement would have had to pull together and compromise with each other. This they did not do. USDA partisans opposed the dominance of the Department of Interior, while that agency was loath to give up, or even share, control. For the districts, some aspects of land settlement, though desirable, were of secondary importance; foregoing them was a tolerable price to pay to speed project development. Bureau officials, too, when challenged on each function, repeatedly decided that "the other purposes of the Act were more important," and that "there would be further opportunity" to secure the necessary authorizations.[81]

A variation on this pattern would repeat over the next few years. But DOI appears to have changed its strategy for pursuing authorization to perform land settlement functions, focusing on all reclamation projects in the west, not just the CBP. With the geographic stakes even larger the fight between the USDA and the DOI escalated and the cast of other players changed. The State of Washington and the irrigation districts retreated to the background.[82] Parties not focused on the CBP took on major roles. Among them were reclamation proponents from the Central

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[80] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 839, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, H. Rept. 200; and P.L. 8, 57 Stat 14.

[81] J. Kennard Cheadle, Memorandum for the Files, 2 March 1943, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and John C. Page, Memo for the files, 3 March 1943, Box 509, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[82] The districts and the state were mainly concerned that recordable contracts, satisfactory to the landowners, be drawn up and signed so that construction could proceed immediately upon war's end. Some district officials, in particular South District director B. B. Horrigan, continued to push for government assistance for settlers in leveling land and preparing for water. He argued that the Bureau should install on-farm water distribution systems. He also indicated that the districts were attempting to develop a program whereby a farmer could "hire his land leveled at cost by the District furnishing the operator and the machinery on a cost basis." This never came about. B. B. Horrigan to Honorable Hal Holmes, 23 March 1945, Box 564, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

Valley of California, who were at odds with Secretary Ickes and the Department of Interior over federal attempts to enforce acreage limits, and representatives of eastern and mid-western farm interests, their attention drawn by the larger scale of the proposals, who were fearful of competition from new reclamation areas.[83] In the end, the results were mixed. The Department of Interior failed to get approval for a program that would place in its hands the authority to control a comprehensive land settlement program. Yet, before construction began on the Columbia Basin Project, some individual assistance proposals, under the control of other departments, did make it into law. Thus, while defeat was near total for Department of Interior partisans, other advocates of settler assistance achieved some success.

The seeds of this subsequent battle, fought over a wide-ranging land settlement program for World War II vets, were sown before hearings on the Columbia Basin Project bill had drawn to a close. In the spring of 1942, when authorizations to extend credit, level land, construct farmstead improvements, and give preferences to certain types of settlers, threatened to sink any CBP legislation, Representative Clinton Anderson of New Mexico suggested they be divorced from the anti-speculation provisions and studied separately. If a need for change then appeared desirable, Congress, he argued, might consider a general land settlement bill embracing all reclamation projects.[84] Representative John Murdock of Arizona, a staunch supporter of the bill as originally written, picked up on Anderson's suggestion. During the second round of hearings in the fall, he pledged to draft

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[83] Norris Hundley, Jr., The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1992), 257-262. (Hereafter Hundley, The Great Thirst.)
[84] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522, 137.

legislation that, at a minimum, would secure preferences for veterans.[85] Eventually, working with the USBR, he proposed a comprehensive veterans' land settlement program offering a range of assistance and applying to all reclamation projects. But he met with no more success than had befallen the earlier attempt to give the Bureau the authority to settle the Columbia Basin Project.

In 1943 and 1944 Representative Murdock's proposed his first bills, limited to giving veterans a preference right in purchasing reclamation land. They languished in committee, ignored as Congress focused on wide-ranging veterans benefit legislation and eventually passed the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, widely known as the GI Bill.[86] Murdock attempted unsuccessfully to attach one aspect of his plan to this popular law. He appeared before the Committee on Veteran's Affairs in March 1944 to propose an amendment that would grant veterans a preference as entrymen on federal irrigation projects.[87] Representative Paul Cunningham of Iowa, who served on the committee, noted that members in rejecting Murdock's plan were concerned that reclamation pertained only to the West. Having raised the specter of regional opposition, he suggested that Murdock draft a stand-alone bill giving veterans a preference not only on reclaimed irrigated lands but also on public lands in other parts of the country. Representative Murdock, however, although not opposed to broader legislation, did not redraft his existing proposal. He,

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[85] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 6522 (part 2) and H. R. 7722, 235. Representative Murdock introduced a bill, H.R. 7680 in October 1942 to extend preferences to veterans, but it disappeared with no action.

[86] Representative Murdock first introduced such a bill, H.R. 7680, on October 8, 1942. He introduced a second bill, H.R. 3179, in the spring of 1943, but no action was taken on it until hearings were held in May 1944. The Bureau of the Budget suggested that the it be reconciled with the views of the Veterans' Administration and the USDA. Regional Counsel to Commissioner, 13 December 1944, Box 504, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

along with other reclamation supporters and Bureau officials, continued to argue that projects such as the Columbia Basin furnished the outstanding postwar settlement opportunities for veterans.[88]

Although in mid-1944 the efforts of Murdock and his reclamation allies were stalled, the government and the nation, with hopes for an end to the war rising, began to pass a spate of legislation providing benefits to veterans. Some applied to farming. Although making no reference to preferences either in buying or homesteading public land, the GI Bill did provide a range of assistance to veterans who wished to farm anywhere in the country, including those who hoped to settle on a reclamation project. The educational benefits, which covered vocational-technical training and apprenticeships, were interpreted to include agriculture and included a subsistence stipend.[89] Government guaranteed loans could be used to purchase farms as well as homes and business property.[90] The bill also specified that a veteran would be eligible, "to the same extent as if he were a farm tenant" for benefits, including loans, available under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, which was administered by the USDA.[91] Further, in September, three months after

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[87]He proposed that his amendment be attached to Title III which provided for loans for the purchase of businesses, homes and farms.

[88]15 May 1944, Congressional Record, 78th Cong., 2nd sess., 4590-91; and House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 3179, Preference to Ex-Servicemen for Entry to Public Lands on Reclamation Projects, 25 May and 12 June 1944.

[89] Ernest J. Palmer, "Veteran Assistance at Minidoka," Reclamation Era (December 1947): 262-264.

[90] The government would guarantee 50 percent of a loan up to a total of $2,000. When applied to a farm, the loan could be used to purchase land, buildings, livestock, equipment, machinery or implements or to repair, alter, or improve any buildings or equipment. When enrolled in training, a veteran would be paid a subsistence allowance of $50 per month, if without dependents, or $75 a month with dependents. In addition, all veterans, if either completely or partially unemployed, including those who might wish to take up farming, were also eligible for up to 52 weeks of readjustment pay.

[91] The Secretary of Agriculture was empowered to determine which veterans, qualified under the GI bill, could receive these loans based on whether they were likely by reason of ability,

passage of the GI Bill, President Roosevelt enjoined the Department of Agriculture and the Veterans' Administration to take full advantage of its provisions to provide veterans who wished to farm the maximum assistance to which they were entitled.[92] Veterans who settled on the Columbia Basin Project before the law expired would benefit significantly from the generous reading government officials made of this law.

Although the help available through the GI Bill came to reclamation settlers through the Department of Agriculture and not the Department of Interior, other legislation passed during this period did vest authority in the DOI. Four days after President Roosevelt's directive to the Secretary of Agriculture, on September 27, 1944, Congress passed legislation similar to what Representative Cunningham had suggested in March. It decreed that for a period of ten years veterans should have a preferred right of application for public lands under the homestead or desert land laws. Further, the Secretary of the Interior was authorized to make such rules and regulations as necessary to carry out the provisions of the act.[93]

Congressional willingness to aid veterans who wished to make a life on the farm for themselves and their families, however, did not lead to an increased spirit of agency cooperation in realizing this goal. Rather, in April 1945 when Congress turned its attention to the question of aiding veterans who hoped to settle on reclamation projects in the West, the battle intensified between the USDA and the

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experience and training to succeed. Further, loans made under the Bankhead-Jones Act could be as large as necessary to enable the borrower to acquire a farm and make necessary repairs and improvements, but were restricted to farms the Secretary of Agriculture deemed of sufficient size to be successful. Bankhead-Jones loans were approved by a local committee set up under the auspices of the Secretary. See chapter 3 preceding.

[92] Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-45 Volume: Victory and the Threshold of Peace (New York; Harper and Brothers, 1950), 282-284.

[93] 58 Stat 747, Chapter 421, 27 September 1944.

Department of Interior over who should control settler assistance in these areas. No vestige remained, not even a public facade, of any cooperative effort between the two agencies to secure passage of legislation supporting reclamation land settlement. Instead, antipathy dominated hearings held by the House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation on a bill, H.R. 520, to "facilitate settlement of returning veterans in projects constructed, operated, and maintained by the Bureau of Reclamation."[94]

The fight over H.R. 520 took place in the immediate aftermath of the Pick-Sloan Agreement and subsequent legislation that had the potential to reshape on a grand scale the course and control of agricultural development and settlement in the West. In October 1944, representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers had met in Omaha, Nebraska to divvy up the exploitation of the natural resources of the Missouri River Basin. The resulting Pick-Sloan Plan, an engineering blueprint that included 112 dams, called for the Bureau of Reclamation to irrigate over 2.8 million acres.[95] Two months later, Congress incorporated the Pick-Sloan vision of comprehensive development of the Missouri River valley into the Flood Control Act of 1944. As part of this legislation, it specified that all irrigation development fall under existing reclamation law and allocated $200 million to the Secretary of the Interior. Left out of the negotiations between the USBR and the Army Corps, the USDA had no role in the Pick-Sloan plan, and the only mention legislators made of the Department in the Flood Control Act was to assign it a minor

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[94] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520: Settlement of Returning Veterans, Part 1 and Part 2, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945. (Hereafter, House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520.)

function in the prevention of soil erosion. H.R. 520 was introduced in the shadow of this agreement, which had the potential to drastically re-allocate resources and authority over agricultural development in the west. In the fight over the bill, the USDA was determined not to accede to this new order.

When it became evident that the final CBP Act would contain no preferences and very little, if any, settler assistance authority, the Bureau had begun drafting legislation geared toward veterans. Representative Murdock introduced the bill, H.R. 520, in April 1945. It was designed to facilitate veterans' settlement in two ways: by giving them a 90-day preferred right of purchase and by assisting them in developing their farms. Functions related both to the selection and to the assistance of settlers were lodged with the Department of Interior and Bureau of Reclamation.

In the selection of settlers, the Secretary was to follow the Fact Finders Act in establishing qualifications to be required of all applicants. But in a provision that paralleled the special dispensation given FSA clients during the 1930s and that also referred to the GI Bill, the Secretary could use moneys advanced by the Veterans' Administration or another federal agency to determine whether a veteran applicant met all or a portion of the capital requirement.[96] William Warne, Assistant Commissioner of the USBR, testified during hearings on the bill that "all qualified veterans under the provisions of the GI bill and the provisions of this bill would be able to qualify for capital reasons."[97]

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[95] William Warne, Commissioner of Reclamation, in his book, The Bureau of Reclamation, said the Pick-Sloan plan called for the USBR to irrigate 2,875,000 acres. William E. Warne, The Bureau of Reclamation (New York; Praeger Publishers, 1973), 164.

[96] These agencies were also directed to exercise their authority to provide financial assistance to the fullest extent possible in regard to veterans wishing to settle on reclamation lands.

[97] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 342.

H.R. 520 also gave the Department of Interior wide powers to assist veterans in establishing farms. It adopted word for word the provisions in the CBP Act authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to buy private land, plat it into family-farm size units, and resell it to settlers. The bill also included settler assistance provisions that paralleled closely, and in some cases again followed word for word, those the Department of Interior had included in its original draft of the CBP bill but had failed to get approved. The Secretary, for instance, was authorized to clear, level and ditch both acquired and other public lands; to similarly prepare privately owned lands by contract with the owner; and to provide for domestic water. H.R. 520, however, went beyond even the powers the original CBP bill would have granted to the DOI, authorizing the Secretary "to extend guidance and advice to settlers on lands within the projects in matters of irrigation farming and to disseminate information by appropriate means and methods." Such an open-ended grant of authority, intruding into agricultural education and advice, aggravated tensions with the Department of Agriculture.[98]

Convinced that the Department of Interior was attempting to usurp its functions, the USDA became even less willing than during the Columbia Basin Project hearings to concede to its rival any authority to provide assistance to farmers on reclamation projects.[99] In commenting on H.R. 520, Under Secretary of Agriculture Grover Hill assured Chairman Murdock that his department favored

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[98] In May 1944 Senator Hatch introduced a bill relating only to the Central Valley Project which would have given the Secretary of Interior these exact same powers in settler assistance, including the authority "to extend guidance and advice to settlers on lands. . . in matters of irrigation farming and to disseminate information by appropriate means and methods." House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 219.

[99] The Department may have felt particularly vulnerable, and thus even more determined to defend its turf, by the attacks directed at it by the critics of the FSA.

legislation that gave veterans "preferential rights in the settlement and use of farms made possible by reclamation project." [100] But during hearings, representatives of the USDA relentlessly attacked the idea that any work on reclamation projects not integral to large-scale engineering should fall to the Department of Interior rather than to the Department of Agriculture.

Witnesses, led by Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard, first sought to establish a geographic, rather than strictly functional, division of labor between the two departments. They argued that land on reclamation projects acquired by purchase from private owners was not part of the public domain and did not fall within the traditional purview of the Department of interior. Rather, "where the Government acquires land by negotiation with private owners for agricultural use, this should be handled by the Department of Agriculture." They further argued that on reclamation projects, as elsewhere, their department, as the premier agricultural agency in the nation, should take over at the farm boundary, no matter the origin of the property. Second, the Secretary and other USDA representatives argued precedent, both legislative and experiential. Recycling arguments used during the CBP hearings, they contended that Congress, by passing the Wheeler-Case Act, had already determined that their department should have responsibility for agricultural settlement activities on reclamation projects. Further, they pointed out, more than 85 percent of the irrigated land in the country fell outside reclamation projects and within the purview of USDA agencies, which consequently had more extensive experience with irrigated farming than did the USBR. Third, USDA witnesses, appealing to fiscal conservatives, stressed efficiency. Their Department

[100]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 365-66.

already had established agencies in place, in many cases assisting farmers living on or near reclamation projects. Approving this bill would set up competing bureaucracies to work on agricultural matters, which was neither an effective nor an efficient way to provide assistance to farmers.[101]

Wielding these three broad arguments, the USDA asserted its responsibility for all agricultural land settlement functions. It attacked what it saw as an attempt by the bill's drafters to give the USBR responsibility for agricultural education and guidance, functions that traditionally were at the heart of the Extension Service program. It also claimed that USDA was best able to carry out other tasks, such as leveling, control over which was still under dispute, as well as settler selection for which the USBR had been responsible for a number of years. Specifically, Secretary Wickard rejected his rival agency's long held contention that leveling the land and preparing it for water were engineering tasks and therefore logically part of the Bureau's purview. Instead, he argued that because these functions took place on-farm, they were agricultural, and if any government agency were to be involved, it should be the USDA. Witnesses from the Department of Agriculture also asserted a claim to settler selection, which Congress in passing the Fact Finders Act had lodged with the Bureau in 1924. They argued that with its knowledge of agricultural practices and requirements, the USDA was better able than the USBR to make decisions on

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[101]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 292, 233, 235, 245, 365, 246, 277, 292. Typifying the position of his department, Secretary Wickard testified that "The Bureau of Reclamation has traditionally constructed the irrigation works for Federal irrigation projects and brought water to the high point on each farm. From there the settler has had to make his own way." Assistance to the settler in these matters, he added, has historically been provided through the USDA. (p. 245.)

who was qualified to farm and to screen potential settlers to avoid the failures that had plagued reclamation in the past.[102]

While witnesses from the USDA led the fight against H.R. 520 and provided by far the greatest amount of testimony, they were not alone in opposing the bill. Committee member Chester Gross of Pennsylvania spoke for eastern and midwestern farm interests who feared competition from new agricultural areas in the west. It was inequitable, he argued, for the government to aid a group of settlers to buy and develop agricultural land in one part of the country when farm prices elsewhere were depressed and the government was asking other farmers to reduce production. He argued also that proponents of the bill were trying to conflate development of the west with the welfare of soldiers, while in fact veterans who wished to move into agriculture had a better chance of success on eastern farms where they would enjoy the support of existing communities and established markets.[103] This regional opposition to federal reclamation was perennial, not unexpected, and paralleled arguments used against Secretary Franklin Lane's soldier settlement plan after World War I. It was, however, abetted by vehement opposition, not to expanding reclamation, but to lodging increased authority over it with the Secretary of the Interior.

In October 1943, Secretary Ickes had announced that he would enforce acreage limitation provisions of federal reclamation law throughout the Central Valley Project (CVP). California agribusiness interests were furious.[104] They supported expanded federal spending on reclamation, including the CVP, and had no quarrel

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[102]House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 241, 293.
[103] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 209, 248.
[104] Hundley, The Great Thirst, 257-262.

with giving veterans a preference in settling on a project. But they wanted control to be lodged firmly with the state. Led by Roland Curran, the Secretary-Manager of the Central Valley Project, they were vehemently opposed to the authority the bill gave the Secretary of Interior to buy and resell land and, most particularly, to limit to 160 acres the area to be held by a family.[105] One committee member, unsympathetic to the CVP, characterized its position as "you want the Federal Government to maintain it (the CVP) . . . and yet you tell me the Federal Government is trying to take everything."[106] Curran asserted this was a mischaracterization but rather than focusing exclusively on support for state control, he concentrated his testimony on arguments with more potential to forge alliances.

The supporters of H.R. 520 disavowed any interest or intent in settling veterans in segregated colonies. Curran, however, repeatedly tried to tarnish the bill by linking it with colonization projects, including those that California and other states had set up for ex-servicemen after World War I. In the spotlight as the current war drew to a close and as the public discussed aid for veterans, those earlier soldier settlement programs were pronounced "galling" failures and dismissed as models for further action.[107] Curran also tried to tarnish the bill by equating it to FSA colonization. The previous year, Congress had completed hearings on dismantling the FSA, issuing a scathing report on its projects, and antipathy toward federally

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[105] Curran testified that H.R. 520 was "just another bureaucratic attempt to establish control over the lands and waters of the Nation which might be put to better beneficial use if the control were left in the hands of the various States themselves." House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 212.
[106] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 228.
[107] In 1929, Curran was appointed by the governor of California to get the state out of the soldier land settlement projects at Delhi and Durham. House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 218. Representative Miller referred to these earlier soldier settlement projects as "galling failures." U.S. Congress, Hearings on H.R. 520, 331.

directed settlement was widespread in that body.[108] Linking it with another proposed bill, which was limited to the CVP and had identical settlement provisions, Curran raised the possibility that if H.R. 520 passed, the USBR might establish FSA style colonization programs on reclamation projects.[109] Curran also appealed to bureaucratic rivals of the Department of the Interior and set the stage for an alliance with the USDA. He argued that H.R. 520 was a power grab to wrest control over veterans' aid away from other agencies and put it in the hands of the Department of Interior. In an obvious solicitation of USDA support, he argued that together the CVP bill and H.R. 520 made obvious the intent of the USBR to expand its realm and take on wide ranging settler assistance authority. Finally, in a direct and successful appeal to the interests Representative Gross represented, Curran argued that the bill would, by authorizing the DOI to buy and lease land, enable the government to go into direct competition with existing farmers on a "tax-free and wet nursing basis." At the end of Curran's testimony, Representative Gross announced it to be "so factual and so full of good common sense . . . I am going to be guided by his recommendations."[110] Thus, in the end H.R. 520 was opposed by a tenuous alliance of both supporters and enemies of reclamation and supporters and opponents of government land settlement. They had in common only an antipathy to the Department of Interior.

Gordon Lineweaver and William Warne of the Bureau of Reclamation, with the backing of the bill's supporters on the committee, responded to all charges. But they, particularly Warne, directed much of their attention to staving off what they

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[108] House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944.
[109] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 219-220.
[110] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520226.

undoubtedly perceived as a power grab by the USDA and the threat it posed to the decades-long campaign by the Department of Interior to expand its responsibility for land settlement. To argue their case, they trotted out their own set of precedents. While the USDA had acknowledged that the Bureau was expert in the large-scale engineering required for dams, Lineweaver also drew attention to a more prosaic aspect of his agency's engineering experience but one more relevant to ditching and leveling land. After four decades and fifty reclamation projects, he emphasized, the Bureau excelled in moving earth "to get land to the desired condition without removing too much topsoil or without moving excessive yardage." Warne, on the other hand, emphasized that critics who dismissed the Bureau as merely an engineering organization appeared to be ignorant of its true historic mission. "Now, I don't believe that has been clear in the minds of all the witnesses," he said, " . . . that our Department (Interior) is historically, for 100 years, the settlement supervisor and agent in the West." Further, he argued, since its creation in 1902, the Bureau had combined home-making and engineering. Directly refuting the USDA's contention that the DOI was responsible only for lands originally in the public domain and not for land the government acquired from private owners, Warne also maintained that the Bureau's settlement responsibility extended "to both public and private lands on irrigation projects that we build." He argued further that Congress expanded DOI's purview to private land when in 1926 it instructed the Secretary not only to work with the states to settle projects after construction but to maintain settlers after the land had passed out of public ownership.[111]

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[111] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 188, 329, 321-323.

William Warne's emphasis on the Bureau's historic responsibility for settlement served to highlight the contrasting lines of reasoning each agency used to justify its claims. The USDA argued that agricultural settlement was primarily an agricultural undertaking, while the Bureau countered that settlement was defining. The USDA's emphasis on agriculture underlay its assertion of a geographic division of responsibility. The USDA was responsible for all land within the farm boundary because this was the locus of agricultural activity. The Bureau, on the other hand, as a counterpart to the USDA's geographically based emphasis on place, argued a temporal division of labor based on the historical process of settlement that occurs over time. To counter the USDA's assertion of geographic determinism, Warne argued that:

> the Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Reclamation, should be sufficiently recognized so that from the time the project was started, construction started, until the settlers are on the land, with the physical ability to enter into productive farming, that our responsibility should not be divided, not split up, but should be lodged in us exclusively.[112]

Warne further argued that this settlement process applied equally to all property on a reclamation project, whether formerly private land acquired by the Bureau or land originally in the public domain.[113] He also made clear that the end point of this process, the point at which the settler has "the physical ability to enter into productive farming," did not occur until the farmer had leveled his land and prepared it for

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[112] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 360. In a statement on the CBP issued one month later, while the fate of H.R. 520 was still in the balance, the Bureau strongly reaffirmed its belief that it and the Department of Interior should have ultimate authority during the settlement process on reclamation project lands. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Summary of Preliminary Economic Information, Columbia Basin Project – Washington, June 1945, Container 141, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, pp. 50-51.

water.[114] The process of settlement, thus, defined the Bureau's purview and extended it from the creation of the project until the point that the new farmers were firmly entrenched on their land no matter its origin or previous history. Until that point, the Bureau would not share any of its responsibilities.[115]

Once again, as during the CBP hearings, the expansive, competing visions of the USDA and the DOI doomed compromise and any chance of an agreement on a bill that would provide assistance for veterans on reclamation projects. Although both agencies believed that the settlers should be aided, both also wanted overriding, if not exclusive, control. This competition forestalled the possibility of an alliance against the enemies of reclamation and land settlement. The result was that although the H.R. 520 passed the House committee, it died in the Senate.[116]

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[113] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 520, 345. He added that if land remained in private hands, the Bureau should carry out improvements by contract with the owners.

[114] One month later, in a position paper on the CBP and while H.R. 520 was still being debated, the Bureau listed in some detail the particulars of its responsibilities in this "great cause" of settlement. They included, selecting settlers; assisting settlers in selecting farm units; and technical assistance, information and advice to settlers covering "land development problems, planning and laying out farm irrigation systems, housing problems, capital, operating and credit needs, methods for securing culinary water, securing adequate farm equipment." The Bureau then concluded that "further assistance will be made available, through services of existing agencies, such as State Colleges, Extension Service, other federal agencies, and through a direct farm advisory program." During the hearings on H.R. 520, the Bureau did indicate some willingness to compromise on the provision to "extend guidance and advice to settlers on lands within the projects in matters of irrigation farming." Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Summary of Preliminary Economic Information, Columbia Basin Project – Washington, June 1945, Container 141, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, pp. 50-51.

[115] In the CBP position paper, the Bureau re-iterated it was unwilling to share responsibility during the process of settlement. "It should be thoroughly understood that these agencies are being offered the opportunity to cooperate in order to provide project settlers with the greatest possible assistance," but "the Bureau must assume full responsibility and make it clear that it is not delegating any of its functions or responsibilities to these agencies." Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Summary of Preliminary Economic Information, Columbia Basin Project – Washington, June 1945, Container 141, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, p. 51.

[116] For two slightly different versions of the death of H.R. 520 see Golze, Reclamation, 369-370; and Charles Brannan to Heads of Administrations, Bureaus, and Offices, Progress

The fight between the two agencies over who should control reclamation land settlement did not abate, however. Rather, it escalated. The Bureau and its congressional allies continued to introduce bills and amendments giving the DOI authority over a wide range of settlement functions. The Department of Agriculture continued to challenge them as attempts to establish a "duplicating" and "miniature Department of Agriculture" and as evidence of "Bureau of Reclamation intent to take over all agricultural work on federal irrigation projects."[117] In mid-1946, however, it appeared that the Bureau had finally prevailed. Congress passed a point-of-order bill authorizing the Department of Interior to level land, construct farm ditches, raise soil building crops and otherwise prepare public lands for irrigation on any federal reclamation project. But President Truman refused to sign it. Instead, he instructed the USDA and the DOI to jointly recommend a method for handling the contested functions.[118] With these instructions, he left still unresolved the question of who would be in charge of agricultural land settlement on reclamation projects

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Report on Department of Agriculture Activities and Policy Formulation with Respect to Irrigated Agriculture, Confidential Memorandum (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Secretary), 4 October 1946, Box 6, Mitchell 927, M&UAD, UW, p. 4 (hereafter Brannan, Progress Report). Golze was Director of Programs and Finance for the Bureau of Reclamation and Brannan was Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Brannan emphasized that the USDA was successful in having the bill amended to remove its assistance provisions. Golze, on the other hand, emphasized that the bill was passed by the House but died with the 79th congress.

[117] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension of Testimony of Charles F. Brannan, The Gila Bill, H.R. 5434, n.d., Box 5, Mitchell 927, M&UAD, UW, p. 2; and Legislative Evidences of Bureau of Reclamation Intent to Take Over all Agricultural Work on Federal Irrigation Projects, 29 July 1946, Box 5, Mitchell 927, M&UAD, UW. See also 9 April 1946, Congressional Record, 78th Cong., 2d sess., 3383; and Memorandum for Heads of Administrations, Bureaus, and Offices, 4 October 1946, Mitchell 927, M&UAD, UW, p. 4. The USDA at this time was particularly sensitive to loss of functions, as legislators were attacking many FSA programs as overly bureaucratized and centralized. They had, for instance, cut FSA staffing from a high of 21,000 to 8,400 in 1946.

[118] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Harry S. Truman, January 1 to December 31, 1946 (Washington, D.C.; G.P.O., 1962), 418-419.

When H.R. 520 died, critics, including the Department of Agriculture, had proclaimed they would not oppose a bill limited to giving veterans a preference in buying reclamation land. But bill supporters had decided not to pursue this truncated authority. A year later, however, in the summer of 1946, Henry Jackson, then a member of the House of Representatives from Washington State, with the support of the DOI, introduced a bill, H.R. 7954, to give World War II veterans a preference in purchasing CBP land from the government. At an initial hearing, however, during which committee members and a Bureau representative discussed whether the bill would be "duplicating legislation or supplemental," it was agreed that the DOI already had such authority under the Act of September 17, 1944 and no need existed for H.R. 7054. After this hearing, the proposed bill dropped from view.[119]

As the House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation upheld that veterans had a preferred right to buy land on the CBP and the Bureau and the USDA continued to spar over who should control land settlement, Congress in the summer of 1946 passed The Farmers Home Administration Act. This law applied to all areas and types of farming. Although it made no specific mention of reclamation, it did address, however, one of the major unresolved issues in the settlement of reclamation projects, settler financing. It also resolved who would be in charge of this function, vesting the power with the Secretary of Agriculture.

The legislators looked both forward and backward in drafting the Act, which they intended would "simplify and improve credit services to farmers and promote farm ownership by abolishing certain agricultural lending agencies and functions."[120]

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[119] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on H.R. 7054 (unpublished), 79th cong., 2d sess., 16 July 1946.
[120] 60 Stat 1062.

Lawmakers were intent on eradicating the New Deal social welfare programs lodged in the USDA, epitomized for many by the FSA. Hearings held by a select House Committee in 1943 and 1944 had concluded that the FSA, in clear circumvention of Congressional direction, had financed "communistic resettlement projects, where the families could never own homes" and followed a "Russian pattern of collective farming.[121] The Act struck directly at this agency and the programs its critics despised. It abolished the FSA, as well as the Farm Credit Administration. It also mandated that the Secretary of Agriculture expeditiously liquidate all resettlement projects and prohibited new loans to cooperative associations or for the purchase of land for colonies of "rehabilitants."

At the same time, the Act established a new entity, the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), to replace the abolished institutions and to take on the responsibility for promoting farm ownership and extending credit. During the FSA hearings, lawmakers had contrasted its activities with the mission written into the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937--to rehabilitate farm families by encouraging individual farm-home ownership.[122] The Farmers Home Administration Act amended the Bankhead-Jones Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture, through FmHA, to make loans and insure mortgages to enable qualified persons "to acquire, repair or improve family-size farms."[123] By using this earlier legislation as the framework for action, legislators in 1946 re-iterated that individual farm ownership, not colonization, was the guiding principle of the nation's agricultural settlement policy. Further, mirroring the GI Bill, the lawmakers specified that the benefits would

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[121] House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 2, 12.
[122]House Select Committee, Report on FSA, 1944, 4-5, 11, 18, and 25.

extend to veterans as well as to farm tenants, farm laborers, and others qualified under Bankhead-Jones—to the deserving as well as the needy.

The law also established guidelines and procedures that the Secretary of Agriculture was to follow in extending this financial assistance. They would have particular consequences for veterans who wished to settle on a reclamation project, such as the Columbia Basin. The guidelines referred both to the applicant and the farm. First, the Secretary was instructed to consider the type and size of a farm and to make loans only for the acquisition or improvement of a family-type farm of a sufficient size to be both efficient and successful. Second, the Secretary was to prescribe qualifications "as to industry, experience, character, and other assurances of success as farmers" that veterans, whose applications had preference over those of nonveterans, would also be required to meet.[124] Having established these guidelines and standards, the Secretary was to appoint in each county a committee of three local residents, two of whom were to be farmers living on and working a farm, to be responsible for both examining applicants and evaluating farms. The result would be that on reclamation projects, many veterans who needed financial assistance from the government would be subject to parallel screening processes. First, a committee administered by the Bureau of Reclamation would screen and select veterans qualified to purchase a farm unit. Subsequently, a separate committee, under the control of the USDA, again would pass on the qualifications of these veterans but would determine also whether the farms were of a type and a

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[123] Production and subsistence loans were covered in a section separate from the amendment to the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act.
[124] Nonveterans remained subject to the same standards established in the original Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937.

sufficient size to receive financial assistance. Neither system made any provision for coordination with the other.

The summer of 1946 marked the end of efforts to pass legislation authorizing the Bureau of Reclamation to select and provide assistance to settlers. Advocates who had fought bureaucracies and Congress for a coordinated, comprehensive land settlement program under the direction of the Secretary of Interior had not realized their dream. But neither had they been totally routed. The federal government would have a role in selecting settlers and aiding them in establishing new farms and homes in the basin. But this effort would be a tenuous composite of diffuse and limited programs scattered among various agencies. Control would be shared by bureaucracies sympathetic to government participation in land settlement, but holding separate visions of how it should be carried out and distrustful of each other. Officials in the nation's capital would continue to vie for control, but more and more actors in Washington State, not in Washington, D.C., would make decisions on how the hybrid congressional policy would be implemented. In doing so, they would focus increasing attention on the land.

Chapter 5

Setting the Stage

The Bureau of Reclamation began construction on the first irrigation block of the Columbia Basin Project in August 1946. With the CBP moving from dream to reality, settlers would soon arrive and the need to resolve the debate over land settlement and who would control it became ever more urgent. At the national level, the dispute between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior intensified, entangling the CBP in an increasingly bitter bureaucratic power struggle. At the same time new actors joined these federal agencies at the center of action. Existing landowners and agricultural scientists from Washington State College, with roots in the local area, emerged as major players in the shaping of agricultural settlement. They staked out positions distinct from those espoused by either the USDA or the USBR and demonstrated increased influence in project decision-making. They shifted the focus of discussions about settlement to specifics, forcing everyone involved to acknowledge the limits on the authority of the government to make and implement settlement policy and to confront the reality and critical role of the land.

One group of locals, existing landowners, played an early and unexpectedly pivotal role in the shift away from what federal planners had intended. Acting contrary to the expectations of government agencies, as well as project boosters, they dramatically reshaped the face of project settlement along with the size and layout of the project. From the time they first envisioned the CBP after World War I,

project proponents had imagined a mini empire of one to two million acres.[1] With the completion of the soil survey and land classification, most had agreed on 1.2 million. In spite of periodic intimations that a project of this tremendous size might never exist outside their booming imaginations, proponents in and out of government continued to cite such figures.

The first indication that plans for a million-plus acre project might be unrealistic came as early as the late 1930's. When Congress passed the original anti-speculation act in 1937, limiting to forty acres the amount of acreage that any one individual could own in the project, it also decreed that property owners who did not wish to have their land remain within the project must petition to have it withdrawn. The burden of action would lay with those who wanted out of the project. To forestall inclusion, an owner had to file with the district a notice of renunciation of the right of the land to receive project water.[2] To the surprise and consternation of project proponents, a number of property owners objected to the inclusion of their land and petitioned for exclusion. Some believed they had sufficient underground water to irrigate. Others described their land as unsuitable for irrigation, being too steep, too rocky, or too sandy. A few argued that applying irrigation water would harm the land, bringing "the alkali up."[3] The result was that in 1938, even facing drought and depression, a number of owners with qualms about irrigation legally withdrew 10,000 acres from the project.[4] Subsequently, after the designated period

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[1] In the 1920's and early 1930's, estimates ranged as high as 1.9 million acres.
[2] PL 117, 50 State 208. The owner was required also to record the exclusion with the county as an impediment on the property title.
[3] Hearing on Formation of Irrigation Districts, 7-9 December 1938, Vol. II, Box 15, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[4] Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Report of Proceedings, Hearing on H.R. 8345, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 22 August 1950, 3.

for filing petitions had closed, others continued to attempt to exclude their lands. As late as February 1941, the secretary of the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District reported the filing of fifteen exclusion petitions with his office.[5]

Boosters dismissed this early rejection as of no significance, however, and did not moderate their projections of landowner participation. Throughout hearings on the CBP Act in 1942, they assured a skeptical Congress that dryland farmers were enthusiastic about the opportunity to become irrigators. Witnesses from the basin and the state of Washington as well as from the Bureau of Reclamation testified that both these farmers and others who owned, but did not farm, property in this high desert expanse were eagerly awaiting the chance to bring their land into the project. To realize this end, Congress had only to provide a relatively effortless way for the owners to transfer their property to the government. The legislators obliged, authorizing the Department of Interior to purchase excess landholdings of any size at the convenience of the seller and hold them for resale.

At the same time, Congress, to insure the government would be reimbursed for at least a portion of the funds expended to construct the irrigation infrastructure, mandated that the Department of Interior, the irrigation districts and the landowners complete a two step contractual process. First, before construction began, the federal government and the districts had to execute a repayment contract obligating each district to pay its allocated share of the project cost. The district directors could sign only after holding a ratification election in which a majority of voting landowners approved. Subsequently, all landowners would be required to sign a recordable contract with the federal government. This contract was a legal encumbrance on a

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[5]SCBID, Minutes, 6 February 1941.

property title and bound owners to sell any excess land at the officially appraised value before the government would supply water to an individual's farm unit. The 1943 CBP Act specified that landowners were to sign these recordable contracts within one year after the districts and the federal government executed the repayment contract.[6]

In early 1945, the Bureau of Reclamation and the irrigation districts hammered out a mutually acceptable repayment contract, scheduled a ratification election for July 21, and with the assistance of the Columbia Basin Commission began a campaign to bring the property owners on board.[7] They soon were forced to confront an unwelcome reality; the scenario they had disseminated for years, featuring local farmers eager to join the project, proved to be overly optimistic. The CBP Act included a provision for owners who did not wish to irrigate to withdraw their land from the project before the vote on the repayment contract. Over 400 landowners did so, removing 283,000 acres from the project. Most of these withdrawals were from the fertile wheat lands of the project's east side, which had been touted by project supporters as particularly desirable for irrigation.[8]

State of [6]Washington, Columbia Basin Commission, et. al., Land and Water Contracts of the Columbia Basin Reclamation Project, 1945. This pamphlet is an excellent explanation of the terms of both type of contract and the steps that had to be followed in executing them.

[7] State of Washington, Report of the Columbia Basin Commission, January 1, 1945 to September 30, 1946, 15-18.

[8] In 1973 William Warne, then head of the Bureau of Reclamation, estimated that "about three-quarters of the wheatlands in the East Irrigation District were withdrawn by the owners." William E. Warne, The Bureau of Reclamation (New York; Praeger Publishers, 1973), 127. Although the lands withdrawn were primarily in the East District, they also included prime farmland along the east side of the South District. In 1961, William McAnliss, a director of the East Columbia Basin District, wrote that there had been "widespread withdrawal of the finest lands in both the East and South District in the years 1945-1946." William McAnliss to Wm. Gianelli, 27 July 1961, Box 9, Batcheller 195, M&UAD, UW.

97.8 percent of the voting landowners approved the repayment contracts, approximately two-thirds did not bother to take part. U.S. Department of the Interior, Columbia Basin Project, Final Environmental Statement (1976), I-7. A total of 2394

The government then turned its attention to the task of getting the individual owners who had not withdrawn their land to sign recordable contracts. Once again, they exhibited less interest in becoming irrigators on the project than proponents had hoped or predicted. By October 1947, after the government had extended the original deadline by more than a year, the owners of 117,000 acres not withdrawn earlier from the project had not executed recordable contracts. Thus, even as the project was approved and construction moved forward, the actions of existing landowners caused it to shrink by over 400,000 acres from the originally planned size. No longer included were 10,000 acres excluded when the districts were first formed, 283,000 officially withdrawn in 1945, and 117,000 neither excluded nor withdrawn but not covered by a contract which would allow the delivery of water.[9]

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landowners voted in all three districts. State of Washington, Report of the Columbia Basin Commission, January 1, 1945 to September 30, 1946, 17.
Estimates of the total number of landowners in the project varied. According to Paul Pitzer there were 8,000 landowners within the project bounds. Paul Pitzer, Visions (1990), 90-91, and 107. The Columbia Basin Commission in 1950 estimated there were 8200 tracts within the project. State of Washington, Report of Columbia Basin Commission, October 1, 1948 to September 30, 1950, 13. Both these figures include east-side farmers who withdrew their land prior to the election on the recordable contracts. In June 1946, the local farm bureau stated that there were 6200 landowners within the three irrigation districts. This figure most likely did not include the owners who had withdrawn their land and thus represented the number who were eligible to vote in the election. Washington State Farm Bureau, Preliminary Report on Columbia Basin Development Plans and Policies, June 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, p. 11.

[9] Estimates on the number or percentage of owners in the project who did not sign contracts have varied over the years. Even after-the-fact estimates have varied. In 1990 Paul Pitzer estimated that out of 8,000 landowners within the original project bounds (including east-wide farmers who withdrew their land), only 4,000—or 50 percent—signed recordable contracts. Paul Pitzer, Visions (1990), 155. The Columbia Basin Commission, in its 1950 biennial report estimated that of the 8200 tracts in the project 5221 were covered by recordable contracts while nearly 3000 were not. State of Washington, Biennial Report of Columbia Basin Commission, October 1, 1948 to September 30, 1950, 13.

Even during the actual sign up period estimated varied. In April 1946 at the end of the first deadline for signing recordable contracts, press releases indicated that "better than 3,000 landowners" had signed recordable contracts covering "more than half a million acres." Wenatchee Daily World, 4 April 1946. In June 1946, before the period to sign recordable contracts had ended, the Farm Bureau reported that 4300 owners, controlling 350,000 acres had signed, while 1900 owners, controlling 400,000 acres, had not. Washington State Farm

Further, to the consternation of district and Bureau officials, landowners continued to submit petitions for withdrawal of their land from the project. One such landowner, who owned a large wheat ranch on the eastern edge of the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, complained that the government was not "extending the same courtesies" to those who wished to withdraw land as it was to those who had missed the deadline for signing a recordable contract.[10]

In 1950, asserting that a number of landowners had failed to sign recordable contracts "through misunderstanding" of the process, the districts, the state, and the Bureau convinced Congress to amend the CBP Act to re-instate the sign-up period.[11] Their hope was to bring back into the project the "vast acreages which will not be

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Bureau, Preliminary Report on Columbia Basin Development Plans and Policies (June 1946), Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 11.

Bulletin 255 issued by the government in 14 March 1947 explaining the extended sign-up period indicated that 4000 landowners had signed but another 2000 had not. J. A. Freeman to Homer Angell, 12 April 1947, Box 1, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.

The figure of 283,000 acres originally withdrawn is taken from a letter written by William Warne, then Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Reclamation, in Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Amending the Columbia Basin Project Act with Reference to Recordable Contracts, Report to Accompany H.R. 8345, 25 August 1950, 2 (hereafter Report to Accompany H.R. 8345),. It may be too low. James Brooks, in his 1957 doctoral dissertation, citing the Bureau of Reclamation office in Ephrata, January 1957 as his source, used the figure of 300,500 acres. James Brooks, "Settlement Problems Related to Farm Size in the Columbia Basin Project, Washington" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1957), 56. (Hereafter, Brooks, "Settlement Problems.") According to a 1949 report by the government, over 500,000 acres was in some category of deferred development including withdrawn land, land under restrictions of the Atomic Energy Commission and marginal land. Department of the Interior, Opportunities, Responsibilities, and Needs in Irrigation Development, Columbia Basin Project, Washington (Ephrata, Washington; February 1949), 4

[10]The August 1, 1950 minutes of the Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District, for instance, include the discussion of three petitions for withdrawal of lands. The minutes of the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, from 1948 through 1953 (Books I and II) contain several references to petitions for exclusion. In September 1950 the directors of the South district voted that all expenses incurred in connection with petitions for exclusion and proceedings therewith be born by petitioners. SCBID, Minutes, 1 September 1950.

J.A. Freeman to Walt Horan, 10 April 1947 and 21 April 1947 and J. A. Freeman to Representative Homer Angel, 12 April 1947, Box 365, Horan 192, MASC, WSU. Freeman complained that while provisions for signing recordable contracts were eased when the original deadline has passed, procedures for withdrawing land were made more difficult.

[11] Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Report to Accompany H.R. 8345, 1

irrigated unless the land owners are given another chance to sign recordable contracts."[12] To gather in as many recalcitrant landowners as possible, the legislature also allowed those who had held their land for ten years, even if purchased after 1937, to sign a recordable contract without proving they had not paid more than the government assessed value.[13] The amendment proved to be relatively ineffective. By 1957 only 35,315 additional acres had been included, while an additional 13,935 had been excluded.[14]

To explain the defections, local project promoters often cited the excess land regulations mandating that these farmers divest themselves of all but 160 acres of their holdings and do so at prices set by the government.[15] One large wheat farmer, who owned several thousand acres and was also a director of the South District, argued that he required at least 320 acres to maintain the investment he had in his homestead.[16] Yet these land limitation restrictions alone cannot explain the withdrawals. In the 1940's, with the return of plentiful rainfall and good agricultural prices, and the advent of technological innovations in wheat farming, these lands were becoming more valuable.[17] The owners of large holdings were enjoying

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[12] Hubert H. Walter, Columbia Basin Commission, to Hugh B. Mitchell, Member of Congress, 8 June 1950, Box 17, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.
[13] Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Report to Accompany H.R. 8345.
[14] Brooks, "Settlement Problems," 56.
[15] In 1940 when the 40 acre per person limit of the original anti-speculation law was in effect, district officials appeared to believe that a limit 160 acres per family would be sufficient to prevent withdrawals. See, for instance, B. B. Horrigan to John Page, 19 November 1940, Box 564, RG 115, National Archives, Denver; and R. W. Reynolds to John C. Page, 9 November 1940, Box 564, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[16] Managing Secretary to Hon. John C. Page, 29 April 1940, Box 506, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.
[17] Mark Buchanan of Washington State College wrote in response to a question about the land appraisals on the project, that "Some of the lands that have been utilized for wheat production have been selling for very excellent prices during the past few years because rainfall has been heavy. " Mark Buchanan to Earl Anderson, 7 May 1946, Box 85, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU. George Macinko cited tractors that reduced soil disturbance from that

prosperity, and had little incentive to give up their land and a way of life they enjoyed. Project supervising engineer Frank Banks and long-time project booster Rufus Woods agreed that these farmers were "not ready" and believed they were "better off without irrigation."[18] In 1961 a director of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District explained that land had been withdrawn in the 1940's by owners of the finest lands in the east and south districts who "decided at that time that they did not wish irrigation development but rather that they desired to continue their long history of dry-land wheat farming."[19] These farmers preferred dryland agriculture and its less intensive regimen; changing economic and environmental conditions allowed them to continue this favored way of life and farming.[20]

By withholding their large and fertile dryland farms from the project, these owners had an impact on settlement significantly at odds with what planners had predicted. First, by rejecting irrigation for themselves, there would be fewer

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caused by horses, rod weeders that reduced soil pulverization, and disk plows that kept stubble on surface, thereby increasing soil moisture and decreasing soil erosion, as innovations that increased soil moisture and decreased wind erosion, helping wheat farmers no matter weather or price conditions. George Macinko, "The Columbia Basin Project: Expectations, Realizations, Implications," The Geographical Review 53 (April 1963): 187. Earlier Macinko had written his Ph.D. dissertation on land use in the Columbia Basin Project.

[18] Rufus Woods to Frank A. Banks, 26 September 1944, and F. A. Banks to Rufus Woods, Box 504, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

[19] William McAnliss to Wm. Gianelli, 27 July 1961, Box 9, Batcheller 195, M&UAD, UW. See also, ECBID, Resolution Book, 2 April 1958. Also on 17 May 1956, the Columbia Basin News editorialized that it would "take a cost-price squeeze even worse than the present one to force dryland wheat farmers to make way for irrigation." In the 1980's the opposition to expanding the project was led by members of the next generation of eastside farmers who continued to prefer dryland agriculture. To cite two examples out of many: The Capital Press, an agricultural weekly covering the Pacific Northwest, wrote a headline for an article in July 1985 that said "Farmers Saying No to Basin Irrigation." The article said that farmers in eastside areas were trying to get their farmland taken out of the project's future domain. Capital Press, 12 July 1985. In February 1985, Gordon and Alice Melcher wrote to State Senator Barney Goltz saying that "as dryland farmers (we) oppose the Columbia Basin Project" Gordon and Alice Melcher to Senator Goltz, 20 February 1985, Goltz Records, WaA&RM, Bellingham, Washington.

experienced farmers than project organizers had planned. There would be a smaller core of irrigators familiar with local soil and weather conditions, tied into the local economy, and likely to develop producing farms relatively rapidly. Second, by withholding their land from the project, these local players limited the government's sphere of action. Able to buy less land than anticipated, the government had less to sell. It consequently had fewer opportunities to select individual settlers and less power to mold the overall settlement population. Finally, much of the land withdrawn was of the highest quality in the basin. Thus, the farms that were available to new settlers through the government were on the average not as good as expected.

Large farmers on the east side of the project who chose to remain in dryland wheat agriculture, further, were not the only landowners who shaped settlement. Others did not withdraw their land from the project, yet neither did they sell to the government. Some, though abiding by the price restrictions, opted to sell their land directly to settlers. Among these was the Northern Pacific Railway, one of the largest private owners in the Project. The company did pledge as far as possible to apply the Bureau's settler selection criteria when it sold farm units to veterans. Many other landowners, however, not only refused to sell to the government, thereby depriving it of the ability to select settlers, they also withheld their property from the market entirely for many years after water became available.

In drafting the CBP Act, legislators had acquiesced to the wishes of government planners to make it convenient for large farmers to participate.

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[20] On 17 May 1956 the Columbia Basin News editorialized that it would "take a cost-price squeeze even worse than the present one to force" dryland wheat farmers "to make way for irrigation."

Conversely, in order to move the bill forward when passage was threatened, the Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Interior acquiesced to the desires of legislators who disliked giving government bureaucrats control over the disposition of private land. The original bill mandated that landowners must hold their property for ten years after project water was available to the block in which it was located before they could sell it for more than the government appraised price. Congress cut this regulated period in half, easing the restrictions on owners of any size property who opted to hold onto their property in hopes of reaping a higher return. Thus, five years after water was available to their land, owners could, without penalty, sell their property privately for whatever price the market would bear. It is, of course, only speculation to estimate the effect of this compromise and how landowners might have acted if held to the original standard. Many, however, when presented with the five-year, rather than ten-year, holding period, chose to retain ownership. Some were even advised to do so by the State of Washington. Thus, during the early years of project construction and operation, when the DOI had hoped to purchase significant amounts of land, much less was for sale than planners had predicted.[21]

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[21] J. A. Weber, a Director of the Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District and a long-time landowner in the Basin, argued in 1948 that the Bureau had appraised the land in favor of people who will come into the project as against those who have owned and lived on the land over a period of years. Minutes of Meeting of Advisory Committee on Allocation of Construction Charges, July 6-8, 1948, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

Landowners complained to various public officials about the appraisal values. See for example, Mrs. Dolly Morgan to Mon C. Walgren, Governor of State of Washington, 4 March 1946, Box 17, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and F. W. Claus to Hon. Warren Magnuson, 9 May 1946, Box 57, Magnuson 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.

The State of Washington actually advised landowners that they could benefit from value added to their property by project construction providing the property was "held by your or your heirs and devisees until 5 years after water is delivered thereto, when all restrictions on the sale price are off." Columbia Basin Commission to Mrs. Dolly Morgan, 3 April 1946, Box 17, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

The magazine of the Northern Pacific Railway, an organization which maintained a close working relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation, warned its readers in June 1948

Government planners were slow to downgrade their estimates of how much land the Department of Interior would be able to acquire for resale to settlers. Even in the spring of 1945, as eastside growers were withdrawing their land from the project, the Department of Interior speculated that eventually it would purchase over 800,000 acres, most of which would be resold to settlers.[22] Although the land settlement program lasted twenty years, the actual figure was much smaller. The government ultimately sold less than one-fifth of the platted farm units on the project and, thus, was able to have a correspondingly limited effect on shaping the identity of the project settler.[23]

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that approximately 80 percent of the irrigable land on the project was privately owned and "very little land at the moment is being offered for sale." "Latest Columbia Basin News," The Northwest, June 1948, 4.

[22] Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior, Summary of Preliminary Economic Information, Columbia Basin Project – Washington, June 1945, Container 141, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, 47-48.

[23] In July 1946 the Bureau announced the start of what it asserted would eventually be a $10 million land purchase program. Northwest Farm News, 11 July 1946. In 1962 Congress rescinded the authority it had given the Department of Interior to purchase land for resale to settlers. The last land was sold at the end of 1966.

It has proved difficult to determine consistent, precise, and comparable figures on the amount of land and farm units sold by the government, and the percentage of the total irrigable land in the project these figures represent. In an environmental impact statement prepared in 1976, the Department of the Interior stated that the government had sold for agricultural purposes a total of 134,409 acres. U.S. Department of the Interior, Columbia Basin Project, Final Environmental Statement (1976), I-138. This same document stated that as of the end of 1974 there were 526,628 irrigable acres and 5812 full-time farm units in the project, U.S. Department of the Interior, Columbia Basin Project, Final Environmental Statement (1976), Chapter I, Table 7. In 1978 the Bureau of Reclamation, in a short published history of the project, stated that "altogether, 1,157 full-time farm units were sold for settlement purposes (by the government.)" It also stated that "facilities had been constructed to serve 543,230 irrigable acres." U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, The Story of the Columbia Basin Project (1978), 30, 46. However, The Bureau of Reclamation in an annual settlement report stated that in 1959 it had sold 850 farm units. It also stated that additional federally-owned units remained unsold, had been relinquished before the sales were completed, or had been withdrawn or deferred because of marginal quality. In a later report, The Bureau disclosed that subsequently between 1960 and 1966 it sold an additional 91 farm units, for a total of 947 sold by the federal government. Columbia Basin Project, Washington, Annual Report, Settler Selection Program, 1959; and 18 November 1969 Memo, Covering period 1960-1966, Public Announcements 31-37, both in uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

Through the actions of local landowners, therefore, the role the government would play in determining who would farm the Columbia basin shrank significantly from the projections made by planners. First, as wheat growers withdrew large blocks of land and other owners declined to sign recordable contracts, the size of the potential settler population shrank along with the physical size of the project. Further, by retaining the right to sell their land privately, landowners determined that the power to dispose of the land that remained within the project never shifted significantly to the public sector. Instead, private property owners would exercise predominant control over who would acquire these new farm opportunities.

Yet, although the land involved was now only one-half the original size and the arena of public action was even more constricted, control of settlement on the CBP remained a prize worth the costs of a bureaucratic battle--and not only for its own sake. Both the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture anticipated that the outcome of the fight to control settlement on the CBP could set a precedent applying to any lands reclaimed by the Bureau. In the postwar West, the implications of such a precedent seemed potentially staggering; thus, the fight between the two agencies to control settlement intensified. It also dragged in new participants.

The struggle for authority on the CBP never took place in isolation. This interconnectedness was never more consequential than in the immediate postwar years when the jurisdictional contest between the USBR and USDA was ratcheted

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The irrigation districts and the counties sold land they had foreclosed on to the Bureau. In many cases the owners had been bankrupted trying to farm. Private individuals with poor quality land were more likely than those with fertile ground to dispose of it rapidly to the government.

up to a new intensity in the wake of the Pick-Sloan agreement.[24] The stakes of the hostilities now appeared potentially limitless. With the promise of peace and the hope for prosperity, the country once again was focusing its attention on domestic development. The economy's potential looked auspicious, and all federal bureaucracies sought a share of resources and authority to participate in an anticipated boom. Much of this attention focused on increased exploitation of the natural world. With their jurisdictional boundaries still unresolved, the USDA and the Bureau of Reclamation (and by extension, the Department of Interior) saw each other as rivals for many of the same, new rewards. In the arid west, much of the pent-up development fervor focused on the region's great river basins, particularly the Missouri and the Columbia. Control over them would be a major bureaucratic coup, and the fight over who would benefit from them drew the question of settlement on the CBP into a much larger jurisdictional battle. Thus, just as the stakes on the CBP itself were shrinking, the question of settlement there became entangled in an escalating battle over how these federal agencies would function and divide power in an evolving post-war world.

The Department of Agriculture was determined not to acquiesce to the precedent set by Pick-Sloan, which would relegate the USDA to a minor, peripheral role in the agricultural development and settlement of massive amounts of irrigated land. It would not accept a position on the sidelines. Charles Brannan, then Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, led the department's opposition to the emerging bureaucratic order that he feared would accompany the new approach to

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[24] See preceding chapter. Also Charles McKinley, Federal Management of Natural Resources in the Columbia River Valley (Berkeley, 1952), 147.

comprehensive "development, use and conservation of the natural resources."[25] He cautioned his department's bureaucracy on the opportunities and threats posed by river basin development. It was vital, he argued in a confidential interdepartmental memo, that the USDA "creatively plan its part on the Federal team" that was forming and ensure it became the "dominant Federal influence in the agricultural phase of river basin development."[26]

As spokesman for Agriculture, Brannan took the department's concerns about its role in comprehensive resource development directly to Congress. In February 1947, he testified before a newly reorganized House Public Lands committee holding informational hearings on irrigation and reclamation. Pervading and coloring his entire testimony and giving it particular urgency was Brannan's belief that the world had changed since 1940 when Congress passed Wheeler-Case and that the stakes for his department in establishing that law as a precedent governing division of duties had increased dramatically. No longer was the discussion merely about "public domain land, but all farmlands in a basin." Now the possibility loomed to control entire drainage systems. "Over the period of the past few years," Brannan reminded the Committee, reclamation had involved, "in simple terms, the conveyance of water. . . to a . . . small, closely integrated area, up until very recently, almost exclusively on the public domain." Such a limited view was now outmoded. " He reminded Congress that "today. . . we are thinking in terms of valley-wide development, in terms of agricultural planning, which involves not only

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[25] "Position of the Department of Agriculture with Respect to the Development, Utilization and Conservation of Natural Resources," preliminary draft (n.d.), Box 5, Mitchell 927, M&UAD, UW, 4.

small segments of the public domain, but also large segments of the present agricultural plant of this Nation." To Brannan, it was vital "if you are going to affect the entire Missouri Valley with an over-all agricultural program, that the Department of Agriculture should be in it from the day we start talking about it until the day it is over." Under present circumstances, however, the USDA was nearly irrelevant. The law governing basin development required coordination only between the War Department, the Bureau of Reclamation and the affected states. It did not even require that the Secretary of Agriculture concur before a project was declared agriculturally feasible.[27]

Brannan's focus on the Pick-Sloan plan and the Flood Control Act of 1944 stemmed not merely from his opposition to the division of duties they prescribed for development of the Missouri River Valley but to the precedent the Missouri might set for other areas, particularly for the Columbia River drainage. In 1944, the Commissioner of Reclamation, Henry Bashore, had instructed a newly reorganized Denver regional office to prepare a comprehensive basin-wide watershed plan for the Columbia River. In the next few years, as work on it progressed, the plan was circulated under the provisions of the 1944 Flood Control Act. This legislation provided a blueprint for development of any waters west of the 97th meridian that

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[26] Memorandum (confidential) for Heads of Administrations, Bureaus, and Offices: Progress Report on Department of Agriculture Activities and Policy Formation with Respect to Irrigated Agriculture, 4 October 1946, Box 5, Mitchell 927, M&UAD, UW.

[27] House Subcommittee of the Committee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 80th Cong., 1st sess., February 1947 (hereafter, House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947), 115, 145, 126, 172. See also Robert Rockwell, "Glimpses of Congress," 11 December 1947, Box 10, Records of Robert Rockwell, Archives of University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder, Colorado; and Administrative Memorandum by Ralph R. Will, Hearings Before the Irrigation and Reclamation Subcommittee of the House Public Lands Committee, 7 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

made no mention of the USDA. After following this procedure, in which the Department of Agriculture was at best peripheral, the Secretary of Interior approved his department's first plan for the Columbia drainage on February 8, 1947, the day after the newly reorganized Public Land's subcommittee completed its hearings. In a move compounding the isolation of the USDA, the Army Corps of Engineers during this same period began revising its 308 Plan for the development of the Columbia River basin. Although often in competition, the USBR and the War Department, at the request of President Truman, began working together to reconcile their reclamation, navigation, power, and flood control goals to devise a unified strategy for the Columbia River. They reached an agreement, divvying up responsibility, on April 11, 1949.[28] The USDA was not even consulted during this long process. As Brannan, now Secretary of Agriculture, pointed out to Congress, "they left the Department of Agriculture, or its views, completely out of the reconciliation."[29]

Brannan and his cohorts were not opposed to comprehensive river basin development. They were determined, however, that the emerging pattern for dividing responsibility would not go unchallenged and would not be used to downgrade either agricultural interests or the authority of the USDA. Brannan propounded a two-pronged counterattack.

He argued first that agriculture should be elevated in importance and a broad view taken of its place in valley development. The Pick-Sloan approach, he asserted, fostered a "state of imbalance," giving too much attention to one-time engineering operations, such as dam and canal construction, and too little attention to perpetual

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[28] Senate Committee on Public Works, Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings on S. 1595, S. 1631, S. 1632, and S. 1645, Part 1, 81st cong., 1st sess., 1949, 184-186.

use of the land, particularly farming.[30] To right this imbalance, planners must direct attention not only at giving farmers guidance and assistance after irrigation facilities had been brought to the land, but at determining feasibility when a project was being conceived. They must ask whether it could serve as the foundation of "sound family farm" operations.[31] Further, they must ask these questions, not in isolation, but in the context of the larger agricultural economy, both local and national. It was imperative to consider how irrigation projects, particularly those of the magnitude now being considered, would affect not only the welfare of the people who would farm these lands but "the Nation's agriculture as a whole."[32]

Brannan's second line of argument focused on who should represent these agricultural interests in river basin development. When Congress and agencies of the federal government began considering "projects that change the entire economy of a whole valley" and involve "large segments of the present agricultural plant of this nation," Brannan cautioned legislators:

> we better start using all of the facilities this government has for the purpose of determining whether or not that over-all project is a sound one. . . and as long as you ignore this great staff of people that you have set up and appropriated for every year in the Department of Agriculture, you are failing to use a facility which is available to you and which is the best one this government or any government ever had in the whole history of affairs.[33]

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[29] U. S. Congress, House Committee on Public Works, Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings on H.R. 4286 and H. R. 4287, 81st cong., 1st sess. (1949), 790.
[30] Senate Committee on Public Works, Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings on S. 1595, S. 1631, S. 1632, and S. 1645, Part 1, 81st cong., 1st sess. (1949), 977-79.
[31] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 117-119.
[32] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings on H.R. 1772, H.R. 1886, H.R. 1977, H.R. 2583, H.R. 2873, and H.R. 2874, 80th Cong., 1st sess., (March and April 1947), 72.
[33] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 126 and 175. Also, see Administrative Memorandum by Ralph R. Will, Hearings Before the Irrigation and Reclamation Subcommittee of the House Public Lands Committee, 7 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

Both the "taxpayers who supply the funds. . . and the settlers who will stake their life and family welfare" on the soundness of the projects deserved no less.[34]

In the past, whether discussing the CBP or the value of Wheeler-Case as a precedent, the USDA had used a similar chain of reasoning when making the case it should be responsible for all agricultural activities, from planning through settler assistance, on reclamation projects. But with the control of entire drainage systems on the table, the stakes had multiplied, not just for the nation's agricultural economy, but for the bureaucratic integrity of the Department of Agriculture. To partisans of the USDA, it was important to ensure that no other entity, particularly the USBR, develop a competing ability. Brannan and Agriculture, thus, consistently rose in opposition whenever the Bureau attempted to build up an agricultural capability or secure Congressional authorization to carry out any duties relating to farming, specifically settlement planning and assistance on reclamation projects. They feared not just a loss of new responsibilities but a cannibalizing of their existing operation. They were determined both to secure a position equal if not superior to that of the Bureau of Reclamation in the investigation of the feasibility of all potential irrigation projects and to resist any and all encroachments by the Bureau on what they regarded as their traditional authority.

The expert agriculture knowledge and experience currently residing in the Department of Agriculture, Brannan told Congress, was "being employed away from us at a small degree at the present time and will be more so, if I understand the future plan."[35] Five years previously his rival could function with an agricultural staff

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[34] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 123.
[35] House Subcommittee Public Lands, Hearings on H.R. 1772, H.R. 1886, H.R. 1977, H.R. 2583, H.R. 2873, and H.R. 2874, 80th Cong., 1st sess., (March and April 1947), 89.

of five men. Now, he told Congress, "we suddenly find the development of a full-fledged Department of Agriculture within the Bureau of Reclamation. Almost full-fledged. And with the talk of more such facilities to come." Should this transformation be allowed to stand, let alone grow, the Bureau would require "a thousand men" before its expansion program was completed.[36] To compound the affront, the Bureau, Brannan imputed, was robbing staff from the Department of Agriculture. Further, because "90 percent of the people who are transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the Bureau of Reclamation have gone at an increase of at least one grade," the government was paying a significant cost for this bureaucratic buildup.[37] Brannan admitted the USDA had "become disturbed" by the growth of agricultural capability within the USBR.[38] Yet, he insisted to Congress, his concern was not bureaucratic competition but the belief that the resources of the government were not being used wisely for the benefit of the agricultural community. "It is not bureaucratic arguments with which we are concerned here. The important consideration is the welfare of the people on the irrigated land."[39]

William Warne, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, was no more willing to concede authority to his rival nor accept blame for the bureaucratic infighting than was Brannan. He insisted that his agency had not introduced any new programs that would infringe on Agriculture and that he "personally" had "tried, I

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[36]House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 176.
[37] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 176. Brannan's concern with the bureaucratic build-up was a bit disingenuous. The Hoover Commission reported in 1949 that in the previous twenty years, the number of USDA employees nearly quadrupled from 22,000 to 82,000. The Hoover Commission, Report on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government (New York; McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1949), 235.
[38] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 125.
[39]House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 127.

think conscientiously, not to infringe on Agriculture's preserves." His response to Brannan's charges was twofold. He laid at the feet of Congress responsibility for any changes that may have taken place in the balance of power between the two agencies and simultaneously minimized the significance of what had occurred. He both downplayed and asserted ignorance of the number of new "men" hired, arguing that any staff buildups were merely part of a new regional organization that came about only after Congress modified the reclamation act. They were not directed at duplicating the work of the USDA. Ignoring the roots of the law in the Pick-Sloan Plan, Warne asserted that his department's approach to river basin development merely followed the "dictates of Congress," as incorporated in the Flood Control Act of 1944. In particular, the responsibility for determining agricultural feasibility on new reclamation projects, which so concerned Brannan, was "vested by law in the Secretary of Interior." The USBR, he argued, did not unilaterally decide that Agriculture would not occupy a central place in river basin planning. Rather, the law "does not say that the Secretary of Agriculture must concur" when a project was declared feasible.[40]

The two agencies made no attempt to keep their battles private. They sparred repeatedly in front of Congress, particularly, although not exclusively during hearings

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[40] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 167, 163, 178-179.

Even while the two agencies were professing innocence and the desire to cooperate, they introduced legislation that was destined to aggravate the tension between them. In March 1947 the USBR introduced a bill, H.R. 1886, to expand its power to determine agricultural feasibility to any and all irrigation projects including those proposed under the Reclamation Act of 1939. In the next session of Congress, Brannan and the USDA responded with a counter measure, H.R. 6054. This bill would have removed control of large segments of water and land resources from the purview of the DOI, placing it with the USDA, giving the final power to approve irrigation and reclamation projects to the Secretary of

held by committees dominated by congressmen sympathetic to reclamation development and to the USBR.[41] By 1947 their inability to get along had stretched the patience of Congress. Even members with an overt bias in favor of reclamation wearied of listening to both sides. Representative John Murdock of Arizona, the sponsor of H.R. 520 and other legislation favored by the USBR, was "disgustingly pained" by both departments, who appeared to him as "two rattlesnakes, who grabbed each other "by the tail and . . . gulped and swallowed and gulped and swallowed until they swallowed each other."[42] Since 1924 when the Fact Finders had recommended that the Reclamation Service establish a capability to handle "the special problems" of agricultural settlement on its projects, the two agencies had always found compromise difficult, if not elusive. But as the stakes in the postwar world increased, the intransigence of each deepened. Little, if any likelihood remained, that either agency, as Warne phrased the stalemate, would "stand still while the snake completely swallowed us."[43]

Agriculture. Robert Rockwell, "Glimpses of Congress", 3 June 1948, Box 10, Robert Rockwell Papers, Archives of University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder, Colorado.

[41] During these hearings, Representatives William Lemke of North Dakota, Frank Barrett of Wyoming, and Antonio Fernandez of New Mexico, in particular, pulled no punches in laying out the biases of the arid west, including distrust of the USDA. Lemke accused the USDA of holding "fraudulent elections," of promoting "Russianization of farming," of stealing ideas from the State Agricultural colleges, and of attempting to "whip the farmers into line against their will." Barrett, in less inflamatory language, accused the USDA of trying to "aline (sic) the farmers in some sections of the South against the whole reclamation program in the West." Fernandez spoke for many of the committee when he rebuked Brannan and the USDA for mobilizing the "Committee on Agriculture to fight the Committee on Public Lands on the floor" in an effort to defeat H.R. 520. House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 127-29, 134, 139, and 173-74. See also Administrative Memorandum by Ralph R. Will, Hearings Before the Irrigation and Reclamation Subcommittee of the House Public Lands Committee, 7 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[42] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 129.

[43] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 171.

The question of who should have the authority to develop agricultural policy for and assist settlers on the CBP was sucked into this maelstrom in which the USBR and the USDA judged the outcome of every disagreement not only on its own merits but also as a strategic move in a larger war. For partisans of each agency, pervading and coloring any decision was the fear that the result on this one project might weaken their position and strengthen that of their rival in a battle with more extensive stakes.

To some degree because of the increasing bitterness and intransigence of the USDA and USBR, other players came to play an increasingly pivotal role in the development of agricultural settlement policy on the CBP. Primary among them were the land grant colleges and a host of associated agricultural officials and organizations, oriented more to state and local than to national issues and institutions. Particularly active were the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, an umbrella organization; Extension Service and Experiment Station personnel who worked through the various land grant colleges in the northwest; and the universities themselves, primarily Washington State College. The entry of these more state and locally oriented agriculture officials eventually helped to resolve the impasse. In the process, however, their participation further complicated decision-making, expanding the cast of players to include participants with differing points of view not necessarily nor always in line with those of either the USDA or the USBR.

These newly important players were not new in their concern with reclamation settlement or the CBP. For decades, the land grant colleges and the Extension Service, particularly their field representatives, had taken an interest in reclamation farmers. But increasingly, where they had been peripheral they became

central. In the late 1930's, dustbowl refugees began to appear on projects in the Pacific Northwest. Many had no knowledge of irrigation farming and floundered as they attempted to develop and work their land. Out in the field, working without specific authority or funding, USBR and Extension Service staff began cooperating on an ad hoc basis to furnish minimal, periodic assistance to these needy settlers. These informal efforts culminated, in June 1940, in a formal Memorandum of Understanding signed at the federal level by the Director of Extension and the Commissioner of Reclamation. Under the terms of this agreement, the Bureau of Reclamation provided funds for the Extension Service to hire agents who were to be assigned specifically to reclamation projects in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. In 1945, however, amid allegations that some of these special agents were not devoting sufficient time to the specific needs of reclamation settlers, the agreement was cancelled.[44]

In Washington state an assistant county agent employed under the general memorandum began work in September 1940 on the Kittitas Division of the Yakima Project, transferring to the Roza Division in 1943. When the general agreement was terminated at the end of 1945, the Washington State Extension Service and the Bureau of Reclamation agreed orally to extend the arrangement, allowing the incumbent agent, C. F. Webster, to continue his work. While previously the USBR had provided the money to pay the assistant agent, effective January 1, 1946 the

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[44] District Manager to Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, 10 January 1952 and three attachments: Statement on Cooperation Between the State College of Washington and the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Interior, on Advice and Assistance to Settlers in Region I, with Particular Reference to the Columbia Basin Project (Part I,); The State College of Washington and the Columbia Basin (Part II); and Summary of Results of the Cooperative Settler Assistance Program between Land Grant Colleges and University and Bureau of Reclamation 1940 to 1952 in Region 1(Part III), Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

Extension Service paid Webster's salary. The two organizations continued to meet for the purpose of discussing cooperative activities, and in May after discussions between Washington State Director of Extension E. V. Ellington and Regional Director of the USBR R. J. Newell, they executed a Memorandum of Agreement to provide on federal reclamation projects in the state of Washington an "intensive program of settler assistance. . . through the combined efforts of the staffs of the Washington State Extension Service and the Bureau of Reclamation."[45]

In this formal Memorandum the two agencies specifically agreed that the provisions of the existing oral agreement covering the services of an assistant agent on the Roza project would continue essentially unchanged, though the Bureau would regularly reimburse the college for the salary paid to the assistant agent. Significantly, the agreement also extended settler assistance to other federal reclamation projects when agreed to by the State of Washington and specifically to the CBP. It also specified that the two agencies would share hiring and supervisory responsibilities, though the Extension Service would possess day to day authority. The Bureau would pay the salary of an agent who would be selected by the Director of Extension and would work under the immediate supervision of the county extension agent. All Extension Service personnel, however, were to give consideration to the "special requirements of the Reclamation program, particularly the successful development of family-size farms and repayment of irrigation charges." Further, every February representatives of the Extension Service and the Bureau of Reclamation were to "mutually agree" on the assistant agent's plan of

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[45] Memorandum of Agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation and the State College of Washington, 9 May 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU. Also see Mark T. Buchanan to George Hudson, 14 January 1948, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

work for the ensuing 12 months. The agreement also specified that the settler assistance program should cover a twelve-point plan of work that included land leveling and irrigation system layout, land use, crop selection, domestic water, marketing, and credit. [46]

Although the Memorandum was more formal and encompassing than the oral agreement it replaced, the signatories obviously intended it to be merely an interim arrangement. It was to remain in effect only through June 1947 and could be terminated by either party on ninety days notice. Even as he transmitted the Memorandum for signature, Newell argued that it appeared "desirable that during the next several months the agreement be revised to provide for a more comprehensive program," a view he trusted the college was "in accord with." Newell and the Bureau wanted to include the experiment stations in future agreements and expand the activities covered to include a variety of cooperative research programs and the training of students "from whom can be recruited the needed additions to the Bureau's expanding organization."[47] The Bureau was interested also in an agreement that encompassed a larger geographic area. After the memorandum with Washington State Extension was executed, the Regional Office of the Bureau immediately initiated negotiations with the Oregon and Idaho extension services and proposed a larger meeting that would include representatives of the land grant colleges, the experiment stations, and the extension services in all potentially interested western states.[48]

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[46] Memorandum of Agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation and the State College of Washington, 9 May 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[47] R. J. Newell to J. C. Knott, 2 May 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[48] J.S. Moore to J.C. Knott, (internal dating May 1946), Box 85, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

In the first weeks after the two institutions signed the agreement, the potential for further cooperation seemed promising. J.C. Knott, Director of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, which encompassed the Washington State College of Agriculture, the Extension Service, and the experiment station, wrote Newell that "undoubtedly, there will be a tremendous opportunity for increased cooperation in the future."[49] Initially such confidence seemed justified, bolstered by quick progress on a research program. Meeting in July the college and the Bureau came to an agreement on areas of joint interest in soils, water and crop research. Effective July 1, the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils and Agricultural Engineering (BPISAE), a USDA Agency, had received a congressional appropriation to study problems on the CBP. By early fall, in an indication of the easy cooperation possible at the local level, the Bureau, the BPISAE and the Experiment Station of the College had drafted a three-way agreement. [50] The agreement, also signed by Soil Conservation Service after it objected to being excluded, was officially titled "research work on soils, crops, fertilizers, irrigation, drainage, and salinity control on the Columbia Basin Project," and included a feature new to cooperative programs—the joint operation of a predevelopment farm.[51]

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[49] J.C. Knott to R. J. Newell, 6 May 1946, Box 85, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU. He also suggested to the Dean of the College of Agriculture (Edward. C. Johnson), the Director of the Agricultural Experiment Stations (Mark T. Buchanan), and the Director of Extension (E. V. Ellington) that they represent the university in meetings with the Bureau to discuss an expanded agreement. J. C. Knott to E. C. Johnson, M.T. Buchanan and E.V. Ellington, 12 June 1946, Box 85, Coll. of Agr.15, MASC, WSU.

[50] Conference of Representatives of Bureau of Reclamation and Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, 20 July 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr.15, MASC, WSU; and Memorandum of Understanding between Washington Agricultural Experiment Station, Bureau of Reclamation of the Department of Interior, and Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering of the USDA, Box 87, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

[51] J.C. Knott to Art Garton, 26 February 1947, Box 6, Coll. of Agr. 104, MASC, WSU; David E. Stephens to M. L. Nichols, 1 October 1946; Mark Buchanan to D. E. Stephens, 1 October 1946; David Stephens to H. P. Singleton, 2 October 1946; S. P. Swenson to M. T. Buchanan,

Any momentum portended by this auspicious and relatively problem-free start soon proved illusory. Federal politics intruded, the USBR overreached, representatives and allies of the USDA intervened in the negotiations between WSC and the Bureau, and agricultural officials associated with the college became wary.

Even during the preceding winter months, as the college and the Bureau had worked together to develop a formal agreement to extend settler assistance to the CBP, indications had arisen that the two agencies would not be able to work in isolation from the larger political environment. The USDA began alluding to possible problems that cooperation could pose for the college and raising questions about the Bureau's ultimate intent. In January 1946, WSC officials discussed among themselves the possibility of "more correlation than is now available in connection with the activities of the different departments and agencies of government that deal with reclamation problems in our state." They decided to take the initiative in exploring this question. During a January 14 meeting between college officials and a representative of the Bureau, Mark Buchanan, Director of the Agricultural Experiment Stations, raised the possibility of coordination between the college, the USBR, and the USDA. But he quickly concluded that no basis for agreement existed at that time,

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17 October 1946, Box 87, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU; and Report of Early Cooperation between the State Colleges, Agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Reclamation (written by Bureau of Reclamation), n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. Three years later when the agreement came up for renewal, the USDA delayed approval because, as Mark Buchanan who signed for the college said, the Department of Agriculture felt all this work should be done under the auspices of the USDA. Mark T. Buchanan, Coordination and Participation of Agency Participation in Columbia Basin Project, 21 April 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr.193, MASC, WSU, 1.

"either in Washington or in the region that would make such coordination possible on a mutually acceptable basis."[52]

Buchanan later reported his efforts to George Hudson, the Department of Agriculture representative in Washington State. The response of Hudson and his superiors reinforced Buchanan's initial conclusion that cooperation would be difficult if not impossible. The USDA immediately tried to put a damper on the college's initiative, while at the same time laying the blame for these difficulties squarely and completely at the feet of the Department of Interior. Hudson wrote that the Department of Agriculture corroborated Buchanan's belief that a problem existed. USDA officials, however, held that the problem "stemmed directly from Interior, that they were disturbed about it but that it could only be settled at the very top level of Government authority." He then tried to discourage independent action by WSC, both by assuming the college was part of the USDA family, albeit in a secondary position, and by raising the dangers of autonomy. "You can do very little about it from Pullman," he concluded, "except perhaps in the normal course of relations with Agriculture to call it to their attention and express whatever desire you have for clearing the atmosphere between those two large agencies." Raising the possibility that the Bureau was "courting" WSC and wanted to "execute an agreement with the College, leaving out the Dept. of Agriculture," he then warned WSC of the dangers of entering into independent agreements with the Bureau. "What kind of position," he asked, "would it put the College in with Agriculture later on?" "I would be careful," he warned, "the College wasn't caught in a squeeze play."[53]

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[52] Mark Buchanan to George Hudson, 14 January 1946, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[53] Geo Hudson to Mark Buchanan, 26 January 1946, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

Buchanan's reply intimated an independent college position and must have disconcerted the USDA somewhat. While he reassured Hudson that he did "not believe...there is anything to the possibility that the college will execute an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation," Buchanan qualified that position by adding, "unless it also fits with the scheme of things *as we see them* (italics added) pertaining to the activities of this group and of Agriculture." In asserting that the college would not want to execute agreements with the USBR that "would be contrary to our own best interests or of those of Agriculture," Buchanan alluded to the possibility that the perspective of the college might not slavishly mimic that of the Department of Agriculture. Thus, although the USBR would not be able to induce the college to sever all ties with the USDA and act completely independently, neither would the USDA be able to assume that the college believed its interests and those of the federal Department of Agriculture were necessarily one and the same.[54]

As 1946 progressed, specific attempts to develop cooperative settler assistance programs for the CBP demonstrated how complicated this task would be and how entangled it had become in the feud between the USDA and the USBR. The first specific difficulty arose when federal politics intruded into plans to develop the cooperative training program broached by the Bureau. In the same July meeting in which they agreed on cooperative research, WSC and USBR representatives discussed how they might work together to further training that would benefit reclamation agriculture. A training program funded by the Bureau and administered by the college to prepare its students for work on federal reclamation projects presupposed a community of interest between WSC and the USBR in which the

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[54] Mark Buchanan to George Hudson, 12 February 1946, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC,

college would derive a direct benefit from expansion of the Bureau's agricultural staff. Both sides seemed to accept this line of reasoning during the July meeting. Bureau representatives explained that because of the demands of the CBP, in particular, their agency was faced with a "very serious shortage" of trained "agriculturists and engineers" and would need a training program, "doing everything with the college." Dean Johnson believed that both the College of Agriculture and College of Engineering would be "particularly interested," and he and other representatives from WSC urged the Bureau to provide an accounting of the jobs and personnel needed and to write up an instructional program. Both sides appeared to agree on two points; that the Bureau needed a greatly expanded staff on the CBP and that both institutions could profit from meeting that need by developing a cooperative training program.[55]

A month later, however, on August 22, W. W. Johnston, Regional Manager of the Bureau, wrote Dean Johnson that his agency's plans to expand staff on the CBP had proved premature. Since the meeting in July, funds had been limited by presidential order and the Bureau had been "subjected to personnel ceilings."[56] In his order, President Truman had responded to the fight between the USDA and the USBR over H.R. 5654, which in providing "basic authority for the performance of certain functions and activities of the Bureau of Reclamation" would have authorized the Bureau to develop agricultural enterprises on reclamation projects. The USDA had been vehement in its opposition, asserting the bill would allow the buildup of a

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[55] Transcript of Conference of Representatives of Bureau of Reclamation and Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, 20 July 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

[56] W. W. Johnston to E. C. Johnson, 22 August 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

"miniature Department of Agriculture" within the Department of Interior. The President vetoed H.R. 5654 on August 14. arguing it would result in a "duplication of certain functions which the Department of Agriculture and its constituent units are authorized and able to perform."[57] While the President made no mention of the CBP in vetoing H.R. 5654, an immediate aftermath of his action--and the federal fight from which it stemmed--was to stymie joint arrangements being worked out by the WSC and the regional office of the USBR to train agriculturists and engineers to aid settlers in this newly opening area. In this instance the college eagerly wished to cooperate with the Bureau, but even with both parties ready to proceed, joint action on settler assistance proved illusory because of the opposition of the USDA. Even with a willing partner, the USBR would not be free to make any agreements it might desire.

The cooperative training proposal was caught up in the fallout of national, interdepartmental politics and was, as a result, unsuccessful. Yet this incident provided another lesson. It demonstrated that the land grant college in Washington was willing to take independent action and would not necessarily fall in line with the wishes of the USDA. At the same time, the Bureau was soon to learn that state college independence could redound against as well as in favor of its interests. In the next battle most principals came to see decisions made about the CBP as an integral part of a larger fight. Federal level officials took an active part in this local issue, and the parties at the local level proceeded with this in mind and with full realization of the larger ramifications outside the CBP.

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[57] Memorandum of Disapproval of Bill authorizing Certain Activities of the Bureau of Reclamation, 14 August 1946, Public Papers of the Presidents, January 1 to December 31, 1946, 418. See Chapter 4 preceding for additional discussion of this bill.

By the fall of 1946 it was becoming clear that the Bureau in its call for an expanded and revised agreement sought more than the addition of research and training programs to its cooperative work with WSC. It envisioned also a reorganization of the lines of responsibility and authority and possibly an umbrella agreement governing all types of future cooperation. In November the regional office of the Bureau prepared drafts of two agreements: a general memorandum with WSC, and a supplemental memorandum with the Extension Service. References to the proposed general agreement indicate it did not cover specific tasks or programs and would have served mainly to indicate a desire on the part of both institutions to cooperate.[58] The supplemental agreement, on the other hand, was very detailed. Written broadly enough to encompass all Bureau projects in the state, the agreement mentioned specifically the need for assistance to the many settlers hoping to establish family size farms on the CBP. In helping these settlers, many of whom would be "persons with no experience in irrigation farming . . . or unfamiliar with farming practices best suited to local conditions," the Bureau envisioned not one settler assistance hierarchy, but two separate and parallel staffs working together on a project. The Extension Service would take a leading role in the "agricultural phases of farm development." Bureau personnel would furnish assistance in "land development and water distribution," functions for which it had tried repeatedly to get legislative authorization. A detailed listing of the specific tasks of each organization

[58] J.C. Knott, 6 January 1947, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU; and J. C. Knott to Charles McAllister, 27 February 1948, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. I have not been able to locate a copy of the draft of the general memorandum and know its contents only through references to it in the correspondence of the principals.

followed. In a move that would soon cause difficulties, the Bureau qualified each list of duties with the phrase "but not limited to."[59]

Subsequent discussions between WSC and the local office of the Bureau about this proposed draft did not take place in a vacuum. Charles Brannan had circulated his confidential intradepartmental progress report on the USDA's irrigated agriculture efforts and its problems with the Bureau of Reclamation on October 4, 1946, one month before the Regional Office of the Bureau prepared this draft memorandum of agreement. The Agriculture Department then made a concerted effort to disseminate this position paper to the land grant colleges and Extension Service personnel in the western states. The USDA representative, George Hudson, went over it with "a great deal of care" at regional meetings. He also sent copies to key officials at the colleges, asserting an identity of interests between the land grant colleges and the USDA and calling for a conference between the Department and

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[59] The Extension Service was to "provide a staff of resident agents and specialists to carry on, in addition to a normal continuing extension program, extensive individual farm assistance in a wide range of new-farm and new-home development problems including, but not limited to the selection and management of crop and livestock enterprises, the planning and acquisition of buildings and equipment, farm homemaking, and marketing. . . (and) . . to provide the Bureau with current agricultural information pertinent to land use and settlement in the form of reports, bulletins, and material prepared especially for use under local conditions. The Bureau was "to provide a field staff of men skilled in land subjugation and irrigation who will give advice and assistance to individual settlers in a wide range of land development problems, including, but not limited to, land preparation, the layout of farm irrigation systems, and irrigation . . (and) . . . to provide Extension Service with current information on the design of the irrigation systems, farm unit layout, operation and repayment policies, and other matters affecting the welfare of the project settlers." U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Supplemental Memorandum of Agreement Between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Agricultural Extension Service of the State College of Washington, R.O.(Regional Office) Draft, 7 November 1946, Box 87, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

the regional institutions to evaluate the desirability of cooperative undertakings with the Bureau of Reclamation.[60]

USDA interference undoubtedly complicated negotiations between WSC and the Bureau. Yet, it is likely that even without this outside pressure, the draft would have raised questions in the minds of college officials. The Bureau itself admitted a few years later that its proposal in which agents would have been under its employ and supervision "was a matter of some concern to the Extension Service."[61] Such concern quickly surfaced. In a meeting with the Bureau on December 15, representatives of the college indicated dissatisfaction with the shift in division of duties envisioned in the proposed supplemental memorandum, a shift that diminished the responsibilities of the Extension Service and increased those of the Bureau. Although at that time not voicing opposition to the establishment of two parallel settler assistance organizations, one staffed with extension employees and one run by Bureau personnel, WSC officials were disturbed that the USBR had been open-ended in describing its potential responsibilities. They objected to the phrase "but not limited to" when the Bureau laid out the duties for which Reclamation would be responsible. Newell soon reassured J. C. Knott that the regional office draft was not the Bureau's final word on the subject but was put forward only as "ideas as to the best methods of cooperation in the field of our joint efforts." He asked the college

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[60] George Hudson to Clyde McKee, 19 December 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU. Hudson cc'd this letter to ten regional officials and Charles Brannan.
[61] District Manager to Commissioner, 10 January 1952, attachment: Summary of Results Region 1, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

to respond freely with any suggestions it believed "would tend to insure the continued smooth working of our cooperative relations."[62]

When Knott and other college officials responded, the repercussions reverberated far beyond Washington State and were felt for a number of years. The most immediate effect arose in the negotiations over a new memorandum governing settler assistance not just for Washington, but for Oregon and Idaho as well. In addition, however, the Bureau's regional office draft and the reaction of WSC changed the dynamics of the larger feud between the Department of Agriculture and the USBR, with meaningful consequences for the breadth and content of the assistance offered settlers, including those who would farm the CBP.

Backing away quite quickly from its attempt to expand its role in settler assistance, the Bureau negotiated an agreement within six months, not just with Washington State College but with Oregon and Idaho as well. On April 7, 1947 the Commissioner of Reclamation issued a "Memorandum of Agreement with State Colleges—Cooperative Settler Assistance Programs" that authorized the Region One Office to execute agreements with the extension services of the three states. On June 27, 1947, following this directive, Regional Director Newell and Washington State College signed a formal settler assistance agreement, effective July 1. It paralleled the previous formal and informal agreements and included none of the major changes the November regional office draft proposed. There would be only one settler assistance staff, funded in part by the Bureau but filled by agents hired by and responsible to the Extension Service. The Bureau signed nearly identical

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[62] They did not, however, question the desirability of the same phrase when it described the duties they would take on. R. J. Newell to J. C. Knott, n.d. (stamped received 14 December 1946), Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

agreements with Oregon and Idaho, also effective July 1. Most immediately affected in Washington were the Roza Division of the Yakima Project and in 1948 a test unit of the CBP located in the south end of the Basin near Pasco.[63]

With its acceptance of this outcome, the Bureau backtracked from the attempt to restructure how settler assistance would be provided on the Columbia Basin Project; once again it would have no direct staff or management authority. The attempt, however, was not without consequences. The decision by the USBR to abandon its effort to directly employ the settler assistance agents for the CBP occurred only after Washington State College expanded the cast of parties interested in the agreement negotiations to include the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities. The entry of this player changed significantly the dynamics of future negotiations.

At the annual conference of the Association in Chicago in December 1946, J. C. Knott brought to the delegates' attention both the overall agreement with the college and the supplementary agreement with the Extension Service. The entire group of western extension directors, as well as college deans, experiment station directors and M.L. Wilson, Director of Extension from Washington, D.C., went over the proposal for Washington State and then expanded their discussion to a range of related questions. The consensus of those in attendance was that the various states and the Bureau should adopt a uniform standard agreement that could be altered as necessary to accommodate regional differences. The group also resolved that "no state Extension Service should sign a memorandum with the Bureau of Reclamation

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[63] District Manager to Commissioner, 10 January 1952, attachment: Summary of Results of the Cooperative Settler Assistance Program between Land Grant Colleges and Universities and Bureau of Reclamation, 1940 to 1952, Region 1, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

that varies from the pattern of those memoranda previously negotiated thru the Federal Extension Service, until such a time as the states agree as to the content of such new memoranda." Following this resolution, the group agreed to set up a meeting of the extension directors of fourteen western states with a representative of the federal Extension Service and "someone from the Bureau of Reclamation with authority to speak on the matter of policy for that organization."[64]

Knott reported these events and decisions to Regional Director Newell in early January. In his letter to Newell, Knott also mentioned that it was the consensus of the group in Chicago that "it would be very difficult" to hold the suggested meeting "before some time in April." Director Newell replied to Knott that he would "hold myself ready to participate in any action that may lead to a truly cooperative program between the state colleges and the Bureau of Reclamation for the sound development of irrigation projects." He also forwarded Knott's letter to the Commissioner of Reclamation, who on April 7, before a national meeting took place, directed Newell to negotiate memoranda of agreement with Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. In content, these agreements mirrored the resolution of the Chicago group; they did not vary "from the pattern of those memoranda previously negotiated thru the Federal Extension Service."[65]

In the three months between Knott's letter to Newell and the Commissioner's directive, the opinions and actions of this expanded mix of actors--who though connected through the land grant system had varying perspectives--complicated and

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[64] J. C. Knott to R. J. Newell, 3 January 1947, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[65] J. C. Knott to R. J. Newell, 3 January 1947, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU; J. C. Knott to F. L. Ballard, et al, 24 January 1947, including copy of letter from R. J. Newell to J. C. Knott, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU; and J.C. Knott to (untitled), 6 January 1947, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

threatened to derail negotiations. First to act was the Committee of Extension Organization and Policy of the Association of Land Grant Colleges. At a meeting held in early February, M. L. Wilson and A. E. Bowman, Wyoming Director of Extension, led the committee in a discussion of the relationship between the Extension Service and the Bureau. The group then resolved that "In view of the increasing activity of the Reclamation Service in setting up Community offices and appointing personnel to conduct agricultural education work or (sic) reclamation projects," the executive committee of the Association should arrange a conference between the USDA, the Extension Service and the Bureau of Reclamation to negotiate "a satisfactory cooperative agreement for the employment of the necessary personnel on reclamation projects as assistant agricultural agents to perform the duties involved under the supervision of the Extension Service." This resolution provided evidence of two relevant opinions held by the group. First, settler assistance personnel on reclamation projects should be "under the supervision of the Extension Service." Second, the land grant colleges should have a distinctly separate and equal role, along with the USDA and the USBR, in negotiating a resolution to this impasse. [66]

The committee's resolution incorporated input from both the USDA and the land grant colleges, but it also masked a range of often contradictory perspectives. M. L. Wilson, for instance, functioned both as a member of the USDA bureaucracy and as the leader of the Extension Service, roles which were not necessarily and always harmonious. The committee passed its resolution in early February, at nearly

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[66] A. E. Bowman to J.C. Knott, 22 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; and Proceedings of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy, Association of Land Grant Colleges, 1939-1949 (USDA 1963), 384-385.

the same time as Charles Brannan, in testimony before Congress, castigated the Bureau for its "development of a full-fledged Department of Agriculture within the Bureau of Reclamation. Almost full-fledged."[67] As Brannan made abundantly clear, his concerns encompassed more than the relationship between the Bureau and the Extension Service. He was focused on the larger question of the overall balance of power between the USDA and the USBR (as part of the Department of Interior) and on which agency should determine agricultural settlement policy on reclamation projects. Wilson, tried to balance this broad USDA perspective with the more circumscribed concerns of the Extension Service. Although realizing that the "Extension aspect is only one of the things which irritates the Department," he hoped that if the "directly affected parties" came together they could "settle the Extension phase satisfactorily" without involving representatives of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior.[68] He believed that the original 1940 agreement between Extension and the Bureau was "satisfactory" and urged that it be readopted. Following this path, he hoped would avoid embroiling state issues in a top level bureaucratic feud. At the same time, however, he assiduously disseminated the position of the USDA. He sent copies of Brannan's testimony to officials at the land grant colleges and told J. C. Knott that he had urged Secretary Brannan to attend any potential conference held in the northwest so he could "speak from the standpoint of a higher level of the USDA than myself." [69]

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[67]House Subcommittee Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 124-125.
[68] M. L. Wilson to J. C. Knott, 27 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. See also M.L. Wilson to F. L. Ballard, 4 April 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[69] M. L. Wilson to J. C. Knott, 19 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; and M. L. Wilson to J. C. Knott, 28 March 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

A lack of consistency among the opinions held by college officials paralleled in part Wilson's struggle to balance the competing demands on the Extension Service that came from its hybrid position as part of both the USDA hierarchy and the land grant system. As Wilson wrote Knott, "I have never been clear about the Land-Grant College side of this issue."[70] For J. C. Knott and his colleagues, their position on the relatively circumscribed question of who should provide settler assistance was entangled in and complicated by larger but related issues. Their perspectives were shaped by the current relationship, perceived and actual, between the Extension Service and both the USDA and the USBR and by the pressures on them raised by larger reclamation settlement issues of particular concern to the USDA, such as agricultural feasibility. Mark Buchanan, the Washington State Experiment Station Director, who the year before had intimated the college might have interests independent from the Department of Agriculture, argued in February 1947 that, particularly in the area of agricultural feasibility, the interests of the college were "closely allied" with those of the USDA.[71] There was also widespread fear within the land grant system that the Bureau might set up a "separate Extension Service" and that this possibility originated in the attitude of the USBR " back in Washington, D.C."[72] The Director of the Wyoming Extension Service took the lead in

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[70] M. L. Wilson to J. C. Knott, 24 April 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[71] M. L. Wilson to J. C. Knott, 24 April 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[72] J. C. Knott to M. L. Wilson, 18 February 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; and J. C. Knott to Charles E. McAllister, 18 February 1948, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. In December 1946, Clyde McKee, Dean and Director of Montana State College, wrote George Hudson, the USDA representative in the northwest that "this station has enjoyed favorable cooperative relations with the Bureau of Reclamation. . ." Clyde McKee to George T. Hudson, 7 December 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

bringing to the attention of the land grant association the Bureau's efforts to set up offices in counties where the Extension Service already operated.[73]

On the other hand, as the Hoover Commission was soon to report, the relationship between the Extension Service and the USDA was troubled, aggravated by an increasing tendency of "several of the bureaus and agencies of the Department" to bypass the Extension Service.[74] "Some of our folks in extension and experiment stations work, "J. C. Knott wrote M. L. Wilson, "have felt that our cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation has been more satisfactory, on the whole, than cooperation with certain agencies of the USDA. In our own state we have had as good cooperative relationships with the Bureau of Reclamation as we have had with some of the agencies of the Department of Agriculture."[75] One of the most outspoken advocates of this position was Frank Ballard, Oregon State Extension Director, who was "very critical" of the USDA.[76] Finally, land grant officials in these western states, where much agriculture depended on public reclamation, had felt for some time that the USDA neglected their concerns and had no well-thought-out policy in support of irrigation.[77]

By the spring of 1947, the combination of the push by the Agriculture Department to carve out a formal legal role for itself in the determination of

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[73] Proceedings of the Committee on Extension Organization and Policy, Association of Land Grant Colleges, 1939-1949 (USDA, 1964), 8-10 February 1947, 384-385 and 30 August - September 1, 1947, 407.
[74] U.S. Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, Department of Agriculture, A Report to the Congress, February 1949, 3.
[75] J. C. Knott to M. L. Wilson, 1 May 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[76] M. L. Wilson to J. C. Knott, 24 April 1947, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[77] As early as February 1946, the USDA representative George Hudson assured Mark Buchanan of WSC that he realized the USDA needed to "formulate a general policy with respect to the needs and interests of the Western irrigation farmer which will be more

agricultural feasibility on irrigation projects and the effort by the Bureau to carve out a larger role for itself in settler assistance threatened to prevent a timely decision on the question of whose staff should provide this assistance to settlers on the CBP. The local officials had come to the conclusion that a national solution, such as legislation, was preferable, but only if the land grant colleges were an equal partner with the USDA and USBR in crafting it.[78] If no such three-way understanding at the national level were possible, Knott wrote Wilson, "perhaps each state should arrive at an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation."[79] This was the climate of opinion in which the Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation signed memoranda of agreement with the three northwest states, agreements which essentially extended the existing arrangement first hammered out in 1940. In Washington State, the agreement covered the Roza Division of the Yakima Project and the Pasco unit of the CBP, to be opened early as a test area.

These agreements between the regional office of the Bureau and the extension services in the northwest did little if anything to ease tensions at the national level. The Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture continued unwilling to compromise in order to come to a national level agreement on agricultural settlement. At the same time, the land grant colleges stepped up their assertions of independence from both federal agencies. Arguing that "in their own right" they were affected by the "scrap" between Interior and Agriculture, the colleges took an increasingly active and central role in overcoming the impasse. Little

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comprehensive and call for more field activity than in the past." George Hudson to Mark Buchanan, 15 February 1946, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

[78] George Hudson to Mark Buchanan, 15 February 1946, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

progress, however, was apparent for nearly two years.[80] Then in 1949, in a relatively rapid series of events, the interested parties began to focus in on a solution. In May the Land Grant College Association called for a meeting with representatives of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior. Before it was held, the Senate Committee on Appropriations issued a report putting its power and prestige behind the efforts of the colleges. Finally, on October 20 and 21 in Kansas City, the long discussed meeting between the colleges, the USDA, and the DOI finally took place. It was attended by the highest level representatives of the two federal departments, specifically Charles Brannan, who was by then Secretary of Agriculture, and Oscar Chapman, Under-Secretary of the Department of Interior. Working from the premise that the land grant colleges were one of "three great groups" with definite responsibilities in the development of reclamation projects, the association membership recommended that: "the Land-Grant Colleges and Universities in their respective states be recognized by the appropriate federal agencies as the focal point of coordination for agricultural reclamation programs." Both the USDA and the Department of Interior readily agreed. [81]

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[79] George Hudson to Mark Buchanan, 15 February 1946, Box 82, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

[80] In October 1947 Congressman Robert Rockwell of Colorado convened a meeting to inquire into the relationship between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Extension Service, but there is little indication that any progress in resolving the impasse resulted. J. C. Knott to Reverend Charles E. McAllister, 18 February 1948, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

Also, in 1948, at its annual meeting, the Association of Land Grant Colleges elevated a subcommittee on irrigated agriculture and water resources to full committee status. Proceedings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, Sixty-third annual convention, 25-27 October 1949, 258-265.

[81] Proceedings of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, Sixty-third annual convention, 25-27 October 1949, 258-265. There was no indication in this agreement that the colleges in the various states would coordinate their efforts.

The consequences for the CBP were immediate. Three weeks after the Kansas City meeting, Commissioner Lineweaver of the Bureau of Reclamation wrote J. C. Knott that:

> It is well understood by all of us in the Bureau, as stated by Secretary Chapman at Kansas City, that the State College is. . . the focal point of coordination for the Agricultural activities on the Columbia Basin project of all Federal Agencies. We feel that the College should take the leadership in developing this coordination so as to effect the best approach to an action program of advice and assistance to the settlers that will prevent duplication, subdue conflicts, and perfect plans for the best job possible.[82]

Reiterating the sentiment of his superior, Frank Banks, District Manager for the Bureau in the Columbia Basin, stated that the college had the "know-how to provide for the sound initial development and subsequent farming programs that are necessary in the Columbia Basin project" and should be the "focal point of responsibility for inter-agency coordination."[83]

With this general approach to settler assistance agreed upon, the Extension Service and the Bureau of Reclamation almost immediately began working out the details of a plan for the CBP. Their first step was to set up a joint committee to consider and put into effect cooperative programs, going well beyond the hiring of assistant agents, to deal with problems in developing the CBP.[84] At their first meeting in March 1950, the representatives of the college and the Bureau, acknowledging only in passing that other organizations such as the SCS might play a role, jointly described themselves "as the agencies having the major responsibilities"

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[82] G. W. Lineweaver to Dr. J. O. (sic) Knott, 11 November 1949, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[83] Press Release, n.d., dateline Pullman, Washington, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[84] District Manager to Commissioner, 10 January 1952, attachment: Summary of Results of the Cooperative Settler Assistance Program between Land Grant Colleges and Universities and Bureau of Reclamation, 1940 to 1952, Region 1, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 2.

in agricultural settlement of reclamation projects.[85] In subsequent years, Mark Buchanan cited this committee as:

> one of the most important groups serving to cement relationships and to promote effective cooperation and integration among the agencies concerned with development in the Columbia Basin area. It provides a continuing basis whereby joint consideration can be given to problems arising currently and a means by which they may be most effectively approached.[86]

Thus was the question of responsibility for agricultural assistance to settlers on the CBP resolved. The land grant colleges, working through their national association, had asserted successfully a third way between claims by both the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture to dominate the process. The association and the individual colleges had aided the USDA in preventing "what appeared to be an attempt on the part of the Department of Interior to set up an 'Agriculture Department in Interior.'" At the same time, however, they had brought to the attention of the USDA and others that the "USDA does not speak for the land-grant colleges. We are not 'wards' of the USDA nor a little brother, but a full fledged partner both nationally and within the several states."[87] The course of this third way, therefore, did not follow a path advocated by either of the major parties. The Bureau of Reclamation abandoned its attempt to assume full, unshared authority over settler assistance. The Department of Agriculture failed to gain direct control over this function and had in fact been forced to accept diminished pretensions to regulate the

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[85] Report of Meetings of Representatives of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, 13-15 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[86] Mark T. Buchanan, Coordination and Participation of Agency Participation in Columbia Basin Project, 21 April 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 3.

institution, the land-grant college, that would be "the focal point" of settler assistance. After years of struggle between the two federal titans, an agency with ties in law and practice to both but not beholden to nor controlled by either was "the focal point" of responsibility for agricultural settlement on the CBP. The bureaucracies had reached a political accommodation. After years of bitter acrimony, the USDA and DOI had agreed to accept an approach to providing settler assistance very similar to what many joint investigators had advocated. The significance of this outcome for the lives and livelihoods of settlers on the CBP would emerge over time as they began building homes and farms.

In the meantime, however, before the role of the college was formally agreed upon, the Bureau and WSC confronted the difficulties of and limits to cooperative action, even when other interested government agencies raised no objections. In 1946, after they had signed a new settler assistance agreement, the two institutions decided to cooperate in a restudy of acreage limitations. As they worked through the process, they would confront the limits to joint decision-making. They also would have to recognize that their ability to implement even mutually agreed upon decisions was constrained by the actions of increasingly influential local actors. Specifically, both the Bureau and the college would come to admit that they exercised their authority in an arena circumscribed by the refusal of private owners to cede to the government the power to buy, sell, or divide their land, or even to allow their property into the project.

The Washington State Farm Bureau (WaFB) raised the issue of acreage limitations while the question of who would have authority over agricultural

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[87] Mark T. Buchanan, Coordination and Participation of Agency Participation in Columbia

settlement was being debated and as the magnitude of property withdrawals from the project was becoming apparent. In November 1945 the WaFB adopted a resolution criticizing "the tendency toward socialized land policies within the Reclamation Bureau of the Department of Interior" and insisting upon "the development of uniform policies to apply alike to all western Reclamation Projects." Shortly thereafter, it undertook an investigation of settlement policies on the CBP."[88] Forwarding a preliminary report to WSC in July 1946, the secretary of the Farm Bureau pointed out two areas in particular in which his organization would appreciate comments from the college: responsibility for settler assistance agents and farm unit size. On the question of limitations on the size of farms, the report indicated that the WaFB had two goals: raising the maximum allowable acreage above 160 acres and restricting, if not abolishing, the authority of the Bureau of Reclamation or the Secretary of the Interior to limit the size of farms below that ceiling.[89]

The following month representatives of the college and the USBR met to discuss the "problem of the size of Farm Units." Both during the meeting and in the weeks before, they laid out their areas of agreement and disagreement. Although a few within the college favored repeal of the 160-acre limitation, the prevailing opinion was support. The Dean of the College of Agriculture, E. C. Johnson, wrote J.C. Knott after reading the WaFB report that "personally, I am sympathetic with the family farm

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Basin Project, 21 April 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 15.

[88] Washington State Farm Bureau to Wilson Compton, 14 January 1946, Box 85, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

[89] Washington State Farm Bureau, Preliminary Report on Columbia Basin Development Plans and Policies, June 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr 193, MASC, WSU; and R. D. Flaherty to Institute of Agricultural Sciences, 8 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. In his cover letter to J. C. Knott, whom he called Joe, WaFB Secretary Flaherty referred to the attempt by the Farm Bureau in California to remove the ability of the USBR to limit acreage.

idea with the limitation of 160 acres."[90] Orlo Maughan, Chairman of the Division of Agricultural Economics, wrote that the "160 acre limitation of the Bureau of Reclamation is considerable insurance against the large corporate land holding such as found in California."[91] College officials, however, saw the question of size limitations below 160 acres as an area of potentially serious disagreement. At the meeting in August, the Bureau and college representatives acknowledged they held differing opinions on the proper goals for agricultural settlement and that these differences in turn led them to disagree on the question of optimal farm size. The attendees agreed the objective of the Bureau was "to furnish as large a number of agricultural opportunities as possible on the Project" while the Division of Agricultural Economics believed "the goal should be the largest number of 'good' agricultural opportunities, the most efficient production per person and the best size organization per farm."[92] The crux of the disagreement was the question of acceptable farm family

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He concluded by asking if the college could compare competing costs in the CBP and California's central valley.

[90] E. C. Johnson to J. C. Knott, 17 July 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

[91] Orlo H. Maughan to J. C. Knott, et al, 20 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 10. In response to the Farm Bureau request Maughan was delegated by the college to analyze and report on the question of the size of farm units on the CBP.

In September 1946 the Board of Directors of the South Columbia Basin Irrigation Districted instructed its delegates to the National Reclamation Association convention to oppose farm units larger than 160 acres. SCBID, Minutes, 2 September 1946.

[92] Report on Meeting to discuss the Problem of Size of Farm Units on the Columbia Basin Project, 16 August 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU. In his history of the Bureau of Reclamation, published in 1973, William Warne wrote that "it was the changing of goals that wrecked principal elements of the plan." During the joint investigations, he argued, "a goal of providing opportunities for the maximum number of small farms to support families was given highest priority." He concluded that many of the elements of the project planned in the joint investigations "were not realized because the goal was altered to one of providing fewer farms, greater production and more economic opportunity for the settlers after World War II." William Warne, The Bureau of Reclamation (New York; Praeger Publishers, 1973), 135.

income. The agricultural economists at the college believed it should be higher than did the Bureau.[93]

These differences over goals were longstanding; they had shaped the thinking of researchers working on different problems during the joint investigations. Planners on Problem 6, led by R. J. Newell of the USBR, had begun with the premise that the goal of the project should be "to create opportunities for establishing homes and livelihoods for the maximum practical number of families."[94] In August 1946, Newell wrote J. C. Knott that the USBR was developing policies on farm unit size based on the recommendations proposed in Problem 6.[95] Following this approach, the Bureau, according to Project Superintendent W. W. Johnston, would lay out each unit "large enough to support a family at an adequate standard of living."[96]

On the other hand, the thinking of the college in 1946 agreed more, though not entirely, with that articulated in Problem Two of the Joint Investigations. Most of the researchers on this problem had been affiliated with Washington State College and had seen the public interest reflected in self-supporting family farms "large enough to provide a good employment and income producing opportunity to the farmer."[97] They felt it was desirable to focus not on available initial opportunities but on the potential of farms at "mature development" and that the size of a farm "should

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[93] Orlo H. Maughan to J.C. Knott, et.al., 20 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[94] Orlo H. Maughan to J. C. Knott, et al., 20 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. See also CBJI, Problems 6 and 8, Chapter 1.
[95] R. J. Newell to J. C. Knott, 5 August 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr.15, MASC, WSU.
[96] Orlo H. Maughan to J. C. Knott, et al., 20 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 2. See also Northwest Farm News, 25 July 1946, for an interview with W. W. Johnston on the layout of farm units.
[97] CBJI, Problem 2, 76.

be determined in light of the mature farm organization."[98] They believed, too, that the goal should be to minimize the number of failed or subsistence farms and maximize the net number of successful farms, a figure to be reached after unsuccessful farms were deducted.[99] It was in light of this goal that agricultural economists at the college advocated basing size determinations on achieving "the highest family farm efficiency possible and a larger family farm income." This emphasis on efficiency led college researchers to recommend that farms on the better quality land should be larger than those proposed by the Bureau, while some farms on the poorer land should actually be smaller than recommended by the Bureau.[100] College officials argued that on better quality land both labor efficiency and earnings rose rapidly with increased acreage. Conversely, on poorer quality land, specifically 3S (soil), labor would not be used efficiently on larger units as any increase in earnings with the increased acreage was minimal. The overall result, according to Orlo Maughan, would be a "somewhat smaller number of farms" than was then contemplated by the Bureau.[101]

While recognizing the longstanding nature of their differing opinions, both institutions agreed that by mid-1946 conditions had changed significantly since the joint investigators had addressed the issue of farm size and that a new analysis was justified. Further, both the college and the Bureau insisted each had an open mind

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[98] CBJI, Problem 2, 73-74.
[99] In making this calculation, the investigators assumed that one insolvent farm offset one solvent farm.
[100] Orlo H. Maughan to J. C. Knott, et al., 20 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 2. Many in the college, including Maughan in this report, recommended that units comprised of Class 3 land be sized down.
[101] Orlo H. Maughan to J. C. Knott, et al., 20 July 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 11.

on the subject and desired to cooperate in the restudy. [102] In his letter to J. C. Knott, R. J. Newell assured the college that the Bureau's recently developed policies based on the recommendations proposed in Problem 6 of the Joint Investigations were not necessarily its "last word" on the subject. Rather, from the Commissioner on down, the Bureau was committed to "continuing analysis of this problem. . . carried on in cooperation with Washington State College and other responsible agencies."[103] On the other side, representatives of the college believed that the Bureau "could be trusted" and was "open-minded about the whole matter of size."[104]

Even as the two sides asserted their willingness to cooperate, they both recognized the problems posed by the existing ownership pattern, dominated as it was by numerous small private holdings rather than large-scale public ownership. As a result of this pattern, the Bureau was in "a weaker position with regard to control of land than was previously contemplated" and would be less able to implement any proposed farm unit sizes on which the two institutions might agree.[105] The Bureau was already encountering these difficulties as it tried to lay out farms in the test block near Pasco, and the college was very aware of the problems. At the end of 1946, L. C. Wheeting, a WSC agricultural economist who had worked on the joint investigation, reported to Mark Buchanan that in some cases of class one soil "as many as six ownerships were involved in one proposed unit . . (and). . . they [USBR

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[102] Report on Meeting to discuss the Problem of Size of Farm Units on the Columbia Basin Project, 26 August 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[103] R. J. Newell to J. C. Knott, 5 August 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[104] L. C. Wheeting to Director Buchanan, 20 December 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.
[105] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, RE-STUDY OF SIZE OF FARM UNITS: COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT, WASHINGTON, May 1948, 6. (Hereafter, USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948.)

personnel] expect to have equal difficulty on units consisting mainly of class two soil."[106]

For a year and a half, a joint college-Bureau committee worked on the re-study of CBP acreage limitations, reporting their findings in May 1948.[107] Recommendations fell into two general categories: slight changes in size and greater flexibility in size. At the same time, the authors cited two categories of reasons propelling the re-study and the conclusions. One centered on economic trends affecting agriculture in general and included market changes, mechanization and other advances in technology, and changes in costs and prices. The other factor was specific to the CBP—the reduced ability of the government to acquire land within the project and thus to control sizing of farm units. To a large degree the changes affecting agriculture in general propelled the recommendations on farm unit size while the smaller than expected percentage of public ownership within the project underlay the perceived need for greatly flexibility in platting farms.[108]

The report recommended an average acreage per farm somewhat larger on the better land, both Class 1 and Class 2T (topography), than had been proposed by the investigators for Problem 6, though the average increase was only 5 acres. Conversely, the restudy recommended a ten-acre average decrease in the size of farms comprised of the poorest irrigable land, Class 3S (soil), down from 110 to 100

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[106]USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 6.

[107] Walter Fuhriman of the USBR headed the study. Previously Fuhriman had been assigned by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the USDA to work on Problem 6 of the Joint Investigations. The college named B. L. Parrish of the department of agricultural economics as its primary representative on the study.

[108]In "an extensive trial" the Bureau had encountered numerous problems in the exchange of ownership and had concluded that in laying out farm units it must have greater flexibility in sizes. In many of these cases the owners insisted on retaining relatively small farms. USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 6-11.

acres.[109] Both the recommended increases and decrease moved in the direction espoused by WSC agricultural scientists, but fell short of meeting the goals advocated by the college. The foreword to the report included a caveat clearly stating that the "representatives of the State College of Washington" continued to espouse "larger farm units on the better classes of land and probably smaller units on the poorer classes of land." The goals of the two agencies, they insisted, remained unreconciled. In the foreword the college representatives stated their unchanged opinion that the policy goal of "the greatest number of 'suitable' settlement opportunities," still espoused by the Bureau, was not necessarily the "most desirable objective in establishing size of farm unit" and that "more emphasis should be placed on maximum production efficiency."[110] Thus, while the report was prepared in a spirit of cooperation and clearly outlined and made some concessions to the views of the college, its recommendations on farm sizes were still weighted toward allowing the Bureau to meet its longstanding objective of providing "as large a number of agricultural opportunities as possible on the project."[111]

It is apparent that college researchers believed that the effect of poor soil quality on farm income at best could be mitigated only partially by adjusting farm size. While farmers on better quality land could choose from a number of profitable crop and livestock enterprises, those attempting to develop farms on poorer soil had a more limited range of crop options. Further, the poor to moderate fertility of the soil meant a relatively low productivity per unit and per person. The average farmer on

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[109]USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 25-26.
[110]USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, ii. The college representatives defined maximum production efficiency as total product per farm unit and per person.
[111]Report on Meeting to discuss the Problem of Size of Farm Units on the Columbia Basin Project, 16 August 1946, Box 86, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU.

poor land, therefore, would receive only a minimal return on the extra labor required to work increased acreage. Thus, while the Bureau continued to strive for a range of farm sizes that would equalize incomes between farmers on good and poor quality land, college researchers believed that such a goal most likely would not be possible to achieve.

Possibly of even more significance in the long run, the authors, those from both the college and the Bureau, conceded the tentative nature of their recommendations. In the report they laid out very specific figures for the range in and optimal size of platted farm units on the different classes of land. Yet, they also acknowledged in a number of ways that the private landowner, both current and future, would have the power to thwart and change these recommendations and limit the government's ability to control farm size. The government was in a "weaker position" than "previously contemplated" with regard to control of land.[112] The determination of existing farm owners to hold onto their land had forced the investigators to allow more flexibility in laying out farm units than they otherwise would have recommended. To accommodate these owners, the restudy expanded the range of acceptable sizes to include both smaller and larger acreages in all land classes. In the case of larger farms, for instance, the investigators acknowledged that many pre-1937 owners would take advantage of the provision in the law that allowed them to receive water for up to 160 acres no matter the quality of the land.[113] Existing private ownership could also skew distribution among smaller farms. In the Quincy Basin, for instance, most of the land remained in privately owned forty- and eighty-acre parcels. The law allowed owners to request that these existing properties

become legally platted units. Consequently, the percentage of sixty-acre units, which the government preferred for this area, would be "less than indicated in the guide in order to conform farm unit boundaries more nearly to ownership units."[114]

The investigators also acknowledged that existing private ownership would affect the size of operating farms—the total acreage one operator might work. Because the CBP Act allowed leasing, operating farms need not be limited to one unit. The investigators expected farmers to lease or jointly operate two or more units. Many existing owners who intended to hold their land planned to lease it out rather farm it themselves. Thus, operating farms would not necessarily correspond in size with platted farm units. Finally, citing historical evidence showing that settlers on other reclamation projects in the area, including Yakima and Kittitas, had moved toward acreages even larger than those recommended on the CBP, the investigators admitted that farm unit sizes established by the government "may not be maintained." They thus acknowledged the uncertain nature of the government's authority to control two pivotal components of agricultural settlement—the size and the number of farming opportunities—and accordingly the essentially transitory nature of their recommendations. With these admissions, they left for subsequent investigations--investigations that never materialized--two issues of primary importance to settlement on the CBP: the retention of farm unit boundaries after they were once established and the maximum size of operating units.[115] In postponing investigation of those issues, the researchers avoided confronting the long-term relevance of their recommendations.

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[112]USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 6.
[113] USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 4.
[114] USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 44.

Soon, the first settlers would arrive and with them would begin the process of matching plans to reality. The stage was set for the great experiment, but differently than Bureau officials, planners, and many other proponents of the project had expected. Local players—landowners and college agriculturists--emerged to exercise power and share authority with national organizations and officials. As private landowners began to make decisions about their property, they forced government planners to downgrade estimates about the amount of land and the number of settlement opportunities the project offered and to accept limits to their power to determine the size of the opportunities that would be available. After years of dispute between the USDA and DOI, the state college of agriculture would be responsible for settler assistance personnel. The Bureau would have to share authority over a range of settlement issues, including the provision of aid to the new farmers. Potential settlers hoping to take up farming, thus, would come to a shrunken project where authority to help them was limited and was divided among various agencies. This arrangement would be tested on two units to which the Bureau would bring water on a trial basis.

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[115] USBR, RE-STUDY, May 1948, 5.

Chapter 6

Testing the Waters: The Settlers Arrive

On the morning of May 15, 1948, four years before the project officially opened, the Bureau of Reclamation sent the first irrigation water running from the Columbia River to the farmland of Block One at the far south end of the CBP. Long-time project booster Judge B. B. Horrigan of Pasco signaled for the floodgates to be opened at 10:15 a.m. Fifty minutes later the water reached the farm of O. C. Gillum, a World War II navy veteran from the Midwest, and his wife Helen. The first test of settlement on the Columbia Basin Project had begun.[1]

Block One of the CBP, where land and water and settler first came together, encompassed 5500 acres, was seven miles long and three miles wide at its largest points, and was platted into 84 farm units. Nestled in the southernmost portion of the project near Pasco, Block One was not scheduled to receive water from Grand Coulee Dam, over 120 miles to the north, until ten years after the project began operation. Landowners and irrigation district officials in the area had long been concerned about this extended wait. Coincidentally, Pasco, with the lowest inland elevation in the region, hugged the shore of the Columbia. Water pumped directly out of the river could be brought to the nearby land relatively quickly and inexpensively. It need only be lifted 171 feet. Thus, partly to placate impatient locals and also because it was technically straightforward, the Bureau decided that until the main distribution system from Grand Coulee Dam reached the area, Block One would receive water by

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[1] Wenatchee Daily World, 15 May 1948; "First Water Reaches Columbia Basin Project," The Reclamation Era, July 1948, 127-128; Helen Gillum, "Columbia Basin Project, Irrigation Block

direct pumping from the Columbia River. Block Two, southeast of Pasco near Burbank, was also scheduled for early development, though not until 1950. It would receive water directly from the Snake River. With this early water, the Burbank and primarily the Pasco blocks also could serve as a laboratory for settlement polices and programs contemplated for the main body of the project, slated to open officially in 1952.[2] The experiences of the irrigators on these test blocks would bring to the fore the drawbacks as well as the successes of the plans and decisions the government had made in preparation for settlement and would point to the pivotal role land quality would play in settler success.

The Columbia Basin Project, as envisioned in 1948, stretched a maximum of 60 miles east to west and 80 miles north to south. Within its boundaries, it encompassed in excess of 2 ½ million acres of land, over a million of which the government in 1948 planned to divide into 14,000 farms. Within this vast region were significant variations in climate, soil, and topography. The average frost-free period, important in agriculture, ranged from 206 to 123 days. Spring and summer wind storms were frequent, fierce, and prolonged. In 1950 WSC agricultural scientists completed a five-year study of the soils of the CBP, supplementing the joint investigation's land classification survey with additional field research. They identified eight distinct soil types on the project. The sandiest had severely low water holding capacities, while at the other extreme a firm hardpan impeded drainage. Soil depth also varied dramatically. In topography the lands ranged from nearly level to ridged and dune-like, both of which characteristics could complicate irrigation.

1: Reflections and Reaffirmations in 1976," The Franklin Flyer, June 1996, 7-8. (Hereafter Gillum, "CBP Reflections," Franklin Flyer, June 1996.)
[2]The USBR began construction on the Pasco Unit infrastructure in August 1946.

As a test area Block One had the virtue of exhibiting many of the characteristics found throughout the Basin that would pose particular difficulties for both the settler and the government. It had, for instance, some of the sandiest soil on the CBP, with low water holding capacity. It was prone to the high winds that plagued much of the Basin. The result in the sandy soil often was a hummocky topography, difficult to irrigate and requiring special care in leveling.[3] Further, human action as well as natural characteristics caused problems. First, because of timing, which would have affected any block chosen for early development, the farm units in the Pasco region were on the average slightly smaller than elsewhere on the CBP. Bureau officials had platted this first block, as well as Block Two, in 1946 and 1947 before the restudy of farm size had been completed. As a result, it contained a much larger percentage of small farm units under fifty acres and a much smaller percentage of units averaging 70 to 89 acres than did the balance of the project. Finally, in a move foreshadowing what was to come throughout the project, a significant number of existing property owners retained ownership of land they did not intend to farm. Out of thirty-five private landowners on the Pasco Unit when the preliminary plat was filed in 1947, only two or three actually lived on and farmed the land. Most of the remainder, however, retained title to the land. But not only did they sell fewer parcels

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[3]M. T. Buchanan and R. M. Salter, Soil, Water, and Crop Management Investigations in the Columbia Basin Project, Agricultural Experiment Stations Bulletin 520 (November 1950), 9-19, 73 (hereafter Buchanan and Salter, Soil, Water, and Crop Management, 1950). A 1929 USDA reconnaissance survey had classified the soil in the Pasco region as Ephrata sandy loam, found throughout the western part of the Columbia Basin. By 1950, however, WSC scientists had revised the earlier classification and determined that the soil on the Pasco Unit was Timmerman sandy loam, typified by very fine sand varying in depth. The soil on Block Two was also extremely light.

to the government than planners had hoped, most did not even sell privately. They opted instead to hold and lease.[4]

It was to this setting, with challenges that foreshadowed those posed by other areas of the project, that the first settlers came. Twenty-five hopefuls, most married and many with families, all of whom secured their land privately, arrived on Block One during 1948.[5] In December, the Bureau held its first drawing, and the initial settlers selected to purchase government-owned farm units moved onto their land in the early weeks of 1949. The central actor in the shaping of settlement on the CBP at last had arrived on the scene. The experiences of this vanguard would provide insights into what influence the government would have throughout the project in determining the identity of arriving settlers and then, over time, molding them as farmers. Their behavior, too, would make clear that the settlers would be active participants in

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[4]The on-going difficulties confronting the Bureau as it tried to conform existing property ownerships and farm unit boundaries made it very difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at precise and final figures, but in 1956 the Bureau reported that the average size of a farm unit on Block One was 67.7 acres and on Block Two was 66.6. In 1952 the first units platted in the main part of the project averaged 71.6 acres. By 1956 the average was 80.9. Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 3826: Acreage Limitations, Columbia Basin Project, 84th Cong., 2d. sess.,7 May 1956. Also, E. R. Franklin, W. U. Fuhriman, and B. D. Parrish, Economic Problems and Progress of Columbia Basin Project Settlers, Agricultural Experiment Stations Bulletin 598 (January 1959), 7 and 9 (hereafter Franklin, et.al., Economic Problems and Progress, 1959); Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952; and Wenatchee Daily World, 19 March 1953. Bureau of Reclamation officials had platted the units on Block One before they and representatives from Washington State College completed the re-study of farm size. The determination of established property owners to retain their existing smaller units probably figured in the result as well. One contemporary estimate published in the Wenatchee Daily World on 15 May 1948 put the smallest farm unit size at 17 acres and the largest at 160 acres. Three months earlier, on March 7, the Spokane Spokesman Review reported a range of 28 acres for the smallest to 141 acres for the largest.

The number of private landowners who farmed is discussed in Report of Meetings of Representatives of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington and the Bureau of Reclamation, 13-15 March 1950 Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[5] USBR, Annual Project History: Columbia Basin Project (hereafter CBP), 1948, 202. In its annual history, the Bureau said twelve settlers arrived prior to July and thirteen between that date and the end of the year.

defining both the nature of the assistance the government would provide and the extent of its authority.

The government was able to secure ownership of only fifteen of the eighty-four farm units in the block.[6] The Department of Interior had full authority to buy land. Portending what would come throughout the larger project, however, it found that property owners offered to sell to the government much less than planners had hoped. As a result, most settlers secured their land privately. Some, unable to find land to purchase, were forced to rent. At the same time, however, the Bureau by 1948 did have a settler selection program in place to screen and choose buyers for government-property. Thus, although opportunities were limited, the fifteen units the Bureau owned did provide it with a laboratory for testing the settler selection process and judging how well it would provide opportunities for those who had emerged as the desired recipients of these farming opportunities.

On November 26, 1947 the Secretary of the Interior had issued Executive Order 2379, establishing policies governing both the appointment of boards of examiners to assist in settler selection on the CBP and the drafting of guidelines and regulations controlling the functions of these boards. Citing authority granted to the Secretary under the Fact Finders Act of 1924 and the Columbia Basin Project Act of 1943, this order was the culmination of the years of debate over who should settle on the project. It favored the deserving, qualified applicant, not the most needy. It gave preference to veterans and established that would-be purchasers of government land must meet minimal requirements for experience and capital. Specifically, the

[6] In 1955 the Bureau reported that it had sold fifteen farm units in Block One. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Land Settlement Report: Columbia Basin Project, 1 January 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. Only ten of these units were available in 1948.

Secretary directed that in selling farm units on the CBP the government was to give "preference to veterans substantially identical with the preference established for public land openings" by the act of September 27, 1944. Further, the government was to assure as far as possible the success of prospective settlers by selecting applicants on the basis of "industry, experience, character, capital, and other pertinent requirements." The order also established a procedure of settler selection, centered on boards of examiners to be set up in each irrigation district.[7]

Each board was to consist of not less than three members: a representative of the irrigation district embracing the farm units offered for sale, a veteran of Word War II, and an employee of the Bureau of Reclamation. The first duty of this board was to prepare, in consultation with the staff of the USBR, the specific standards of industry, experience, character, and capital to be required of applicants desiring to purchase farm units in a specific irrigation block. The boards, however, were to act within guidelines specified by the Order. The recommended minimum capital requirement, though not prohibitively high, did eliminate the destitute. It was to be "the lowest amount consistent with protection of the settler, during development of his farm unit, from excessive hardship or failure by reasons of inadequate funds for the expenses of family living and of needed farming operations." For experience, no specific amount was specified, but "success in development and operation of a new, irrigated farm" was to be the touchstone. The boards were directed to formulate the "type and combination of experience as would best contribute to success in development and operation of a new, irrigated farm." After adopting these standards,

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[7] U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, Order No. 2379, 29 November 1947, Department of Interior Library, Washington, D. C. Also, see Chapter 4 previous for discussion of Act of September 27, 1944.

the board would be responsible for screening applicants, selecting those qualified to purchase farm units, and determining the assignment of farm units to successful applicants.[8]

These policies were first put into place with the organization of a Board of Examiners for Blocks One and Two. The South District appointed Loen Bailie, president of its board of directors, a grain and cattle rancher and a long-time booster of the project. At the request of the Bureau of Reclamation, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion recommended Mel McInturf, a member of both organizations and an irrigation farmer, to represent veterans. Beauford Kuhns, Chief of the Land Settlement Section at the district office of the USBR and an ex-farmer, represented the Bureau and the federal government. In collaboration with the local office of the USBR, the board members turned their attention first to establishing the specific capital and experience qualifications to be required for the purchase of government land on Block One. According to Mel McInturf, they carried out this initial task by accepting without question the recommendations drawn up by the local office of the USBR--that prospective purchasers must have a net worth of $3700 and the equivalent of two years farm experience, none of which need be in irrigation farming.[9]

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[8] U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, Order No. 2379, 29 November 1947.
[9]Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Sale of Federally-Owned Farm Units and the History of Their Development, Columbia Basin Project: Volume I – 1950 (Ephrata, Washington, 1 August 1951) Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata (hereafter DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I); Washington State Farm Bureau, Preliminary Report on Columbia Basin Development Plans and Policies, June 1946, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, p. 3; and telephone interview with Mel McInturf, 25 February 1997. According to McInturf the Board also agreed that a purchaser would have to build a habitable residence before receiving the deed to the farm unit.

The Northern Pacific Railway, which owned over 25 farm units on Block One, also gave preference to veterans in sales. However, although it used the qualifications established by Reclamation as "a guide" in selecting purchasers, the company did not set minimum requirements for either capital or experience. Spokesman Review 7 March 1948; "First Water

On July 20, 1948, the Bureau of Reclamation mailed Public Announcement 1.1, describing the upcoming sale of ten government-owned farm units in Block One, to 2500 people who had earlier asked to be notified.[10] One hundred fifty-eight applications were returned. Out of these the Board accepted 139, all from veterans who not only met but in most cases far exceeded the minimum requirements for experience and capital established by the Board.[11] They were overwhelmingly from a farm background. They averaged 6.4 years actual on-farm experience after age fifteen, and 86 percent were the children of farmers and averaged four years working on the family farm. They also far exceeded the minimum capital assets required, with an average net worth of $7842.[12]

On November 15, the Board of Examiners for Block One held the first drawing on the CBP to determine priority of applicants from this pool. Thirty names were drawn. The first twenty were asked to furnish the board with corroborating documentation. The Board then invited the first six applicants to appear on December 15th for in-person interviews. Only one declined. These interviews were

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Reaches Columbia Basin Project," Reclamation Era, July 1948, 128; and USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1948.

[10]At the time, the government owned two farms outright, seven additional farms would soon become the property of the government, and one was owned jointly by the government and Northern Pacific Railway. Eventually, it would offer an additional five units. DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, preface and 1.

[11]Only eleven of the 158 returned applications were from nonveterans. The balance of the unaccepted applications either were received after the close of the filing period or were incomplete. DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, p. 1.

[12] Board of Examiners, Report for Irrigation Block 1, n.d., uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. The report included over fifty different statistics. Fifty-five percent of the applicants on the average had 2.6 years experience as hired labor and 57% had 2.3 years experience as a farm operator. Eighty percent included household goods and 87 percent autos among their assets. The next largest, 49 percent, listed farm equipment as an asset. The applicants were a bit older than had been anticipated. Although the largest percentage (47%) were between 20

structured both to give the Board a final chance to judge an applicant's qualifications and to give each applicant a realistic and full picture of the circumstances facing anyone trying to carve out an irrigation farm on the project. According to Mel McInturf, the board was interested in both the enthusiasm exhibited by the applicants, and, on the assumption that the applicants would be men, the attitude of the wives. Years later McInturf said that if "the wife objected to the unit the man could not draw a unit. We insisted that it had to be agreeable to both. There were a few who were not able to draw a unit because their wives objected." In imparting information to the would-be settlers, the board tried to cover both drawbacks and opportunities, ranging over taxes, terms of sale, water charges, farm training for veterans, settler assistance, credit, domestic water and other utilities, social life, crops and farming stratagems. They also reminded each applicant that it was necessary to build a habitable residence before receiving a deed from the government. After the interviews, a land use specialist with the Bureau escorted the would-be settlers on a tour of available farm units. This tour more than any lecture probably impressed upon both the husband and the wife the hardships as well as the possibilities of farming on the CBP. Finally, the applicants, in order of priority, selected units. According to McInturf, because few settlers had the same requirements for land, this procedure worked well and was fair to all purchasers. The process was repeated five days later when the board interviewed the applicants with priority numbers seven through ten.[13]

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and 29 years of age, the average age of the applicants was 31 years. But given that the war had ended over three years previously, it is not surprising that the vets were a bit older.

[13] Marion Behrends Higley, Real True Grit: Stories of Early Settlers of Block 15, Between 1953-1950 (Pasco, Washington: B&B Express Printing, 1998, privately printed), 198 (hereafter Higley, Real True Grit): DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Mel McInturf, 25 February 1997.

By December 1950 the government had sold twelve farm units.[14] The successful candidates for the purchase of land from the Bureau on Block One personified quite well the public relations ideal of a deserving family farmer. They also made evident how the prewar idea that the recipient of this opportunity should be a destitute failed family farmer in need of a second chance had been modified during the hearings on the CBP Act to promote the deserving veteran who was also qualified. Although most had only modest financial resources, they were not destitute. Their certified assets ranged from $3700 to $20,500. All but two had less than $10,000, though half had assets nearly double or more the minimum requirement. They also were comparatively well educated; five, including one nurse and one attorney, had been to college. They also exhibited strong farm backgrounds. Most had significantly more than the minimum two years experience; at least eight were raised on a family farm. Although older than expected, they were relatively young. In 1948 they ranged in age from 24 to 41; seven were under 30. By 1951 nine of the twelve were married, and eight had at least one young child.[15]

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[14] The government eventually would dispose of another three units. By the end of 1950 two of the original purchasers had assigned their contracts to other settlers. The following description of the settlers is based on the twelve settlers who bought publicly owned farm units by 1950 for which extensive descriptive material is available, primarily, although not exclusively, in DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[15] Two reports, one prepared in 1948 and one in 1951, list slightly different net assets for the applicants. With one exception (where the 1951 report was not specific), the figures I cite are from the 1951 report. The individual figures were: $3700 (from 1948 report), $4807, $4922, $5450, $5741, $5750, $7250, $7529, $7650, $8471, $16,340, and $20,500. As a general rule, the figures in the 1948 report are slightly higher, quite likely reflecting overly optimistic estimates of the value of assets that were to be sold. Acting Chief, to Project Development Supervisor, 29 December 1948, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata.

Ten of the twelve successful applicants lived in the Pacific Northwest and Utah at the time they purchased their farm units, although five had been raised elsewhere Three had lived before the war in Utah, and three in Oregon. One each had been raised in Nebraska, Kansas,

It is important to remember that the power the government exercised in settler selection was limited. First, of course, the Department of Interior was able to purchase and as a result control the sale of only a relatively few units. In addition, the Board of Examiners was limited in its powers. At no time in the process did it rate the applicants who met the minimum qualifications.[16] Priority rather was determined only by the random chance of the draw. The board's primary power to discriminate among interviewees, according to Mel McInturf, was to encourage self-selection by pointing out to potential applicants the challenges they faced and exposing them to the reality of the land before they made a final decision. Yet, in spite of these limits to its power, the Board in its first attempt at choosing settlers functioned much as anticipated. The result in most cases fit the image touted by planners and promoters as they sought to garner support for the project—a deserving veteran with a young family who also demonstrated the minimum qualifications necessary to give him a reasonable head start on the road to success. One exception to the expectations was in the words of Mel McInturf, a "lady veteran." Anne Helina was a nurse and lieutenant in the regular army. She was also unmarried.[17]

Florida, Idaho, and South Dakota. One was born in British Columbia. None was originally from Washington State. DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Acting Chief to Project Development Supervisor, 22 November 1948, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[16]The policy by which selection boards could rate applicants, used on a few projects after the Fact Finders made their report and until the end of World War II, was never considered for the CBP. Such a rating system allowed the Board to give greater advantage to those with irrigation experience and large capital resources. The Bureau discarded it entirely, not just on the CBP, in 1949. Murray A. Straus, Matching Farms and Families in the Columbia Basin Project, Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations Bulletin 588 (June 1958), 2 (hereafter Straus, Matching Farms and Families, 1958); and Golze, Reclamation, 362-367. See Chapter 3 preceding for discussion of rating system.

[17] Higley, Real True Grit, 199. See also, Wenatchee Daily World, 18 January 1952. The other two recipients who deviated most from the PR ideal were older, 34 and 40 years of age, and better off than the majority of applicants, with assets of $20,500 and $16,340. They were,

The true test of the settler selection process, of course, would come later when those chosen tried to establish long-term farms and homes. In the interim, they, along with everyone else who came to the project, would face and have to overcome hardships, though in an era much less difficult than before the war. At the same time, the effort of the government to forge newcomers into successful permanent farmers would affect each and every settler, not just those who got their land through the Bureau's selection process.

These first settlers, regardless of their background or how they secured their farm, would come to primitive conditions. The first to settle on the Pasco unit were Warren and Audrey Clifford, newlyweds from Puyallup in the western part of Washington state. They bought their farm privately from an insurance agent in Pasco and a number of other individuals who owned smaller pieces of the platted unit. Although larger than most in Block One, it was characterized by shallow topsoil. Warren was 22 years old, Audrey was only 18 when they moved onto the sagebrush-covered unit in January 1948. In the winter that followed they suffered through floods and weather in which temperatures dropped as low as minus 30 degrees. Their first home was half a 20-by-40-foot makeshift fusion of an army hut and a shop. They had no plumbing, no electricity, no telephone. They hauled their water in ten-gallon milk cans from the government's experimental farm over a mile away. To keep warm they burned sagebrush in an old cook stove.[18] In a retrospective article published in 1971, the Tri-City Herald, the major newspaper in the basin area, featured the experience of

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however, both married men with children and were raised on farms in the United States. For a specific article on Anne Helina see Wenatchee Daily World, 18 January 1952

[18]Wenatchee Daily World, 15 May 1948; Tri-City Herald, 14 March 1971; Gillum, "CBP Reflections," The Franklin Flyer, June 1966, 7; and Audrey Clifford, typed narrative, 8 December 2000 (in possession of author).

the Cliffords as emblematic of "Basin Life - `48 style'" headlining it "Pioneers burned sagebrush."[19]

There was much truth to the image of these first settlers as "sagebrush pioneers." Starting out, nearly all of them, not just the Cliffords, made do with only the most rudimentary resources, with no running water, no electricity, no phone. It was not unusual for a family to live a year in a structure that later would become a chicken coop or in a hut where "when the wind blew, they shoveled the sand out of their bedroom."[20] Yet, the extreme hard times of this postwar pioneer life passed quite quickly in an economically prospering America. Unemployment in 1948, although it had risen since the war, remained under 4 percent. Per capita income in 1949 was $1450, much higher than in the next most prosperous countries of the world. In 1948, government spending was four times what it had been in 1939 and was on the rise; and the GI Bill made some of this money available to the many veterans who would settle on the CBP. By 1950, thirty-five of the settlers on Block One, including nine who purchased units from the federal government, had enrolled in the GI Bill farm training program and received an average of $2160 in direct cash subsistence payments.[21] These settlers were a people with options. They would soon build a farm life that was part of the modern world or they could leave to try something or

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[19] Tri-City Herald, 14 March 1971.

[20] Dee Harris to Katheryn (sic) Utter, 6 March 2000. (Hereafter Harris to Utter, 6 March 200.)

[21] James T. Patterson, Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chapter Three, 61-81. This postwar boom, of course, did not benefit everyone, but people, like the overwhelmingly white, middle and working class settlers who came to the project, did participate.

DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, p.19. The nine purchasers of government owned units received an average of $1809 in subsistence payments.

A. M. Killingsworth to B. E. Kuhns, 17 May 1951, attachment: Settlers on Pasco Pump Unit enrolled in Institutional on-The-Farm-Training, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

somewhere else. "On their own," as Helen Gillum later described it, except for "the Settlers Assistance Act . . . the GI Bill, FHA, and all the technological know-how that the U.S. Department of Interior could muster. . . they plunged headlong into success or failure."[22]

In 1948 Dee Harris, the special settler assistance agent hired for the Columbia Basin Project, personified the help mustered by the government. He was employed under the June 1947 memorandum of agreement between WSC and the regional office of the USBR that authorized an "intensive program" of settler assistance provided through the "combined efforts of the staffs of the State Extension Service and the Bureau of Reclamation."[23] Fresh out of the University of Idaho and as young as, or in many cases younger than, the would-be farmers, Harris came to Block One on June 1, two weeks after the first water.[24] Twelve settlers were already at work by the time Harris arrived to take up his duties. For the next year and a half administrators and politicians at the federal level would debate in the halls of government and academia, far from where Harris labored, how to organize and divide authority over a wide-ranging program of cooperation for the nation's reclamation projects. The results of their deliberations were intended to apply, among many other areas, to the "intensive program" of settler assistance on the CBP. It would be October 1949, at the Kansas City gathering of Land Grant college officials and federal

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[22]Gillum, "CBP Reflections," The Franklin Flyer, June 1996, 7.
[23]U. S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Memorandum of Agreement Between the Bureau of Reclamation and the State College of Washington, 9 May 1946, Box 89, Coll. of Agr. 15, MASC, WSU; E. V. Ellington, Assistance to Settlers, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 4-5; and Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000. See Chapter 5 previous for discussion of the signing of this memorandum.
[24]Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, Washington State Extension Service County Reports and Specialists Reports, MASC, WSU 4. (Year Annual Narrative: County Extension.)

administrators, before they reached any agreement. In the fields of central Washington, however, Dee Harris, local USBR workers, and most particularly the settlers did not have such luxury of time and deliberation. They faced a need for immediate action. Working together they would follow a demand and results-oriented approach to what help was needed and what the duties of both Harris and the Bureau employees would be.

As this process of providing settler assistance went forward on the CBP, it soon became apparent that with their emergence on the scene, the settlers had joined the government agencies as an active participant in formulating the specifics of the help they would receive. While Harris and his Bureau colleagues in the field proceeded independent of higher level bureaucratic disputes, they were greatly affected in the performance of their duties by the needs and wishes of the settlers. After these new farmers began arriving, no longer would government agencies talk only among themselves. Henceforth, the discussions would include the people on the land. At the same time, with the arrival of the first farmers on Block One, government agencies could no longer continue to debate and avoid answering the question of who would be responsible for providing assistance to CBP settlers.

A retrospective capsule description Harris wrote of his early time on the project includes an unintended tip-off about the immediate effect the settlers had in shaping the assistance available to them. In it he explains that he "worked with the Bureau personnel on land leveling and laying out irrigation systems, both rill irrigation and sprinklers."[25] It is the reference to sprinklers that points to the emergence of the settlers as a participant in shaping the assistance they received. It is important, first,

to remember that Congress had never authorized the Bureau of Reclamation or any other government agency to construct farm water distribution systems or otherwise prepare farm units for irrigation. Still there was to be a significant role for the government in providing "advisory assistance."[26] At the same time, most planning for the project, beginning with the Joint Investigations, had assumed that settlers would use gravity-propelled surface irrigation to apply water to their crops. Planners, thus, had assumed that although a settler arriving on the project would be responsible for the actual leveling and grading of the land, the government would provide crucial help in support of surface irrigation, specifically surveying and calculating cut and fill. Little, if any, thought was given to the use of sprinklers or to any "advisory assistance" settlers might require with this technology. Juggling the mix of environmental and economic pressures they faced on Block One, however, the new farmers, even with only the rudimentary technology then available, often opted for sprinklers, pushing the settler assistance program to follow them in a direction other than what planners had expected.

The defining characteristic of surface irrigation is length of run—the distance water travels in a continuous flow. Length of run, in turn, is determined by the interaction of soil and slope. Because it determines permeability, the physical composition of the soil—its texture—must be factored into length of run. By way of example, water travels only a short distance over sand before disappearing completely, while it penetrates very slowly and travels longer over fine-textured, compact loam. At the same time, no matter what the soil type, water will not spread

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[25] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000.

over either a flat or a hummocky surface nor will it penetrate well when it is running rapidly over an excessively steep grade. Surface irrigation, therefore, requires a precisely engineered and carefully leveled topography to secure the optimum combination of slope and soil. At the same time, length of run decisions have both environmental and economic consequences. Long runs require either or both large volumes (heads) of water and long periods of application; they have the potential to seriously erode soil and cause excessive water loss at the upper end of a run. Short runs, on the other hand, while saving water and minimizing erosion, are costly in both time and money to create and operate. In a given geographic area, numerous short runs require more labor, distribution facilities and control structures than do fewer long runs. [27]

In spite of this complexity, planners for the CBP, at the opening of Block One, had assumed settlers would adopt surface irrigation. They did not consider sprinklers a viable alternative and often actively discouraged their use. They argued that costs to the farmer were prohibitively high, both the initial cost to purchase and install required equipment as well as the ongoing operating cost of power. In 1947 an agricultural engineer at Washington State College had calculated that installation costs would run up to $50 an acre, over a third more than the estimated average cost

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[26] U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, "Opportunities, Responsibilities and Needs in Irrigation Development, Columbia Basin Projection, Washington" (Ephrata, Washington; February 1949,), 14, 19-20, 33. See also Chapter 4 preceding.

[27] Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and Agricultural Extension Service, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, the State College of Washington, Information for the New Settler in Irrigation Block No. One, n.d., remote storage, USBR, Ephrata, Washington. (hereafter Department of the Interior et al, Information for New Settler, Block One.) Irrigation Research Committee, Consideration of Needs for Irrigation Research, Report of Meeting, 13 October 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

of leveling.[28] Some costs for sprinkler irrigation, in fact, were significantly higher in 1948 than they would be a few years later. When the settlers began arriving on Block One, for instance, only single-phase power was available, which limited the size of electric motors. Small motors in turn limited the spread of the water to at most twenty acres. As a result farmers had to install twice as many pumping stations with related equipment and pay twice would have sufficed if they could have operated larger motors. At the same time, though some changes had come and others were on the horizon, sprinkler technology in 1948 remained very primitive and labor intensive. Before the war pipes were made of steel and thus were too heavy for one person to move. In the interim, the advent of aluminum had lightened the weight of the pipe. Still, forty-foot lengths of pipe, three to four inches in diameter, had to be lifted and moved by hand at least twice a day. The Cliffords recalled trudging through muddy soil to move 800 feet of pipe, at one point every two hours night and day.[29] In 1948 not even wheels were yet available to ease the process of moving them.[30] Thus, although the labor involved in moving pipes required no particular skill, irrigating by sprinkler consumed a large amount of time. As Block One opened for settlement, Bureau planners still considered the costs in time and money of sprinkler irrigation to far outweigh the benefits.

Conditions on much of Block One, however, posed significant difficulties for surface irrigation and, therefore, worked against the expectations of planners. Some arriving settlers, including Warren and Audrey Clifford, found their soil to be quite

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[28] Grange News, 23 August 1947, 9.
[29] Tri-City Herald, 10 August 1997.
[30] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000; telecom with Dee Harris, 25 January 2001; William Johnston to Doyle Ohlund, 29 May 1951, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and "Western Farmers

shallow.[31] Its limited depth made it difficult, often impossible, to cut and fill to establish the necessary grade without at the same time exposing the subsoil and losing fertility. As they tried to level their land for water, however, the most pernicious and widespread problem facing settlers on Block One, and even more so on Block Two, stemmed from soil texture, not depth. Sand was widespread throughout the Basin's southern regions.[32] Easily disturbed by the pervasive strong and frequent winds, this sandy soil would form into a hummocky topography that required extensive leveling in order to grade properly.[33] Further, no matter the topography or soil depth, water would flow only 100 or 200 feet over the sand before disappearing below the surface, necessitating many short runs. Farmers, as a result, were forced to level and grade a large number of discrete, small plots. Under any of these circumstances, even when leveling and grading were workable, land preparation costs often far exceeded most estimates. A government handbook at the time told the settlers to expect to pay on average $34 an acre, but Dee Harris reported at the end of 1948 that they were in fact paying "from $70.00 to $100.00 per acre" to level their land.[34] He later estimated that in extreme cases costs reached as high as $250 an acre.[35] These costs for leveling dwarfed the $50 an acre that had been estimated for sprinkler installation.

Introduce Improved Methods," The Northwest, January 1951, 1. Harris also mentioned that salts in the water could pit the pipes, causing leaks, water loss and consequent erosion.

[31] Clifford to Utter, 8 December 2000.

[32] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000.

[33] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County, pp. 35-36 ; and District Manager to Commissioner, 10 January 1952, Attachment Part 3: Summary of Results of the Cooperative Settler Assistance Program between Land Grant Colleges and University and Bureau of Reclamation 1940 to 1952 in Region 1, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, p. 9.

[34] Department of the Interior et al, Information for the New Settler, Block One; Reclamation Era, October 1949; and Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 8.

[35] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000.

Finally, because the sandy soil found throughout much of Block One, and almost entirely over Block Two, had little or no moisture holding capacity, the water would quickly sink below the root zone. Even when the land was laid out into numerous small plots, if the crops were to get the water they needed, the farmer had to irrigate often and in small, carefully regulated amounts. Otherwise, a significant quantity of water would be lost before the crops got sufficient moisture. To be done correctly, this process required knowledge built up only through extensive experience. Before the settlers arrived the Bureau, analyzing land quality and capability, had set the annual water allocation for each farm unit. During the first ten years of operation, referred to as the development period, the government would not collect construction repayments from the farmer. Rather it would deliver water on what was referred to as a rental basis. This base rental charge per acre applied to the allotment established by the Bureau. Additional water over that amount--excess water--carried increasingly higher charges as more was used. These ranged from 120 percent of the base rate for the first excess acre-foot to 160 percent for the third excess acre foot. Because of the difficulties involved in watering the sandy soil of Block One, however, many new farmers almost immediately found the allocation set by the Bureau insufficient and were forced to buy higher priced excess water. During 1949, the first full year of operation, new settlers exhausted their allotted water by mid summer; Dee Harris reported that the "first farmer used his basic water allotment some time in July."[36] The result was a high cost for water that many farmers could not afford, had not expected, and quickly came to resent.[37]

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[36]Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 43.
[37]Telecom with Dee Harris, 25 January 2001; Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000; Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 41-43; Columbia Basin Commission, et al., Land

Although many farmers stayed with surface irrigation, several found the difficulties and costs, either in leveling the land or in spreading the water on sandy soil, to be "prohibitive and . . . turned to the installation of sprinklers."[38] They chose this path even though Bureau personnel continued to point critically to the high costs of sprinklers, and a handbook prepared jointly by the Bureau, the College, and the Extension Service cautioned new settlers, especially those of "modest means," against the cost of sprinkler systems.[39] Some of these converts to sprinklers rejected surface irrigation because they feared the "high cost" and the danger of "removing the good top soil and putting it in gullies. . . if they leveled the land"[40] Others opted for sprinkling because it required only relatively unskilled and, thus, more readily available and less expensive labor. Many chose sprinkling, however, because it enabled the irrigator to quite easily regulate water and apply only an amount the soil

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and Water Contracts of the Columbia Basin Reclamation Project (1945); Farmers Handbook for the Columbia Basin Project (Institute of Agricultural Sciences, the State College of Washington, and Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior, n.d.), I/2-I/4 and L/2-L/3; Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes of Meeting, 17 September 1949, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Memorandum for files (District Land Office), 25 June 1948, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 3.

[38] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, MASC, WSU, 13.

[39] Telecom with Dee Harris, 25 January 2001.

Engineers for WSC wrote that on Block One, "it is evident that many operators are irrigating with sprinklers by choice and not because rough topography or lack of soil depth influenced them to do so." A. L. Walker, Max Jensen and B. D. Parrish to Crawford Reid, 11 November 1953, Box 1, Coll. of Agr.193, MASC, WSU.

According to Dee Harris the Bureau was "so sure the only way to put water on the land was by gravity irrigation" and made the following points against sprinklers: "too costly to buy, they would only last a few years, too costly to pump the water and too costly to get the power to the pump out in the field." Harris to Utter 6 March 2000.

The Bureau was not alone in cautioning settlers about sprinklers. In a handbook of information for the new settler prepared jointly by the Extension Service, the College and the Bureau, settlers were warned that "it will normally be better for the settler of modest means to use a surface method of irrigation because sprinkler systems are expensive." Department of the Interior et al, Information for the New Settler, Block One, 4.

[40] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 8

could hold.[41] Thus, the quantity and as a result the cost of water needed to irrigate the sandy soil would be much less. By the end of 1948, nine of the twenty-five settler families who had arrived on the project, including Warren and Audrey Clifford, had decided to install sprinklers.[42] The numbers grew rapidly as some settlers, who originally leveled their land to surface irrigate, began after only one or two growing seasons to install sprinklers, particularly when their use of excess water increased expenses and when the development of wheel mounts made moving pipes easier.[43] By the end of 1950, 27 of the 63 units under cultivation were sprinkler irrigated.[44] By 1951, all but two of the settlers who bought their units from the government were developing their land under sprinkler irrigation.[45] Two years later, 50 percent of all units on Block One were sprinkler irrigated.[46] Settlers on Block Two were even more committed to sprinklers. In January 1955, the Bureau reported that all settlers in the Burbank area were using "the sprinkler method of irrigation." [47]

In spite of the government's qualms about the use of sprinklers, everyone connected with the settler assistance program moved quickly to offer needed help to

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[41] Harris to Utter, 25 January 2001.
[42] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 13; and Audrey Clifford to Kathryn Utter, 8 December 2000.
[43] "Western Farmers Introduce Improved Methods," The Northwest, January 1951, 1-2.
[44] Leverett Richards, "An Agricultural Empire is Born," Country Gentleman, May 1951; and Land Settlement Report, Columbia Basin Project, 1 January 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata, 2.
[45] DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, 6
[46] A. L. Miller, Max Jensen and B. D. Parrish to Crawford Reid, 11 November 1953, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[47] Block Two settlers were even more interested in sprinklers. In a January 1955 land settlement report, the Bureau of Reclamation remarked on the "light texture of the soil" in Block One and stated that all settlers were using "the sprinkler method of irrigation." Land Settlement Report, Columbia Basin Project, 1 January 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

settlers who chose this method.[48] Bureau engineers readily consulted with farmers and Harris about the specifications for sprinkler irrigation. During the winter of 1948-1949, they "figured the costs and made designs" for four systems. By early spring they and Harris had begun surveying the main lines for three more.[49] Further, the effect of the settlers' interest in sprinklers extended even beyond the type of assistance offered by Harris and his Bureau counterparts in the field. By the summer of 1949 the development farm program, a joint venture of the State College, the Bureau, and the USDA, had established sprinkler tests in three areas on the Project. Milo Hoisveen of the Bureau specifically acknowledged the influence of the settlers on the government's decision to set up this research program. In the August 1949 issue of Reclamation Era, he explained that a twenty-acre, sprinkler-irrigated experimental plot in Block One was being developed "in response to the requests from residents of the Pasco area."[50] Months later the State College and the Bureau set up a field study in Block One to compare the "economies" of sprinkler and surface irrigation.[51] In March 1950 representatives of the two agencies, as an outgrowth of the Kansas City agreement between the USDA and the DOI, established an on-going formal mechanism for joint discussion and analysis of settlement problems on the

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[48] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 9 and 13; and Dee Harris, Monthly Narrative Report--September 1948: Franklin County, Washington State Extension Service County Reports and Specialist Reports, MASC, WSU. (Hereafter author, Monthly Narrative—date: County Extension.)

[49] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 34; Dee Harris, Monthly Report--May 1949: Franklin County Extension.; and Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 9-10.

[50] Milo W. Hoisveen, "Sprinkler Tests on the Columbia Basin Project," The Reclamation Era (August 1949): 181.

[51] A. L. Walker, Max Jensen and B. D. Parrish to Crawford Reid, 11 November 1953, Box 1, College of Agriculture Acc. 193, MASC, WSU.

CBP. The comparative cost study was one of the first actions authorized.[52] Thus, beginning immediately upon arrival, with the first decision they had to make—what type of water distribution system to use–the settlers demonstrated they would have a role in shaping the assistance available to them. At the same time government personnel indicated a willingness to follow their lead, adhering to the principle expressed by E. V. Ellington, director of the Washington State Extension Service, that the purpose of the program was to present to these men and women the assistance "that they need or what they feel they need and want."[53]

While planners, administrators and politicians had discussed for years the type of assistance to provide, only to have the early actions of the settlers spur modifications in their plans, a related but separate question may have stirred even more controversy within government. Who would provide the help decided upon? Throughout 1948 and much of 1949 top-level officials of the USDA, the USBR, and the land grant colleges struggled, often rancorously, to find an answer. During this same time on Block One, however, with the arrival of the settlers, the situation was much different. The settlers did not demand or even express a preference for a particular solution, but their mere presence and their urgent need for help in preparing their land for water removed the question from the realm of speculative discussion and mandated action. If the settlers were to be well and not poorly served, the government needed to respond immediately and to the best of its collective ability. When Dee Harris took up his position, he did not have the engineering expertise essential to design an irrigation system. His Bureau colleagues in the field did. At the

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[52] Report of Meetings of Representatives of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, 13-15 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

same time, if the settlers were to successfully irrigate their crops with these systems, the engineering had to be tailored to the very specific soil and related agricultural characteristics of each farm unit, requiring knowledge that was the hallmark of the Extension Service. In order to aid the settlers as quickly and accurately as possible, thus, the course of action was obvious--synergistic cooperation by the employees of both agencies to meld their respective engineering and agricultural knowledge for the benefit of the settler.

Dee Harris acknowledged repeatedly that he depended upon the Bureau employees to provide the range of engineering assistance the settlers required, both because of his relative ignorance and because of the expertise and dedication of the Bureau employees. Referring to the work done preparing units "either for leveling or sprinkler installation," Harris commented at the end of 1948, "it is the opinion of the Assistant Agent that he is learning more than are the farmers themselves."[54] He lauded the "survey crew, Mr. Hoisveen, Sandwich and Miller from the Bureau of Reclamation," for their assistance. "By working with these men," Harris explained, he had "learned the basic principal (sic) of running both a level and transit."[55] It was not until the middle of August 1949, after he had been on the job for over a year, that Harris felt competent to assume "sole responsibility for not only surveying the land but plotting his findings on graph paper in order to figure the cuts and fills to be made in the leveling operations." Even then, Harris admitted, he wanted the "Bureau Engineer" to "go over the figures" checking the cuts and fills to be "certain as to the

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[53] E. V. Ellington, Assistance to Settlers (n.d.), Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[54] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 9
[55] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 9.

amount of dirt to be moved."[56] Harris also repeatedly acknowledged throughout 1948 and 1949 his dependence on Bureau colleagues to provide the engineering assistance settlers needed if they opted to install sprinklers. The work, he explained, "required the skill of a competent engineer," and "involved a good deal of agricultural engineering in figuring friction losses, sprinkler-head sizes, motor size, length of main line and laterals, etc."[57] Harris cited in particular the contributions of Bureau engineer Milo Hoisveen who, at the end of 1949, had "in some way worked in the surveying of every farm unit receiving water to date."[58] Hoisveen, Harris reported, was equally adept at the engineering required for an "over-all sprinkler system," such as specifications for pipe thickness, sprinkler head size and sump and pump house construction.[59] As with the surface irrigation work, not until he had been on the job about a year did Harris feel confident to work without a Bureau employee at his side; reporting then that he "surveyed the main line for three proposed sprinkler systems which was a new experience where he and the farmer did the work."[60]

The engineering provided by Bureau employees, although absolutely essential to design a successful water delivery system, was not sufficient from the point of view of the college and the Extension Service. Successful irrigation also needed an agricultural understanding of soils, not only their composition and structure, but also the consequences of these traits--how they affected productivity and suitability for growing crops. Sandy soils, such as found on Block One, for instance, warm quickly and retain the heat. As a result organic matter will burn out. The lower the organic

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[56] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 36.
[57] Dee Harris, Monthly Narrative--September 1949: Franklin County Extension, 2; and Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 13.
[58] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 5.
[59] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 9-10.

residue, the lower both the fertility and the water holding capacity of the soil. This and related knowledge of soils, according to Dee Harris, was what he and the Extension Service brought to the task of helping the settlers design irrigation systems tailored to the specifics of their land.[61]

Designing irrigation systems on Block One, thus, involved three collaborators—the farmer, a Bureau engineer, and Dee Harris. As Harris explained, having all members of this "trio" participate "not only expedites the work to the best advantage but all three parties interested know what is going on and have put forth some actual labor."[62] They would walk the land together. The Bureau engineer would stake hundred foot gradients, shoot elevations of every point, calculate how much cut and fill would be needed, and lay out the size and shape of possible fields. Concurrently with this engineering, Harris would dig holes to determine soil depth and type and analyze its productive capability and the crops that could be grown. In a retrospective description, Harris explained that his role at this point in the process was "to make sure that Bureau engineers took fully into account the characteristics of the soil."[63] He would then explain to the farmer what the layout proposed by the engineer would mean for farm operation. If a farmer desired, he and Harris might "sit down at the kitchen table" with the engineer to redesign the field layout, or a farmer might decide to forego leveling the land altogether or in part and install sprinklers. After a survey and design were agreed upon, the Bureau had little if any further involvement. Harris, however, would continue alongside the farmer and the leveler to

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[60] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 36.
[61] Telecom with Dee Harris, 25 January 2001; and Duane A. Bosworth and Albert B. Foster, Approved Practices in Soil Conservation (Danville, Illinois; The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1982), particularly chapters 1 and 19.
[62] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 34.

make sure first that the plan was followed during excavation and earthmoving and then that the farmer understood how to use what had been engineered to best advantage. Heavy leveling, for instance, limited for a number of years the crops that could be grown.[64] A settler's first year on the project, Harris believed, was "the golden era of suggestions for the handling of the soil and water relative to this particular area."[65]

When water was the topic during this "golden era of suggestions," Harris spent "a great deal of time" with individual settlers. Until one had "actually worked with the soil on the project, when applying water," he argued, it was "difficult to believe that so much care is necessary for proper irrigation."[66] At the same time, many of the new settlers were "old dry farmer(s)" or others who had "no irrigation or farm experience" at all.[67] As a result of this combination of inexperienced irrigators and labor-demanding soil conditions, as well as economic pressure to develop as much land as soon as possible, many farmers exhausted the annual water allotments set by the Bureau less than halfway into the first season. Although foregoing any attempt to apportion blame between farmer and bureaucrat, Harris did believe the problem was due at least "in part to poor water management."[68] The operator of the development farm run by the Bureau, he noted, "used no more than his basic allotment."[69] During this same early time on the project, Harris recalled also that on March 28, 1949, "the

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[63] Telecom with Dee Harris, 25 January 2001.
[64] Telecom with Dee Harris, 25 January 2001.
[65] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 12.
[66] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 12.
[67] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 13.
[68] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 41. Also, Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes of Meeting, 17 September 1949, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[69] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 36.

day the irrigation water was turned on, there was water flowing in every direction. Some of it flowed where it was wanted and some didn't do so well." So, to help farmers with the "essential but time consuming" task, Harris would pack "his own shovel," venture out to a farm and demonstrate various irrigation practices and water control measures.[70]

Most settlers, however, believed that the problem lay primarily if not entirely with the Bureau of Reclamation and that the water allotment provided by the government was inadequate for conditions on the Block. This "sentiment" increased "every time another farmer had to purchase additional water." Whether Bureau error or farmer inexperience was the cause, the "percentage of farmers buying more water," Harris reported, "was very high, in fact too high." [71] The Bureau, "in the spirit of cooperation in trying to work out a satisfactory arrangement with the farmers as to their actual water needs," did respond.[72] Because of excess sediment in the canals, it adjusted the water allocations upwards by 30 percent and, at a 1949 meeting with the general settler committee and the directors of the irrigation board, agreed to conduct a survey of project farms to re-examine water needs. Harris worked with Bureau engineers, including Milo Hoisveen, taking soil tests and checking the amount of erosion and wastewater run-off. Hoisveen also worked with the water master checking delivery turnouts to make sure the exact amount of water being measured to a farm unit was actually being delivered. Any adjustments in water allocations during this time, however, "came slowly and on an individual basis." As a result, the dispute over water allotments lingered. In 1950, along with the settlers' use of

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[70] Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension Service, 12; and Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 41.
[71] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 43.

sprinklers, it became one of the first issues on the agenda of the newly organized joint committee of WSC and the Bureau.[73]

Also during this "golden era of suggestions" Harris addressed soil as well as water problems. The overriding goal was to preserve the land. Improper irrigation, as well as wasting expensive water, could wash precious topsoil into ditches. Wind posed an equally great threat.[74] Thus, in addition to water management, Harris talked with the farmers about how to minimize wind damage: when to clear and level land; how much to clear and as a result expose to the elements at any one time; and how to use cover crops and cropping rotations to hold soil in place. The loose sand found throughout much of Block One was very susceptible to the area's strong winds, particularly severe during the early spring. If land were left uncovered, either after the initial clearing or after a harvest, these winds could whip up blinding, damaging dust storms. In the spring of 1949, Harris reported, " two two-day blows did considerable damage to the newly leveled units since large amounts of soft soil were blown from the newly made fill. The ditches and corrugations were also blown full."[75] Until the sand got tied down with crops, farming and living were "plain hell." As Dee Harris recalled years later:

> the wind blew so hard and there was so much dust in the air that the sun looked like a red ball of fire in the sky. You could look at the sun at mid-day, when the wind was blowing the hardest, and the sun didn't hurt your eyes but the sand burned your eyes and nose. All the sand had been loosened

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[72] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 42.
[73] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 40-43.
In 1952 the Regional Director of the Bureau appointed a committee to investigate water allotments on the project with special attention to the Pasco Block. G. W. Lineweaver to Warren Magnuson, 11 September 1952, Box 90. Magnuson 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.
[74] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2001.
[75] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 35.

> by the land levelers and it just took time to get it to hold water and grow crops so it would be stable again.[76]

Such conditions resulted not only in unbearable living conditions, the loss of valuable topsoil, and clogged ditches and canals, requiring the Bureau to release additional water to meet farmers' needs. Severe "sand blasting" also could destroy crops already in the ground, even those near harvest.[77] In recognition of the damage it could do, wind, along with water, soon found its way onto the agenda of the joint committee in the hope that means to ease the problem for the settler could be found before the main body of the project opened.

Thus, during 1948 and 1949, even as federal level administrators struggled, often rancorously, to find common ground, Harris and his Bureau colleagues in the field pulled together to ensure as much as possible the success of the individual farmers, in part because they developed close connections with the farmers. Dee Harris in his regular reports referred repeatedly to the personal nature of the work, stressing how well he and his colleagues knew and were known by the new farmers and how familiar they were with the individual farms. Because in the first year or two on Block One so few settlers arrived, Harris met and walked the land of each one. He knew "the different units individually" and the "personal preference of the farmer." [78] Harris also stressed that he was not alone in this personal, individual knowledge of and attention to the settlers and their land. In these visits to farm and farmer, he spent "countless days" working "in company with" Milo Hoisveen, who had "the

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[76] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2001.
[77] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 43; and Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 5 and 8.
[78] Dee Harris, Monthly Narrative--November 1948: Franklin County Extension; and Dee Harris, 1948 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 4. See also Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 6.

confidence of all the new settlers."[79] This rapport with the farmers was apparent even to casual observers. After a tour of the Block in the spring of 1949, a visitor from Washington State College commented that "one of the most interesting points of the entire trip was the way in which the Bureau of Reclamation representative (Milo Hoisven [sic]) and the Asst. County Agent seemed to be working with the people settled on the project. I never saw farmers work so well with a county agent before."[80] To Harris and his Bureau colleagues on the ground, their willingness and ability to cooperate to provide the best service possible had consequences for people they had come to know personally and who in turn had come to trust them.

There was also a powerful bureaucratic interest in seeing Block One flourish. All the agencies wanted to "crow" about what they were doing. The Bureau in particular was determined that Block One succeed in order to counteract criticism it had received on projects in Oregon and Idaho. The Extension Service, since its settler assistance personnel were paid from USBR funds, was equally concerned that Congress view favorably the pilot program on Block One. Lobbying for funds, the Bureau brought members of Congress to the project to "show them" how well it was progressing. Many crucial legislators had made clear their intolerance for the bureaucratic in-fighting that stymied efforts at cooperation between the USDA and the USBR at the top federal level. Creating a favorable image would necessitate counteracting this negative impression, demonstrating how productively agencies in the field could cooperate.[81]

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[79]Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 41; and Dee Harris, Monthly Report–September 1949: Franklin County Extension.
[80] Dee Harris, Monthly Report—May 1949: Franklin County Extension.
[81] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000.

The USBR and the Extension Service in the June 1947 memorandum of agreement covering the Pasco Unit had indicated that the settler assistance program would not be limited to agricultural engineering, even if this were expanded to include assistance in farming the engineered land to best advantage. The Bureau and the Extension Service, as their interests were outlined in the memorandum, envisioned agents such as Dee Harris assisting the farmer in an even wider range of agricultural tasks, from crop selection, soil improvement and weed control through marketing. They also allowed for the possibility that the agents would help new settlers plan farmsteads and home sites, organize domestic water systems, create community organizations and solve credit and financial difficulties. In the early years on Block One, Dee Harris at one time or another tackled most all these tasks, in a job whose description he indicated might have read, "do everything you can to help the new farmer."[82] Given the demand for land preparation assistance, it was only because Bureau employees carried out much of the agricultural engineering that Harris was free to assist "in all phases of farm and farm home and community development." After more than a year on the job, he commented that the list of his activities was "endless," ranging from advice on feeding turkeys, to leveling a house foundation, to fixing a piece of machinery. He indicated particular satisfaction in encouraging and helping the settlers organize a committee that could spearhead work on problems of most concern to them and that, he hoped, could help in the development of a sense of community.[83] This wide-ranging assistance, while directly intended to help settlers establish themselves quickly and successfully on Block One, also contributed to helping the government make this test area a "show place." As Harris explained,

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[82]Dee Harris, "I wouldn't Trade Jobs," The Reclamation Era, (October 1949): 231.

farmers who developed farmsteads and homes rapidly would help the agencies "show off 'what we are doing'" and "what irrigation has done."[84]

Thus, as a "test" area the first blocks had two separate but symbiotic purposes, to help the settlers while bolstering the reputation of the government agencies. Viewed as a laboratory in which the results of the "tests" could be used to show the skeptical and uncommitted that the project passed with flying colors, the immediate beneficiaries would be the government bureaucracies. Yet, for local reclamation officials and their colleagues in the Extension Service and Washington State College, an equal, and for the settlers a much greater, benefit of operating test blocks was the ability to identify failures as well as successes. From this perspective the goal was not to showcase the positive, but to devise solutions to any problems and weaknesses that the "test" might reveal. Further, the beneficiaries would be not only the farmers already working their land on the first test blocks, but others yet to come who would settle the rest of the project.

In October 1949, when the USDA and the DOI agreed to accept the land grant colleges as the locus of a cooperative approach to settler assistance on reclamation projects, Warren and Audrey Clifford, quickly followed by others, had been on Block One for over a year and a half. For nearly as long, Dee Harris and Bureau engineers had been helping settlers prepare their land for irrigation. WSC and the USBR also had cooperative agricultural research projects up and running, and J. C. Knott and others from the college were working with the Bureau to determine the most equitable manner of allocating construction repayment charges. No structured, formal mechanism existed, however, for analyzing and coordinating the knowledge that

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[83] Dee Harris, "I Wouldn't Trade Jobs," The Reclamation Era (October 1949): 231, 236.

these efforts, by both settlers and government agencies, generated. But in March 1950, as a direct consequence of the federal-level decision to cooperate, representatives of the Bureau and the State College of Washington met "to review problems involved in the settlement and development of the Columbia Basin Project . . . and to explore possible additional fields of cooperative study."[85] After discussing "existing and anticipated problems" on the CBP, the representatives adopted a formal structure of cooperation in which committees from each institution "would meet jointly to review the program, inventory the needs and plan appropriate actions."[86] As well as promoting integration and cooperation, the Joint Committee, as it was called, would provide an on-going mechanism for considering problems as they arose.[87]

The October 1949 agreement between the USDA and the DOI provided the immediate impulse for establishing the Joint Committee and its extended and more structured program of cooperation. However, issues generated by the experiences of the settlers and the government agencies in the field provided much of the group's original agenda. In preparation for the March organizational meeting, the Regional Director of the USBR proposed that developments on the Roza and the Kennewick projects as well as the Pasco Unit be discussed, and suggested as topics the cooperative program for advice and assistance to settlers, land classifications, repayment charges, and research in the efficient application of irrigation water.[88] At the organizational meeting, attention focused on the CBP. The Joint Committee,

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[84] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000.
[85] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meetings of Joint Committees, 13-15 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[86] J. C. Knott to H. T. Nelson, 17 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[87] Mark T. Buchanan, Coordination and Participation (sic) of Agency Participation in Columbia Basin Project, 21 April 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

searching for long term answers, took up a range of issues, prominent among them the questions of sprinkler use, water allotments and charges, and wind and water erosion that had arisen as Dee Harris, the Bureau engineers and the settlers had confronted land development and the start of irrigation.[89] At this and later meetings, it also addressed structural and political problems affecting how best to deliver aid and advice, including the need to solve shortcomings evident in the assistance program as organized and administered on the test blocks.

Increasingly, the Bureau of Reclamation, which was paying for the settler assistance program, tempered its support for the eclectic list of duties contained in the 1947 memo of understanding, holding that preparing the land for irrigation, particularly leveling, should be "the job of first responsibility."[90] At the same time, the settlers on these early blocks, while very eager for this type of assistance, questioned the ability of the Extension Service in the person of Dee Harris to provide the desired help. Harris himself shared and recognized these misgivings. He admitted that he was learning as much from the Bureau engineers as were the settlers. He also recognized that "all the farmers on the project know the assistant agent is relatively new at the job of surveying and he is asked to account for his every move while surveying."[91] Under these conditions, unless hiring and training practices were changed, Bureau engineers, who had the required expertise, would be needed, on the main part of the project as on the test blocks, to carry out much of the actual work.

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[88] F. M. Clinton to J. C. Knott, 3 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[89] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meetings, 13-15 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[90] B. R. Bertramson, Minutes on Meeting Covering Question: Agricultural Service Needs in the Columbia Basin, 30 July 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[91] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 36.

The Joint Committee responded by organizing a subcommittee both to establish a training program and to review job requirements for the position of assistant agent.[92]

Discussions on the adequacy of the system for delivering assistance to the settlers soon extended beyond revisions to the existing cooperative program. Dee Harris, commenting years later on the help he and his Bureau colleagues provided Block One settlers, acknowledged that "an army" of agents would have been necessary to replicate that level of attention throughout the basin.[93] Furthermore, as the main part of the project was developed, settlement would occur in areas where the Soil Conservation Service had existing operations. Thus, in 1951, in a move that most likely was both a concession to the financial limits of the existing cooperative program and a recognition of the expertise and interest of the SCS in irrigation and water management, the Joint Committee expanded its focus on interagency cooperation to include that agency. It concluded that "the Bureau and the State College should foster cooperation with the SCS at every opportunity," since much could be "gained from coordinated effort."[94]

The reasons behind this determination to work with the SCS were both political and reflective of a desire for administrative efficiency. By coordinating with the SCS and incorporating it into their efforts, the Bureau and the college would be better able to answer critics, particularly in Congress, who argued that the settler assistance program duplicated existing efforts. With the SCS on board, the Bureau

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[92] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meetings of Joint Committees, 13-15 March 1950, 26 May 1950, 7-8 August 1950, and 27 March 1951, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[93] Harris to Utter, 6 March 2000.
[94] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meeting of Joint Committees, 27 March 1951, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193,

and the college would be in a position to respond that the combined efforts of all agencies were required to meet the minimum needs of project settlement. [95] Administrative efficiency, on the other hand, required coordination because the SCS would be "faced with the same problems as Bureau of Reclamation and State College personnel in advising settlers on irrigation practices and in preparing designs for irrigation systems." To avoid confusing the farmers when three agencies were involved in providing assistance, the Bureau and the college had to "work closely with the SCS," to ensure that they agreed completely on recommendations. To this end, the Committee suggested that the Bureau and the college review and jointly approve the guidelines and standards the SCS would follow.[96] Left unclear at this point, on the eve of opening the main part of the project, were lines of authority and division of responsibility.

Problems arising from the work of the settler assistance program in the field, however, made up only part of the Joint Committee's agenda. Other issues of great import to the settlers, as a consequence of past decisions by Congress, were outside the purview of either the Bureau or the college. One problem for the settlers, for instance, arose because as part of the 1943 CBP Act, lawmakers decreed that the antispeculation provisions would apply to land for only five years after water was available. At the expiration of that time an owner could sell a unit at a price above the

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MASC, WSU; and Report of Subcommittee on Irrigation Research, February 1951, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[95] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meeting of Joint Committees, 20-21 December 1951, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[96] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meeting of Joint Committees, 13-15 March 1950; Idem, Report of Second Meeting, 7-8 August 1950; and Idem, Report of Fourth Meeting, 27 March 1951, all in Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

government appraised value. As a result, a significant number of existing owners opted to wait before selling their property; many would-be settlers were unable to purchase land; and leasing became more widespread than planners had expected or hoped.[97] The Joint Committee, to ameliorate this situation, which it had little power to prevent, turned its attention to devising a model rental agreement that could be used throughout the project and would protect both the land and the interests of the farmers while being acceptable to the property owners.[98]

To the settlers, one other problem loomed particularly large—inadequate credit. It, too, made its way onto the agenda of the Joint Committee, but as with leasing, neither the Bureau nor the college had much authority to effect change. For the new farmers, the need for financing rivaled the need for a water delivery system, and just as their arrival on the scene had removed the question of technical assistance from the realm of speculative discussion, it also brought immediacy to the need to provide credit. Further, just as the government had debated inconclusively and interminably before settlers began arriving how much assistance would be provided in leveling and preparing farm units for water and who would provide this assistance, similar indecision had plagued its efforts to solve the credit problems that the new farmers would confront.

Block One settlers, just as would those who followed, faced varied and steep expenses. They would need money to level their land and prepare it for irrigation or to

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[97] Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952; and Report of Meetings of Representatives of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, 13-15 March 1950, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[98] Institute of Agricultural Sciences, State College of Washington, and the Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Meeting of Joint Committees, 13-15 March 1950; Idem, Report of Meeting of Irrigation Research Committee, October 1950; Idem, Report of Third Meeting, 24

install a sprinkler system. They would need even more to build a home and the many other structures required on a farmstead. On the arid CBP where it was sometimes necessary to drill to great depths to reach water, this could include steep costs for domestic water. Finally, before they could plant a single acre or realize an income from farm animals, they would need money for equipment, livestock, seeds and fertilizer and would have to pay for irrigation water. This variety of expenses had been known for years, but when the settlers began arriving, they found that the amount of money required exceeded what anyone had anticipated, compounding their financial problems.

In the postwar period, development and farm operation costs rose significantly from those anticipated only a few years earlier during the Joint Investigations and the hearings on the CBP bill. Further, after one season the actual costs on Block One were running higher than on nearby reclamation projects and higher than planners had expected even when the settlers began arriving. An informational handbook, prepared jointly by the USBR and the State College, told Block One settlers to expect to pay on average $34 an acre to level their lands. This figure corresponded with the high end of the range of estimates made by the Joint Investigators.[99] In early 1949, however, the Bureau, though it gave no specifics, acknowledged that development costs were "high at present."[100] Other agencies disseminated larger, specific cost projections. When the Columbia Basin Commission prepared a brief on the financing

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November 1950, all in Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; and The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 36.

[99]Department of the Interior, et. al., Information for the New Settler, Block One; CBJI: Problem 9, 4. The Joint Investigators estimated that large scale clearing and leveling of land would be $23.94 per acre while if carried out by the individual settler the cost would be $33.88 per acre.

needs facing project farmers, it calculated that a settler would need $5600 to level an 80-acre farm.[101] Averaging out at $70 an acre, this was double the figure in the handbook. The Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), a USDA agency that loaned money to farmers, also made estimates of land preparation costs that were significantly higher than the information in the handbook. FmHA calculated that $6,030, over and above family labor, would be needed for basic land treatment and preparation for irrigation on the Pasco Unit. This figure was by far the largest investment of this type required on eight reclamation projects FmHA studied in the Columbia River drainage area.[102] Further, if, as Dee Harris reported, leveling costs on many units could run $100 or more an acre, even the calculations of FmHA and the CBC might well under-represent the needs of a number of settlers.

Land preparation, though highly visible and contentious, comprised only a portion of the costs facing settlers. While the Joint Investigators had published figures as late as 1945 projecting that settlers would need $7,000 to $10,000 to develop a new farm, FmHA in 1949 estimated that a Block One settler would need a total of $24,190 to acquire, develop and equip a typical family farm, including $2,000 for domestic water. This was the second highest overall commitment of funds FmHA estimated would be required on any of the eight regional projects. It was also $5,000 more than the Bureau calculated would be needed to develop a Block One farm and included $800 more than reports published even a few months earlier had estimated

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[100]U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Opportunities, Responsibilities and Needs in Irrigation Development, Columbia Basin Project, Washington (Ephrata, Washington, February 1949,), 5.

[101] Kirby Billingsley to Walt Horan, 25 February 1949 and attached brief, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU

an individual settler would have to pay for a share of a group well. Finally, according to Carl Larson, the regional representative of the FmHA, even operating expenses that could not be postponed, such as for seed and fertilizer, were "running much higher than they [the settlers] expected."[103]

The majority of Block One settlers were unprepared to handle these costs without credit assistance. Most had limited assets. In January 1949 Carl Larson calculated that the average net worth of the settlers who purchased government units was approximately $6500. This figure, significantly higher than the minimum $3700 required, included not only cash on hand but also the value of the land, and any livestock, equipment, and household furniture already owned.[104] Further, a few settlers with a high net worth may have skewed the average; six of the nine settlers who by that time had agreed to purchase a public farm unit had assets of $6,000 or less.[105] The FmHA planners envisaged that this relatively low net worth, particularly inadequate when compared to the escalating costs, would hold for a significant number of the settlers yet to arrive, both those who purchased privately and those who bought government owned units.

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[102]U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration, Credit Needs in the Columbia River Drainage Area 1950 Through 1955, 13 July 1949, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.

[103] Department of the Interior et al, Information for the New Settler, Block One ; Kirby Billingsley to Walt Horan, 25 February 1949 and attached brief, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU; Lon D. Leeper to Hugh B. Mitchell, 23 January 1949 with enclosure by Carl Larson, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW (quotation); U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration, Credit Needs in the Columbia River Drainage Area 1950 Through 1955, 13 July 1949, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU; U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, "Opportunities, Responsibilities and Needs in Irrigation Development, Columbia Basin Projection, Washington" (Ephrata, Washington, February 1949), 33; and CBJI: Problem 14, ix.

[104]Lon D. Leeper to Hugh B. Mitchell, 23 January 1949 with enclosure by Carl Larson, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.

[105] Acting Chief to Project Development Supervisor, 29 December 1948, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

Analysts tied this relatively low net worth in part to the large number of ex-servicemen expected to settle on the project. In the first half of 1949 FmHA estimated that eighty percent of the settlers on the Pasco Unit would be veterans.[106] This prediction proved to be valid during these early project years. By the end of 1950, approximately fifty settlers had purchased and were developing farm units on Block One.[107] At the same time, thirty-five of them, or 75 percent, had enrolled in the on-the-farm training program established under the GI Bill. All ex-servicemen did not necessarily sign up for training; the enrollment, for instance, included only nine of the twelve purchasers of government units, all of whom were veterans. Thus, the number of enrollees was fewer than the number of veterans on Block One, and the 75 percent enrolled in GI training was less than the minimum number of settlers who were World War II veterans. Because of the time spent in the armed services, most of these veterans, officials at all levels speculated, would be unlikely to have accumulated much capital.[108] Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan wrote Congressman Hugh Mitchell of Washington that "practically all new settlers are veterans of WWII who have limited capital resources."[109] The FmHA estimated that veterans would have "less assets at the time they purchase their units" than would nonveterans.[110] At the same time, although those enrolled in the GI training program would receive subsistence payments, the amounts were limited to $90 a month and would do little to

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[106]U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration, Credit Needs in the Columbia River Drainage Area 1950 Through 1955, 13 July 1949, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.
[107] "Next Year Country," The Washington Farmer, 18 January 1951, 3.
[108]Kirby Billingsley to Walt Horan, 25 February 1949 and attached brief, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.
[109] Charles Brannan to Hugh Mitchell, 9 September 1949, Box 18, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.

meet farming and land preparation costs.[111] These veterans would not have had, according to the national director of the VFW, "the time to build up enough equity to qualify for bank credit."[112] Thus, although Block One settlers had net worths higher than their pre-war counterparts, their assets when compared to the costs they would incur were significantly below what would be required to develop the land and operate the farm until it generated income.[113] They would need extensive, immediate credit. But little was available.

Project planners, including the Joint Investigators, long had been aware of the potential credit shortfall that could face the new farmers. At the root of the problem was the near unavailability of private credit. Lenders were little interested in making long-term mortgage loans to buy or develop any new farm. Very few private banks were willing even to participate in a government insured program. On recently opened reclamation projects, such as the CBP, the unproven agricultural potential of an area compounded the general reluctance of lenders to extend credit to individual farmers just starting out. Private institutions were further disinclined to loan money to farmers on reclamation projects, even those in operation for a number of years, because the government had a first lien on the property for repayment of construction charges.

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[110] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration, Credit Needs in the Columbia River Drainage Area 1950 Through 1955, 13 July 1949, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU, 15.

[111] Leverett Richards, "An Agricultural Empire is Born," Country Gentleman, May 1951.

[112] The settlers enrolled in the training program by 1950 had received an average of $2159 in subsistence payments, in many cases over a number of years and beginning before a move to the CBP. A. M. Killingsworth to B. E. Kuhns, and attachment, 17 May 1951, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Omar B. Ketchum to Mr. Horan, 18 July 1950, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.

[113] Unidentified news clipping, 20 November 1951, Ray Toll scrapbook, Wenatchee, Washington. Ray Toll was assistant supervisor with FmHA in 1951. (Copy in possession of author.) In this article, Walter Burgess, FmHA supervisor, argued that the recommended net worth for settlers compared to that of dust bowl refugees was inadequate not merely because of increased expenses but because of the "unwillingness" of postwar settlers "to rough it."

Finally, local banks were also reluctant to make short term operating loans before a settler had established a production history, preferring "the federal government financing them until they take off the first crop."[114]

Unfortunately for the first settlers on Block One, by the time they began arriving, most efforts to provide public financing to compensate for the severely limited private credit had fallen short. The only vehicle in place was the Farmers Home Administration. In 1946 Congress had passed legislation creating this agency, intended to "simplify and improve credit services to farmers." Because this law authorized FmHA to institute "preferences for loans and insured mortgages to enable veterans to acquire farms," project proponents had hoped it would provide at least a partial solution to financing problems on the CBP. [115] In practice, however, it did little to satisfy the needs of reclamation farmers, including the settlers coming to Block One. As originally constituted, FmHA had inadequacies that stemmed from intertwined political and legal roots. The political troubles preceded as well as accompanied creation of the agency. They in turn begat legislation that made implementation of this loan program problematic for reclamation settlers.

The political problems were longstanding. Beginning with the Joint Investigators, who had looked back to the work of the Fact Finders, CBP planners and supporters had been concerned about the lack of credit. They had investigated and proposed various options to provide financial assistance to project settlers. But

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[114] Wenatchee Daily World, 6 February 1948 (quotation); E. S. Thrush et. Al. to Charles Brannan, 13 July 1949 (stamped date), Box 18, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW; U.S. Department of Interior, et.al., Information for the New Settler in Block , Section on Financing, 6; U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, "Opportunities, Responsibilities and Needs in Irrigation Development, Columbia Basin Projection, Washington" (Ephrata, Washington, February 1949, Mimeographed), 36; and Columbia Basin Commission, Biennial Report, 1948-1950, 139.

the USDA and the Department of Interior had never been able to agree on either the content or the administration of a program to loan money to farmers on the CBP in particular or on reclamation projects in general. With no uncontested proposal before it, Congress had refused to act. After the war when the legislature approved the Farmers Home Administration Act, it proved a poor substitute for legislation geared specifically to the needs of reclamation projects. The 1946 Act created the Farmers Home Administration as an agency of the USDA and placed it under the direction of the Secretary of Agriculture. Any assistance FmHA provided reclamation settlers would be incidental to USDA's larger mandate. Even more troublesome, however, because the legislation did not focus specifically on the needs of reclamation settlers, it actually included provisions making it difficult for many of them to take advantage of the program.

FmHA was established to administer and coordinate farm loans authorized by existing legislation, specifically the Water Facilities Act and the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, both originally passed during the Depression.[116] Under Title I of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, FmHA made loans and insured mortgages for "family type" farms to those who could not get credit elsewhere. These long-term loans covered farm and home buildings; land and soil improvements, including leveling; and irrigation facilities. Under Title II of Bankhead-Jones, the agency made short-term operating loans to cover the purchase of livestock, farm equipment, seed, feed, fertilizer, as well as family subsistence and medical expenses. Under the Water Facilities Act, the Agency extended credit, up to a maximum of $50,000, to both individual farmers and groups of farmers for the construction of domestic water

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[115] 60 Stat 1062. Public Law 731.

facilities and to individual farmers for irrigation systems or devices not covered under Title I of Bankhead-Jones. The $50,000 limit proved to be a problem for settlers trying to finance a group well on the Pasco Unit. Primarily, however, problems arose for reclamation settlers, including those on Block One, because the 1946 Act required that loans granted under Title II of Bankhead-Jones and under the Water Facilities Act both be secured by a first mortgage on the farm. This requirement was a major obstacle for farmers who secured land from the government, either by homesteading (which was still possible on some projects) or by purchase. The Bureau retained title to the land it controlled until settlement requirements, such as construction of a habitable dwelling and land cultivation by the settler, had been met. It could cancel a purchase if these obligations were not fulfilled. Further, no provision in the law required a subsequent purchaser or entryman to assume repayment of unpaid loans for land improvements. FmHA, therefore, unable to obtain the required security, would not loan money to CBP settlers who bought their land from the Bureau.[117]

While these legislative impediments made it difficult for some reclamation farmers to secure credit from FmHA on a long term basis, funding woes, rooted in Congressional politics, affected all the Block One settlers. FmHA was not specifically targeted to reclamation agriculture, let alone the CBP, and was in fact a nationwide program. By law it had to allocate funds among the states and territories on the basis of farm population and tenancy. No preference was given to reclamation. The overall

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[116] See Chapter 4 preceding.

[117] House Committee on Agriculture, Assistance to Homestead Entrymen: Hearing before Subcommittee No. 31, 81st Cong., 1st sess, 6 April 1949; House Committee on Agriculture, Financial Assistance to Homestead Entrymen: Report to Accompany H.R. 2514, 8 September 1949; and Wenatchee Daily World, 6 February 1948. A similar problem arose whenever settlers bought land on contract and the seller, such as Northern Pacific Railway, required a first mortgage. USBR, Annual Project History: CBP (1948), 12.

program had to fight for its share of annual government appropriations. Washington State had to compete for money with the rest of the country including states with larger farm populations. The CBP had to compete with the rest of the state including other reclamation projects. By January 1949 FmHA funds for the fiscal year ending in July were exhausted. At that time 749 loan applications requesting over $1.3 million were on file statewide with more expected in the next few months.[118] On Block One FmHA had made 15 operating loans, four irrigation loans and two real estate loans, but needed over $150,000 to take care of additional applications on hand. Carl Larsen of the local FmHA office estimated that without more funds, twenty of the units would not be farmed that year. This estimate did not include loan requests expected but not yet received by his office.[119] In February twenty-seven settlers who had purchased farms on the Pasco Block cabled Representative Hugh Mitchell that only the Farmers Home Administration was willing to extend them credit, but it had no money. Unless Congress granted the agency additional funds, all the writers would be "forced to suspend development operations for the 1949 crop year and seek outside employment."[120]

With the arrival of the settlers on Block One, Dee Harris and local Bureau officials concerned with settler assistance, ignoring differences that stymied their superiors, had taken immediate action. So too did the arrival of the settlers hasten action on the question of credit. As they arrived, the difficulties the settlers faced in financing the development and initial operation of their farms made clear that

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[118] Fred M. Fuecker to Hugh B. Mitchell, 27 January 1949, Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.
[119] Lon Leeper to Hugh B. Mitchell, 28 January 1949, with attachment, Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.
[120] Telegram, A. R. Thurman et al to Rep Hugh Mitchell, 4 Feb 1949, Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.

unresolved problems plagued the existing credit system. Yet it was not only as victims that they brought attention to this major obstacle to successful settlement of the project. They were, at the same time, active participants in pressing for an immediate solution. The settler committee, which Dee Harris had helped organize, undertook as one of its first tasks a campaign to find solutions to the various financial dilemmas. During the winter of 1948-49, Harris reported, the committee was "very active in trying to solve problems facing the new settlers," meeting once a week to discuss various issues, primary among them credit and the financing of domestic water. Members turned their attention to both the short and long-term financial problems facing them, keeping in regular touch with Carl Larsen of FmHA. In an attempt to meet the immediate need for additional funding, they contacted federal representatives and senators directly and lobbied a variety of civic, agricultural and veteran groups to join the effort to obtain additional appropriations. Although he may have overstated their role, according to Harris, as a result of these efforts by the settlers, "the funds were almost immediately forthcoming."[121] Further, for the fiscal year beginning a few months later in July 1949, Congress almost doubled appropriations for Washington state production loans.[122] Finally, and of great significance for the CBP, Congress in the Appropriations Act of 1950, excepted $3.5 million from the statutory formula for the distribution of FmHA funds. The agency instead was to use this money for farm

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[121] Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, MASC, WSU, 10, 11, and 46; Telegram, A. R. Thurman et al to Rep Hugh Mitchell, 4 Feb 1949, Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW ; Lon Leeper to Hugh B. Mitchell, 23 January 1949, with attachment, Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW; and Fred M. Fuecker to Hugh B. Mitchell, 27 January 1949, Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW

[122] 1948-1949 totals were $859,843. 1949-1950 totals were $1,571,385. Walter Duffy to Hugh B. Mitchell, 18 July 1949; and Loaning Activity of the Farmers Home Administration in Oregon, Washington and Alaska, July 1, 1949 to June 30, 1950, both in Box 90, Mitchell 281, M&UAD, UW.

ownership loans "to settlers on public lands and homestead entrymen," which included people who had contracted to buy land from the government in a reclamation project. As a result, a "substantially" larger allotment--$1.46 million rather than $357,000—was available for the state of Washington, particularly reclamation projects such as Block One.[123]

Increased and rerouted funding alleviated the immediate credit crunch, but did not solve systemic financing problems. Block One farmers and others in and out of government also turned their attention to rectifying the statutory problems that made it difficult for settlers to receive credit from FmHA. As a result, in October 1949, Congress passed legislation that mandated cooperation between the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior in the extension of financial assistance to reclamation settlers. The new law stated that the Secretary of Agriculture was authorized to make loans "for any purpose" under either Bankhead-Jones or the Water Facilities Act to "any person. . . who has made or makes a homestead entry on public land or *who has contracted for or contracts for the purchase of other land of the United States in a reclamation project.*"[124](italics added). Further, the law specifically noted the problem caused by competing claims on the property and authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to take as security for a loan, in lieu of a first mortgage, a lien that would run with the land and obligate future owners. It also authorized the Secretary to defer the first repayment on such loans for two years.[125] The bureaucracies would have to work out the administrative details, but the legislative impediment blocking FmHA loans to purchasers of government owned

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[123] Dillard B. Lasseter to Walt Horan, 14 September 1950, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.
[124] Public Law 361, 63 Stat 883.

units was gone.[126] Congress also amended existing legislation to increase the maximum water facilities loan from $50,000 to $100,000.

Block One settlers steadily began profiting from both the increased funding and the changes to the laws governing FmHA operations. Within a little over a year, FmHA had poured $400,000 into the Pasco Unit.[127] By April 1950 the Agency had made thirty-six production loans to project settlers, twice the number authorized in February 1949. Money for domestic water also began flowing to the project. The Farmers Home Administration believed that the drilling of individual wells was too expensive for most new farmers and had approved very few loans for that purpose. Further, before Congress raised the ceiling on loans granted under the Water Facilities Act, Block One settlers also had been unable to secure funding for a group water system. After the legislature amended the Act, one of the first water facilities loans FmHA approved in excess of $50,000 was for the Pasco Heights Water Association, which would serve over forty units.[128] Slowly, the agency also began to have a significant impact on long term financing for farmstead development. In February 1949 Carl Larsen indicated that FmHA was in the process of granting only two real estate loans totaling $24,000. By April 1950, the Agency had made eight farm ownership loans, and by the end of the year six more were under study. Also by this time, two settlers who had purchased their units from the government had

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[125]House Committee on Agriculture, Financial Assistance to Homestead Entrymen: Report to Accompany H.R. 2514, 8 September 1949.
[126]DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume II, Box 12, CBC Records, WaR&RM, Olympia, p. 1.
[127] The Washington Farmer, 18 January 1951, 3
[128] Dillard Lassiter to Walt Horan, 14 September 1950, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU; Farmers Home Administration Borrowers on Pasco Project, Field Trip, 12 April 1950, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; SCBID, Minutes, 7 April 1950, 228; and Dee Harris, 1949 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 9.

received waivers from the Bureau allowing them to get title to their land before they constructed a permanent and habitable dwelling. With this waiver they were able to apply for a real estate loan from FmHA.[129]

The effect of this infusion of money on the lives of many Block One settlers was dramatic. Tents and army huts as housing quickly gave way to solid structures with running water. In April 1949 Robert Tschirky, a World War II army veteran originally from Switzerland, and his wife purchased a Pasco farm unit from Northern Pacific Railway. In their early months on the land, Mr. Tschirky could not get a $250 loan even though he had a tractor and other machinery for collateral. A wheat crop he planted for cash was twice blown out of the ground by "ripping winds." The couple and their infant daughter spent their first year, including a freezing winter, living in a tent to which they had added a small hut. By the summer of 1950, a little more than a year after their arrival, they had forty-eight cleared and leveled acres, enough machinery to farm twice that land, and a new six-room house where the tent had been. They did face one more winter without running water, but that would come in the spring of 1951 when they hooked up to the Pasco Heights cooperative water system financed by the FmHA. They also had a debt of over $12,000 to the Farmers Home Administration. The dramatic progress of the Tschirkys from tent to new house in one year became one highlight in a public relations blitz, and their story appeared

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[129] The Washington Farmer, 18 January 1951, 3.; Farmers Home Administration Borrowers on Pasco Project, Field Trip, 12 April 1950, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata, 14 and 43.

in Country Gentlemen and the magazines of the Northern Pacific Railway and the Bureau of Reclamation.[130]

The Tschirkys were by no means alone in their steady progress. Most other settlers, however, advanced more slowly and less dramatically, particularly those who purchased units from the federal government and had to wait for changes to the FmHA legislation before they could apply for a real estate loan to build a home. E. Dan Patterson, a civil engineer for the Soil Conservation Service in Georgia before the war and an army major who served in the Pacific theater of operations, drew priority number five in the government's first land sale in December 1948. He listed assets of $5325 including $4200 in cash. He and his wife moved onto their unit, which had a total of 68 acres of irrigable land, in May 1949, one month after Mr. and Mrs. Tschirky settled on the project. The Patterson's first home was a 16-by-16 foot military surplus hut, one of fifty Dee Harris and the settler committee arranged for the new farmers to buy from the Air Force for $60 each. By October 1950, they had all their irrigable land under cultivation, and though they still lived in the hut, it now had running water. They also owed the Farmers Home Administration over $8,000, but felt ready to take on more debt. Following procedures worked out by the USBR and FMHA, Mr. Patterson requested the title to his unit from the government. He was one of the first two settlers to do so. The Regional Director of the Bureau agreed, waiving the requirement that the Pattersons build a permanent dwelling on the unit prior to

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[130] Farmers Home Administration Borrowers on Pasco Project, Field Trip, 12 April 1950, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; "America is Wonderful," The Northwest, January 1951, 6 and 9; Carl Larson, "Credit for Settlers," The Reclamation Era (April 1951); Leverett Richards, "An Agricultural Empire is Born," Country Gentleman, May 1951; and Tri-City Herald, 14 March 1971.

receiving title and enabling them to negotiate a construction loan from the Farmers Home Administration.[131]

Not everyone enjoyed progress as stellar as that of the Tschirkys and the Pattersons. Some settlers who did not have the resources to develop their farm on their own could not qualify for sufficient credit even from FmHA. Others took on debt they found they could not repay except under the best of circumstances. Block One settlers began farming during, though near the end of, a favorable economic period for agriculture. Still, the uncertain realities of farming hit them quickly.[132] In the October of 1950 unexpected, continuous rains pummeled the project, soaking hay, clover, and beans before harvest. Some settlers managed to salvage a portion of these crops, others lost everything. Overall, approximately one quarter of the Pasco farmers suffered moderate to heavy losses.[133] Yet, by the end of 1951 no one on the Block any longer lived in a tent or trailer, and fewer than ten percent of the settlers were delinquent on their loans to the Farmers Home Administration.[134]

Thus within a few short years after the project opened, an increasing number of people who needed credit, on both Block One and Block Two, which got water and settlers in 1950, were able to obtain it. Although congressional appropriations continued to fall far short of agency requests and settler demand, FmHA had more money available and more farmers were able to qualify to receive it. At the end of

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[131]Acting Chief to Project Development Supervisor, 29 December 1948, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; Farmers Home Administration Borrowers on Pasco Project, Field Trip, 12 April 1950, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; U.S. DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata.
[132]Franklin, et. al., Economic Problems and Progress, 16; and "The Columbia Basin Project" (n.d.), Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[133]Leverett Richards, "An Agricultural Empire is Born," Country Gentleman, .
[134] Seattle Post Intelligencer, 28 April 1952; and Wenatchee Daily World, 19 January 1952.

1952, all settlers who had been on the project for two or more years got 75 percent of their credit from the agency.[135]

Still, many of the farmers continued without the financial aid they needed. When Congress in October 1949 amended the Farmers Home Administration Act to enable settlers who bought land from the government to apply for farmstead construction loans, it had eliminated only the legislative impediments. It had not ensured cooperation between the USBR and the USDA agency. With the legislative roadblock removed, longstanding bureaucratic tensions and conflicts, which had been submerged and pushed to the background by the need to revise the law, re-emerged, catching settlers in the middle.

When Congress reorganized agricultural credit services and included reclamation settlers under FmHA's purview, it directed that the Secretary of Agriculture "appoint in each county in which activities are carried on under this Act a county committee composed of three individuals residing in the county, at least two of whom shall be farmers residing on a farm and deriving the principal part of their income from farming." Among their duties, the members of the county committee passed on and certified loans, but they could act only within guidelines established by the law and the Secretary of Agriculture. Such guidelines pertained to the qualifications of both the farmer and the farm. Specifically, the law stipulated that the Secretary of Agriculture was to set requirements for all applicants, including veterans, "as to industry, experience, character and other assurances of success as farmers." Further, the agency could give no loan or mortgage "for the acquisition, improvement, or enlargement of any farm unless it is of such size and type as the Secretary

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[135] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Progress of Settlers on

determines to be sufficient to constitute an efficient family type farm management unit and to enable a diligent farm family to carry on successful farming of a type which the Secretary deems can be carried on successfully in the locality in which the farm is situated." Using these guidelines the county committee was to examine both applicant and farm and determine if the applicant "will successfully carry out undertakings required of him under a loan" and if "the farm with respect to which the application is made is of such character that there is a reasonable likelihood that the making or insuring of the loans with respect thereto will carry out the purposes of this title."[136]

With these legislative provisions, Congress once again failed to make allowances for the specific circumstances affecting those who would take up farming on reclamation projects, and as a result, set the stage for bureaucratic conflict between the USBR and the USDA. On all its projects, including the CBP, the Bureau of Reclamation had policies governing both the proper size of a farm, based on the quality of the land, and the qualifications required of settlers who would buy government owned units. The FmHA Act directed the USDA to develop its own standards on these same questions of farm size and quality and applicant qualifications. Almost immediately, the potential for conflict became reality. The USDA promulgated regulations governing FmHA loan policy that came in conflict with existing Bureau policies. Settler confusion soon followed.

The CBP Act of 1943 had established that all settlers would be subject to acreage limitations that mandated an absolute maximum farm size of 160 irrigable acres. Size was to vary with the quality of the land, on the principle that an increase

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Reclamation Projects, March 1953, Remote Storage, USBR, Ephrata.

in acreage could compensate for poorer quality land and "allow a settler a chance to make an income comparable to that of a person on a smaller unit of good land."[137] At the same time, however, the Bureau also was committed to providing the largest number of farming opportunities possible. Working within these guidelines in the period immediately following World War II, the Bureau laid out on Block One and Block Two farms that ranged down to twenty acres and averaged less than seventy acres in size.[138] Conversely, Dillard Lasseter, the federal FmHA administrator, instructed all state directors that loans were to be "made only on clearly adequate, efficient family-type farms. . .that have adequate land resources." In support of this policy he argued that "more land resources are necessary for success than were necessary in the past."[139] FmHA administrators also made clear that "adequate land resources" referred to the quality as well as the quantity of land. An acceptable family farm was one not only "large enough" but also "productive enough" to provide the income necessary to meet the family's obligations.[140] These differing approaches to optimum farm size and quality mirrored earlier disagreements among the joint investigators and participants in the farm size re-study over whether the maximum number of irrigation opportunities or the maximum assurance of success should guide the platting of farms. They also set the stage for a potential conflict between the Bureau and FmHA.

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[136] Public Law 731, 60 Stat 1062.
[137] Wenatchee Daily World, 19 March 1953. The article quoted W. W. Johnston, supervisor of project development for the USBR.
[138] Wenatchee Daily World, 19 March 1953; Franklin, et. al, Economic Problems and Progress, 6-7; and Washington Farmer, 18 January 1951. Block One units averaged 66 acres. Block Two units were smaller.
[139] Administrator to All State Directors, 18 July 1951, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[140] Wenatchee Daily World, 29 June 1951.

The two agencies also were destined to clash over farmer qualifications, specifically experience and financial resources. In its settler selection program, the Bureau directed that anyone selected by its local committees to purchase farm units from the government would be required to meet the minimum qualifications it deemed necessary to succeed in developing a farm, including two years of farm experience after the age of fifteen and $3700 in assets. It soon became apparent that the USDA and FmHA disagreed with the USBR over the proper amount and particularly the timing of experience required to succeed and the total value and composition of the assets. FmHA did not publish minimum standards for experience and asserted that it and its local committees judged each case on its individual merits, but the agency did believe that a loan applicant should have "continuing farm experience." This policy was "at variance" with the Bureau's more lenient requirement that two years of experience accumulated anytime after the age of fifteen was acceptable. The USDA agency also questioned the adequacy of the assets the Bureau required of those who wished to purchase a government unit. FmHA did not specify a minimum amount of capital as a prerequisite to receiving a loan, but it did believe that "applicants with only a negligible amount of operating capital and without an assured source of adequate operating credit should not receive Farm Ownership loans." Further, the Bureau, continuing to believe that its mission was to "provide new settlement opportunities for responsible, ambitious persons . . . in the lower income brackets," allowed settlers to include, as part of the minimum qualifying capital, funds that would be spent before arriving on the Project. The regional FmHA supervisor criticized this policy. The result would be settlers who, when they applied for a loan, had only a

"negligible" and, in the opinion of the agency, insufficient amount of operating capital.[141]

The Farmers Home Administration was established as and took seriously its role as creditor of last resort. Yet, the conservative and self-described "rigid" approach it took to lending, based on requirements for both farm and farmer more stringent than those adopted by the Bureau, made problems inevitable for the settlers.[142] The experience of O. C. Gauksheim and his wife, who purchased a government-owned farm unit on Block Two, illustrated the confusion and disillusionment that a lack of coordination between competing bureaucracies could cause the new project farmers. Problems arose when the Bureau and FmHA differed in evaluating both the couple's qualifications and the land they wanted to farm.

Mr. Guaksheim was a 44-year-old World War II veteran who had farmed with his father in Idaho for eighteen years. At the time he applied to buy a Block Two unit, he and his wife were living in California. In August 1951 he selected unit four, previously chosen and given up by another veteran when problems clearing the title delayed purchase. To meet the minimum capital assets requirement, Guaksheim was given three months to sell his home in California and submit proof that he would retrieve cash equity of at least $1700 from the sale. With this requirement met, he and his wife moved onto the unit in late spring 1952. By early December he had purchased and installed "a rather nice trailer house" on the property. But, although

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[141]DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume II, Box 12, CBC Records, Olympia, 4 and 6; and Administrator to All State Directors, 18 July 1951, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[142] Unidentified Newspaper clipping, August 1950, Ray Toll personal collection, Wenatchee, Washington. (Hereafter Toll scrapbook. Copy in possession of author.) Walter Burgess, on his appointment as FmHA supervision covering the CBP, described the agency's qualifications as rigid.

he had "been on the project about five and a half months" and had paid "about $170" in irrigation fees, he had not used any water because he had "not yet been able to obtain a loan of any kind" to allow him to develop his farm. In an appeal to the directors of the South District, asking them to refund the money he had paid for irrigation water but had been unable to use, Mr. Gauksheim explained that his application for a loan from the Farmers Home Administration had been denied and he was uncertain whether he would ever receive credit. He blamed his predicament on "misinformation" sent out by the Bureau of Reclamation. When it notified him that a farm unit was available, the Bureau, he said, told him that "facilities for obtaining financial assistance were also available on the project." He believed this was not true. The district, however, refused to refund his money, explaining it had already been "turned over to the Bureau of Reclamation to pay for irrigation water delivered to the District." It did agree, however, to "contact the Farm (sic) Home Administration to determine why his loan had been denied and endeavor to get a loan approved for him."[143]

In the interim, Mr. Gauksheim also contacted Representative Henry Jackson who queried FmHA on the settler's behalf. In response, on February 20, 1953, Walter Duffy, supervisor of the regional office in Portland, Oregon, reiterated the decision to reject Gauksheim's application for a loan, placing it in the context of FmHA policy that stressed the interaction of the qualifications of the farm and the farm family. Without specifically naming the Bureau of Reclamation or arguing as Gauksheim did that it provided "misinformation," Duffy contended that the unit and the

[143]DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume I, Container 139, Remote storage, USBR, Ephrata, 21 and 58; and Agriculturist to Project Development Supervisor, 9 December 1952, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

settler were a bad match. The unit had "very sandy" soil that would require an expensive sprinkler system and high monthly power charges to irrigate. As a result, the total items essential to farm operation would cost nearly $20,000, but FmHA calculated the unit had a "debt paying ability" of only a little over $10,000. Although the Gauksheims had good references, they lacked by a large measure the financial resources necessary to make up the difference. They had calculated their net worth to be $5,000, but FmHA believed that figure, itself inadequate, was overstated. All but a few hundred dollars was tied up in a trailer house, which Supervisor Duffy estimated, had much less resale value than Mr. Gauksheim indicated. Thus, the FmHA county committee and the county supervisor, Duffy explained, had been unwilling to recommend a loan, concluding that although the Guaksheims would be "a high type family, . . . the low debt paying ability of the farm would make a sound loan on this farm impossible." To FmHA, a loan would not be beneficial if farm and family were not a good match, and the Gauksheims were not a good match for the land they wanted to farm. The family's resources were not sufficient to meet the special needs of the land. Delinquency and foreclosure were likely.[144]

In the end, whether because the unit was inadequate or because FmHA failed in its obligation to loan them money on it, the Gauksheims never developed their farm. In 1954 they purchased a small portable system and irrigated ten acres, but eventually they took advantage of legislation Congress passed in August 1953 for the benefit of owners of reclamation farm units found by the Secretary of Interior "to

[144] Farmers Home Administration, Portland to Senator Henry Jackson, 20 February 1953, Box 11, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

be insufficient to support a family." Under this law, the Bureau declared their unit "inadequate," entitling the couple to exchange it for other reclamation project land.[145]

The Gauksheims, thus, were to a certain degree victims of competing bureaucratic imperatives shaping policy on both settlers and land. After selling their home in California, they possessed the minimum financial resources required by the Bureau to purchase any unit owned by the government. This requirement was itself a product of a compromise in which the Bureau attempted to balance the goal of providing as many opportunities as possible with the need to ensure that applicants would have sufficient money to face a reasonable chance of success and to repay the government. While FmHA questioned whether the Bureau's financial requirement was strict enough, potential buyers continued to criticize it as overly stringent and unfair, especially to "young soldiers "who went into the service right after high school.[146] At the same time, the Bureau was under pressure from settlers and their advocates, including the politically powerful veterans groups, to maximize the number of opportunities and from both development advocates and many existing property owners to irrigate as much land as possible, regardless of quality. It had to balance these political pressures against minimum requirements for irrigability. The quality and size of the units that resulted from this process varied greatly, but the agency, beyond providing information, did not take it upon itself to match farmer and farm.

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[145] Land Settlement Report, Columbia Basin Project, January 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; Public Law 258, 67 Stat 566; U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Annual Report, Settler Selection Committee, 31 December 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Annual Report: Settler Selection Program, 1956, uncatalogued storage, SCBID, Pasco. The 1956 Settler Selection Report states that through December 31, 1956, eleven of eighteen purchasers of federally owned units who qualified for relief under the Exchange Act owned farms in Block 2.
[146] Jerry Treffy to Warren Magnuson, 20 August 1952, Magnuson 3181-3, Box 90, M&UAD, UW.

The Bureau left that decision to the individual settler, though eventually, through the exchange law, it did provide some after-the-fact recourse.

FmHA, on the other hand, operated in a political environment almost the mirror image of the one confronting the Bureau. It was under pressure to separate itself from still lingering animosity toward the FSA as a purveyor of "left-wing or relief" programs. It cultivated a reputation as responsive to the recommendations and beliefs of conservative elements in the agricultural community.[147] It was thus isolated from political pressure felt by the Bureau to maximize development and settlement opportunities and was freer to adopt stricter standards for irrigability. FmHA opposed the Bureau's inclination to make units with poor land significantly larger than those comprised of good soil and believed much of the poorer quality land should not be platted into farm units. Further, if the Bureau did declare marginal land irrigable, FmHA asserted that because it would require exceptional investments of both time and money, it should go only to those who had such resources. Thus, if the Bureau were to err, it was under great pressure to do so on the side of providing maximum opportunities. The Farmers Home Administration, on the other hand, weighted the goal of ensuring agricultural success and financial stability much more heavily.

While the Bureau and FmHA cleaved to their varying standards, settlers such as the Gauksheims found themselves caught in the middle, victims of this bifurcated bureaucratic authority and forced to deal with separate agencies with distinct and at times conflicting agendas. The problems caused by the lack of financing geared specifically for reclamation settlers had evolved out of the inability of Congress, the USDA and the DOI to agree on how to split responsibility for settler selection and

assistance. As a result, when Congress created FmHA, it had decided, essentially by default rather than by plan, that financing was to be outside the Bureau of Reclamation. But, if FmHA and not the Bureau were to wield this authority on reclamation projects, confusion and problems for the settlers would ensue if the agencies did not cooperate, coordinate their actions, and provide a clear and consistent picture of the situation to the farmers. The Gauksheims were victims of one specific manifestation of this bifurcated responsibility and lack of bureaucratic cooperation, caught when a relatively lenient aspect of the Bureau's settler selection process clashed with FmHA's more stringent loan standards. Although required by the Bureau to possess a minimum net worth when contracting to buy a unit, settlers were not required to retain these resources for any specified period of time. As a result, many settlers, including the Gauksheims, spent "a considerable portion" of their stated net worth before arriving on the project, depleting their available financial resources. When they applied for a loan from FmHA they fell far short of meeting of meeting FmHA's standards.[148]

Recognizing that this problem existed proved relatively easy; agreeing how to rectify the situation and ease the way for the settlers proved more difficult. By 1951, the USBR and FmHA were discussing their differences, and the Bureau had made a few minor changes. The Board of Examiners, according to Buford Kuhns who served on it as the Bureau representative, began stressing to settlers the desirability of arriving on their farm with as much of their assets preserved as possible. Neither the Board nor the Bureau, however, made any attempt at enforcement. They did agree to

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[147] Harry J. Allyn to Jack Rogers, 15 January 1951, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

raise the minimum financial requirement, though only in relatively small increments, first to $4,000 and by the end of 1951 to $4500.[149] There is no evidence that these actions blunted the criticism voiced by the Farmers Home Administration or prompted it to adopt a more lenient loan policy.

Solutions satisfactory to all parties involved thus remained elusive even as it became clear that the fallout from the mismatch in priorities between the Bureau of Reclamation and FmHA would not be isolated to Blocks One and Two, but posed a threat to the vitality and success of the entire project. Citing the case of the Gauksheims, the president of the South Columbia Irrigation District argued that either farm units were not "large enough" or the soil not "suitable for family sized economical units," or the Farmers Home Administration had not "been helping sufficiently in the development program." He did not offer an opinion on which bureaucracy's policy was at the root of the problem. But at a January 1953 meeting of the Bureau, FmHA, and the Columbia Basin Commission, he contended that unless the mismatch was "ironed out," the entire CBP could be "damaged in the public's eyes."[150] Whether in direct response to the district's complaint or not, W. W Johnston a few months later told a state advisory committee meeting of FmHA that "where the USBR has been informed that a unit was not eligible for a FHA loan the veterans have been told this fact and in some cases have not selected the units."

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[148]DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume II, Box 12, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia, p. 6.

[149]DOI, USBR, Sale and History of Federally-Owned Farm Units: Volume II, Box 12, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia, p. 6. The Bureau's Regional Director imposed the second raise when the Board voted instead to keep the requirement at $4,000 but disallow the value of a passenger car.

[150] Minutes of Conference, Farmers Home Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, and Columbia Basin Commission, 26 January 1953, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

Johnston added that "these farms were sold to well financed nonveterans."[151] In this concession to the higher standards of FmHA the Bureau accepted an approach that worked at cross purposes to its goal of offering as many farm opportunities as possible to deserving veterans.

The settlement experience on Blocks One and Two, thus, did function as a real test, bringing with it lessons to be learned from both success and failure. Thousands of veterans, most meeting or exceeding the qualifications established by the Bureau, were eager to take up farms on the project, but the government would have only a few opportunities to offer them. Government agencies in the field, represented by such figures as Dee Harris and Milo Hoisveen, demonstrated the possibilities of cooperation, working with new farmers and each other to design water delivery systems geared for each piece of land. Yet, these experiences highlighted the limits to as well as the efficacy of the plans and policies set in place before the settlers arrived, specifically limits that came from the people on the land and from the land itself. Finally, the bureaucracies came up against self imposed limits, brought about by difficulties in cooperating, that had real consequences for the settlers.

The need to assimilate, adjust to and react to all this new information and changes was immediate. In Mid-1951, just as the Gauksheims moved to Block Two and began their struggle to find the money to begin farming, settlers were moving into Block 40 in the northern end of the basin and the Bureau of Reclamation was making the first water available to them. The focus of attention on the CBP was shifting to the main part of the project. The real test was about to begin.

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[151] Wenatchee Daily World, 19 March 1953.

Chapter 7

Damn Sand[1]

Beyond Ephrata, Columbia Basin administration headquarters, we momentarily mistook for snow huge heaps of fertilizer shipped in from Idaho to enrich reclaimed land.
National Geographic, 1952[2]

The Columbia Basin Project was a child of water, not land. It was the abundance of the river, not the quality of the soil, that propelled dreams of reclamation. The Basin was a place of semi-arid and often arid desert soils, described by one observer in 1952 as a "waste land that has been parched for thousands of years."[3] The value the land possessed lay not in any intrinsic agricultural quality or exceptional fertility, but in its location and elevation, next to and only a relatively few feet above a river blessed with great quantities of both life giving water and latent power.[4] For project boosters, engineering could unleash and harness this power to transport the river to the land. There, in the hands of the settlers, they believed, water could work its near magic and bring a "dormant desert" to life.[5]

The value the land did contribute to such an agricultural enterprise was more passive and ambiguous. Though sometimes describing it as fertile, private boosters and public policy makers most often put it forward quite mundanely as irrigable—

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[1] Retired editor of the Capitol Press in a telephone conversation with the author in the fall of 1996.
[2] Leo Borah, "From Sagebrush to Roses on the Columbia," National Geographic Magazine, November 1952, 574.
[3] Business Week, 7 June 1952.
[4] Planners bypassed better quality land in Douglas County northeast of the project because, although it lay nearer the river, it was also at a significantly higher elevation.

capable of being farmed. Following the lead of the joint investigators and other scientists, supporters also acknowledged great variation in the character and quality of the soils that spread across the million acres proposed for the project, sometimes suggesting that rather than posing a problem, variety of soil offered variety of opportunity.[6] Thus, although supporters did not disparage the land, they relegated it to the background and focused the spotlight most often on the transformative power of water and people. The land would be the stage on which the actions of these others would take place. As a 1954 booster article proclaimed, "all the land needed was water—and the skill of good farmers—to become richly productive."[7]

When settlement began in earnest, however, the people on the land increasingly came to confront the costs and consequences of trying to farm desert soils, even with the help of abundant water. The land emerged not as a passive setting but as an active, pivotal force. As it interacted with the water and with the actions of people, both present and past and both on the land and off, it shaped in unplanned and unanticipated ways the settlement of the Columbia Basin Project. The huge heaps of fertilizer, mistaken for snow by the National Geographic writer, bore testament both to the inability of water alone to make the desert bloom and to the demands the reality of the land would make on the settlers and the settlement process.

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[5] Columbia Basin News, 30 May 1952.

[66]CBJI, Problem 2, and CBJI, Problem 3, passim ; and Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of Interior, Irrigable Land on the Columbia Basin Reclamation Project, n.d., circa 1940 (hereafter Bureau of Reclamation, Irrigable Land.)

[7] The Lamp, November 1954. A 1940 article in the New York Times was typical of those which laid the entire transformative burden on water, omitting the role of the farmers, describing the project as "1,200,000 acres of land which requires only moisture to be fertile and productive." Quoted in E. F. Hackett to Department of Interior, 23 October 1940 and John C. Page to E. F. Hackett, 29 October 1940, Box 564, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

The project officially opened in the spring of 1952. By that time signs had already emerged of the ways in which the land would interact with the water and with the past and present actions of people to shape the unfolding story of settlement. Even as the Gauksheims began their attempt to turn fifty-seven acres of desert land into a productive farmstead, project boosters had begun work on the Farm-in-a-Day celebration to herald the metamorphosis of a million acre desert into a garden. As they strove to carry out these transformations, however, both the family and the CBP cheerleaders soon would confront the consequences of trying to irrigate the sometimes poorly understood land to be transformed. In the test block at the south end of the project, the Gauksheims found that FmHA cited "the very sandy soil" of their unit when denying their loan.[8] To the north, in order to make it possible to till much of the supposedly irrigable land being presented to the deserving veteran, celebration planners were forced to field 100-man crews to clear their prize of rocks in the plow zone.[9]

In each case, soil problems necessitated irrigation by sprinklers. Yet not only would such technology be expensive, it would prove to have limits. As settlers tried to build farms on these and other units in the basin, they were forced to accept that water, even when applied with the assistance of sprinklers, was not a cure-all. It could not compensate for deficiencies in the soil. In fact, when used in excess, water could exacerbate rather than ameliorate them. Finally, as the years passed, the effect of soil problems was not restricted to the fortunes of individual farmers, such as the Gauksheims, on whose land they occurred. Rather, as the number of

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[8] Farmers Home Administration, Portland to Senator Henry Jackson, 20 February 1953, Box 11, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

individual problems mounted, the impact extended to how the project as a whole was settled.

Soil is the product of three factors: parent material, environmental processes, and time. The parent material is modified over time by "climate, vegetation associated with the climate, and relief as it modifies the microclimate and vegetation."[10] In the Columbia Basin both parent material and climate, alone and in combination, have tended to create large expanses of relatively poor soils that do not, in fact, compare well with those in other irrigation projects throughout the Northwest, being sandier and lighter in texture.[11]

In the Columbia Basin parent materials have a stronger than normal influence on soil composition. They also vary dramatically between the east and west sides of the project. The soils on the east side developed from deep deposits of silty loam loess. This is the best parent material found in the basin. On the west half of the project, less desirable parent materials prevailed, including glacial outwash, basaltic and granitic glacial sediments, and sandy quartz bearing rock. Loess occurred only

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[9]Geo Delany, Monthly Narrative--April 1952: Grant County Extension; and Oregonian, 30 May 1952. Also, see Chapter 1.

[10] Raymond A. Gilkeson, Washington Soils and Related Physiography—Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations circular 327, April 1958, 2 (hereafter, Gilkeson, Washington Soils, 1958.). This discussion on soils is taken primarily from this circular, which one of the special extension agents who worked with the project settlers later described as "our bible." Also see Buchanan and Salter, Soil, Water and Crop Management, 1950); and Chester F. Cole, "Factors Relative to Settlement in the Columbia Basin Reclamation Project," The Journal of Geography (January 1948). (hereafter Cole, "Factors Relative to Settlement.")

[11] Brough, O. L.,jr., A.L. Walker, E. R. Franklin, P. M. McMains, and Vernon Divers, Columbia Basin Project Relative Land Productivity and Income, Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations Bulletin 570, 1956, 13 and 14. (Hereafter Brough, et.al, CBP Land Productivity, 1956). The authors compared the Columbia Basin Project with five other irrigation projects in Washington, Oregon and Idaho and concluded that "generally, Columbia Basin Project soils are lighter in texture than soils on the five other projects." They mentioned specifically sandiness and the hazards of wind erosion.

in a few limited areas on the west and was often shallow and found over basalt or caliche (a hard crusty calcium carbonate), both of which inhibited drainage.

Environmental processes—climate and weather--also vary between the east and west sides of the Columbia Basin, but in general have made a relatively weak contribution to soil development. Weathering of minerals, instrumental in soil creation and build-up, is a function of climate. It proceeds most rapidly when warm temperature and significant precipitation occur simultaneously. Lying within the shadow of the Cascade Mountains, the Columbia Basin has an arid climate, averaging less than six inches of rain in the southwest and only a bit over nine inches in the north. It also experiences a significant range of temperature, from an average January minimum of 20 degrees to a July average maximum of 91 degrees.[12] What little precipitation there is normally falls during the cold winter season. Except during the winter months, most of the region has a moisture deficit, losing more through evaporation than it gains through rain. By early summer no moisture remains in the soil. These combinations of temperature and aridity curtail both chemical weathering and associated biological activity. Further, the limited, winter rainfall combined with extreme high summer temperatures gives rise to sparse vegetative types such as bunchgrass, bitterbrush or sage. Even on the less permeable soils of the area that retain some moisture, this vegetation yields a "very low yearly increment to the soil humus."[13] Thus, the climactic conditions prevailing

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[12] Temperature and precipitation figures taken from Cole, "Factors Relative to Settlement," 4. Highs and lows are even more extreme. Over a ten-year period, the soil conservation district in western Adams County recorded an 111 degree summer maximum and a winter minimum of minus 26 degrees. Othello Soil Conservation District, Program and Work Plan, n.d., uncatalogued storage, Soil Conservation District Office, Othello, Washington.
[13] Gilkeson, Washington Soils, 1958, 2.

throughout the Basin have led only to minimal weathering of minerals and minimal accumulation of organic matter and consequently to minor soil development.

In the Columbia Basin, parent materials and climate combined to create a spectrum of soils, but in general the combination was most propitious on the east half of the area originally proposed for the project. Loess parent material was most prevalent there. Further, the eastside experienced a climate more conducive to soil formation. Primarily because it lay at a relatively higher elevation, it enjoyed both greater annual rainfall and cooler summer temperatures than were found in the west half. As a result, it had more chemical weathering of minerals and more abundant vegetative buildup. This fortuitous combination of parent material and environmental conditions resulted in deep, medium textured, and friable soils with a quite high organic content, referred to as Ritzville or Wheeler. On the west side poor parent material prevailed, and climactic conditions were less conducive to weathering and vegetative build-up. The result was coarser and sandier soils, with a limited organic component. Often shallow, they could have an impenetrable hardpan near the surface and rocks and subsurface intrusions in the plow zone. Scientists have identified more than ten soil types throughout the west side, but a few predominate and illustrate the conditions found in that part of the project. Ephrata soils, formed on a rocky or gravelly outwash, range from sandy loams to coarse sands, often are shallow and have rocks near the surface. Burke soils, loams or sandy loams, can be deep, though often are shallow, and appear over a limey hardpan called caliche that may rise to "within a few inches of the surface." Quincy soils, sandy and very sandy

loams, have a "relatively low clay content and equally low organic component," ranging "from .05 to 1 percent." Othello soils are deep, but extremely light textured.[14]

Such lands found throughout the west side pose a variety of problems. First, soils lacking organic material have limited fertility, providing little of the nutrients plants need for growth. Many lack a range of minerals, including zinc and boron, but nitrogen deficiency is particularly widespread and serious. One settler in 1953 described his land to be "as dead of nitrogen as soil can be."[15] Second, high sand content and low clay and organic matter components created a texture that limits the land's ability to absorb and retain water for use by crops. Further, subsurface hardpan, such as basalt or caliche, particularly when underlaying this porous topsoil, can lead to poor drainage and rapid formation of ponds and seeps. Conversely, where coarse gravel underlays this permeable topsoil, nearby lower lying areas can become waterlogged. Third, the low concentration of humus in sandy soils along with the low clay content makes them very prone to erosion, from both blowing wind and running water. Fourth, rocks and stones in the plow zone complicate efforts to work the land and restrict possible uses. Fifth, shallow soils, no matter the quality, make leveling problematic, raising the specter of loss of the limited topsoil. Finally, the dry

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[14]Buchanan and Salter, Soil, Water and Crop Management, 1950, 9-12; Gilkeson, Washington Soils, 1958; Brough, et.al, CBP Land Productivity, 1956; "Not All Soils in Basin Good," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 26; and 1953 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, 2 (rising quotation). Brough, et al, identified the Othello land type, not named by the others, but which is mentioned as a problem soil by agents working where it appears. See Elwood Dull, Monthly Narrative—June 1955: Grant County Extension. See also Report on Meeting of State Level Committee on Development of Columbia Basin Project Lands, 20 October 1954, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 6, in which the state extension agent commented specifically on the Othello type soils which are "light in texture and subject to blowing," and which were "representative of rather extensive areas of such lands" in the project.

[15]Grange News, 22 May 1953, 5.

desert soils with little rain to leach them are often alkaline and have high concentrations of lime, impeding plant development.[16]

Thus, in much of the CBP, throughout the west side in particular, nature created a variety of soils that in many instances, as the Washington Farmer said, "would be considered marginal anywhere else."[17] The soil by itself, however, did not cause the problems for settlement. Rather people, both on the land and off, made a number of decisions that compounded and exacerbated any consequences for settlement that the composition, texture and fertility of the soil might have set in motion.

Long-time landowners made the first of these decisions years before the first settler arrived to begin farming. Their decisions had consequences for both the size of the project and the range and mix of soils available for irrigation. Local boosters and government planners originally envisioned and Congress subsequently authorized a project over one million acres in size. This plan was altered when many eastside landowners, in the area favored with good soil, decided in the 1930's and 1940's to withdraw from the project.[18] Their actions not only reduced the size of the CBP by over one-third but also deprived the project of its best land. A Bureau of Reclamation publicity brochure published just before the withdrawals described the

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[16] Cole, "Factors Relative to Settlement," 5. Also telephone interview with Thomas Pennock, former settler assistant agent, 27 March 2002; and "We Can Control Columbia Basin Wind Erosion," The Washington Farmer, 20 October 1955, 6. The article quotes soils specialists who said that the "predominantly sandy soil" of the Basin was naturally susceptible to blowing and that "one-half to two-thirds of the 600,000 acres" then scheduled for irrigation had "soils subject to severe wind erosion." Columbia Basin News, 21 December 1955. See Also Columbia Basin News, 8 January 1955 citing the remarks of Franklin County extension agent Del Purnell on the threat to basin farmers from "alkali salts." Webster's New College Dictionary publishes a special geologic and agricultural definition of alkali as "a soluble mineral salt present in some soils of arid regions in quantity detrimental to agriculture."

[17] "Not All Soils in Basin Good," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 26.

[18] See Chapter 3 preceding.

area involved as containing "the largest, nearly continuous block of first-class soil. . . made up of wind-deposited silty materials (loess) which blanket a strip from 4 to 12 miles wide along the eastern border of the project."[19] In 1962, Gilbert Stamm, Commissioner of Reclamation, referred to this withdrawn land, which he estimated as between 200,000 and 300,000 acres, as "a very large part of the best wheat area of the project."[20] As a result of the withdrawals, the soils on the land that remained in the project and available for settlement would be, as a whole, of a poorer quality than anticipated. The Washington Farmer acknowledged this unpleasant reality, describing the withdrawn areas as including "some of the best land" in the Basin.[21]

The Bureau of Reclamation and other project proponents, hoping that the withdrawn land eventually would be brought back into the project, referred to the scaled back project as the first half. These dryland farmers, however, showed little inclination to change their minds. In 1952 and 1954, when the chambers of commerce in towns along the east-side pushed for an extension of the canal to their area, local farmers came out in force to oppose the effort. In 1954, a Mr. Watkins told an irrigation district hearing that he had talked to farmers representing 40,000 acres of land and that neither he nor they wanted irrigation in the area. A Mr. Herman, supported by every other farmer in attendance, said they were tired of the chambers of commerce pushing for irrigation notwithstanding landowners' opposition and desire to continue dryland operations.[22]

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[19] Bureau of Reclamation, Irrigable Land.
[20] Senate subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Hearings Relating to Columbia Basin Irrigation District Matters, 87th Cong., 2d. sess., 20 June and 18 July 1962, 69.
[21] Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952. Reprinted in Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952.
[22] Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes of Meeting, 15 December 1954, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; Columbia Basin News, 20 December 1954; and Agriculturist to Project Development Supervisor, 9 December 1952, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

Further, beginning in 1946, another property owner, an agency of the U.S. government, took action affecting both the amount and also the quality of the land to receive water in the nominal first half. In 1946 and 1947, the Atomic Energy Commission, which oversaw the Hanford nuclear facilities across the Columbia River from the CBP, began purchasing and withdrawing from the CBP acres of land along the Wahluke Slope in the southwest corner of the project. By February 1953, even after releasing 87,000 acres, it had placed 174,000 acres within either a control or secondary zone, withdrawing them from the project.[23] Though not made up of the superior soils found along the eastern edge, the withdrawn AEC land included what many commentators believed to be "some of the best land" in the west half of the project.[24]

These decisions to withdraw land, however, did not create the soil problems for settlement, but merely enlarged the percentage of land that would be plagued

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On 17 May 1956 the Columbia Basin News editorialized that it would "take a cost-price squeeze even worse than the present one to force" dryland wheat farmers "to make way for irrigation." Twenty-five years later the next generation of east side dryland wheat farmers again opposed the efforts of project proponents to irrigate their land. Grant County Journal, 22 July 1981 and 12 July 1984; Seattle Weekly, 10 August 1983; and John G. White, "Second half of Columbia Basin Project facing stiff financing battle," Irrigation Age, October 1984, 47-48. In a very public fight during the 1970's and 1980's, dryland farmer Katherine Bohnet succeeded in withdrawing 1,000 acres from the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District.

Also during this period, many observers realized that the prospect of funding from the federal government was dim. In 1955, an editorial writer for the Spokane newspaper told the Pasco Chamber of Commerce, "we're kidding ourselves, if we expect to have the million acres (available in the Project) irrigated. I think there is a limit to what we can get from the federal government." Columbia Basin News, 8 February 1955.

[23] It was estimated that 46,000 of the 87,000 released acres were irrigable. "More Acres for Irrigation," The Northwest, February 1953, 8; Pitzer, Visions, Plans, and Realities, 104; and Columbia Basin News, 13 April 1956. Minutes of a committee formed to return this land to the project are included within the records of the Columbia Basin Commission at the Washington State Archives in Olympia.

[24] Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952. (?)The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952. See also, Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes of Meeting, 15 December 1954, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. As late as 1956, the AEC continued to purchase land and take

with them. From the earliest planning days, government officials and agricultural scientists were aware that poor quality land appeared extensively in the project and debated how much should be classified as irrigable and included in the CBP. The concerns raised by the Soil Conservation Service in 1941, that over 300,000 acres of shallow sandy and sandy loam soils the Bureau had included in the project were not suitable for irrigation, had not been upheld. But the review committee, while deciding to retain the lands, did admit they were of marginal quality and would require careful cultivation. Reclassification to nonirrigable would have removed nearly 25 percent of the total 1.2 million acres from the CBP. Coupled with the withdrawals taking place, up to one-half of the land originally slated for irrigation would have been eliminated. Further, the land under question was predominantly, if not entirely, in the western half.[25] Thus, because of the location, the decision to retain it had a disproportionate effect on the overall quality of the land available for settlement when the project opened. The result was that one-half the land slated for development in 1952 was acknowledged by investigators from the Bureau, the USDA and the SCS to be at best of marginal irrigability.[26] It is also evident that in 1952 not only government scientists and planners, but also the larger public, knew of the drawbacks of the soil. An article appearing in The Washington Farmer just before the Farm-in-a-Day celebration and reprinted later in the Wenatchee Daily World warned "prospective settlers. . . the plain truth is that a lot of land classed as irrigable in the Basin would

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it out of production. 1956 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 24. These withdrawals were almost entirely in the south district.

[25]See chapter 4 previous for discussion of original classification and 1941 review.

[26] Committee of the State College of Washington and the Committee of the Bureau of Reclamation on Development of the Columbia Basin Project, Minutes, 20 June 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. The committee estimated that only 68,368 acres had the highest income potential, approximately $79 an acre, while 98,880 acres had the lowest, ranging from $2 to minus $4 an acre.

be considered marginal anywhere else. . . [and] . . . irrigation alone will not make good land of it."[27]

The withdrawals explain why the soils on the land included within the project in 1952 were more limited in variety and inferior in quality than had been expected in 1943 when the CBP Act was approved. They do not explain fully, however, the limits on the variety and quality of soils available for settlement. People continued to exacerbate the problem that nature, parsimonious in its soil building, had put in motion. Settlers looking for land would find that even when water was available to an irrigation block, much land within it might not be for sale. Once again, decisions by individual property owners constituted the proximate cause. But the chain of causation extended back in time to include congressional action as well.

In 1942 the Department of Interior submitted to Congress a bill to govern the organization and administration of the CBP. One provision, included in the final law approved by Congress, required that all owners sell anything over 160 acres of irrigable land—referred to as excess—before they could receive water. In lieu of selling, some who owned excess land divvied it up among family members, many of whom were not farmers.[28] Other excess land owners, in a practice not prohibited by the original law, set up trusts to hold as much as 160 acres for each minor child. The extent to which this stratagem was used to maintain control of land in a family only became apparent in later years.[29] Many, however, merely postponed action and

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[27] (?)The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, and Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952.
[28] Columbia Basin News, 5 September 1953, tells the story of one such family division. In another instance, a settler assistant agent reported on an "estate in the north end of Block 42 now being divided among five family members, none of whom have previous irrigation experience." Day Bassett, Monthly Narrative—August 1952, Grant County Extension.
[29] Fred G. Aandahl to Mr. Aspinall, 16 May 1957, attachment, Box 130, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Chronicle, estimated date 3 December 1953, Toll scrapbook; and Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1957.

when Congress later changed the law were able to keep significantly larger acreages.

The original bill, introduced in 1942, also had required property owners to retain ownership of nonexcess land, no matter when obtained, for ten years after water was available before selling at greater than the appraised dryland price. Congress, however, weakened this restriction and in the 1943 CBP act required only that the land be held for five years. Under this shortened holding period, property owners sold much less land to the government for resale to settlers than planners had expected.[30] Then, as the project neared opening and later as it was developed, many owners of non-excess land, who neither sold to the government nor farmed the land themselves, decided not to sell privately until the price restrictions lapsed.[31] Instead, seeing "a chance to turn a profit by holding on a little longer," they retained ownership through the five-year holding period.[32]

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[30] See Chapter 5 previous.

[31] The Wenatchee Daily World in a story on 26 May 1952 detailing the progress of one farm family reported that in late 1950 these settlers from Oklahoma found it nearly impossible to find any private land for sale in the project area. The Bureau of Reclamation advised would-be settlers in an undated brochure, probably published in 1953, that "very little [privately owned] land is now being offered for sale." Bureau of Reclamation, Farming Opportunities, (GPO, n.d.).

Stories spread around the project of what Business Week referred to as "black-market dealings. . . You buy the land at the government's appraisal, then you pay maybe $5,000 extra for a beaten tractor." But there is little real evidence that such practices materially affected the amount of land available for purchase. "From Waste Land to Farm Land," Business Week, 7 June 1952, 98.

[32] The Seattle Post- Intelligencer commented on 30 April 1952 that "It is generally conceded in the basin, most of the owners will hang on to the land until the law expires after five years after water is available for the irrigation block in which the land is located." The Washington Farmer on 15 May 1952, in an article reprinted in the Wenatchee Daily World on 28 May 1952, agreed, saying that "five years after water becomes available to a farm unit, it may be sold at above the appraised price. Landowners see a chance to turn a profit by holding on a little longer." The Oregonion, on 4 April 1952, speculated that the law did not prevent speculators from competing with real settlers, explaining that "the antispeculation act applying to project lands also is eyed askance by some experts. It is only for five years, during which no settler may sell his land. Many feel it should be for ten years to keep out the quick money boys."

This strategem was widespread and on-going. In January 1953, "less than half the 925 farm units" entitled to irrigation water had been developed. Businessmen in Ephrata complained that absentee owners, "by not showing up to develop their land when water was available," were "retarding irrigation progress in the Columbia Basin."[33] Three years later, in 1956, the directors of the South District started a "small scale action to force owners of dry units to sell them" in an effort to get into production land for which water was available. But as the director behind the effort admitted, "owners who were willing to pay a total of about $60 an acre while waiting out the anti-speculation period would be in a position to sell their units for whatever they could get at the end of the five years."[34]

While many of these owners left their land undeveloped, others, if they were able to find renters, leased it out. In May 1954, after six years with water, tenancy on Block One was at 44 percent. Forty-nine operators farmed a total of 82 farm units, and an incomplete survey showed that 36 units were being "operated under lease."[35] Tenancy spread as more land was opened for settlement, and in 1960 researchers at WSC concluded that "the extent of operating irrigated lands under lease on the Project is much greater than the leasing of farms in other older, well established, irrigated farming areas of Washington {and} the extent to which leasing of farms is

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[33] Columbia Basin News, 24 January 1953; and 1953 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 42.

[34] Columbia Basin News, 27 June 1956, 7 August 1956 and 6 October 1956. In early 1956, when the Royal Slope area opened, the Washington Farmer commented on the "unavailability of land," and explained that the landowners had held their land for years and had "decided to hold it a few more years. They'd already owned it for years and are in no rush now to sell." Robert L. Sincock, "How Many Apples in Columbia Basin?" Washington Farmer, 5 January 1956, 4.

[35] Columbia Basin News, 6 May 1954.

occurring in the Project was not expected by the original Project planners."[36] In 1954, a joint committee of the Bureau and WSC concluded that only 43 percent of farm operations were composed entirely of land owned by the operator, while 57% were composed entirely or partly of rented land. A state college official described those percentages as "much higher than . . . reported by the 1950 Census of Agriculture for other irrigated areas of Washington and Oregon." Further, because many rental operations contained two or more farm units, the actual number of units operated under lease exceeded 60 percent.[37] In January 1957, the directors of the East district complained of "only 330, out of over 1200 farms being operated as single family farm operations, while 635 farms are being operated by leases."[38] Three years later, WSC researchers reported that in 1957, slightly over 53 percent of the farm operations throughout the project were "wholly or partly on leased land," with approximately three-quarters of these rental operations containing two or more units.[39] Thus, in the early project years the amount of land available for purchase,

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[36] B. D. Parrish and Earl R. Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land: Columbia Basin Project, Washington, Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations Bulletin 620, September 1960, 1 (hereafter Parrish and Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land, 1960.)

[37] State College of Washington and Bureau of Reclamation, Minutes of Meeting of Joint committee, 12 and 13 December 1957; and (WSC), The Columbia Basin Project (n.d.), both in Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. W.W. Johnston of the Bureau told a meeting of the joint irrigation districts in January 1955 that in the previous year "28 percent of the farms were operated by people owning and leasing three units or more per operator." Joint Boards of Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts, Minutes of Meeting, 21 January 1955, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[38] ECBID, Resolutions, 2 January 1957.

[39] Parrish and Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land, 1960, iii and 2. The exact figure was 53.1 percent. The study reported that in 1957 there were 3158 farm units under cultivation, consolidated into 1923 farm operations. The researchers defined a farm operation as "all the land operated under one management."

The Bureau in 1958 reported a significant difference in leasing among districts. In the South district, which contained 50 percent of the veteran settlers and had a rate of absentee ownership of only 24 percent, 28 percent of the farm units were leased. In the East and Quincy districts, with lower percentages of veteran settlers and absentee rates of 43 and 56 percent respectively, 55 percent of the units were leased. Project Manager, Ephrata, to

either privately or from the government, was limited. Would-be buyers found it "difficult" to find land for sale, although there were "a great number of units for lease."[40]

All these various landowner decisions affected not only the quantity but also the quality of land available to settlers wishing to set up new farms in the Basin. First, private landowners forced to sell excess land logically would retain the best for themselves. Existing dryland farmers, for instance, who stayed on the land until the project opened and "took up the shovel" when water arrived, owned and retained some of the better land. A Grant County Extension Report commented on this phenomenon in 1954:

> This year, many of the fellows who had dryland farmed all their lives were using the shovel and spreading water over their parched acres. Much of this land is some of our better land and had been farmed for several years because of that.[41]

Regional Director, Boise, 1958 (date unclear), attachment: Interim Report on Leasing – 1958 Irrigation Season, Box 262, USBR Record Center, Denver.

[40]Mel Hagood, Monthly Narrative–August 1952: Grant County Extension. Hagood said at same time that there were "still a great number of outsiders on lookout for purchase of units but few units for sale. " In September, he commented that it was "still difficult for someone to buy a unit." Hagood, Monthly Narrative–September 1952: Grant County Extension. In October, he reported that "there are still a great many people coming through looking for land to buy and also a large number of absentee owners looking for some to rent their units." Hagood, Monthly Narrative--October 1952: Grant County Extension.

The State of Washington and the Northern Pacific Railway had some land for sale. In early 1955, the railway offered 3964 acres of land for sale in Block 16, a sandy area posing development problems for farmers. The farm units contained significant nonirrigable land, ranging in size from 132 to 240 acres. Columbia Basin News, 28 December 1954. Also, much of the railway's land was in the area the AEC had declared withdrawn from development. Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes of Meeting, 22 March 1957, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

The State of Washington had approximately 70,000 acres for sale. However, much of this did not go to actual settlers because the state did not have to abide by price restrictions and bidding could drive prices up out of the reach of most. Commenting on the first state land sale in October 1952, Mel Hagood, the lead settler assistance agent, said that "a large percentage of the land sold was purchased by investors who do not plan on full development or actually farming themselves." Hagood, Monthly Narrative--October 1952: Grant County Extension. See also, Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes, 4 September 1953, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Columbia Basin News, 8 June 1955, which reported that units went for up to five times the appraised value.

[41] 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 1.

In addition, potential renters put soil quality at the top of the list of characteristics they considered important when leasing, and units with good soil and favorable topography could rent at a 50 percent premium.[42] Thus, because the better quality land was easier to rent and commanded a significantly higher price, its owners felt less pressure to sell. The ability to lease, therefore, not only kept land off the market, but kept the good land disproportionately unavailable.[43] It also increased its vulnerability to damage. Neither owners nor renters wanted to pay for cover crops to hold soil in place. Because much of the basin soil was light, leaving it uncovered after cultivation resulted in significant loss of topsoil and fertility. Thus when the land did become available for sale, it often was damaged.

No official studies exist, but anecdotal evidence and informed opinion, both from the time and from later years, support the idea that very little of the land put on the market was of the best quality and that much of it was in fact marginal to poor. In May 1954, a farm publication told its readers that even "when available," it was

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[42]ECBID, Minutes, 2 January 1957.

[42] Parrish and Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land, 1960, 7; and Carl W. Petersen, Monthly Narrative—November 1953: Grant County Extension. Petersen reported that Block 74 land had excellent soil and favorable topography and comparatively low development costs and attracted a large number of cash renters paying $40 per acre, while the sandier units on Block 72 rented for only $25 an acre.

[43] "Thousands of Acres Were Watered," The Northwest, November 1952, 4; Wenatchee Daily World, 28 May 1952; Parrish and Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land, 1960, iii, 10-14; 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 46; and Orland H. Tonnemaker, Monthly Narrative—April 1956: Grant County Extension. In 1956 agent Walter Bergstrom commented that in Block 87 where he said "the ratio of tenancy will be very high," there was evidence of "very noticeable" wind erosion and dust storms as large blocks of land were broken out at once and re-leased. Walter Bergstrom, Monthly Narrative—March 1956: Grant County Extension. Wistar Burgess of FmHA commented in 1954 that "most of the unwise use of Project lands was observed on farm units which were being operated under lease or where absentee landowners control the lands." Meeting to Explore ways and Means to Improve Assistance to Settlers on the Columbia Basin Project, 26 July 1954, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

"difficult to obtain desirable tracts even from private sources."[44] Gloria Nelson, a settler wife, wrote home to her parents in January 1955 that "land, good land, is at a premium."[45] At the end of 1955, the Extension Service in Grant County reported that, although for the first time classified ads were appearing with land for sale at appraised prices, "good land still difficult to obtain."[46] Further, evidence indicates that in particular the land sold by the government was poor to marginal. Throughout the early critical years of project settlement many comments on the poor quality of farm units available for purchase referred specifically to government-owned land.[47] In the summer of 1954, the settler assistant agent in Franklin County reported that veterans who bought from the government were "getting larger, rougher units more suited for livestock and close growing crops."[48] WSC scientists wrote in 1956 that "for a variety of reasons land which the Bureau of Reclamation has had for sale is, on the average, of lower productivity that (sic) that held by private individuals."[49] Decades after he left employment on the Columbia Basin Project, Mel Hagood, who served as supervisor for the settler assistance program from 1951 to 1962, commented that to

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[44] "The Columbia Basin: Rich New Agricultural Empire," WASHCOEGG, May 1954, 22.
[45] Letter, 20 January 1955, Nelson Accession 205, Spokane Historical Society (SHS), Spokane.
[46] 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 1.
[47] Spokane Chronicle, 5 March 1955; Evan W. Hall, "Make Haste Slowly in the Basin," The Washington Farmer, 15 October 1953, 5, 34; and Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1956.
[48] Galen McMaster, Monthly Narrative—August 1954: Franklin County Extension. Also, Block 49, which had a large number of government owned units, had "a large amount of land that will have to remain in pasture and hay crops a large share of the time because of shallow soil and topography." 1953 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, section on livestock production.
[49] Murray A. Straus and Barnard D. Parrish, The Columbia Basin Settler: A study of Social and Economic Resources in New Land Settlement, Washington Agriculture Experiment Stations Bulletin 566, 1956, 3. (Hereafter Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956.)

his mind, the settlers who bought through the government got "poorer land." [50] He also believed this state of affairs was "surely known by all the Agencies."[51]

Man and nature thus interacted with the result that much of the land available for settlement was marginal and problematic. When worked, it blew. When irrigated, it did not hold water. With little active organic matter, it lacked the nutrients, most significantly available nitrogen, essential for plant growth. Rectifying and compensating for these and other problems would place burdens on a farmer that exacerbated the normal difficulties and challenges associated with breaking out and establishing a new farm.[52] In turn, how well individual farmers, in the aggregate, fared would affect the overall project. In 1941, when Problem two investigators had requested a soil re-evaluation, Harlan Barrows had emphasized that "the outcome of the analysis would affect both the welfare of many prospective settlers and the welfare of the project as a whole."[53] A decade later, the causal connection between soil quality, the fate of individual farmers and the fate of the overall project would become clear.

Reclamation supporters always acknowledged that turning a piece of dry land, whether previously cultivated or not, into a productive irrigated farm capable of supporting a family would be a difficult and challenging undertaking. Since 1902 when federal reclamation began, the idea held sway that two farm families would try

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[50] Mel Hagood interview, 27 December 1999. (Hereafter Hagood interview, 1999.)
[51] Hagood to Utter e-mail, 26 June 2002.
[52] "Not All Soils in Basin Good," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 26; Cole, "Factors Relative to Settlement," 5; n.a., "Progress Report of Studies to Determine Limitations and Possibilities of Columbia Basin Project for Fruit Growing," Box 1, Coll. of Agr 193, MASC, WSU; Gilkeson, Washington Soils, 1958; and Buchanan and Salter, Soil, Water, and Crop Management, 1950; and H.P. Singleton, "Pre-Tested Farming," The Reclamation Era, April 1952.
[53] Harlan Barrows to Commissioner, 3 May 1941, Box 543, RG 115, National Archives, Denver.

and fail on a piece of reclaimed, irrigated land before the third would be successful.[54] Over the decades, proponents of change in reclamation policy used the fear of this pattern and the desire to avoid it to push policies that fell into two categories--assist any and all farmers on a project, and screen those who hoped to settle on government land. With varying degrees of success, pre-settlement planning for the Columbia Basin Project incorporated both these approaches to avoiding or at least minimizing settler failure.

The impetus behind the Joint Investigations was the belief that planning could ease pressure on settlers on the land, both by increasing technical knowledge and by devising a range of assistance programs. This goal was partially met. The government made available to many farmers much of the knowledge gained from the research of the investigators and later agricultural scientists. Other recommendations, however, required Congressional action that was not forthcoming. Of particular significance, Congress refused both to authorize the Department of Interior to level land or otherwise prepare farm units for the settlers and to allow it to loan money. This latter decision proved to have exceptional significance for project settlement. Politicians and planners also struggled to reach agreement on settler selection. In early project planning, Commissioner Page spoke for many in the Roosevelt administration, but not for Congress, when he recommended loosening requirements then in place on other projects to allow indigent dust bowl refugees to qualify for CBP land. Only a few years later in the midst of World War II, however, the Bureau agreed with Congress in giving ex-soldiers preference to purchase farm

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[54] Gene McNulty, "Will Two Generations Go Broke on Basin?" The Washington Farmer, 15 March 1951, 6-7. Phil Nalder of the BR said in 1955 that there were "two things want to

units. It also had come to accept that any purchaser, veteran or not, would have to meet minimum requirements of experience, resources, and character.

As settlers moved onto the project, however, the process of farm-making proved to be more difficult than pre-settlement planning had anticipated. For project settlers the marginal quality of much basin land complicated and made even more difficult the increasingly unfavorable economic conditions facing agriculture during the 1950's. Consequently, attaining success on a CBP farm unit would require more skill, money and time than planners, boosters and the settlers themselves had expected. The result would be great pressure on both the settler assistance and settler selection programs and deep divisions of opinion on how best to screen settlers, help farmers on the land, and minimize first the number of individual failures and later the damage to the project itself. Eventually, even the preference given veterans became divisive.

The first settlers on the test blocks began farm-making in a period favorable to U.S. agriculture when demand met or exceeded production. These propitious circumstances had begun with the increased demand fostered by World War II and had been extended by a moribund postwar European agriculture. By the time the project officially opened in 1952, however, the new farmers on the CBP faced a more challenging economic environment as agricultural prosperity fell victim to overproduction and a cost-price squeeze for farmers that according to a Bureau analyst was "particularly serious for the Columbia Basin Project."[55] In 1953, as a result of a combination of causes, including a rebound in overseas production and

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avoid: tenant farms and three tries per unit before a farmer sticks." Spokane Chronicle, 5 March 1955.

continued increases in productivity at home, "surplus farm products glutted the warehouses and storage bins" of the nation.[56] As a local extension agent commented in the basin, "the farm surplus problem bears down so heavy that other problems are over shadowed to a greater degree than [in] the past."[57] Prices paid farmers declined; between 1951 and 1956 they were down 23 percent.[58] At the same time, costs rose, propelled in part by expensive technological innovations in mechanization, chemistry, and genetics. The result was a steady decrease in net farm income.[59] In 1960, the head of the Washington Department of Agriculture lamented that the Columbia Basin Project was "developed in a period of the lowest return to agriculture, in relation to farmers' income from their crops, since 1940."[60] A few years earlier the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Washington State College even speculated that the "biggest error" made in the development of the project was "timing."[61]

Even when all other circumstances were favorable, starting a new farm in such adverse economic conditions would be daunting. On the CBP, poor or marginal land made the task even more difficult. The time, money, and expertise

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[55]To Regional Director from Committee on Review of Land Settlement and Development Program, 29 March 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[56]John L. Shover, First Majority - Last Minority: The Transforming of Rural Life in America (Northern Illinois University Press: De Kalb, 1976), 248.
[57]1954 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, section entitled Major Problems. See also Columbia Basin Herald, 5 June 1953 (reprinted from Wall Street Journal).
[58]R. Douglas Hurt, American Agriculture: A Brief History (Iowa State University Press; Ames, 1994), 325.
[59] An editorial in Columbia Basin Herald, 6 June 1956 cited USDA figures showing that farm income had been in a "down trend since 1951" and a report from the Institute of Life Insurance that stated the farm income had declined "around 30 per cent" from 1951 to that date. In January 1956, Senator Warren Magnuson, in what admittedly was a partisan comment, wrote that "farmer's income is down 11 percent since the [Eisenhower] Administration took over." Warren G. Magnuson to C. Al Green, 9 January 1956, Box 16, CBC records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[60]Remarks by Director Joe Dwyer, 4 March 1960, Donald Magnuson 293, M&UAD, UW.
[61]S P. Swenson to Jalmar Johnson, 27 March 1957, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

needed to make a farm productive all move in a steeply inverse relationship to the quality of the land, and water would not be an equalizer. "Irrigation alone," as The Washington Farmer warned prospective settlers at the project's official opening, would not transform poor land into good land. Rather, "considerable cost in time and money" would be required to bring lower quality land to high productivity, and it never would be "as productive as first-class land under comparable management." No matter the amount of time and skill invested in management and the amount of money and resources invested in rectifying deficiencies in the soil, much project land would never be suitable for anything but relatively-low return pasture and forage crops, and possibly dairying. On marginal lands high-return cash crops would not be feasible.[62]

The Ephrata, Quincy and Othello soils found in much of the project's first half presented problems for cultivation that fed on each other and made excessive demands on the time and resources of the farmer. Light sandy and sandy loam soils were susceptible to the basin's high winds that could blow out or smother crops, including cover plantings intended to check this problem. Gloria and Lee Nelson bought a government unit in Block 49 in May 1953. Two years later, Gloria, writing home to her parents about "heart sickening" winds and dust storms, lamented the crop damage. The peas "just get up to where they are looking really good (two to three inches) and whammy in an afternoon the land is bare and they are only little

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[62]Quotation from "Not All Soils in Basin Good," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 26. Also in 1960 the head of the State of Washington Department of Agriculture said that poorer land had lower returns and that "farmers with poorer land face particularly difficult situations." Remarks by Director Joe Dwyer, 4 March 1960, Donald Magnuson 293, M&UAD, UW. In an article in The Washington Farmer, 2 September 1954, on the possibility of dairying, which focused on the Quincy area, a farmer and chamber of commerce leader was reported as saying that "4000 to 5000 acres of very sandy soil southeast of Quincy might not make the farmers any money except in livestock. . . and dairying is less speculative than beef." (p. 4.)

short stubs above the ground, if that." The alfalfa, planted to hold down the lightest soil, "has blown away too."[63] Further, having minimal organic matter, the soils had both low fertility and low waterholding capacity. The farmer was required to add essential nutrients, such as available nitrogen, in significant amounts, either (and often) both through the application of chemical fertilizers or by sowing and plowing under soil-building and nitrogen-fixing plants. At the same time, the sandier or coarser a soil, the quicker water ran through it, requiring more water than finer soil, no matter how careful the application.

Minimal fertility and poor waterholding capacity separately put significant demands on a farmer, but unfortunately one also could aggravate the other. Sandy soil is coarse and does not have as much surface area as finer soil. As a result, minerals do not attach well and leach out rapidly when water is applied, whether through rain or irrigation.[64] Thus, when the settlers began irrigating these soils, the little fertility and mineral content that had been built up over the millenia was quickly lost. But, also, when the farmer added fertilizer, it would quickly leach out during irrigation. Nitrogen in particular, potash, and other soluble elements do not hold onto soil well, and settler assistant agents soon found that excessive use of water by new farmers caused available nitrates and other nutrients to leach out. This problem was most severe with surface irrigation on sandy soils because the farmers tended to over-irrigate at the upper end in an attempt to ensure that water reached the lower end of a run. The more water a farmer applied, the more nutrients, including those provided by expensive fertilizer, were leached out. Mel Hagood wrote in 1954 that

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[63]Letter, 12 May 1955, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.
[64]Thomas Pennock telecom, 21 March 2002; and Vance T. Smith, "Too Much Water," The Washington Farmer, 15 April 1954, 4.

"leaching of nitrogen is perhaps the most visible sign of improper use and over-application of water."[65] As a soils specialist quoted in The Washington Farmer said, "the amount of valuable plant foods lost in this manner will be in proportion to the amount of water that passes through the soil."[66] One farmer with twenty- five years of irrigation farming experience complained that on his farm in the south part of the project, "my experience didn't apply. . . . It's hard to keep from over-irrigating which tends to leach the fertilizer away."[67]

Thus, although irrigation water was necessary to productive farming in this arid land, its use, unless applied very carefully, could make it more difficult for the farmer to rectify fertility problems. The only way to mitigate such a problematic cycle was to build up the soil by repeatedly plowing under soil-building crops, which required a number of years, and to irrigate using very short runs and precisely timed applications of water, which required prodigious and on-going labor. Many, if not most, of the new settlers had neither the time nor the resources necessary to follow such a course.

The soils of the basin had other problems that caused difficulties for the new settlers. Looking back to the early years on the project, Hagood referred to the rocky, sagebrush covered lands in Block 40 as "the dregs."[68] Rocks in the plow zone could break farm machinery if left in, required extensive time and labor to remove, and could prevent land being used for anything but pasture, which would not return

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[65] Mel Hagood, "'Stairsteps' Can Help You to Irrigate Sloping Land," The Washington Farmer, 7 October 1954, 4. (Hereafter, Hagood, "Stairsteps.")
[66] Vance T. Smith, "Too Much Water," The Washington Farmer, 15 April 1954, 4.
[67] Grange News, 27 May 1953.
[68] Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999.

the profit per acre that row crops would.[69] Saron Minden, touted in numerous articles as one of the best of the early settlers, after one year of clearing his 75-acre farm on Block 40 had several piles of rocks "averaging 25 feet in length and ten feet in width."[70] He also had to apply $500 of fertilizer to 35 acres of rocky soil in order to grow wheat, not considered a high-return cash crop.[71] Fifty years rocks still pepper much of Block 40 and nearby areas, and the soils support nothing but pastures lined with rock jumbles.[72]

In other areas, even if the topsoil were rich, lands with an impermeable subsurface, such as the caliche that underlay the sandy loam Burke soil, quickly experienced waterlogging. Within a few years this made some units uncultivatable, drove a few farmers off their farms, and threatened to bankrupt the entire project.

It was, however, the widespread nutrient-poor coarse and sandy soils, which had poor waterholding capacity and leached fertilizers when irrigated, that most immediately threatened the ability of a large number of settlers to establish themselves permanently on the project. A government bulletin, published in 1950, indicated that nearly all crops contemplated for cultivation in the basin would need nitrogen, warning that for some crops, "the amount of nitrogen fertilizer used must be great to produce high yields." The only specific recommendations were for 120

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[69] A farmer who came to Block 40 in 1952 complained that when FmHA required him to plant beans, rocks broke his machinery; Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Major to Representative Catherine May, 17 November 1961, Box 52, Catherine May 304, MASC, WSC. Another farmer hired dump trucks to remove rocks "brought to the surface by leveling." Oregonian, 31 March 1952.
[70] Wenatchee Daily World, 21 August 1952. Another Block 40 farmer in 1962 asserted that the Bureau claimed the rocky ground in Block 40 could be cleared and farmed profitably, if it didn't "exceed 40 tons of rock per acre," but that actual tests reveal that some of the land in that area had "approximately 500 tons of rock per acre." Wm. P. Bennett to Senator Henry Jackson, 30 December 1961, Box 78, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.
[71] Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 29 April 1952.
[72] In the spring of 2004 a Quincy district employee I encountered in the area said farmers complain that rocks are their most prolific crop.

pounds of nitrogen per acre for potatoes and 160 pounds for corn.[73] In the case of potatoes this followed a prior planting of alfalfa. According to Mel Hagood, these early "recommendations for fertilizer were not enough," and were "quickly increased."[74] A farmer, highlighted in a March 1952 article in the Oregonian, planned to apply nitrogen at the rate of 200 pounds an acre.[75] Two months later, Chet Dixon, an early Block 1 farmer, warned the new settlers that during his first year on the land he had had to apply nitrogen every six weeks to make his sandy desert soil work.[76] Even pasture and wheat required significant amounts of nitrogen, up to 100 and 160 pounds per acre respectively.[77] But it was the cash crops--such as potatoes, beans and sugar beets—on which many of the new settlers had to rely in order to survive, that required particularly large quantities of nitrogen. Reports in December 1952, at the end of the first year after the project officially opened, indicated that applications of 450 pounds of ammonium nitrate per acre of beets had been common; a year later one farmer reported applying 900 pounds per acre for this crop.[78] In addition to the lack of nitrogen, beans, as well as corn, almost immediately exhibited a zinc deficiency.[79]

The expense could be overwhelming for new settlers. In many, if not most, cases, the soil did not possess a natural fertility that they could draw on during the

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[73] Buchanan and Salter, Soil, Water and Crop Management, 1950, 59.
[74] Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999; and Hagood to Utter e-mail, 10 July 2002.
[75] Oregonian, 31 March 1952.
[76] Robert L.Sincock, "...And Then We Were Broke," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 5ff.
[77] Columbia Basin News, 17 February 1954; and The Northwest, October 1954, 5.
[78] "Beet Crop Replacing Sagebrush in Washington," The Northwest, December 1952, 3; "Settler Wants to Trade Beets for Bricks," The Northwest, February 1954, 3-4; 1953 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension; and Grange News, 22 May 1953. Potatoes required large amounts of water, which in turn leached out the nutrients, necessitating re-fertilization. Further, plants could not use all the nitrogen applied. One hundred pounds per acre applied gives crops 30 pounds of usuable nitrogen.

first difficult years of farming..[80] Rather, settlers immediately needed to apply additives, and costs could mount quickly. The farmer cited in the Oregonian article spent over $1,000 on nitrogen before he even began his first planting.[81] Within a year of buying a unit, Lee and Gloria Nelson had decided their land needed a legume cover crop "to get it going good." Yet even that planting, which would not bring them any income, "requires so darn much fertilizer and at $4.00 per bag that really amounts (sic) up."[82] Further, the expense continued. In 1953, "many an operator" on Block One "spent a thousand dollars or more. . . for fertilizer."[83] Warren and Audrey Clifford, the first farmers on the Block, spent $1400 that year, more than many settlers had paid to buy a unit.[84] Because of the cost, "most people did not apply enough fertilizer," particularly on the "weak" soil. But if they tried to farm "on the cheap," they "didn't succeed."[85]

The cost of water on these sandy soils also could mount up quickly, particularly for new settlers with neither the time, the expertise nor the money to follow best irrigation practices. During the ten-year development period, before the construction repayment obligation went into effect, the Bureau levied a minimum charge on each unit that entitled the farmer to a specific quantity of water depending on the quality of the land. In 1952 four water-duty classes were in effect, providing

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[79] Burke Giles, Monthly Narrative--June 1952: Grant County Extension.
[80] Hagood interview, 28 December 1999.
[81] Oregonian, 31 March 1952
[82] Letter of 11 August 1954, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.
[83] Columbia Basin News, 4 May 1954. The Washington Farmer cited one farmer who spent $17 an acre to grow corn on very good, deep Ritzville-type soil. Dale W. Fields, "Is Corn the Basin Crop It's Cracked Up to Be," The Washington Farmer, 3 March 1955, 4.
[84] Columbia Basin News, 27 May 1954. For comparison purposes, the average cost of an undeveloped farm unit offered to veterans in the second drawing for land on the main part of the project was $854.12: see Public Announcement No. 5, 1 February 1951, Box 85, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW. This calculation does not include one farm unit which included a barn and house and well and which sold for over $6,000.

from 3.35 acre-feet of water per acre for the best land to 5.04 acre-feet for the poorest land. The Bureau charged premiums for additional water, progressing from 120 percent to 160 percent of the base amount.[86] Farmers who did not stay within the minimum allocated found the cost of water quickly rising above what they had anticipated.[87] Many new settlers in areas all over the project fell into this category. At the end of 1952, Grant County Extension reported that some farmers were using up to 10 acre-feet on potatoes, double even the largest basic allotment.[88] Mel Hagood later remembered that some farmers near Quincy applied three to four times more water than they had expected, entailing extremely costly purchases of excess water.[89] Block 15 and 16 farmers, toward the south end of the project, routinely required excess water, often up to a third extra allotment. The costs rose proportionately, often beyond what the president of the Block 15 association argued a new settler could afford.[90] To the east, a farmer in Block 42 reported spending $1100 for water to grow grain, beans and peas, crops which were not the heaviest users of water, and a Block 49 farmer complained of needing two excess water allotments.[91] Such expenses were widespread. A 1954 survey of three blocks, not even among the hardest hit, found that from 32 to 45 percent of the farm units used excess water.[92]

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[85] Hagood interview, 28 December 1999.
[86] USBR, Annual Project History: Columbia Basin Project (1962), 14.
[87] Farming Opportunities, (n.d.); Farmers Handbook, L/3; G. W. Lineweaver to Warren G. Magnuson, 11 September 1952, Box 90, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.
[88] 1952 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 28.
[89] Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999.
[90] Columbia Basin News, 13 August 1955.
[91] ECBID, Minutes: 7 November 1956; and James C. Holland, Monthly Narrative—September 1955: Adams County Extension.
[92] 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 76. The blocks were 40, 41, and 42.

These problems, confronting the new farmers, led to recriminations and the search for answers to where the blame lay. Had the government misclassified the soils and misjudged the amount of water crops would need? Did the settlers not use water properly? Most observers without a direct stake in the outcome found that all parties shared in the blame; and everyone concerned agreed that the most pressing question was how best to mitigate the negative effects on the individual farmers and on the project.

Many farmers felt the cause of their problems could be traced back to miscalculations by the government either in classifying soils or allotting water or both. Such errors, they believed, fueled unrealistic expectations on their part and on the part of the government of the difficulties and expenses they would face in trying to develop farms. Since the settlers were forced to deal with the consequences of these errors, the Bureau had a responsibility to make changes to correct them. Later comments by setter assistant agents lend some credence to this position. Mel Hagood perceived a "little tendency" on the part of the Bureau toward "too optimistic classification of land" and speculated that the government might have been "fudging a little bit," for instance, in rating as class 3 land that was "awfully coarse textured sand."[93] Much of this, most likely, was the shallow sandy and sandy loam soils the Bureau refused to eliminate from the project when prodded to do so by the SCS in 1941, because such a move would have threatened the viability of the entire project. Walter Bergstrom, an agent on the western part of the project in the mid-1950's, later said that the government did not always understand the soils and how to operate on them, which "led both to mistakes in classification and trial and error in advice on

[93] Hagood interview, 28 December 1999

how to farm." In such circumstances, it could have been "almost impossible for these farmers to irrigate with the amount of water that was allocated."[94] Looking back from the perspective of nearly fifty years distance, Hagood speculated that only the timely introduction of sprinklers saved the project from serious problems:

> The project really lucked out because sprinkler systems came in just at the right time to be available for some of the poorer class lands. I think the project would have had a lot rougher time. I'm not sure it would have ever survived as well—I know it wouldn't have survived as well.[95]

Whether they believed the government had misclassified the soils or incorrectly calculated the amount of water a particular class would require, the crux of the farmers' argument was that in light sandy soils, bereft of organic matter, water percolated immediately and rapidly downward. Soil and water were inextricably linked in these complaints. Excessive water losses in the marginal soil were out of their control. Typical was the retort of an angry farmer who, when exhorted by the Bureau to take more care in applying water, responded: "putting water on that land is like pouring sand in a rathole."[96] It is impossible to know how many others were as disgusted with their units as this anonymous farmer, but in a 1954 survey, among participants who were dissatisfied with their farms, the greatest number--43 percent--identified soil conditions as the reason.[97] Further, although settlers often and vociferously complained about water requirements, allotments, and charges, the focus on water was often a stand-in for a broader dissatisfaction with soil conditions on the farm. Water problems were only the most obvious manifestation of less well-

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[94] Phone interview with Walter Bergstrom, 21 March 2002. (Hereafter Bergstrom, 21 March 2002.)
[95] Hagood interview, 28 December 1999; and Bergstrom, 21 March 2002.
[96] Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1956.
[97] Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 36-37. Second, at 30 percent, was the small size of the unit.

defined productivity problems, and though central to many if not most complaints, did not completely account for them.

Although protests began as soon as the first farmer had to purchase excess water or encountered unexplained and unexpected "difficulties with crop production," they built to a peak in 1955 and 1956, erupting throughout the Basin.[98] In the north central project, soil quality and excess water use figured prominently in an on-going protest that began in late 1954 over the poor quality of Block 40 farm units, including shallow, rocky soil.[99] To the south, in the East District, extension agents during the 1955 growing season investigated settler complaints about water allotments on the sandy soil of Block 42.[100] During this same time Buford Kuhns of the Bureau and Settler Assistant Agent Elwood Dull visited a number of Quincy district farms on Othello sandy loam and fine sandy loam that were using a "considerable quantity of water." [101] In Block 15 of the South district, where the Bureau had rated most of the soil as class one, more than sixty farmers in the summer of 1955 complained to officials that the topsoil was too sandy and at times too shallow to justify anything other than a class three rating. They wanted a lower classification, which would enable them to receive larger base amounts of water, compensating for infiltration losses. In 1956 settlers from other south district blocks swelled the number of active

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[98] C. D. Moodies to B. R. Bertranson, et. Al., 19 July 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. Also, by the summer of 1952 the complaints by Block One farmers that their soil was wrongly classified and that as a result water allotments were inadequate led the Bureau to appoint a committee to visit a series of units on which operators exceeded their allotments and recalculate the water requirements. G. W. Lineweaver to Hon. Warren G. Magnuson, 11 September 1952, Box 90, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.

[99] Columbia Basin Herald, 15 October 1954; and 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 110.

[100] 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 76-77. Large scale potato farmers in Block 43 also used excess water, but "don't worry about the amount of water used or the cost." (p.77)

[101] Elwood Dull, Monthly Narrative--June 1955: Grant County Extension.

protestors to over one hundred. They complained of "yield" problems. They called for an investigation of "fertility, fertilizing and alkali problems," saying that without immediate action, "we just won't be around."[102] Also in 1956, officials from Extension, USBR, SCS and WSC toured Block 78 on the project's west side in response to farmer complaints about water use and poor crop production over the prior two years. Water use was a problem, but by itself did not explain the difficulties farmers faced. The sandy topsoil required light, frequent irrigation, but a hard subsoil impeded root penetration. These physical shortcomings were compounded by deficiencies in a range of nutrients, including phosphorous, potassium, and magnesium. In spite of these characteristics, the Bureau had classified much of the soil as class one or class two; the farmers were requesting reclassification. During this same time, WSC scientists, citing "poor water relations, low fertility and a lime chlorous effect upon crops," called Block 78, "one of the mistakes made in land classification."[103]

In 1952 the Bureau, after an investigation of settler complaints in Block 1, had determined that, with the exception of the poorest lands, "the present water allotments are adequate and. . . . changes not necessary."[104] Subsequently,

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[102] Columbia Basin News, 13 August 1955; Columbia Basin News, 20 August 1955; 1955 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 31; Columbia Basin News, 7 January 1956; Columbia Basin News, 31 January 1956; Columbia Basin News, 2 March 1956; Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1956; and 1956 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 35. By the summer of 1956 the directors of the South district were actively trying to secure more liberal water allotments for farmers who were "having trouble raising crops on their present allotments." Columbia Basin News, 8 September 1956.

[103] C.D. Moodie to B. R. Bertramson, etc., 19 July 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; 1956 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 58; and [WSC], The Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 9.

[104] G. W. Lineweaver to Hon. Warren G. Magnuson, 11 September 1952, Box 90, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW. Also see Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes, 8 August 1952, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. The Commission reported that "Land owners are

however, as complaints increased and spread, extension agents and Bureau personnel found that even when following "above average" and "good" irrigation practices, farmers at times used more than their water allotments.[105] They also identified unexplained productivity problems. As a result, by 1956, the Bureau had become more responsive. In March, a special committee to review land settlement and development declared that because of "light soils interspersed with sandy ridges of Class 6 land," Block 17 in the South District "should be deferred to the end of the 600,000 acre program, and perhaps longer. Additionally, similar marginal smaller areas within future blocks might well be deferred until later."[106] Throughout the summer and fall, with the assistance of the South district, SCS, WSC and Extension, the Bureau surveyed water allotments and investigated productivity problems in a number of critical areas.[107] By early 1957, it had increased allotments on 89 farms in Block 15 and 42 farms in Block 16 of the south district and eleven farms in Blocks 42 and 44 of the east district; and had downgraded much of the class 1 and class 2 land in Block 40 of the Quincy District. At the urging of the Extension Service and the College, it was considering a reclassification of problem soils in Block 78. It also made temporary revisions to the water payment classes on the light phase Othello soils wherever they appeared and adopted new standards that would be used in further adjustments in land classifications throughout the project. Finally, with the support of the Bureau, WSC was preparing a revised report and map on soil

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making protests to Congressmen and others. All of this. . . creates criticism and opposition to the project and is detrimental to the whole cause of reclamation."

[105]Elwood Dull, Monthly Narrative—June 1955: Grant County Extension; and 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 77.

[106]Committee on Review of Land Settlement and Development Program to Regional Director, 29 March 1956, Box 1, Coll of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[107]Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1956, 15 September 1956 and 24 October 1956; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1956, 2c; Wenatchee Daily World, 14 January 1957.

classification that would "discuss more completely the problem soils of the Basin with respect to soil fertility deficiencies, alkalinity and salinity tendencies, erosion hazard, and drainage problems."[108] Walter Bergstrom later reported that when this report appeared it became the "bible" for the extension agents.[109]

Many, if not most, farmers remained unsatisfied, but the Bureau was hesitant to respond further. Poor drainage and seeped land had followed closely on the heels of settlement and already were becoming troublesome. The government feared that reclassifying land and increasing allotments for a particular class would appear to sanction additional water use and aggravate the problem. Even before the second full growing season began, a Grant county settler assistance agent noted the appearance of boggy low spots.[110] The problem continued to worsen and spread. By 1953 the water table in many areas of the county had risen from 5 to 200 feet.[111] In 1954 an Adams County Extension agent noted that "parts of this new land are waterlogged even before they are developed for irrigation the first year."[112] By 1954, the Grant County Extension also was reporting on various other negative consequences stemming from excess waste water, including "salt accumulation, . . .

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[106]Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1956; Columbia Basin News, 15 September 1956; Columbia Basin News, 24 October 1956; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1956, 2c; 1956 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 58; Wenatchee Daily World, 14 January 1957; Columbia Basin News, 12 January 1957; Columbia Basin News, 10 April 1957; and (Washington State College), The Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agri. 193, MASC, WSU, 5-7.

[109] Walter Bergstrom to Kathryn Utter, 19 April 2002.

[110]Ben Roche, Monthly Narrative– March 1953: Grant County Extension.

[111]1953 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 3.

[112]Day L. Bassett, Monthly Narrative—August 1954: Adams County Extension. See also Gene Thompson, Monthly Narrative—August 1954: Adams County Extension; and 1954 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, 21.

crusting of the soil surface and . . . a leaching of available nitrates in the sandy soils."[113]

Further, regardless of instances of erroneous or overoptimistic land classification, most government officials, both in the Bureau and in cooperating agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service and the Extension Service, as well as "leaders of East and Quincy Irrigation districts," believed that inefficient, even "indiscriminate," irrigation by the farmer contributed significantly to excess water use.[114] In 1955, there was widespread agreement with the comment made by Cecil McCormac, head of the SCS, that if the farmer did not start managing water, "you'll have a swamp."[115] Typical were the comments of a settler assistance agent in Adams County who reported that "overuse of irrigation water very common among majority of farmers," another in Grant County who said that "over-irrigation is a common practice in the area," and experiment station scientists who gathered evidence showing that the "average irrigation farmer uses considerably more water than needed for almost all crops." Even the settlers themselves sometimes admitted to overuse. Joe Black, a Quincy area farmer, told a Grange tour of the project that "a

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[113]1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 47. For an overview of the problem see William W. Watson, Pre-Construction Drainage Investigations for Columbia Basin Project Lands, paper presented at Pacific Northwest Section, American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 17-19 October 1962, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[114] On 4 Sept 1956, the Columbia Basin News reported that the Directors of the East and Quincy irrigation districts agreed with technicians that indiscriminate use of water complicated drainage problems. They opposed efforts of farmers in the South District to get allotments changed, fearing that if South district farmers paid less for water, others would have to pay more to make up the lost revenue which was required to cover operation and maintenance costs. The Directors of the South District, however, supported the efforts of farmers in their area in get water allotments increased. See also Columbia Basin News, 4 October 1955.

[115]Columbia Basin News, 21 January 1955.

lot of farmers are screaming for an extra foot [of water] and probably running it off in the drain ditch."[116]

The Bureau and the other cooperating agencies all believed education was a primary means for solving settler difficulty with water, that overuse was a consequence of lack of knowledge as much as demanding soil conditions, that the two causes fed on each other and that both could be overcome by increased knowledge and training.[117] Many of the settlers arrived in the basin with very little and often no experience with irrigation. A 1956 study found that only one-third of all settlers, whether buying privately or from the government, had ever irrigated.[118] The Nelsons were typical. Describing the challenges they faced carving out a farm in the basin, Gloria explained that "Lee had been raised on a farm in Kansas, but knew very little of irrigation farming."[119] Since leaving the military after World War II, he had worked as an engineer. Mel Hagood recalled a private land buyer who had never been on a tractor before moving to the project.[120] Further, even those with irrigation experience often found it did not transfer easily to the specific conditions found on the exceptionally light and often severely windblown Basin soils. A settler with twenty-five years experience in irrigation farming complained, when setting up a farm

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[116]1956 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, 11; Elwood Dull, Monthly Narrative—August 1954; Grant County Extension; Columbia Basin News, 4 Sept 1956; Grange News, 22 May 1953; ECBID, Minutes, 5 September 1956, 628. The 1956 Adams County Extension narrative, while reporting that "overuse of irrigation water is very common among the majority of farmers in the irrigated section," faulted the potato growers as a "very definite offender in the overuse of irrigation water as a group." (p. 11)

[117] Roy Deming, Monthly Narrative—April 1952: Grant County Extension; Roy Deming, Monthly Narrative--June 1952: Grant County Extension; Ben Roche, Monthly Narrative—July 1953: Adams County Extension; and Harold T. Rogers, "The Columbia Basin Present and Future," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 33.

[118]Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 7-9.

[119] The Battle of the Basin, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane, p. 5.

[inel] Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999.

in the south Basin, that "'down here,' my experience didn't apply."[121] Finally, most settlers, no matter how extensive their agricultural background, had never developed a farm. They were totally unfamiliar with the particular problems encountered in starting from scratch and in running water on soil never before leveled or irrigated.[122] Even with the best of intentions and at times with significant experience, many settlers found that they required an extended period to develop the understanding and skills needed to apply water efficiently under the project's challenging soil conditions.

Although the need for education was critical, providing it would be a large and complex undertaking. Collecting correct and sufficient information was the first hurdle to overcome. In 1951, the Bureau-College joint committee on settler assistance decided its understanding of irrigation practices and efficiencies appropriate to the soils of the CBP was "woefully lacking."[123] Members instituted additional research, including outlying testing on project farms, to augment the work already done at the Experiment Stations and on the Bureau's development farms. Still, with the many different combinations of soil and topography possible on such a large project and

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[121] Grange News, 27 May 1953. Also, The Washington Farmer reminded potential settlers of the differences between basin soils and those found in most other areas of the arid west. "Not All Soils in Basin Good, " The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 26. Grant County Extension Agent Elwood Dull reported on a farmer, described as an "old 'experienced' irrigator from Idaho. . . apparently. . . not too familiar with good practices for this project," who was using considerable excess water in irrigating. Elwood Dull, Monthly Narrative--June 1955: Grant Count Extension. In discussing wind erosion, representatives from the SCS, Extension Service and the USBR agreed that "farmers needed to learn new practices in the new area." 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension Service, 46.

[122] 1953 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 2. Mel Hagood commented that "many of them had irrigation experience. But very few had ever gone through development of a farm. Most of the ones who had experience in irrigation from Idaho, Oregon and Utah had never had to go through that. They had grown up on developed farms, so it was somewhat different." Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999

[123] Joint Committees on Development of CBP, Subcommittee on Irrigation Research, Minutes of Meeting, February 1951, Box 1, Coll. of Agr.193, MASC, WSU.

with the likelihood conditions would vary significantly even on a single farm, the government and its agents were hard put to understand the "idiosyncrasies" of the soil and the best methods of irrigating and fertilizing.[124] "An area as big as the Columbia Basin," the Bureau admitted in 1952, "does not give up all its secrets in 5 years."[125] Research would be on-going. As new blocks were brought in or as farmers in an established area experienced difficulties with irrigation and fertility, the Extension Service and the Bureau established demonstration plots and conducted tests on farmers' fields. In 1956, for example, they set up two demonstration plots in the troubled Block 15, one for shallow rooted beans and one for deep-rooted established alfalfa.[126]

At the same time, conveying the results of this research to the farmers on the land nearly overwhelmed the combined resources of a number of government agencies, primarily the Extension Service, SCS, and the Bureau. They had to provide this type of guidance while also carrying out the primary mandate of helping settlers level their land, a task that was intimately connected with efficient water use, as much over-irrigation was a direct result of improper layouts.[127] Even when

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[124] Bergstrom, 21 March 2002.

[125] H.P. Singleton, "Pre-Tested Farming," Reclamation Era, April 1952, 82.

[126] Outlying testing occurred regularly every year throughout the project. The plots in Block 15 in 1956 were among a series set up in all three counties. Accounts of outlying testing are available in the annual Extension Service reports at WSU. See specifically, 1954 Annual Report: Grant County Extension; 1956 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension; and 1956 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension.

Reports of the Development farms established by the Bureau of Reclamation are available in Box 2, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. An account of the Winchester Test farm in the Wenatchee Daily World, 18 December 1955, explained that the government deliberately chose the location because it hoped to determine what could be accomplished on its very light sandy soil.

[127] At a meeting of WSC personnel to discuss the agricultural service needs of CBP settlers, questions were raised about a possible overemphasis on engineering to the detriment of production and irrigation problems. H. P. Singleton, of the Experiment Stations "pointed out that the Bureau of Reclamation has held that leveling was the job of first responsibility, and since they were paying for these assistance county agents that was where they wanted these

advised to the contrary, settlers were prone to put in runs that were too long and, thus, required that water be kept flowing for long periods of time to ensure it reached the bottom end.[128] The result was wasteful over-watering, erosion, and leaching of minerals and fertilizers at the top.[129] Convincing the farmers of the need for proper field layout and leveling often proved difficult, as many were hesitant to use short runs. Mel Hagood reported in 1954 that:

> Much of the over-irrigating is due to improper irrigation layouts. Too long runs is probably the most serious failing, one many are likely to fall into because it saves labor in many cases. It is not uncommon to find runs one-half mile in length with water left running in a furrow for 24 to 48 hours.[130]

Although in this report Hagood linked poor water use with poor field layout, improper water application could abrogate the benefits of even the best field layout, and the government attempted to disseminate general information on proper irrigation techniques as widely as possible. Hagood started a monthly newsletter for farmers called Water Works that gave hints on wise use of water. Extension and SCS agents regularly conducted demonstrations on irrigation practices and techniques.[131] But, the variety and complexity of conditions found on the CBP

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men to focus their attention. See B. R. Bertramson, Minutes of Meeting Covering Question "Agricultural Service Needs in the Columbia Basin," 30 July 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. See Chapter Six for detailed discussion of designing and leveling fields and irrigation systems.

[128] Speaking of the design of runs and field layout, Mel Hagood commented that "sometimes it was unreasonable—what the farmer would want. We would really try to get him to do something different. But it was his land, he made the decisions..." Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999.

Also, operators of multiple units often wanted help leveling each unit. A tabulation of assistance from Fall 1951 through Fall 1952 showed that one operator got assistance developing eight units. Supplemental Extension Report: Grant County, 1952, pp. 14-36. See also Bergstrom interview, 22 March 2002.

[129] Othello Soil Conservation District, Program and Work Plan, n.d., uncatalogued records, District Office, Othello. Further, as this work plan indicated, even with such over-irrigation, under irrigation at the lower end of a long run might result.

[130] Hagood, "Stairsteps," The Washington Farmer, 7 October 1954, 4.

[131] Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999; and 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension that describes four demonstrations held in the month of June alone (p. 46).

required micro-research and micro-management. Proper irrigation and fertilization had to be geared to specific soil conditions, and agents quite often had to conduct tests on the fields of a particular farmer before they could determine optimum water and fertilizer needs and then demonstrate how best to apply both.[132]

The time necessary to properly help one settler quickly added up when multiplied by the large number of new arrivals, overwhelming the agents trying to help.[133] Agent Walter Bergstrom reflected years later that it "took forever to educate settlers. Soils were so different."[134] The problems were on-going. In June 1952 Agent Roy Deming reported spending "several afternoons" helping settlers who were having difficulty irrigating; in June 1955, Agent Elwood Dull reported that he made forty contacts with farmers to provide help on some phase of soil and water

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[132] Fertilizer as well as water needs could vary dramatically. Soil samples on four units on the Royal Slope showed "startling needs and variations in phosphorous and potash on two." Walter Bergstrom, Monthly Narrative–September 1956: Grant County Extension.

[133] Early in 1952 the government anticipated 900 farmers would arrive. At the end of the year Grant County Extension assistance program reported that in that county over 300 new farmers developed approximately 400 new farms and that the settler assistant agents responded to a total of 643 inquiries on all phases of soil and water and provided field assistance to 302 farmers. In June of 1952 the Settler Assistance program had only six trained agents, including Hagood, to help farmers throughout the entire project. More were being hired, but they would require six months training. 1952 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 28-29; Mel Hagood, "Training New Agents," Reclamation Era, April 1952, 88-89; and Northwest Farm News, 5 June 1952. In July of 1952 technicians from the Soil Conservation Service office in Ephrata (Grant County) helped lay out some 300 new irrigation systems and the district supervisors from Moses Lake, Quincy and Ephrata worked with over 180 new settler-irrigators during the first half of the year. Conservation District News, July 1952, 6-7. The demand for assistance did not let up over the next few years. In February 1953, a new Settler Assistant agent reported that he "moved into the Moses Lake office at a time when the two men previously working out of that office were swamped with work requests." Ben Roche, Monthly Narrative—February 1953: Grant County Extension. In 1955 the Franklin County Extension Service reported that "the Settler Assistance program in this county has been under pressure from new farmers in the area for their help. The work load has been heavy all year for assistance in engineering work for irrigation layout and consulting assistance." 1955 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, p. 29. In 1956 the Franklin County extension reported that an "influx of new farm families has increased the work of Extension agents. Individual contacts are very important, but time prevents making as many as there should have been." 1956 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 2.

[134] Bergstrom interview, 22 March 2002.

problems.[135] The demand strained not just the resources of the settler assistance program but those of all government agencies combined. In 1954 state Extension Agent E. J. Kreitzinger argued that even working together, the Bureau, Extension, WSC, and SCS were not able to provide the advice and help on sound irrigation practices needed by project settlers.[136] Reaching all who needed help was impossible. Reflecting on their ignorance and the mistakes made when first trying to set up an irrigation system on their land, Gloria Nelson lamented that "if only we'd known what individuals there were to contact, we could have saved ourselves many a headache."[137]

Despite all the effort put into it, education proved not to be the hoped-for miracle cure. All units required leveling and field layout appropriate to their topography and soil conditions. On the problem sandy soils of the project, in particular, however, the recommended course of action also included time-consuming and meticulous application of water and long-term reclamation of the soil. First, to minimize water use and prevent leaching of nutrients, the agents advised the settler to adopt an irrigation schedule requiring short and frequent applications. To follow such a schedule a farm family would have to increase significantly the amount

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[135]Roy Deming, Monthly Narrative--June 1952: Grant County Extension; and Elwood Dull, Monthly Narrative--June 1955: Grant County Extension.

[136] Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999; Northwest Farm News, 5 June 1952; "Basin Settlers Amply Advised," The Washington Farmer, 5 June 1952, 11; and Report of Meeting of State Level Committee on Development of Columbia Basin Project Lands, 20 October 1954, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. At the same meeting where Mr. Kreitzinger made his comment, Paul McGrew of the SCS said his agency would not be able to pick up the slack if Congress cut Bureau funding for the settler assistance program. The previous year BR personnel available to participate in the settler assistance program had been reduced throwing the entire burden upon WSC and SCS. USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1953, 29, 36.

[137]The Battle of the Basin, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane, p. 5.

of time and labor devoted to irrigating.[138] In some soil and topographic conditions, further, even the most careful surface irrigation would not eliminate excess water use. The only answer was a sprinkler system. Second, the agents recommended that settlers with marginal units limit cash crops and plant soil building cover crops on, at an absolute minimum, two-thirds of their land.[139] Such farms, in the words of a WSC report, needed "soil reclamation right along with unit development."[140] The intent was to get organic matter and humus into the soil as rapidly as possible to increase fertility as well as water holding capacity and to hold down soil erosion, from both wind and water. Farmers on the poorer land were encouraged to incorporate pastures and livestock as a major component of their long-term farm plan, even if such an approach meant decreased income and upfront expenses they could not afford.[141]

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[138]Hagood Interview, 28 December 1999. "We usually recommended applying larger amounts of water for short times instead of small amount for long time."

The sandier the soil the larger the head of water, the faster the velocity. Water moving at a rapid speed would not all soak into sandy soil at the top of the run; some moisture, therefore, would make it to the end. In no situation could streams be so large as to cause erosion. Hagood, "Stairsteps," The Washington Farmer, 7 October 1954, 4.

[139] During a discussion of the CBP at a meeting of the state soil conservation committee, "Cecil McCormac.. . said that the main thing in all cases was the establishment of a good soil building cover crop. Warren Starr added that the establishment of a good crop rotation to get organic matter and fertility into the soil as rapidly as possible was also necessary." Washington State Soil Conservation Committee, Minutes of Meeting, 16 July 1954, Box 14, Soil Conservation Districts Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. Though soil building crops were recommended across the board, a better unit did not require as much land be devoted to them. The Othello Soil Conservation District indicated that "the percentage of the time the land will have to be in soil building crops will be determined by the land capability." Othello Soil Conservation District, Program and Work Plan, (internal dating, 1954), uncatalogued records, SCD office, Othello; 1953 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 2; 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 2, 14, 17; and Washington Conservation District News, July 1952, 7. An article in Wenatchee Daily World, 18 December 1955 describes operation of former Winchester Demonstration Farm, which was planted entirely in alfalfa because of extremely light soils and supported a dairy operation.

[140](Washington State College), The Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 10.

[141] The Extension reports, for instance, contain numerous discussions of the need for settlers to incorporate livestock and pastures in their farm plans. See for instance, the 1953 and the

Many settlers were reluctant to accept such advice, and many agents ascribed this reluctance to a belief that it was cheaper to let the water run than to invest family or hired labor in order to irrigate efficiently.[142] In 1954, the annual Adams County Extension narrative concluded that:

> Over-irrigation is prevalent on most of the new farms. Possibly this can in part be attributed to: unfamiliarity with a new irrigation system and farmers unfamiliar with irrigation itself, but a larger amount of the overuse of irrigation water can be directly attributed to poor water management such as – too long of runs, irrigating too often, run-off at end of rows, running water in rows too long to mention[:] a few of the abuses that occur when farmers use a philosophy founded and applied by farmers in our northwest "Water is Cheaper than Labor." This philosophy, no matter how wrong, certainly exists among a number of our farmers. [143]

Agents also felt that many new farmers balked at following guidance on crop rotation and soil building, believing they would make large sums of money quickly by concentrating on row crops. Farmers were apt, however, to accept recommendations on fertilizer use, even when costly, hoping this expenditure would enable them to plant cash crops such as beans that would provide an immediate financial return.[144]

To counter these ideas, agents set out to prove to the new settlers that the long term benefits of using water efficiently and instituting crop rotations and building up the soil immediately far outweighed the short term hardship.[145] Farmers knew

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1954 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, section on Livestock Production; 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, pp. 2 and 17; and 1956 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 22. Typical was the Franklin County report which said that "because of our light textured soil in the area Extension has encouraged this [pastures and alfalfa], fully realizing that problems will come up in relation to marketing crops such as these."

[142]A Grant county agent explained that the "farmer feels that it is cheaper for him to set his water and let it run rather than hire extra labor in cutting down his sets." 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, p.47. The BR also believed the farmer hoped to substitute water for labor, and that this belief contributed to the dispute between farmers and the BR over proper allotments. Ed Neal, a BR engineer told the Columbia Basin Commission that " the farmer wants more water to save labor and the bureau claims that too much water will ruin the land." Columbia Basin News, 3 March 1953.

[143] 1954 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, 20.

[144]1953 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 38.

[145] Bergstrom interview, 22 March 2002.

that the more water they used the more it cost. The agents hoped to convince them that using more water conferred few benefits; that it could not, for instance, compensate for soil deficiencies, and that "reasonable amounts of water applied to a crop would give yields as high as when twice or three times the amount of water was applied." [146]Agents wanted also to convince farmers that water actually could cause problems; that "saturated soils" slowed plant growth; that excess water "leached their fertilizer and that was costly;" and that, in general, "too much water and too much nitrogen may do more harm than good."[147] Further, although acknowledging the need of many new farmers to raise "high producing cash crops the first few years," agents hoped to convince them that proper rotations could "provide adequate incomes during the first years, but at the same time build organic matter and soil fertility."[148] Agents reported "headway" in convincing farmers to increase efficiency in water use, but progress was slow.

In some instances, lack of ability explained the failure of the farmer to "carry out the recommendations," but more often agents ascribed it to a lack of desire: "sometimes farmers do not listen."[149] In 1955 a Franklin county agent commented

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[146] Meeting of Joint Committee on Settler Assistance, 19 and 20 December 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 4.

[147] 1955 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, 17; Hagood interview, 28 December 1999; and Hagood, "Stairsteps," The Washington Farmer, 7 October 1954, 4.

[148] 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 28. See also 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 2; 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 1-2: 1956 Annual Narrative: Franklin County Extension, 21-22 and Hagood interview, 28 December 1999.

[149] Regional Director from District Manager, 29 October 1952, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; and Minutes of Settler Assistance Committee Meeting, 22 April 1954. Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

A few, particularly large, growers had no interest in changing their ways. In 1956 government officials condemned large scale, corporate farming for the "absence of conservation practices on the land." In 1955 Grant county agents named three particular offenders--Western Cold Storage, Davis and Baxter, and Skone and Conor— who "don't worry about the amount of water used or the cost." Decades later, speaking of large growers, Walter Bergstrom recalled that agents "couldn't tell them anything." Potato growers were

that "we can give them [settlers] the best information available but we cannot make their decisions for them."[150] After more than two years on the job and after much knowledge had been made available on the proper amount of water for soils and how to apply it and how to prepare the soil for it, Mel Hagood lamented that "unfortunately, there is a huge gap between what the technicians and scientists are aware of and what farmers have accepted as being right or practical."[151]

Though many farmers were slow to accept and understand the rightness and practicality of the advice, possibly even more were deterred by the problem of its practicability for them. Education could rectify lapses in understanding and experience, but although accurate knowledge was necessary to enable farmers to properly irrigate and cultivate their land, it was not sufficient. Equally important, and necessary, were time and money. Education could not provide them, and many farmers lacked them.

The approach to irrigation recommended by government agents—laying out fields with numerous runs that were short in length and applying water frequently and relatively briefly--would require many more hours of work, day after day throughout the growing season, than would a less water efficient approach. To follow this advice, the farm family had only two options—spend money to hire outside help or take time away from other pressing tasks and devote it instead to irrigating. Many poorly financed settlers, however, had no money to pay outside workers, and already

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considered particular offenders; an Adams County agent in 1956 criticized them as "still a very definite offender in the overuse of irrigation water." Orland Tonnemaker, Monthly Narrative—April 1956: Grant County Extension. See also 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 76-77; Bergstrom, 22 March 2002; and 1956 Annual Narrative: Adams County Extension, 11.

[150]D.C. Purnell, 1955 Annual Narrative; Franklin County Extension, 8.

[151] Hagood, "Stairsteps," The Washington Farmer, 7 October 1954, 4.

were substituting family labor as far as possible for needed capital.[152] The other alternative—sprinklers—was also labor intensive, particularly before side-wheel systems became available and reliable. In addition, they required both an up-front expenditure of $100 to $125 an acre, an amount out of reach of many settlers, and on-going operating payments for power.[153]

Soil reclamation, too, was time-consuming and a drain on limited finances. To protect and build up the soil, a farmer had to commit years to planting clover, alfalfa or small grains, often foregoing, on that land and during that time, the potentially more lucrative economic returns of high-yield cash crops. And expenses still remained substantial.[154] A typical regimen was that recommended in 1956 to the farmers in Block 78 after they had complained about poor production:

> . . . all soils be tested, potash applied to cut areas. Phosphates be applied in the amounts of 100 to 50 pounds per acres, that only small grains and alfalfa be planted, all irrigations be light and frequent and that 10 pounds of nitrogen be applied on new alfalfa seedlings.[155]

For many settlers following such advice would did not seem feasible, no matter how desirable. "Everyone," Gloria Nelson wrote her parents, "is so poor, they don't want

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[152] In May 1952, The Washington Farmer reported that "the cost of hiring labor simply was out of reach" for settlers, partly because per capita earnings in the Pasco or south basin area, which included Hanford, were 30 percent higher than the national average. Robert S. Sincock, ". . . And Then We Were Broke," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 39. Also, the short runs agents recommended farmers lay out for irrigation efficiency simultaneously increased the time needed to operate machinery on a field. Brough, et.al, CBP Land Productivity, 1956, 21.

[153] USDA, Farmers Home Administration, Analysis of Farm Ownership and Farm Housing Loans, Columbia Basin Project, period ending 1 February 1953, attachment, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. In this report the average borrowed to level land and establish a surface irrigation system was $45 per acre. On some land, leveling costs could run as high as $100 an acre, but since sprinklers did not eliminate the need for all land leveling, even in such cases, the cost of sprinklers would be higher. 1952 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 28 mentions that leveling costs run up to $100 an acre.

[154] In 1952, Experiment Station personnel tested the soil on land "where there seemed to be "trouble getting crops of alfalfa and clover established." and reported instances of low nitrogen content. 1952 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 29.

[155] 1956 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 58.

to plant any cover crops, but brother they'd better or in a few years, they won't have any land left to plant."[156]

From 1952 through 1956 a farm family seeking to buy a government-owned unit needed a net worth of only $4500 to qualify for a land drawing, and could claim $500 for a passenger car and $500 for household goods toward meeting that amount.[157] Although many settlers possessed significantly greater resources, from 1952 to 1954, almost 20 percent qualified with a net worth of less than $6,000 and an additional 29.8 percent had less than $9,000.[158] WSC sociologist Murray Straus and economist Barnard Parrish found at the end of 1954 that 14 percent of the settlers had total resources of less than $5000 at the time of settlement.[159] In 1955, William Burgess of the Farmers Home Administration reported that a survey of 65 loan applicants showed that "19 had less than $3,000 in working assets, 20 had less than $5,000 but more than $3,000, and 16 had less than $7,500 but more than $5,000." He defined working assets as "cash, useable farm equipment, or livestock."[160] Further, many families had spent much of their money before arriving on the land. A committee reviewing the settler selection program in 1955 concluded that a farmer with only $4500 in resources would have little left after "he had made his down payment on his farm, paid in advance for his first development year's irrigation water, and paid the cost of moving his family and household goods to the

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[156] Letter of 19 September 1954, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.
[157] Report of Meeting to Discuss Qualifications of Applicants for Federally Owned Farms, Columbia Basin Project, 3 March 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.
[158] Net Worth of Purchasers under Public Announcements 1952 – 1954, mimeographed; and Average Net Worth of Purchasers, 4 November 1954, both in uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.
[159] Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 21. Five percent had less than $2,500.
[160] Report of Meeting to Discuss Qualifications of Applicants for Federally Owned Farms, Columbia Basin Project, 3 March 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. FmHA did not consider household goods nor passenger cars in its net worth estimates.

project."[161] Reflecting on the dire plight of many of her neighbors, Gloria Nelson wrote:

> Some had very little cash but since furniture could be counted as $500 and the same for a car they didn't have to scrape up but $3,500 and if you had farm equipment of some value that made up the difference in required convertible cash. So some were practically pennyless (sic) when they arrived.[162]

Farmers in the early years also soon found they could not count on farm income to compensate for a shortfall in assets.[163] Many came "into the Basin with a very minimum amount of cash and credit in which to develop a farm and maintain a family subsistence until some cash income was realised (sic) from the farming operations," but soon discovered that they had "unrealistically high" expectations of earnings during early years.[164] Almost half the respondents in the WSC study complained that they "earned less than they anticipated on the basis of their pre-settlement planning."[165] For their miscalculations, they faulted "come on" publicity. They blamed individuals, civic groups, government agencies and the agricultural press. Gloria Nelson wrote home that the chamber of commerce told "tall tales" and in the talks by private and public officials alike at the farm unit drawing "it all sounded very rosy."[166]

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[161] Report of Findings of Committee Appointed to Consider Qualifications of Applicants for Federally Owned Farms, Columbia Basin Project, 15 April 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.
[162] The Battle of the Basin, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane, p. 2
[163] Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 24-25 and 39.
[164] 1952 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 30; and Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 39.
[165] Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, p. 39. Further, veterans purchasing a farm unit after July 25, 1951 no longer qualified for stipends from the G.I. education bill to supplement their farm income. Oregonian, 4 April 1952; Wenatchee Daily World, 21 August 1952; and Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes, 4 September 1953, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. See chapter 6 previous.
[20]Letter of 20 May 1955 and The Heart of the Basin (p. 2), Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane. A copy of Wenatchee Daily World, undated (December 1955), in Toll Scrapbook mentions that "some farmers complained that FHA painted a rosy picture in explaining their program."

In 1955, however, FmHA calculated that more than three years passed before most farm operations brought in a positive net income: "during the first year of development all settlers lost money, during the second year most of them lost money; and during the third year they just about broke even."[167] Straus and Parrish, in their study of farmers, over 60 percent of whom had been on the project two or more years, found that at the end of 1954 one-third had an annual net cash income of $2,000 or less, including median off-farm wages of $420. Thirteen percent had a total net cash income of zero or less. In such situations, outside employment could be the only route to avoid early failure. Lee Nelson, a graduate engineer, had quickly found reasonably well-paying outside work, and Gloria Nelson wrote home that "Lee's salary coming in every two weeks is a life-saver." Yet for many, a job off the farm, for either husband or wife, was not an option or did not bring in sufficient income to support the family. In such cases, the outcome could be dire. As Gloria Nelson reported, "we learn that several families who have been reported to us are nearly to starve for lack of cash."[168]

In an article in The Columbia Basin News, 4 May 1954, settlers complained about a particular article that painted a too "rosy" picture of area and acted as "come on" for GI's. Typical of such "rosy" pictures were the remarks of a Chamber of Commerce speaker who told a meeting of prospective settlers and chamber members that the newly irrigated area of Franklin county and the entire CBP were "The Garden of Eden of the whole United States." Columbia Basin News, 22 September 1953. Government agencies themselves recognized the existence of and problem caused by overly positive publicity but blamed those outside of government. A WSC paper mentions the "continual divergent pressure between the optimistic promotional groups and the realistic planning groups." [Washington State College], The Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, 7. In 1955, Grant County Extension pointed to the prosperity of farmers during the war and immediate post war years as a source of this misconception: "many of our farmers who first arrived had the feeling that they would probably make large sums of money in a short period, due to the publicity that the agricultural industry has had in the past decade." 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 2

[167] Report of Meeting to Discuss Qualifications of Applicants for Federally Owned Farms Columbia Basin Project, 3 March 1955, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[168] Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 24-25; and Letter of 28 October 1954, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane. Out of 206 farmers in the study, only 21 had been on the

While the resources and income of many if not most settlers remained low, expenses grew. A WSC study found that from 1953 through 1955 new farmers invested on average $21,373 in developing a single unit farm, including land purchase and preparation and construction of a residence, farm buildings, water system, and fencing. The authors, all agricultural economists, cautioned that even with this investment the settlers would need additional money as "it is not likely that many of them had fully developed their units."[169] In January 1953, for instance, FmHA concluded that on average initial development costs would total $30,000.[170] Further, the initial investment figures did not include the cost of machinery, livestock and operating capital needed for such necessities as seeds, water, fertilizer, fuel. The WSC investigators concluded that by 1956, the cumulative capital required to complete farm development totaled $75,358.[171]

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project more than three years. The Tri-City Herald, 23 October 1955, reported that preliminary findings from the study listed "the average farm income in the basin last year at $4,100 but show half the farmers made less than $2,300." Jobs were limited, and in high demand, in the sparsely populated area. In many families, the wife was the one to work off the farm. Jean Hughes, who with her husband, began farming on the project in 1962, credited her job as school librarian for "bringing in the bacon." Letter to Dear Mildred, August 1956, in papers loaned to author by Jean Hughes.

[169] Franklin, et al, Economic Progress and Problems, 1959, 19-20. The investment also came out to an average of $286 per acre cropped Also see Chapter six previous.

[170] Minutes: Farmers Home Administration—Bureau of Reclamation-Columbia Basin Commission Conference, 26 January 1953, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and Columbia Basin Commission, Biennial Report, 1 October 1950–30 September 1952, 13. The Columbia Basin News, 18 August 1954, reported that a group of bankers, government finance agencies and WSC agricultural economists agreed that it cost "from $25,000 to $35,000 to develop a unit." The Northwest reported that one farmer in early 1954 had invested $35,000 to develop his farmstead. This figure included leveling, ditching a one-fifth share in a well, and a house, machine shed and shop, but did not include operating expenses. "Settlers Wants To trade Beets for Bricks, The Northwest, February 1954, 4. An agriculture journal, WASHCOEGG, reported another farmer, who was building his house himself in his spare time had spent $3600 for land and $28,000 plus profits from farming for development, buildings and crop financing, but had to date completed only the basement of the house. "The Columbia Basin: Rich New Agricultural Empire," WASHCOEGG, May 1954, 11.

[171] Franklin, et al, Economic Progress and Problems, 1959, 19-20.

Settlers caught in this kind of financial bind would seek to minimize expenses and maximize income. They would hesitate long and hard before following advice that would result in either additional costs or decreased income. When one attendee at a 1954 meeting on soil conservation questioned why, contrary to all advice, farmers planted two-thirds rotation or cash crops and only one-third soil building crops, another answered "one word – money."[172] Gloria Nelson would have agreed. Writing to her family in May 1954, she lamented that "the Reclamation etc. tell you all these things should be done but it takes money to operate like they would like to see you do."[173] Defenders of the farmers argued, moreover, that this focus on money came not because the farmers were greedy or incompetent. Rather, the impetus was survival. In January 1955, writing of neighbors living in such desperate conditions that "even their clothing is molding," Gloria Nelson told her parents that "people just can't live for every (sic) without income."[174] In December 1955, when Block 15 farmers were complaining of poor crops and high water requirements on their sandy soils, the local newspaper, the Columbia Basin News, wrote:

> Accept the proposition that the Basin farmer is underfinanced and a good many confusing things become clear.
> Why, for example, should a farmer plant spuds and beans on land he's been told won't grow spuds and beans and against advice of the experts. . .
> The fact that Basin farmers had such advice and went ahead and planted spuds and beans has been taken by many as evidence that farmers are a greedy group of plunderers who don't happen to be very bright.
> But spuds and beans are cash crops and the need of the Basin farmer is cash. Cash to pay his water charges. Cash to pay his power bills. Cash for seed and fertilizer, farm equipment, and, like the crapshooter says, new shoes for baby.
> The Basin farmer is no more—and no less—greedy than the run of man but he is realistic—he has to be to survive.

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[172] Washington State Soil Conservation Committee, Minutes of Meeting, 16 July 1954, Box 14, SCS Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[173] Letter of 5 May 1954, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.
[174] Letter, 25 January 1955, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.

He knows that his land probably belongs in forage crops and that his business should be livestock.
But he knows, too, that he must have cash to survive. . . .
So the Block 15 farmer plants cash crops. . . .
He knows he made a mistake but he will challenge you to show him how he could have done differently.[175]

For such underfinanced settlers, if they—and the project– were to survive, the alternative to capital or income was credit.[176] But unfortunately, this alternative often proved equally out of reach, particularly for those on the poorer land. Participants in the Straus and Parrish study identified inadequate capital and credit as the leading difficulty in adjusting to farm life on the project.[177] During the project's early years, commercial banks made few loans. According to a WSC study, banks, insurance companies and other government agencies such as the Land Bank and the Production Credit Association routinely rejected two kinds of problem cases: units that required "greater expenditure and a longer period time" to develop because of "soils that have a tendency to blow, irregular topography, rockiness, etc., (primarily, those lands in the Class 3 category)"; and settlers that did "not have sufficient capital resources to both develop a farm unit and to supply the necessary living funds" until such time as the farm could supply these financial resources.[178]

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[175] Columbia Basin News, 21 December 1955.

[176] At its quarterly meeting in March 1953, the Grange took the position that "credit is as essential in the basin as is soil and water. If more financing is not made available the development of the Columbia Basin will be severely crippled." Wenatchee Daily World, 10 April 1953. See also Columbia Basin News, 21 September 1953.

[177] Straus and Parrish, Columbia Basin Settler, 1956, 36

[178](Washington State College), The Columbia Basin Project. n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agr.193, MASC, WSU, 15.

1952 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 30; Wenatchee Daily World, 30 April 1952; Nat W. Washington to Grant County State Bank, 28 November 1952, Box 38, Nat Washington Records, WaA&RM, Ellensburg; and Nat W. Washington to First National Bank, and attachments, 8 April 1953, Box 38, Nat Washington Records, WaA&RM, Ellensburg.

Also, as the manager of the Columbia Basin Branch of Seattle-First National Bank explained to the chairman of the Grant County Pomona Grange, "national banks deal largely in deposit money repayable on demand. Congress has wisely seen fit to restrict our loans on

Thus, for settlers without significant assets of their own or who wished to farm on the marginal lands of the project, and even for many who did not face such problems, their sole source of development and operating funds, with the possible exception of private loans, was the Farmers Home Administration.[179] This agency, however, proved not to be the savior of last resort project proponents and those who needed financial help had hoped and expected it to be.

First, it lacked the funds. In January 1952 the national office of the USDA indicated that the Farmers Home Administration expected "to deal with about 40 percent of the families settling" in the CBP.[180] But by March, FmHA officials expressed themselves "somewhat surprised" at the large number of "good settler prospects" who needed financing.[181] At the same time additional funding to meet this growing demand was uncertain. The Washington Farmer speculated that "in present circumstances, Congress may not be in a mood to be very generous" in providing FmHA "funds for settler financing," adding that "there is a very serious question about how much more tax money the nation can put in the Basin." [182] This potential disparity quickly became a reality. In the spring of 1953, FmHA estimated

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real estate to a ten-year maturity." F. E. Hardin to Nat W. Washington, 22 December 1952, Box 38, Nat Washington Records, WaA&RM, Ellensburg.

[179]For examples of the coverage of this situation provided by the press, see Wenatchee Daily World, 30 April 1952 and "Basin Credit to Be Tight," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 24-25. According to Washington State College, strict selectivity by other institutions, placed the "greater problem cases on the Farmers' Home Administration. (Washington State College), The Columbia Basin Project. n.d., Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[180] Hon. Walt Horan from A. H. Moseman, 15 January 1952, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU.

[181] Wenatchee Daily World, 18 March 1952.

[182] Harold T. Rogers, "Financing a Basin Farm," The Washington Farmer, 3 July 1952, 4.

In February Senator Magnuson noted no increase in FmHA's budgeted funds for the upcoming fiscal year even though 87,000 acres, divided into 800 farms "will be placed under water this year in the Columbia Basin." Wenatchee Daily World, 18 March 1952. Editorial reprinted letter from Senator Magnuson to Dillard Lasseter, Farmers Home Administration.

that "75 percent of the settlers needed FHA financing."[183] During this same time, the agency experienced "a slowing down" rather than a "speeding up" of its program nationwide, as the Eisenhower administration froze FmHA personnel and announced plans to slash its funding.[184] By September the agency in the basin was "swamped" and underfinanced. Its appropriation for the fiscal year was only $900,000, but it had already received "hundreds" of applications for loans, each of which would "run from about $15,000 to $18,000."[185] It was also clear that the national office of FmHA had no intention of re-allocating resources to meet this demand and that the project occupied no special place of prominence among its areas of responsibility. On his first visit to the area in the fall of 1953, R. B. McLeaish, a large scale Texas irrigator whom President Eisenhower had chosen to head FmHA nationally, reminded locals who tried to impress on him the need for more financial assistance for the CBP, that "the problem might look big here but there were similar problems all over the

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[183] Wenatchee Daily World, 10 April 1953; and clipping in Toll scrapbook, dated 20 March 1953, paper unidentified.

[184] A hiring freeze prohibited FmHA from even replacing five "field men" in the state. The Grange News of 20 March 1953 mentioned that the federal government had put a "freeze" on FmHA replacements of field men, clipping in Toll scrapbook. The Wenatchee Daily World reported on 10 April 1953 that the Secretary of Agriculture had announced plans to slash the appropriation of the Farmers Home Administration. The comment on slowing down appeared in an editorial in The Othello Outlook, 30 October 1953.

In September 1953, former Secretary of Agriculture, Charles Brannan, admittedly no friend of the Republican administration, in an interview with the Wenatchee Daily World worried even that FmHA "may be dissolved." He drew this conclusion from the appointment of R. B. McLeaish of Texas to replace Dillard Lassiter as agency head. Brannan argued that McLeaish was "such an ultra conservative in outlook that the appointment could only mean that the program is marked for liquidation. Wenatchee Daily World, 17 November 1953, clipping in Toll scrapbook. In an interesting aside, in 1956 McLeaish resigned under pressure amid allegations over both his personal behavior and his handling of the agency, including a million-dollar contract. Columbia Basin News, 21 June 1956.

[185] Columbia Basin News, 21 September 1953.

country." His suggestion for solving the project's credit woes was that locals push for "more private financing."[186]

The economy drive of the Eisenhower administration, however, even coupled with growing demand, explains only in part the problems many settlers on the CBP encountered in their efforts to secure and retain financing from FmHA. Factors of equal, if not more, significance were the decision of Congress to place lending authority on the project with a USDA agency, FmHA, and not the Department of Interior; FmHA's approach to interpreting and carrying out its authority; and the tendency of the USBR and the USDA agency to work at cross purposes when dealing with settlers, squeezing many settlers in what critics called a "bureaucratic pincer."[187]

The result was a credit system that did not match the expectations of its potential clients, particularly those with limited resources who hoped to farm on the project's poorer and marginal land. Although the agency was intended to help farmers unable to obtain financing elsewhere, FmHA officials periodically emphasized it was "not a subsidy group." Rather, it had a fiduciary responsibility to make "safe" loans.[188] Guided by this interpretation of its mission, the agency adopted and adhered to an application policy that was stringent in evaluating both

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[186] Newsclipping, pencil date October 1953, paper unidentified, Toll scrapbook. See also Wenatchee Daily World, 17 November 1953, in Toll scrapbook in which Charles Brannan describes McLeaish as owning 10,000 acres in Texas. .An article in the Columbia Basin News, 21 September 1953 pointed out that one reason FmHA was so far behind meeting the demand for loans in the CBP was that key employees, including appraisers and the engineer, "have many other assignments in addition to those in the Basin."

[187] This problem plagued the two agencies on all projects. See Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes, 12 March 1954, attachment entitled Progress Report dated 9 March 1954, Box 25, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia. The Columbia Basin News, 2 March 1956, referred to the disagreements between the Bureau and FmHA as a bureaucratic pincer.

[188] Minutes: Farmers Home Administration-Bureau of Reclamation—Columbia Basin Commission Conference, 26 January 1953, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

the resources of the settler and the productive capacity of the farm unit. This approach often put FmHA at odds with decisions made by the Bureau in screening possible settlers and determining the potential productivity of farm units. The agency also adopted an equally rigorous approach to compliance and repayment.

When a settler applied for long-term farm development credit, FmHA appraisers first "made a careful analysis" of the unit's "soil resources" and working with the applicant, planned a crop and livestock program appropriate to the unit's "soil capabilities," which included both the amount and the quality of the land. The agency believed that a farmer should be able to follow a diversified crop program that would enable the build up and subsequent protection of the soil and return a satisfactory level of income. The goal was to protect both the farm family and the project lands. Although the agency appeared to have no hard and fast rule on the minimum amount of acreage such diversification would require, officials periodically commented that a settler could follow such a program on few units of less than eighty acres. Soil, however, was central to determining an "economical farm unit."[189] Thus, this minimum applied only to the best quality land. The poorer the soil the larger a unit must be. In some instances, the soil was so poor that FmHA believed that only with the largest units could a farmer work the land without damage and realize a satisfactory living. The soil on such a unit, for instance, might be too shallow, sandy, coarse or rocky ever to be built up to support anything other than pasture or livestock. In other cases, though development and soil building might be

[189] Columbia Basin News, 21 September 1953. Article discusses conflict between FmHA and USBR over what constitutes an "economical farm unit."

expensive and consume a number of years, eventually a satisfactory living could be realized on a unit of moderate size.[190]

Appraisers then estimated the costs of developing the unit and implementing the farming program, requiring that the operation be placed "on a sound basis at the earliest date possible after the loan is made," an approach referred to as "full farm development."[191] As Grant County FmHA supervisor Wister Burgess explained to critics in 1954:

> The program has no intention of going in where it can only do a portion of the job. . . . The FHA objective is to loan the Basin settler enough money to make a complete and successful operation of his farm unit.[192]

The figure included not only land leveling and the installation of an irrigation system, but also a well to provide domestic and livestock water and all necessary structures, both barns and other farm outbuildings and housing that the agency insisted meet its minimum standards. It would accept neither the trucking of water nor basement homes. Finally, the appraisers calculated the farm's long-term earning capacity. Using this data, they deducted expenses from earning capacity to determine how much the borrower could repay annually and used this figure to determine the maximum amount the agency would lend the applicant.[193]

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[190]Dillard Lasseter to Honorable Walt Horan, 3 October 1952, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU; Meeting to Explore Ways and Means to Improve Assistance to Settlers on the Columbia Basin Project, 26 July 1954, Box 1, Coll. of Agr.193, MASC, WSU, 4 and 7; Project Development Supervisor to Project Manager, 29 July 1954, Box 330, USBR Records Center, Denver; and Report of Meeting of State Level Committee on Development of Columbia Basin Project Lands, 20 October 1954, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

[191]Dillard Lasseter to Honorable Walt Horan, 3 October 1952, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU; and Joint Boards of Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts, Minutes, 18 February 1955, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[192]Newsclipping, dated 23 May 1954, unidentified paper, Toll scrapbook.

[193] "Basin Credit to Be Right," Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 24-25; Grant County Journal, 31 July 1952; and Wenatchee Daily World, August 1952, Toll scrapbook.

After the appraisal was completed, the FmHA county committee would approve the loan only if the maximum allowable credit together with the settler's own resources matched or exceeded the estimated development, operating and living costs. A farmer on a marginal unit would be at a disadvantage. First, development costs, which could include sprinklers or extensive leveling for numerous short runs and a year-round water system for livestock, and operating expenses that could include large amounts of fertilizer to compensate for poor soil, often were quite high. Second, poor soil returned less income per acre than would better quality land. A settler on such a farm, therefore, would face the need to invest a large sum of money to cover development, possibly even the cost to build up a livestock herd, but the farm would not provide the income to repay a large loan. A family or individual with limited resources could well be unable to make up the difference between allowable credit and projected expenses. Thus, while either limited resources or marginal soil, especially on a small unit, could jeopardize the chance of receiving a loan, the combination made credit near impossible, even if the applicant were an experienced and capable farmer.[194] Explaining a rejection, the director of FmHA wrote Senator Magnuson that:

> After considerable effort to find a sound basis to develop this unit into an adequate family-type farm, it was determined that the unit was not suitable for this purpose. The unit was a very sandy soil of low productivity and there was a 110 foot elevation difference between the northeast and the southwest corners of the tract. The undesirable soil type and topographical features. . .were the basis for the decision that a sound loan could not be made. . . . The State Director's report indicates that

[194]FmHA loan policies discussed in Honorable Walt Horan from Dillard Lasseter, 3 October 1952, Box 157, Horan 192, MASC, WSU; Wenatchee Daily World, 19 March 1953, Toll Scrapbook; and The Washington Farmer, 15 October 1953. Also see Straus, Matching Farms and Families, 1958, 16-17 for discussion of quality and size of farm and cost of development. Straus concludes, "in general, the budget studies show that the poorer lands have both *lower gross* income potentials and also require *higher costs* to produce this lower gross. Consequently, larger investments are required to farm the poorer lands, and returns to the operator are much lower than is the case with better quality land." (p. 17)

the Robisons are capable people and would be eligible for a farm ownership loan provided they had a suitable farm. [195]

If a farmer did receive financing, the agency insisted on close supervision. Throughout the life of a full farm loan, agency personnel oversaw the progress of the settler to ensure the farm family followed through on its approved development and production program. Each year's operations were analyzed and compared with the farm plan. Budgets were required, money was disbursed only as needed and for authorized purposes, and expenditures were monitored. The same process was followed for short term operating loans, too, whether or not the farmer had development credit from FmHA. Second, the agency maintained a strict repayment policy, stating that it was "without authority to make any loan that cannot be repaid in an orderly manner." Nearly all farmers, including those with full farm development loans, required short- and medium-term operating and production loans for the purchase of seeds, fertilizer, livestock and water and for living expenses. FmHA expected that settlers would lose money for at least their first two years on the land, longer if they were attempting to farm on the poorer soil unable to support cash crops. Yet, though development loans, "if necessary," could include a two-year deferral of repayment, the agency in all cases required repayment of operating and production credit to begin on the first anniversary of the loan.[196]

Farmers believed that this modus operandi made the agency "unequipped" to provide financing to meet the "special needs" of project farmers, particularly those

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[195] H.C. Smith to Warren G. Magnuson, 19 July 1956, Box 112, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.
[196] Columbia Basin Herald, 11 March 1955 reprints statement from the state committee of the Farmers Home Administration describing loans and setting forth the agency's policies and criteria for making loans. In an interview with the Columbia Basin Herald, 3 March 1955, Grant County FmHA supervisor, Ray Toll described in detail how supervised credit worked.

requiring development loans.[197] They had a range of complaints that covered both agency policies and the attitudes of local officials.

First, settlers believed that while they were deciding whether or not to purchase a farm, they were misled about the availability of credit. Reflecting on their introduction to the project during the selection process, Gloria Nelson wrote;

> the talk which in future years was the most disalusioning (sic) of all was that of the FHa (sic) Credit man. He led everyone to believ (sic) that although it might take as long as 5 or even 6 months to get credit to develope (sic) the farm it wasn't hard to do and they had just lots of money they would like to loan on a 40 year repayment basis. . . This mith (sic) was rather lengthy in getting stomped on but it was probably the most flavored bit of information we received for instead of the short time they said would be required to get a loan it ran into at least a year and then at times after all the plans and red tape had been taken care of . . . they'd tell you then that your farm wasn't large enough or wasn't good enough land to warrant so much money to develop it. Essentially they were right but it took so long for the farmer to be informed of it.[198]

Settlers also believed that during this introductory period government agencies worked at cross purposes, catching settlers in a "bureaucratic pincer." Many veterans with limited resources were deemed qualified to select and purchase lower quality land from the Bureau of Reclamation, but subsequently were unable to secure financing from the Farmers Home Administration. Gloria Nelson wrote home of the difficulties of a farmer "up on the hill" with a deficient unit:

> Lee says the fellow behind us . . . who is having such a financial time of it told him the other day that the FHA says his farm isn't feasable (sic) now and they won't loan him anything on it . The Bureau knew this when they sold him the farm. . . . He had a beautiful view but that's all. So many of the units are that way. . .view but that's all.[199]

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[197] Columbia Basin Herald, 20 February 1956. The term special needs used in this article appeared repeatedly in news accounts of the time, which discussed credit problems on the project. Project farmers, of course, also often had credit problems and demands common to farmers anywhere; for instance, emergency loans to cover them through weather disasters or drastic price declines or increases in loan limits to cover increases in costs.

[198] The Battle of the Basin, Nelson acc. 205, SHS, Spokane, p. 2.

[199] Letter, 5 May 1955, SHS, Spokane.

Other farmers, who qualified for credit, had their own complaints. Many were unwilling to assume the debt load that resulted from FmHA 's insistence on a full farm development loan or the stringent supervisory oversight that FmHA required. Bureau reports reiterated the common settler complaint that FmHA's policies on "land size, farm experience, and cash assets" discouraged many farmers needing credit from even submitting an application.[200] The Nelsons, for instance, decided to forego the $30,000 in credit for which FmHA approved them, explaining that:

> In return for lending this money to us over a 40 year period, we had to sign a contract stating that we'd live on the farm for 40 years or until the loan was paid off, we wouldn't rent more land or rent out our land to anyone without their permission. Lee would not take an outside job without their permission and other demands so preposterous we wondered how anyone could sign it.[201]

Finally, farmers who received credit, both long-term development and short-term operating loans, increasingly were unable to meet their obligations. They feared losing their land. Again, farmers on marginal land, which took longer to return a profit, were more at risk.[202]

Critics proposed a range of remedies to meet the special needs of project farmers. First, the Bureau and FmHA must work together to provide more realistic upfront information on the availability of credit. Second, FmHA specifically must abandon the "full farm development" policy for long-term loans.[203] Lowering the standards, particularly for housing and outbuildings on units that had high land

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[200] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Annual Report: Settler Selection Program, 1956, Columbia Basin Project, Ephrata, Washington, 9-10, uncatalogued storage, SCBID, Pasco; Report of Farm Unit Sales and Progress of Settlement, 21 March 1956, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Farm Units—Columbia Basin Project: Standards, Size and Comparisons, 31 December 1956, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. FmHA officials argued that "bad publicity" unduly scared these potential applicants. Columbia Basin News, 22 October 1956.

[201] The Heart of the Basin, Nelson acc. 205, SHS, Spokane, p. 3.

[202] Spokesman-Review, 26 October 1956.

[203] Columbia Basin News, 15 February 1955.

development costs, would enable farmers to apply for a smaller loan. Applicants, thus, would be able to qualify with fewer resources and avoid the debt load and high interest payments that accompanied full development loans. Third, the agency had to be more flexible in setting and enforcing loan terms. Heaviest criticism fell on the requirement that repayment of short and intermediate loans begin at the end of the first year of operation. Critics, both among farmers and agencies such as Extension and SCS, argued this approach was not suitable for developing areas such as the CBP. Giving a borrower time for the farm to begin generating a net income before payments were required would improve the chance of eventual success. It would also reduce pressure to raise cash crops that damaged the soil. Deferred and graduated repayment would facilitate settler attempts to adopt a "legume and grass program" more suited, in particular, to marginal units that required soil building or could support only pasture and livestock.[204] Lastly, when the above remedies were inadequate, the government should provide "borderline subsidy" loans to settlers who purchased poor quality units that were particularly difficult and expensive to develop and would generate only a low income per acre.[205] The South District, led by director Loen Bailie, was the chief proponent of this proposal, believing that FmHA was particularly "reluctant" to make loans on its "lighter and 'blowier'" soils. The existing approach of this USDA agency, Bailie and others argued, was detrimental

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[204] Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Hearings: Farmers' Home Administration Operating and Housing Loans, 84th Cong., 2d sess., 8, 17, and 24 May 1956, 16.

[205] Spokane Chronicle, 5 March 1955. See also Wenatchee Daily World, (hand dated December 1955),Toll scrapbook, in which Wister Burgess of Wenatchee FmHA office reported as saying "the problem is between a subsidized loan program with some outright grants or loans based on a repayment plan and quoted as saying, "if subsidized loans are wanted then the people should try to get legislation to make them possible."

both to the veterans and to the orderly development of the project itself.[206] If the government sold such units to applicants who met the minimum financial and experience requirements, it had a responsibility to ensure access to credit. By not doing so, it snared them in the "bureaucratic pincer" caused by the mismatched policies of the Bureau and FmHA.

Starting soon after settlement, farmers, both those unable to secure loans and those experiencing difficulty repaying, aired their credit grievances and sought rectification, but with little success. Some, such as Carl Gauksheim, complained directly to and sought help from the irrigation districts about their specific problems. Others wrote to their senators and representatives. Senator Magnuson reported in April 1956 that he had received "approximately 175" letters about credit problems.[207] Lee Theroff, a farmer and South District director, wrote directly to President Eisenhower.[208] Organized protests began as early as the fall of 1953 and peaked in 1955 and 1956.[209] Early in 1955 at a joint meeting of the irrigation boards, directors

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[206] Spokesman-Review, 14 April 1956. See also Minutes: Farmers Home Administration-Bureau of Reclamation-Columbia Basin Commission Conference, 26 January 1953, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; Joint Boards of Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts, Minutes of Meeting, 18 February 1955, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; Lee Theroff to Senator Warren Magnuson, 24 January 1956, Box 112, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW; Spokesman-Review, 16 March 1956; Spokesman-Review, 14 April 1956; Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Hearings: Farmers' Home Administration Operating and Housing Loans, 8, 17, and 24 May 1956, 1-7 and 15-17; Spokesman-Review, 26 October 1956; and Wenatchee Daily World, 26 October 1956. For a specific farmer complaint on need for repayment to be adjusted for new development areas, see as example, Wayne L. Mitchell to Senator Jackson, 19 January 1952, Box 78, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

[207] Warren G. Magnuson to Evan W. Hall, 20 April 1956, Box 108, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW. The files of Senators Jackson and Magnuson and Representatives Catherine May, Walt Horan and Don Magnuson contain hundreds of letters from individuals complaining about credit.

[208] Lee Theroff to Senator Warren Magnuson, 24 January 1956, Box 112, WGM 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.

[209] Othello Outlook, 30 October 1953 (article and editorial). Also in the fall of 1953 complaints emerged about changes in FmHA policy that made it difficult for groups of farmers to receive loans for community water systems. Columbia Basin News, 20 October 1953.

from the south and east districts, responding to complaints from their constituents, attacked both FmHA's "full development" policy and the inability of the Bureau and FmHA to agree "on what constitutes an economical farm unit."[210] In December, in response to settler protests, the irrigation districts established a special committee charged with investigating credit problems. In January 1956, a group of farmers, mostly from Blocks 15 and 16 of the South District, presented a "blistering criticism" of FmHA to the committee.[211] In mid-February, "some 20 veterans," constituting only "a small proportion of those with grievances," met with Senator Jackson and a representative from the Washington, D.C. office of FmHA. At the end of the month hundreds of "disturbed and angry" farmers came together in mass meetings in the east and northwest project to "battle for better financing."[212] By autumn, settler discontent had grown sufficiently large and vociferous to draw the federal administrator of FmHA to a four-hour public meeting in the basin at which "more than 60" farmers "slammed" into him and other FmHA officials.[213]

These efforts proved to have little, if any, of the effect on FmHA policy desired by the critics, being met instead, as a local paper editorialized, "with a hard heart and a good deal of talk about the necessity for fiduciary responsibility."[214] In the spring of 1956 Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson opposed legislation introduced by Senators Magnuson and Jackson to ease the project's credit problems by increasing allowable indebtedness and extending the amortization period for

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[210] Joint Boards of Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts, Minutes of Meeting, 18 February 1955, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[211] Undated (December 1955), untitled newsclipping, Toll Scrapbook.
[212] Columbia Basin News, 20 February 1956; Columbia Basin Herald, 20 February 1956; and Wenatchee Daily World, 29 February 1956.
[213] Columbia Basin News, 26 October 1956. See also, Spokesman Review, 26 October 1956; Wenatchee Daily World, 26 October 1956; and Spokane Daily Chronicle, 26 October 1956.
[214] Columbia Basin News, 7 May 1956.

repayment on intermediate term production loans. Such a change was intended to help the settlers who were "pioneering virgin land," trying to bring previously unfarmed units into production and develop the land for its appropriate use.[215] At the same time, the administration and the department introduced a bill in its stead that was, in the words of a South District Director, "strictly an old growers' bill" which "would do little for the Basin."[216]

While opposing legislation that would have authorized it to change its policies in order to adopt an approach more conducive to the circumstances faced by project settlers, the Agency also made policy and program decisions under its existing authority that heightened rather than mitigated pressure on project settlers. For instance, in 1954 and 1955, the national office of FmHA made a series of decisions making it more difficult for settlers to finance group wells, while the state and local office refused to grant development loans to settlers who did not have an approved water source.[217] Of even greater significance, however, FmHA decided in the spring

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[215] Columbia Basin News, 22 May 1956; and Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Hearings: Farmers' Home Administration Operating and Housing Loans, 84th Cong., 2d sess., 8, 17, and 24 May 1956, 1-26 (quotation p. 2).

[216] Columbia Basin News, 6 June 1956.

[217] In 1954, FmHA ceased providing engineering assistance for well design and in 1954 determined it would not approve group loans if individual monthly payments exceeded $12. The state office then refused to release funds for development loans to settlers who had planned to join a system that was refused for this reason. U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and State College of Washington, Memorandum of Understanding, 1 May 1951, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; Columbia Basin News, 22 February 1955; Tri-City Herald, 4 March 1955; Columbia Basin Herald, 22 March 1955; 1954 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 40-41; 1955 Annual Narrative: Grant County Extension, 74; Summary of the Domestic Water Program on the Columbia Basin, 1 November 1951 to 30 June 1957, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. The report concludes that 25 percent of the farm units were in well associations as of the end of June 1957. See also Tri-City Herald, 11 March 1955; Columbia Basin News, 26 April 1956; Conference on Land and Settlement Matters, 7-9 July 1954, Box 330, USBR Record Center, Denver; Carl W. Petersen, Monthly Narrative—November 1953: Grant County Extension; N.a., Report of Meeting to Study the Problems of Domestic Water Service in the Irrigation Blocks in the Western Portion of the Royal Slope, 14 March 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. Six months later, the area director of FmHA suggested that "community

of 1955 to tighten its previously more informal policy on the financial resources required to qualify for a loan. Too many loans were going "sour," the agency announced, and "it was a disservice to a settler to loan him money when it looks like he won't be able to make a go of it."[218] The amount an applicant would need would vary, "depending on the farm unit," but subsequently the agency would require that "minimum cash assets available on arrival on the Project should be from $5,000 to $7,000 for the better lands, and $10,000 to $15,000 for lands having high development or acquisition costs."[219] Both changes made more rigid the discrepancy between Bureau and FmHA policies and fell most heavily on settlers trying to farm on poor lands costing more to develop.

Thus, the guiding principles of FmHA and the needs of many project farmers often were at odds. The resulting distress probably never reached the level envisioned by the worst fears of the agency's critics, such as Judge Burt Horrigan, an early promoter of the project who told the Columbia Basin Commission in March 1957 that in the South district, "because of inadequate finances and other settlement problems. . . 1/3 of the present farmers of the area were in a bad, in fact, tragic, financial situation."[220] Still, statistics lend credence to the belief that farmers suffered both because they could not obtain the credit they needed and because they could not meet the obligations of the credit they did secure and that those on marginal land were most susceptible.

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leaders should take a greater interest in helping the farmer solve his domestic water problems." Columbia Basin News, 17 October 1956.

[218] Tri-City Herald, 10 March 1955.

[219] Columbia Basin Herald, 11 March 1955; Columbia Basin News, 2 March 1956 and 20 December 1955. The Bureau of Reclamation continued to require that a veteran have $4,500 to qualify to buy a unit much of which could have been spent by the time a loan application was submitted after arrival on the project.

At the end of 1959 the Bureau reported that of the 850 farms it had sold, FmHA had made farm ownership loans on only 20 percent.[221] Although some settlers, such as the Nelsons, decided against accepting or applying for FmHA credit, many others were rejected. The Bureau reported that by the end of 1956 a minimum of 95 veterans who submitted loan applications to the agency were formally rejected. An additional twenty-three applications were cancelled. The report also showed that the credit situation had tightened since the project officially opened; a graph depicted a steep increase from 1953 to 1955 in the number of "formal loan rejections." A breakdown of the reasons given for the rejections showed that 63 percent were due either to deficiencies in the unit, the high cost of developing the unit, or lack of adequate cash or working assets.[222]

Further, though delinquencies do not necessarily lead to foreclosures, their numbers indicated that settlers able to secure loans were experiencing problems. By March of 1955 FmHA had begun to serve notice on farmers, such as those in Block 40 plagued by rocks and shallow soil, that they were "so far in debt and have opportunities so poor" that they would receive no further credit and should liquidate. By January 1, 1956, FmHA reported that 45 percent of its loans in the northern part

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[220] Columbia Basin Commission, Minutes of Meeting, 22 March 1957, Box 26, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[221] Annual Report, Settler Selection Program, 21 December 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata, p. 5. Figures are available only for units purchased from the government.

[222] Report of Farm Unit Sales and Progress of Settlement, Columbia Basin Project, From 1949 to March 21, 1956, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Committee on Review of Land Settlement and Development to Regional Director, 29 March 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. Although more loans would be made in the future, data for the south district, home to much of the project's sandiest soil, show that over a two year period in the mid 1950's, FmHA made farm ownership loans on only ten of the 250 units the government had sold to veterans.

of the Project and 63 percent in the south, where sandy soil was particularly widespread, were delinquent.[223]

Figures available on what the Bureau variously referred to as "turnover" in farm ownership and "unsuccessful farm development" give some insight not only into the extent of farm failure but also its roots in credit and land quality difficulties. By the end of 1956, the government had sold 725 farms, and the Bureau in its annual account of the settler selection program reported that 148 of the purchasers had divested or wished to divest themselves of ownership and twenty had been unsuccessful in developing a farm.[224] By 1959 the government had sold a total of 850 units, and the Bureau prepared a less comprehensive report which revealed that the number of units specifically categorized as unsuccessfully developed had risen to fifty-seven. The 1959 report included a revealing tabulation of the probable causes of "unsuccessful development" that listed inadequate units, lack of financing, or a combination of the two as the reasons for unsuccessful development in 46 of the 57 cases, or over 80 percent.[225] In only five of these cases did the report mention financing as the reason for unsuccessful development without also listing problems with the unit. Further, in only ten of the 41 instances in which problems with the unit

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[223] Wenatchee Daily World, 6 March 1955; and Columbia Basin News, 20 December 1955. Early freezes and wet weather during harvest damaged and sometimes destroyed crops. The consequences of poor yields were aggravated by falling prices. The price for cash crops on which many settlers relied for income plummeted dramatically; beans were down from 8 to 10 cents a pound to 5 to 6 cents and potatoes from $4.17 a thousand to $3.57

[224] The report indicated the owners of 115 of these units, approximately 16 percent, had given up ownership. Eighty-nine had assigned their contracts to other veterans, five had exchanged their units for another, and twenty-one had sold their unit after title had been conveyed. In addition, twenty-one sales contracts had been cancelled, fourteen by mutual consent and seven by the government because of failure purchaser to fulfill contract obligations. Finally, eleven purchasers of government units were "awaiting a more desirable opportunity" to exchange their unit and twenty, although still retaining ownership, had ceased farm operations due to unsuccessful development.

were listed was size the only reason given. The other thirty cases characterized a unit as limited, often specifically mentioning sand, soil, and rock problems. Typical were reasons such as "small sandy unit," "rocky soil," "limited unit," "sandy unit," or "soil problem."[226]

Statistics do not explain, but they can enlighten. These figures underscore that the interaction between the quality of available land and decisions made by landowners, politicians, and bureaucrats had unintended consequences for a significant number of settlers as they tried to transform poorly understood desert land into productive farms. These consequences originated in the decision to include land of marginal quality within the project. This situation was aggravated by the subsequent decision of a variety of property owners either to withdraw good land from the project altogether or, in response to a relatively lenient restriction passed by Congress, withhold it from sale. Settlers then confronted larger than expected costs, skills, and timeframes to transform the too often marginal land into productive farms. The assistance available to them as they took on the task, however, was limited by Congressional action, particularly the decision to lodge loan authority with the

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[225] In one of these cases, poor management was the officially listed reason, but additional comments explained that the owners could not stop wind erosion problem.

[226] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Annual Report: Settler Selection Program, 1956, Columbia Basin Project, Ephrata, Washington, uncatalogued storage, SCBID, Pasco; and U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Annual Report: Settler Selection Program, 1959, Columbia Basin Project, Ephrata, Washington, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. In 1959 there had been a total of 143 assignments of unit ownership but no statistics comparable to those in the 1956 report were provided on resales, cancellations and exchanges. Statistics on financing of unsuccessfully developed units reveal that 21 settlers secured some type of FmHA loan (often operating funds only), 17 had no financing, and 13 relied on private assistance. Banks and the PCA provided some financing to three settlers each. Public and private lenders foreclosed on or repossessed 14 units. Twelve owners sold before losing the farm, and eleven owners exchanged their farm for a better unit elsewhere in the project. In the remainder of the cases the final outcome was not yet known.

Farmers Home Administration, a USDA agency for which the health of the CBP was only one goal among many and not its prime mission. Further, it would soon be apparent that the consequences of this interaction of land quality and human decisions did not end with the effect on the individual settler. They also would extend beyond personal experiences to the course and execution of the overall settlement process.

Chapter 8

Consequences

The veteran's program in the Basin "is unfair to the basin itself and it is unfair to the taxpayer."

Earl Gregory, Chairman
Quincy District Director
February 1956[1]

The Columbia Basin Project was unique in that much of the farmland had to be built up with land-improving crops and that much of the land was suitable only for livestock or hay. . . . Under these circumstances it is impossible for a farmer to make a living on farm units which average 80 acres in size.

Earl Terwilleger
Farmer and East District Director
November 1956[2]

Unlike many projects, soil and bedrock conditions on Columbia Basin are such that drainage problems frequently become severe very soon after initial conveyance and delivery of water.

Board of Consultants
appointed to study repayment problems
July 1961[3]

In the spring of 1956, the editor of the Columbia Basin News, a paper published in Pasco and serving the southern reaches of the project, wrote a retrospective series of articles on "The Columbia Basin Story." To the editor, Patrick Owens, the project had faced two struggles. The original fight to secure approval, fought by "Ephrata pumpers and Basin drylanders" over the opposition of "hostile congressmen," culminated in the appropriation of the money needed to get water on the land. With the arrival of that water and the settlers who would use it, proponents

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[1] Columbia Basin Herald, 29 February 1956.
[2] Reported in Columbia Basin News, 29 November 1956.
[3] Board of Consultants, Report to the Secretary of the Interior Re Repayment Problems Columbia Basin Project, 28 July 1961, Paul Pitzer Records, WaA&RM, Ellensburg, p. 25. (Hereafter, Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961.)

were faced with a "new and perhaps more difficult struggle . . . a fight to prove the project."[4] When Owens wrote his articles, eight years had passed since the first settlers arrived on Block One, and five years had passed since water from behind Grand Coulee dam had first reached the land. The second struggle was not going well.

The early, test years of the project had been promising. Yet soon after the official opening, the mixing of national economic and political trends with conditions specific to the CBP, which caused intractable problems for individual settlers, also snagged the overall project in a financial and development bind.

In 1953, Howard Stinson, regional Bureau counsel, told irrigation district officials that a postwar upsurge in construction costs, both labor and materials, had wreaked havoc with earlier budgetary projections. He warned that to complete the million-acre project expenses directly assignable to irrigation would be 50 percent greater than the original 1945 figure.[5] Further, with much of the first half covered with various combinations of highly permeable topsoil and impenetrable subsoil, water became a problem more rapidly and widely than expected. Land was waterlogged even before it had been irrigated. [6] Yet Stinson's revised construction estimate did not include any drainage work. Over the following years, the Bureau calculated that an additional $40 million would be required to construct the subsurface drainage systems needed to prevent the loss of thousands of acres of project land to

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[4] Columbia Basin News, 10 April 1956.
[5] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 6; and Columbia Basin News, 13 January 1953 and 2 December 1953.
[6] Day Bassett, Monthly Narrative – August 1954: Adams County Extension.

waterlogging.[7] As expenses rose, the Bureau forecast that under the expenditure limits imposed in 1945, it would be unable to complete development of even the first half. Congress and the administration, however, balked at increased appropriations.[8]

At the same time, the number of farms developed lagged behind expectations set in place at the end of the war. The Bureau established and maintained an ambitious schedule building canals and related infrastructure. But many locals were disappointed in the rate at which units with water available were brought into production and family farms established. Although applicants for government land continued to far exceed the opportunities, at the end of 1956, 148 farms that had been offered for sale were left unpurchased, in most cases for over a year. Others were resold, exchanged, abandoned, or otherwise unsuccessfully developed.[9] South District officials complained that a number of units in their jurisdiction had been returned to the government "three, four and five times."[10] In the South District, ninety government units were either unsold or returned.[11] In most cases poor land quality was the cause of stalled sales and unsuccessful development of government units. At the same time, private owners, particularly absentees, held onto their land until the five-year "antispeculation period has run out," and brought units into operation

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[7] J. N. Christopher and K. Campbell, Drain Construction on the Columbia Basin Project, paper presented at ASCE Specialty Conference on Irrigation and Drainage, Boise, Idaho, 23-25 July 1980, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. (hereafter Christopher and Campbell, Drain Construction.)

[8] Columbia Basin News, 24 October 1956.

[9] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Annual Report: Settler Selection Program, 1956, uncatalogued storage, SCBID, Pasco, p. 1. (Hereafter, USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: year.) See also chapter 7.

[10] Columbia Basin News, 2 March 1957.

[11] Columbia Basin News, 27 July 1956. One director estimated that 18 percent of the land purchased from the government had been returned. Columbia Basin News, 2 March 1957.

more slowly than boosters had hoped.[12] As a result, a significant number of farm units eligible for water were not being farmed. At the end of 1956 the Bureau reported that water, available for approximately 4,000 farm units, had been delivered to 2,856 and that only 42.8 percent of the land eligible for water in the South District, 60.1 percent in the Quincy District, and 63.2 percent in the East District was cropped.[13] District revenue and the local economy suffered.[14]

Finally, the ability of many farmers to meet their contractual repayment obligations lagged behind planning estimates. Settlers on other than the best land found their farms more expensive and time-consuming to develop and less productive when worked than expected. Confronted with both marginal land and the agricultural cost-price squeeze, many were barely able to keep their farms.[15] The consequences, moreover, extended beyond the personal. In such circumstances, the struggling settlers and others concerned with project viability perceived the ability of many farmers to pay project costs as stagnant if not falling. Two agricultural economists from Washington State College concluded that an operator on the poorer lands would find it difficult to make an income equal to the going wages of the area "even if he pays no water or drainage charges."[16] In addition, the few but growing number of farmers whose land became waterlogged and "unsuitable for production"

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[12] In June 1956 a SCBID director placed the blame for nonirrigated units on "owners who had the land before the project was established and were holding on until the five years anti speculation period has run out." Columbia Basin News, 27 June 1956.
[13] USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1956, 2d; and Columbia Basin News, 27 June 1956 and 2 March 1957.
[14] Columbia Basin News, 27 July 1956, 6 October 1956, and 2 March 1957.
[15] See chapter 7 previous. In 1959, the directors of the East district commenting on the 1958 crop reports pointed out that "parity had now reached 80%, the lowest figure since 1938." ECBID, Minutes, 4 March 1959, 815.
[16] B. D. Parrish and E.R. Franklin, Confidential Appraisal of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Review Draft: Report of Payment Capacity Study, Columbia Basin Project, January 1960,

were excused from paying their contractual water assessment on the wet acreage. The income of the government fell along with that of the farmer. By early 1957 an eastern and a local newspaper referred to the project as "an ailing utopia."[17]

Motivations likely ran the gamut from altruistic to self-serving, but as locals cast about for a way out of a situation that one old-timer characterized as "a shock to us all," they began to question many of the assumptions and arguments used to authorize and build the project. One of the most sacrosanct had been the deserving veteran. Looking back at this earlier fight, the Columbia Basin News editor Patrick Owens argued that "the notion of turning the project over to veterans as a reward for good and faithful service" was the turning point. Although the war "delayed irrigation . . . it also assured the rapid completion of the Ephrata vision." During the fight for approval, proponents had vanquished opponents with the vision of the project as an opportunity for a grateful nation to reward as many veterans as possible with the chance to build and live on a family farm. When Owens wrote his article over a decade later, arguing that the project was now in the in the midst of " a new and perhaps more difficult struggle. . . to prove" itself, attitudes had changed.[18] Many project proponents no longer saw the original assumptions and arguments about settlement as ammunition in their struggle. Instead, they pointed to the veteran-settler as a significant part of the problem.[19]

Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. They were referring specifically to Ephrata class 3 and Quincy series soils.

[17]This description appeared originally in the Wall Street Journal, 27 March 1957, and was reprinted in the Wenatchee Daily World, 29 March 1957.

[18] Columbia Basin News, 10 April 1956.

[19] In March 1955, deserving veteran Donald Dunn declared bankruptcy and sold the farm-in-a-day. Project apologists laid the blame for his problems at unwise expansion and a "sprawling" farm operations. See, for instance, The Washington Farmer, 1 August 1957, 9.

Adherents of this point of view had two strands to their argument. One emphasized that the veteran was the hapless victim of an unfair and unjust settler selection system that instead of rewarding him with the chance to win a "farm of my own" saddled him with "100 acres of blow sand."[20] As Quincy District Director Earl Gregory argued in a talk to the Grant County Farm Bureau, the government misled veterans as to "how much money they needed. . . how much money was available. . . how much money could be made in the Basin."[21] Change was necessary, another local argued, to save veterans from "the chance to work your wife to death, send your kids to school with no soles in their shoes and go broke financially."[22] The other strand of the argument asserted that change was needed to prevent the unqualified and unprepared veteran from dragging the project down with him. Blinded by the chance to grab the "brass ring," veterans entered the lottery. When their names were chosen, they came to the project to develop and operate a farm even though they were "not prepared to do a job of farming," either "financially" or "otherwise." Too many "go bust."[23] To Gregory, "it is unfair to the basin itself and it is unfair to the taxpayer."[24]

To people who held this point of view, such as Gregory and J. M. McPartland, a FmHA county committee member, the lottery had become a major cause of the financial "emergency" facing the project.[25] Rather than lauding the settler selection program as a way to reward the deserving veteran, some

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[20] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1956.
[21] Columbia Basin Herald, 29 February 1956; and Spokesman-Review, 4 March 1956.
[22] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1956.
[23] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1956.
[24] Columbia Basin Herald, 29 February 1956. Struggling veterans on the project countered that making them the scapegoat was an insult and that the cause of their failure was FmHA's unwillingness to live up to its responsibilities. Spokesman-Review, 12 March 1956.

newspaper headlines asked if it were "the main villain."[26] The veteran, previously held up as a hero in order to garner public and political support for the project, was denigrated as a possible threat to its continued development. To some the answer was to do away with the settler selection program or at a minimum eliminate the veteran preference. South District directors, worried that Block 17 was "to (sic) sandy to be developed," suggested that the government "throw out veterans preference [there] and let a fellow who knows what he's doing come along and put up his money and take his chances."[27] The "more moderate approach" was to increase the financial and experience requirements necessary to qualify for a drawing.[28] Over the next few years, with the support of some veterans' organizations and the opposition of others, the government instituted a series of changes.

The Bureau had planned to hold three drawings in 1956 to sell newly opened government units. Only the first, in March, took place. "Pending approval of marked changes in land sale procedures," the government postponed the other two, though it did repeatedly try to sell a number of what the Columbia Basin News referred to as "rejects."[29] Between 1948 and 1956, the Bureau had made a series of small increases in the financial resources necessary to qualify to buy a government unit, raising the minimum amount of capital required from $3700 to $4500 and eliminating the $500 credit for household goods. After the second and third drawings for 1956 were postponed, however, the government moved from small incremental

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[25] Spokesman-Review, 4 March 1956.
[26] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1956.
[27] Columbia Basin News, 9 September 1957.
[28] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1956.
[29] USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: 1956, uncatalogued storage, SCBID, Pasco; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1956, 2b and 2c; and Columbia Basin News, 6 October 1956.

adjustments to the capital requirements to a significant rethinking of the structure and goals of the program. Two points are clear. First, the marginal quality of much of the land propelled the changes. Second, the effect of the changes was to undermine the original goal of the program to provide as many opportunities as possible to veterans who could meet minimal qualifications.

The first marked changes in the program were announced in the fall of 1956. They involved re-evaluations of both the land and applicant qualifications and were intended, the Bureau explained, to rectify the existing situation in which the agency found itself "offering farms to applicants who in turn can not obtain financing from the Farmers Home Administration." As a first step, the Bureau would group units by quality, based on the cost to level land and prepare it for water and on crop suitability. A unit would be placed in Group A if it were suitable for diversified farming and if the purchase price and land preparation costs totaled $10,000 or less. Units requiring more than $10,000 to purchase and prepare for water would be placed in Group B. To ensure they fell into Group B, $3,500 was added to the combined development and purchase costs of units suitable only for hay and pasture. The government assumed that a farmer would need to develop such a unit slowly with soil building crops and, thus, should be prepared to meet at least one additional year's living expenses without any income from the farm. An applicant wishing to purchase a unit in Group A would be required to possess financial resources of at least $5,500 and have either $3,500 of that in cash or $5,000 in cash equivalents, such as stocks and bonds. To qualify to purchase a unit in Group B, a veteran would need $8,500 in assets, with either $5,000 of that in cash or $7,500 in cash equivalents. Finally, in all cases, a revised earnest money agreement obligated a

purchaser to re-establish proof of required assets when arriving on the project.[30] The VFW announced that it was "'strongly opposed' to stiffened requirements," but the government vowed to put them into effect when the drawings resumed.[31]

The sale of new land, however, did not resume for more than a year. Congress was debating an amendment to the CBP Act affecting acreage limitations, and the Department of Interior was uncertain whether the new law would allow a veteran to purchase more than one unit from the government. In the interim, the Bureau made a concerted effort to dispose of previously rejected units, described as "light textured," having "somewhat rough or rolling topography," and being best suited to "dairying or livestock production." The new standards would not apply to this previously offered and rejected land, but the head of the Land and Settlement Division cautioned potential buyers that:

> While our earlier announcements provided that applicants who have a minimum net worth of $4,500 may qualify for the purchase of these farms, experience has provided that it is extremely difficult for settlers to finance their development without substantially greater assets.[32]

Drawings for land not previously offered for sale eventually resumed in the spring of 1958. The government put the new standards into effect and applied them to the announcements that had been postponed two years earlier. It also, in response to a provision in the amendment to the CBP Act, prohibited a purchaser of a government unit from leasing it out without prior permission.[33] By the end of 1959

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[30]USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: 1956, uncatalogued storage, SCBID, Pasco, quotation p. 7; and Columbia Basin News, 9 November 1956.
[31] Columbia Basin News, 16 November 1956.
[32] Columbia Basin News, 21 June 1957.
[33] USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1958, 36; USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata, p. 2; and Columbia Basin News, 16 January 1957, 27 January 1957, 27 February 1957, 21 June 1957, 3 August 1957, 10 September 1957, 7 November 1957, and 27 December 1957.

the Bureau seemed to believe the new standards for applicants were working as intended--and as critics of the settler assistance program had hoped. In December it reported that "the increased capital requirement, the earnest money agreement procedure, and the leasing provision appear to be bringing us a better qualified settler." Better qualified appeared to equate with better financed. The Bureau concluded too that the earnest money agreement, which required a purchaser to arrive on the project with the required cash assets, had "proved to be a very successful practice." The agreement assured that buyers reached the project with "substantial cash assets" and discouraged applicants "who lacked recent farm experience and whose net worth was low." [34] The Bureau also reported that FmHA granted a "slightly higher" percentage of farm development loans to purchasers of units in the two postponed sales than it had to previous buyers.[35]

Although the new policy did meliorate some problems, it was not a cure-all. Its application, in fact, demonstrated that the role land quality played in shaping project settlement was less amenable to manipulation than was the role of settler qualifications. Significant, and increasing, numbers of units fell within Group B. In the 1959 offering of 31 units in the Quincy district, only eight qualified for Group A. Further, by the spring of 1961, twelve remained unsold and were being offered to

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[34]USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata, pp. 2-4. At a meeting of FmHA and the BR in February 1959 the observation was made that "the new requirements were bringing better settlers to the project and were allowing the Farmers Home Administration to make more loans." The minutes are unclear as to who made the comment. Report of FHA - USBR Conference, Columbia Basin Project, Ephrata, Washington, 25 February 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[35] Specifically, 21 percent.

nonpriority (non-veteran) applicants.[36] Beginning in 1962, each public announcement offering units for sale required all applicants to possess a minimum net worth of $8,500.[37] In 1964, the Bureau estimated that development costs for Block 17, which it had postponed irrigating years earlier because of marginal land quality, would range from $35,000 to $45,000 per unit and cautioned that income during early years would be "relatively low because of the limitations of the area to row cropping." FmHA argued that under these circumstances even $8500 was woefully inadequate and an applicant should have a net worth of not less than $20,000. The Board of Examiners did not recommend the increase. But, it did agree to "fully forewarn applicants of the problems involved in financing the development of these units" and to send out a separate handout, prepared by FmHA, detailing the excessive costs and problems to all families considered for the purchase of a farm unit.[38]

Further, the policy changes put into effect in 1958 were not the last, nor were they necessarily the most significant. The nationwide veterans preference legislation expired in 1959, with little notice or opposition on the project.[39] In April 1961, the

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[36]Settler Selection Program, (internal date 18 May 1961), uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Wenatchee Daily World, 7 June 1959

[37] Seventeen farm units were offered in Public Announcement 35 in the fall of 1962. Applicants were required to possess at least $8,500. Notes on Settler Selection Program in IB 23, (handwritten notation PA 35), uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[38] Head, Settler Selection Section to Project Manager, 11 August 1964 and 28 July 1964, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; and Farmers Home Administration: A few points to be considered when purchasing a farm unit in Block 17, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[39] Settler Selection Program, (internal date 18 May 1961), uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; Information Sheet: First Phase Construction of the Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 21, Nat Washington Records, WDA&RM, Ellensburg. In 1967 a director of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District "expressed concern that veterans are no longer given preference in the acquisition of government owned land." Chief, Irrigation Land Division to Files, 19 January 1967, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. By this time, however, the government had no more settlement units for sale.

government required that at least one year of the farm experience needed to purchase a unit be recent.[40] Then, in 1963, the Department instituted another major structural change to the settler selection program. The year before, Congress had passed legislation to allow an "amendatory repayment contract." The law also repealed provisions of the CBP Act governing the sale of public land and allowed the Secretary of the Interior to sell, outside the constraints of the settler selection program, "farm units which, in the opinion of the Secretary, are not suitable for settlement purposes."[41] Responding to this legislation, the Bureau divided land available through its public drawings into supplemental and settlement farm units. Supplemental units were considered "not adequate to support a family as a single-unit farming operation" because of size, soil quality, topography, or waterlogging. In the sale of supplemental units the government would give first priority to current resident project landowners who lived within two miles of the unit and who needed additional land because of "small holdings, unproductive land, or severe wet land conditions."[42] The intent was that when a supplemental unit was added to an existing marginal unit, a productive, profitable farm able to support a family would result. Poor land quality, thus, was the admitted impetus for the action.

A significant, though unstated, effect was to distance the program even further from its original settlement goals. While the changes instituted in 1958 had made it more difficult for applicants to qualify for a unit, the number of remaining opportunities available to potential settlers was unaffected. By giving existing project

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[40] Settler Selection Program, (internal date 18 May 1961), uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.
[41] U.S. Congress, House, Report 2180 to Accompany H.R. 11164, 87th cong., 2d sess, 13 August 1962, 29.

landowners priority in buying much of the land, however, the changes put into effect in 1963 cut the opportunities left for newcomers. In April 1964, in the first supplemental drawing, the Bureau offered 78 units for sale.[43] In 1966 the government offered nine settlement and 27 supplemental units for sale. In 1967, the Bureau made arrangements to process a backlog of approximately fifty supplemental land sales, but held no settlement land sales. In 1968 the government informed persons who had previously indicated a desire to be "notified of future sales of federally owned settlement units" that there were "no sales. . . scheduled to be held during the next several years." Federally-owned units in new irrigation blocks would be used "to assist owners of seeped lands determined to be infeasible to drain." As a result, the government was "abolishing the mailing list" for land sale announcements.[44] After twenty years, the settler selection program had slowly faded out, diminished as it waned by the marginal quality of much of the land the government had been able to acquire.

The program did bring a core of hundreds of family farmers to the project. But it never reached the scale its adherents had hoped for it.[45] The unwillingness of many property owners to join the project and the decision by so many of those who

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[42]Project Manager to Commissioner, 23 August 1963, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1966 ;and Grant County Journal, 30 April 1964.
[43] Columbia Basin Herald, 24 April 1964 and the Grant County Journal, 30 April 1964.
[44] W. E. Rawlings to Applicant, 8 July 1968, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. Further, sometime after the fall of 1976 when the government was planning a hoped for expansion into the second half, it stated in an information sheet that "it is not anticipated that any federally owned land will be available for settlement purposes." Information Sheet: First Phase Continuation of the Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 21, Nat Washington Records, WDA&RM, Ellensburg.
[45] At the end of 1959, the Bureau reported it had sold 850 units. This figure included undeveloped units, cancellations and exchanges. In 1969 the Bureau reported it had sold an additional 91 units from 1960 through 1966. USBR, Annual Settler Selection Report: 1959; and Memo, covering 1960-1966, PAs 31-37, 18 November 1969, both in uncatalogued

did join not to sell their land to the DOI doomed government settler selection from the beginning to a relatively small size. Then as the Bureau proceeded to sell the land it had been able to acquire, the marginal quality of many of the units further weakened the program's size and effectiveness. Finally, even if Interior were to proceed with construction of the second half of the project, where much of the soil was rich and dryland farmers had already done the difficult pioneering work, the likelihood that sales of settlement units would ever be reinstated was minimal. In 1958 the Bureau had all but dismissed the possibility that the government would buy any land outside the reach of the canals then in place.[46] "We have not heard of many offers to sell," the project manager admitted. Further, even if land were available, purchases would be expensive and would require a "large investment."[47] Nearly twenty years later, after the Bureau began planning for a hoped-for expansion, the government issued an information sheet explaining that the "very small portion" of land it owned in the new area was "committed for disposal under ongoing land adjustment programs, and it is not anticipated that any federally owned land will be available for settlement purposes."[48]

The consequences for project settlement, of the interaction between land quality and the earlier decisions of property owners to withdraw good land and politicians to limit government assistance and credit, are obvious in the changes to

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storage, USBR, Ephrata. By subtracting the 155 supplemental units from the total figure, I estimate 700 families bought farms from the government.

[46] This decision applied both to lands to be covered both by an East High Canal and an extension of the existing East Low canal.

[47] W.W. Johnston, Should We Continue to Buy Settlement Lands in Areas Beyond the 455,000-Acre Program, presentation to Columbia Basin Project Conference, 3-5 September 1958, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[48] Information Sheet: First Phase Continuation of the Columbia Basin Project, n.d., Box 21, Nat Washington Records, WDA&RM, Ellensburg.

the settler selection program. They do not end there, however. Less than one decade after the CBP officially began operations, Congress twice had significantly altered sections of the original legislation designed to set the rules for project settlement off from the general reclamation law. The original purpose of the sections later altered had been to provide affordable farm opportunities for as many people as possible. One change cut the number of opportunities. The effect of the other was to further decrease opportunities and significantly increase cost, limiting the affordability. Again, land quality, enmeshed in the consequences of prior political and private decisions, played a significant role.

In the first instance, in the fall of 1957, Congress amended the CBP Act to allow a husband and wife to own a total of 320 acres of irrigable land. Previously, an individual or family could own only one farm unit, regardless of its acreage. In a few instances, where the land was of very poor quality or the owner had held title continuously since May 1937, the farm units had run as large as 160 acres of irrigable land. In most cases, however, the units were much smaller, though over the years the size had risen. In 1948, on Block 1, the average was 67 acres. By 1957, as it came to better understand and acknowledge the limitations of the land, the Bureau was platting units averaging slightly over 90 acres in size.[49] Also, when it deemed the situation merited action and when property owners were willing, the Bureau revised property lines to enlarge existing units, for instance, consolidating three units into two. From 1952 through November 1956 it processed 84 enlargements that increased acreage an average of 50 percent, from 50.9 to 76.3

[49] Irrigation Operation and Maintenance—Columbia Basin Project, 1 March 1958, Exhibit 6, Box 266, USBR Records Center, Denver.

acres.[50] Each approach, however, had limited usefulness. First, by the mid-1950's much of the land had already been platted. Second, revisions of existing units required that lands be contiguous and depended on the participation of property owners willing to sell their acreage so it could be used to increase the size of neighboring units.[51] Thus, even after the attempts on the part of the Bureau to raise farm unit size, the new law at a minimum doubled and in most cases tripled or quadrupled the amount of project land a family could own.

At the most general level, the change represented the triumph of the advocates of agricultural modernism and capitalist efficiency, including individuals who hoped to profit through expansion, in a clash of values with those who believed in government planning and the social value of family farms. When it declared the CBP an "ailing utopia," the Wall Street Journal argued that the project was a government "dream" turned "nightmare" where planning had "stood still." [52] During hearings on the proposed change, a Block 73 farmer advocating the abolition of all land limitations argued that "it is economically unsound to farm less acres than your abilities and capital and type of operation require for utmost efficiency."[53]

Saying that a value system favoring growth and expansion triumphed over a "philosophy of federal reclamation" favoring maximum social benefit and minimal

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[50] Specifically, the enlargements increased Class 1 equivalent acreage from an average of 50.9 to 76.3 acres. Farm Units—Columbia Basin Project; Standards, Size, and Comparison, 31 December 1956, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. Also Report of FHA – USBR Conference, Columbia Basin Project, Ephrata, Washington, 25 February 1959, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[51] In some cases, enlargements were further complicated because both units to be combined had buildings on them.

[52] Wall Street Journal, 27 March 1957. Reprinted in Wenatchee Daily World, 29 March 1957.

[53] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Report of the Interior Hearing on the Land Limitation Provision of the Columbia Basin Project, 5 January 1957, Quincy, Washington, Box 1, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia, p. 26.

federal subsidies for an individual, however, ultimately explains little about history.[54] To provide a fuller explanation, many discussions, both at the time and later, of why this change occurred focused on outside macroeconomic forces, the cost-price squeeze and the technological revolution, which supported trends toward industrial and mechanized farming that agriculture experienced in the post-war era.[55] The timing of the cost-price squeeze made a difficult task even more daunting for settlers on the CBP. They were forced to deal with the high expenses and limited income associated with developing a farm during the "period of the lowest return to agriculture, in relation to farmers' income from their crops, since 1940."[56] With prices for the crops they produced at record lows, most saw the technological revolution and the increased production it promised as the only way to meet expenses and earn an acceptable income. Newer, more efficient equipment, it was argued, enabled a

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[54]Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Cambridge: The Beklkap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992). The term "philosophy of federal reclamation" in discussing CBP farm size is from: N.a., The Columbia Basin Project, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSC. The Wall Street Journal article of 27 March 1957 referred to pre- World War II government plans that included walking plows and horse harnesses in budgets.

[55] In reply to an inquiry about the demand for an increase in the size of farm units on the project from the Associate Editor of the Portland Oregonian, the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Washington State College suggested in March 1957 that "both the demand for an increase in the size of ownership unit and the economic distress of some farm operators in the Columbia Basin, (sic) have been due to these background economic conditions," specifically mentioning "the impact of changes brought about by science and technology." S. P. Swenson, Dean to Jalmar Johnson, Associate Editor, 27 March 1957, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. See also N.a., The Columbia Basin Project, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

In 1999 the World Commission of Dams pointed to "innovations in farm machinery" and the "constant downward pressure on commodity prices" to explain that "only by increasing the size of their operations, thereby reducing costs, could farmers [on the CBP] hope to maintain or improve their standard of living." World Commission of Dams, Grand Coulee Dam and Columbia Basin Project, Circulation Draft, December 1999, 3.1-6.

[56]Remarks by Director Joe Dwyer, 4 March 1960, Donald Magnuson 293, M&UAD, UW. Also S P. Swenson to Jalmar Johnson, 27 March 1957, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.

farmer to work more land. [57] This equipment also enabled the work to be done profitably. The increase in capacity more than offset the increase in cost. A farmer could take advantage of economies of scale while increasing production.[58] Thus, the argument went, farming of more land would both maximize an individual farmer's production and optimize the return on the investment in costly machinery. The change in the CBP Act in 1957 facilitated this response to the cost-price squeeze by providing legal authority to own more land.

This explanation of why the advocates of raising acreage limits on the CBP triumphed is not wrong and not without significant merit. Yet, it is not complete. By focusing on macroeconomic forces, it understates historical specificity and contingency. It glosses over the environmental, political and socio-economic conditions particular to the project that complicated and compromised the ability of many settlers to cope with the cost-price squeeze facing agriculture. A broader approach that incorporates factors specific to the CBP points up why the project was fertile ground for people arguing for change in acreage limits.[59]

For advocates of enlarging land ownership limits on the CBP, the ultimate goal was a new policy. But a necessary and initial step was to discredit the existing system. It was at this point that local factors, prominent among them soil conditions,

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[57] In a survey conducted by the East District in the summer of 1956, most respondents indicated that with their equipment they could handle 175 to 200 acres. See Columbia Basin News, 2 August 1956. A second survey conducted at approximately the same time of farmers in the Quincy area found that 71 percent felt that two units could be farmed with the same machinery required for one. See James E. Brooks, "Farms in the Basin Aren't Big Enough," The Washington Farmer, 15 November 1956, 4 and 7. (Hereafter Brooks, "Farms."

[58] World Commission of Dams, Grand Coulee Dam and Columbia Basin Project, Circulation Draft, December 1999, 3.1-6.

[59] N.a., The Columbia Basin Project, Box 1, Coll of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU. This report suggests that the problem of farm size on the project involved " technical farm problems, expansion desires of settlers, and the general trends toward industrialized and mechanized

played a particularly significant role. The objective of the acreage limitation provision in the 1943 act, its critics in the mid-1950's argued, was "to provide the maximum settlement opportunities. . . to the greatest number of prospective settlers, with due regard to their ability to make a fair living from the fruits of their toil."[60] If this "fair living" standard could not be met under the existing arrangement, then the law should be changed. Critics of existing acreage limitations repeatedly referred to the quality of much of the project soil as they built a consensus that this standard was not being met and that change was needed. The arguments they made paralleled those put forth by advocates of the need to change other policies, such as those governing water allotments, land classification, credit availability, and settler selection. In all cases, critics asserted a mismatch between the quality of the land and the existing policy. In this fight over acreage limits, advocates of change argued, the social goals of the project were being undermined. Settlers found themselves struggling to survive, and their inability to make a "fair living from the fruits of their toil" lent legitimacy to and propelled the push for increasing allowable acreage. Behind these failures, however, lay the poor quality of the land.

The proponents of change highlighted the difficulties marginal soil posed for many project settlers who were attempting to develop a unit during these trying economic times. Not only were their expenses higher, they lacked flexibility to adapt to the difficult conditions. One way to respond to the need for increased production, as a way of coping with the low returns to agriculture, was to farm existing acreage more intensively, planting high-return crops. Many CBP farmers on marginal land,

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farming," further explaining that technical problems involved "the changing status of our technical knowledge of Columbia Basin soils."

however, were not able to pursue this option. Their soil was too sandy, rocky or shallow to support intensive production of high value row and specialty crops. In an attempt to make it productive, many farmers resorted to the use of extraordinary and expensive amounts of fertilizer. Yet, this was only a short-term option. In the long run, intensive farming would be profitable only after a settler invested years plowing under soil-building vegetation and humus to build up organic matter and fertility and improve soil quality. Furthermore, for many farmers intensive farming would never be possible. Their land was too poor to build up and would never be suited to anything other than pasture or grasses.

The tight credit situation on the project added to the difficulties faced by these settlers, preventing them from securing the time needed to build up the soil and increase its productivity. In spite of repeated calls for change by farmers, the Bureau, and irrigation district officials, FmHA never budged from its position that many of the units of marginal quality land could not support a family. It never ceased asserting that expenses to develop were too high, that income was too low, and that in such cases, subsidies, not economically sound loans, were necessary. It insisted that its existing legislative authorization limited its ability to help, and Congress continued to refuse to authorize the necessary legal and financial assistance. Under the existing system, FmHA repeatedly determined that such land, at best, would qualify for credit only if a farm were significantly larger than platted and therefore capable of producing more income and if the applicant had sufficient resources to live without a net farm income for a number of years. In some instances of poor land, suitable only

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[60] U.S. Senate, Report No. 140, to accompany S. 1482, 12 March 1957, 85th cong., 1st sess., 3.

for livestock and pasture, the agency contended that even 160 acres, the maximum allowed, was insufficient to enable a profitable operation.

The only route to increased income, therefore, that many farmers saw was to work more land. By the mid-1950's those who could afford it did so by leasing one or more units. In 1957, "53.1 per cent of the 1,923 farm operations . . . were wholly or partly on leased land," and the practice had become more extensive on the CBP than on other more established irrigated areas.[61] Further, even if they had not felt forced to secure the maximum and quickest return possible, farmers were loathe to pursue pasture and livestock farming on leased land, regardless of its quality. Because of what a WSC researcher termed the "uncertainty" of their situation, they believed it was "not economically feasible for them to develop stock water systems, fencing, corrals, and other semi-permanent facilities on rented lands."[62] Thus, not unexpectedly, researchers found that renters, who devoted 57 percent of their land to row crops, farmed their land more intensively than did owners, who devoted only 33 percent of acreage to row crops.[63]

Critics of the existing ownership limits thus advanced the specter of a project populated by land-owning settlers and increasing numbers of tenant farmers, both of whom exploited the soil, either to keep from losing their farms or as an adaptation to uncertain tenure. Under the existing acreage and credit restrictions, they argued, the soil could not support the settlers. In an effort to make it do so, rather than building

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[61] Parrish and Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land, 1960, iii; and Minutes: College – Bureau Joint Committee Meeting, 12 - 13 December 1957, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[62] J.B. Wyckoff, Cattle Feeding in the Columbia Basin, Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations Circular 357, April 1959, 1.
[63] Franklin, et al., Economic Progress and Problems, 1959, 29.

up the land, farmers were robbing it of what fertility it did have and damaging it further.

A letter written by Earl Gregory, a farmer and a Quincy irrigation district director, was typical of the approach of those who incorporated these project-specific conditions in arguing for increases in acreage limits. Gregory was the critic of settler selection, who in February 1956 labeled the program "unfair" to the basin and the taxpayer. Two months later, on behalf of the Joint Board of Irrigation Districts, he wrote Senator James Murray of Montana requesting that Congress "cure a defect in the Columbia Basin Project Act of 1943" that limited ownership to one farm unit, the average size of which was "approximately 70 acres." Murray, Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, had told the Columbia Basin News in January that he opposed any increase in acreage limitations.[64] In his letter, Gregory argued that it was "generally impossible for a farm family to make a decent living on one farm unit." He began with a reference to agricultural modernization and efficiency, arguing that on a single unit "a farmer cannot efficiently use the modern mechanized equipment necessary in present day farming." He immediately, however, brought in the question of the quality of project land and the need not only to preserve it from damage but to build it up. On a single unit, he argued, a farmer cannot:

> rotate his crops or adopt approved conservation practices to concerve (sic) his soil or build the land to the required productive capacity farmers wish to attain. With a limit of one unit ownership a farm family is required to raise soil-robbing cash crops instead of following a rotation program calculated to build up his farmstead. . . . The one unit limitation on ownership requires many farmers to become tenant farmers in order to have sufficient acreage. . . .

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[64]Columbia Basin News, 9 January 1956.

He then proceeded to the credit problems project settlers faced, pointing out that "under the one farm unit ownership per family limitation . . . a farmer cannot and has not been able to secure adequate farm financing."[65] The gist of his argument was that the present acreage limitation allowed neither the land nor the settler to prosper, that both in fact were damaged.

Gregory also enclosed a proposed amendment to the act that would allow an individual to receive water for up to 160 acres of irrigable land. The amendment specifically stated that the "total irrigable area permitted to be held by a landowner under this section shall correspond to that which may be held by a landowner" under the general reclamation act.[66] This demand for parity with settlers on other projects was an on-going rallying cry of many proponents of change. The full significance of this reference to the general reclamation act became evident later.

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[65] Memorandum by the Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs on Columbia Basin Project (Washington) Acreage Restrictions and S. 3730, 2 May 1956, 84th Cong, 2d sess., 11. In discussing credit, Gregory cited both FmHA and local banks and the inability of farmers to "secure sufficient financing for his annual operations to say nothing of financing of permanent farm improvements and costs of original development."

Two weeks later, Roy A. Huse, representing the Quincy Irrigation District and the Joint Boards, said in a follow-up testimony before a Senate Hearing by stressing that "first, I think we might mention that in practicing soil conservation and rotating crops in accordance with soil conservation practices, it is necessary to have sufficient land to carry out such practices." He also emphasized credit problems and the specter of large scale and widespread leasing. The Ephrata Chamber of Commerce argued that "the crop returns from the average 80-acre farm are insufficient to justify the investment to carry on a necessary rotation and soil conservation program." A letter placed in the record from the Washington State Soil Conservation Committee stated that its members had "decided that the farm size problem has had a definite effect upon the conservation of soil and water in the basin," adding that "proper classification of land capabilities" was as important as size. Senate Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation , Hearing: Soap Lake Problem, Columbia Basin Project (S.3730) and Acreage Limitations, Columbia Basin Project (S. 3826), 84th Cong., 2d. sess., 7 May 1956., 40, 41, 47 and 48. These arguments are typical of those made by a range of individuals and groups critical of the existing acreage limitation system in the project.

[66] Memorandum by the Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs on Columbia Basin Project (Washington) Acreage Restrictions and S. 3730, 2 May 1956, 84th Cong, 2d sess., 11-13. The specific reference was the section 46 of the Omnibus Adjustment Act of 1926 (amending the Federal reclamation laws) (44 Stat 649: 43 U.S.C. 423e).

For advocates of change, 1956 was a turning point in their fight, specifically in discrediting the existing system. Further, the line of reasoning put forth by Gregory on behalf of the joint boards appeared to have played a significant role. In January, Senator Magnuson replied to a Moses Lake farmer who had written him about increasing acreage limitations that "to date I have not been supplied with sufficient factual information to justify a personal course of action."[67] At the end of April, however, he and Senator Jackson wrote Senator Murray that they believed it was time to review the acreage limitations provision of the CBP Act and proposed that the issue be discussed at hearings to be held early in May. They referred specifically to the letter written by Gregory, suggesting that it "presents a critical problem that we feel should be thoroughly aired by your committee before a determination is made as to the need for legislative action." Senator Murray, citing Gregory's description of a "critical economic and agricultural situation that exists on the project under the provisions of the Columbia Basin Project Act of 1943," forwarded the letter to Acting Interior Secretary Clarence Davis, asked for a report and response, and notified him of the hearing. Also following the suggestion of his colleagues, Senator Murray had an official memorandum printed for the use of the committee that opened with Gregory's letter.[68] At the hearing, the Department of Interior conceded that "it has admittedly been found in some instances that farm units as originally established are somewhat small." Yet, it remained firm in its conviction "that the immediate and pressing needs of project farmers are for increased financial assistance through the

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[67]Warren G. Magnuson to Roy Kayler, 5 January 1956, Box 112, Magnuson 3181-3, M&UAD, UW.

[68]Memorandum by the Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs on Columbia Basin Project (Washington) Acreage Restrictions and S. 3730, 2 May 1956, 84th Cong, 2d sess., 14 and 15.

greater availability of long-term credit rather than for more land."[69] At the end of the hearing, however, Senator Jackson indicated he and Senator Magnuson would introduce legislation based on the Gregory proposals.[70]

Within months Senator Murray and the Bureau appeared to accept the need for change. At the end of November, the Columbia Basin News reported that Senator Murray, whom it called a "powerful opponent of change in Columbia Basin Project land limitations," had either "pulled in his horns or is keeping quiet about a proposal to increase the limits."[71] A few weeks later, Phil Nalder, CBP project manager, told a meeting with WSC that although he continued to favor a case by case adjustment of farm unit size, the Bureau was considering raising the limit on ownership, "possibly to two units per owner."[72] Then, in early January, in what the Columbia Basin News termed "a complete turnabout," Murray joined Jackson and Magnuson in calling for a "rapid action by Congress to solve the problem of inadequate Basin Project acreages."[73] Thus, as 1957 opened, major congressional and administration decision-makers had conceded the need to scrap the existing system.[74]

Public opinion in the Basin, both among farmers and the wider community, also had come to this conclusion. In November 1956, the editors of two basin

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[69] Senate Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearing: Soap Lake Problem, Columbia Basin Project (S.3730) and Acreage Limitations, Columbia Basin Project (S. 3826), 84th Cong., 2d. sess., 7 May 1956., 27 and 30.
[70] Senate Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearing: Soap Lake Problem, Columbia Basin Project (S.3730) and Acreage Limitations, Columbia Basin Project (S. 3826), 84th Cong., 2d. sess., 7 May 1956, 70; and Columbia Basin News, 8 May 1956.
[71] Columbia Basin News, 16 November 1956.
[72] WSC and USBR, Joint Committee on Settler Assistance, Minutes of Meeting, 19 and 20 December 1956, Box 1, Coll. of Agr.193, MASC, WSU.
[73] Columbia Basin News, 16 January 1957.
[74] Although, there is no indication that the USDA played a significant role in the fight over changing the acreage limits, Wesley A. d'Ewart, a special assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, wrote the Quincy board of directors that "I am in agreement with your efforts to

newspapers, the Columbia Basin News and the Othello Outlook, both of whom had repeatedly written in opposition to overturning the acreage limitations, agreed during a public debate on the issue that change would be necessary.[75] That same month, the Washington Farmer published a survey of project farmers undertaken by James Brooks, an instructor at Eastern Washington College. Out of 119 farmers interviewed, only 5 percent favored the existing system.[76]

The quality of project land factored strongly into this solidifying of opinion. At the November debate, Earl Terwilleger, a proponent of 160 acres per person, argued in support of his position that the CBP was "unique in that much of the farmland had to be built up with land-improving crops and that much of the land was suitable only for livestock or hay."[77] There is no indication in a CBN report of the debate that anyone in attendance or at the paper questioned Terwilleger's contention that in comparison to other areas the land in the CBP was uniquely poor.

In his study, Brooks found that farmers in large numbers believed that to give the land the care it required--both to build up fertility and to farm in ways appropriate to existing conditions--larger acreages were necessary. Significant majorities of the farmers he interviewed believed that pasture and hay operations, crop rotation, good conservation methods, and livestock operations required two units and that "with two units it was not necessary to have as great a percentage of their total land in soil-robbing "'intensive' row crops."[78]

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have this law liberalized and assure you I will be glad to help toward that end." Columbia Basin News, 7 July 1955.

[75] Columbia Basin News, 29 November 1956.

[76] Brooks, "Farms," The Washington Farmer, 15 November 1956., 4 and 7.

[77] Columbia Basin News, 29 November 1956.

[78] Brooks, "Farms," The Washington Farmer, 15 November 1956, 4 and 7. Specifically: 77% felt better crop rotations were possible on two units; 73 percent that better conservation

At Congressional hearings on acreage limitations held in the Basin in early January 1957, farmers expressed opinions ranging from rants against any government restrictions to pleas to retain the social goals associated with the founding of the CBP. A number, however, unequivocally laid much of the blame for their troubles, as well as the need for increased acreage, on the project's marginal land. As one farmer noted, "there is plenty of it."[79] Block 40 farmers complained of rocks, hilly topography, and shallow soil. A Block 49 farmer grumbled that "some of us don't know what Class 1 soil is."[80] In part, too, farmers specifically faulted the government for mistakes in classification. One failed settler argued that his entire unit was marginal and misclassified and complained that "the unit which I was on should never have been included in the Project. And the same is true of much other land in the vicinity where I farmed."[81] A Block 42 farmer protested that "my ground is misclassified."[82] Others honed in on financing problems, but linked them with land quality, stressing the "high development costs of Columbia Basin properties."[83]

Such charges were not isolated, but figured in the larger debate on acreage limitations. A few weeks following the hearing the associate editor of the Portland

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methods were possible; 76 percent that it was easier to convert to livestock enterprise; 80 percent that a greater percent could be in pasture and hay; and 64 percent that not as much of their total land would have to be in soil-robbing crops. Also, 71 percent felt that two units could be farmed with the same machinery needed for one. Seventy-seven percent of the farmers also stated that two units could be farmed with the same machinery needed for one unit.

[79] Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Department of the Interior Hearing on the Land Limitation Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 5 January 1957, 29.

[80] Department of the Interior, Report of Department of the Interior Hearing on the Land Limitation Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 4 January 1957, 10 and 28.

[81] Department of the Interior, Report of Department of the Interior Hearing on the Land Limitation Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 4 January 1957, 29.

[82] Department of the Interior, Report of Department of the Interior Hearing on the Land Limitation Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 4 January 1957, 10.

Oregonian wrote the Dean of Agriculture at Washington State College asking him to comment on the "true situation in regard to the demand for an increase in the size of farm units." He asked, specifically, if rumored "misclassification of soils" had occurred and if "farm units in certain areas would never pay out no matter how large they might become." He also asked about reports that FmHA had rejected several loan applications because soil was poor, specifically "too light, too sandy, too susceptible to blow and otherwise not of as high a quality as classifications had indicated."[84]

As 1957 opened, therefore, in part because of concerns engendered by the quality of project land, the point remaining to be decided was not whether change was needed, but what form it would take. In spite of some evidence to the contrary, the irrigation districts contended that a majority of the farmers favored 160 acres per person.[85] But in February 1956, South district farmers had voted overwhelmingly against the idea. Further, Brooks found that only 13 percent of the farmers he interviewed preferred that proposal. Tabulating support for a variety of options, however, he identified little consensus on an alternative. Two proposals limiting ownership to 160 acres per family both received the approval of 23 percent of the respondents. One was an across-the board limit, but the other specified that the 160-acre ceiling should apply to good land only and authorized more acreage if the land were poor. Thirteen percent of the farmers interviewed favored allowing a family to own two units. Ten percent would have permitted a family to own from 80 to 130

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[83]Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Report of Department of the Interior Hearing on the Land Limitation Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 5 January 1957, 25.
[84] Jalmar Johnson to Dean S. P. Swenson, 29 January 195, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU.
[85]Advocates of this position were split between those who meant per adult, including both husband and wife, and those who believed minor children should be able to own land.

acres of the best land, but more if the land were poor.[86] Thus, though opinion spanned a range of options, a significant point of agreement was that farmers on poorer land should be allowed to own more acreage than those on better quality land.

The proponents of 160 acres per person, the position that eventually prevailed, stressed that it was necessary to find a solution that could solve the problems of all project farmers, including those on the poorest quality land or on particularly small units. Tying their argument to conditions specific to the project, they asserted that a more restrictive alternative would be both inequitable and inadequate to the task. In January, the East district drew up a series of eight resolutions in support of 160 acres per person. Two specifically addressed the questions of adequacy and equity. One, repeating an argument district officials had made for months, asserted that "a limit of two units. . . would be of doubtful help to those owners in areas where most or all of the farms have only 50-60 acres or less." A second maintained that a "limit of 160 acres per family would be unfair to the large number of owners of the poorer classes of land, suitable mostly for hay and livestock operations." The East district directors approved the resolutions six weeks after publication of the Brooks article.[87] Whether cognizant of it or not, they built on concerns voiced by the many farmers in the Brooks survey who, while not supporting 320 acres per family, had questioned whether a lesser limit would be sufficient for the settlers faced with farming the project's poorer quality land.

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[86] Columbia Basin News, 3 February 1956; and Brooks, "Farms," Washington Farmer, 15 November 1956, 4 and 7. Brooks discusses the controversy as well as reporting on the results of his survey. Also see Columbia Basin News, 29 November 1956, coverage of debate on acreage limitation controversy.
[87] ECBID, Resolutions, 2 January 1957.

Two months later, East district officials testified before House and Senate subcommittees in favor of 160 acres per person. Their arguments ranged from the conservation arguments highlighted by the farmers in the Brooks study to warnings about the threat of wholesale leasing and inadequate credit. They also emphasized the inadequacy and inequity of the alternatives. William McAnlis, Secretary-Manager of the East district, argued that "to impose an acreage limit of, say, 160 acres per family would extend no help to the man with the larger farm of poor land" suitable only for hay and livestock.[88] Such a farmer would be unable to purchase an additional unit and still remain under the 160-acre ceiling. McAnliss also argued that "to retain a strict farm limit of, say, 2 units per family would obviously discriminate against the farmers who need help the most, those on the smaller than average farms."[89] Many units in areas platted early were much smaller—often less than 50 or 60 acres--than were units of similar quality in parts of the project that were platted later.[90] The 160-acre per person limit would allow farmers faced with either circumstance more latitude to adjust farm size to soil conditions and existing plats.

During this time period, proponents of an amendment to allow each individual to own 160 acres saw progress in their quest. A few days after the March Senate hearing, the Department of Interior wrote both the Senate and House committees that it "would not object" to a bill amending the CBP Act to allow delivery of water to "one or more farm units comprising a total irrigable area of not more than three

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[88] House Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearing on H.R. 4802 and H.R. 4919, 18 and 19 March 1957, 85th cong., 1st sess., 5.
[89] House Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearing on H.R. 4802 and H.R. 4919, 18 and 19 March 1957, 85th cong., 1st sess., 52-53.
[90] House Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearing on H.R. 4802 and H.R. 4919, 18 and 19 March 1957, 85th cong., 1st sess., 56. One east district director told the

hundred and twenty acres held by members of a family." Among its reasons for supporting the change, the Department included the need for more land to enable diversified farming essential to good soil management; the reluctance of local banks and FmHA to loan on existing units; and the spread of leasing. With a reference to drainage problems, it also expounded at some length on the possibility that larger and more productive farms "might justify a reallocation of the per acre construction costs to be repaid by the water users" and that this possibility should "merit study in connection with any realistic adjustment of farm ownership limitations."[91]

After Interior's announcement, Senator Henry Jackson introduced a bill allowing an individual to own 160 acres and a family 320 acres.[92] The Senate passed it unanimously less than two weeks later, citing among the reasons for doing so not only the adverse regional and nationwide agricultural economy and the effects of technological innovations, but conditions specific to the project such as the refusal of FmHA to grant credit to farmers with limited acreage, excess leasing, and the need to enable diversified farming. Without specifically downplaying the quality of project land, the Senate in its report on the bill also cited the longstanding consideration given to the character of the soil in determining appropriate acreage

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committee that "we have in our east district some 400 units that are less than 50 acres in size."

[91] Ross Leffler to Mr. Engle, 4 March 1957, Box 21, Nat Washington Records, WDA&RM, Ellensburg; Fred Aandahl to Hon James E. Murray in U.S. Senate, Report No. 140 to accompany S. 1482, Amending Certain Provisions of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 12 March 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 7-10; and Spokane Spokesman-Review, 19 March 1957. It also pointed out that the term family was defined as "a group consisting of either or both husband and wife, together with their children under eighteen years of age, or all of such children if both parents are dead." Only a few days earlier, at the hearing, the Department had testified that it had decided to support a change in the act but was "inclined to leave" the question of family versus individual ownership open. Wenatchee Daily World, 1 March 1957.

[92] Columbia Basin News, 20 March 1957 and 4 April 1957.

limitations.[93] Taking issue with the DOI, however, the Senate indicated it considered the repayment question an "entirely independent" matter.[94]

The Senate bill differed in one significant way from the draft proposed by Earl Gregory and the irrigation districts. It dropped the reference stating that the total acreage a landowner could hold should correspond to that allowed by the general reclamation act, including all children under the age of 18 in the definition of a family. The accompanying report explained that in this bill, "the members of a family may not receive water for more than 320 acres through the device of placing additional units in the names of minor children, as is permitted by interpretations of the reclamation law applying to reclamation projects generally."[95] The question of sidestepping the intention of the law by vesting ownership in minor children had become an issue in January. Interior Field Solicitor Paul LeMargie expressed the opinion, which the Columbia Basin News publicized, that bills introduced by Senators Jackson and Magnuson and by Representatives Magnuson and Holmes would have allowed a minor child to own basin land.[96] The paper also criticized the Columbia Basin

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[93] U.S. Senate, Report No. 140 to accompany S. 1482, 12 March 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 4-5.

[94] U.S. Senate, Report No. 140 to accompany S. 1482, 12 March 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 3. It also lumped repayment capacity with a variety of other issues, many of which were desired by the irrigation districts and opposed by DOI as suitable only for separate consideration. Earlier, Senator Jackson had said that "in my opinion, the committee will oppose use of the amendment as a justification or authorization for the department to proceed with the review. Columbia Basin News, 8 March 1957.

[95] The Department of the Interior had opposed the bill introduced the previous spring by Senator Jackson because it "would have permitted, under interpretations of the reclamation, as applied by the Department of the Interior, a man, his wife, and each of his children, regardless of age, to hold 160 acres of irrigable land." U.S. Senate, Report No. 140 to accompany S. 1482, 12 March 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 2 and 6.

[96] Columbia Basin News, 23 January 1957, 24 January 1957, 26 January 1957 and 18 February 1957. See also letter for Paul LeMargie, Field Solicitor, department of Interior, published in the Columbia Basin Herald, 17 January 1957 in which he explains that no previous reclamation act required that a landowner be an adult. He also pointed out that the land limitations applied under the 1902 act, which supporters of 160 per person often referred

Commission and the irrigation districts for indicating they "would oppose any alteration of the proposed amendment specifically to prohibit ownership of more than 320 acres per family."[97] Both Senate and House sponsors amended their bills to specify that members of a family could not own more than 320 acres.

Members of the House subcommittee on irrigation and reclamation, however, remained unconvinced of the need for a law that enabled each adult to own 160 acres.[98] Instead, in June they approved a bill that provided that each family could own a maximum of two units. It did not, however, establish any limit on the number of acres per unit. According to a subcommittee spokesman the bill was crafted in this way so that "the poorer the land, the more each farmer would be permitted to operate."[99] The publication of this explanation seemed to indicate that subcommittee members were impressed with the argument that settlers trying to farm the project's marginal land needed exceptional help.

The subcommittee also remained unsatisfied with the restriction on the land holdings of minor children that had been added to the Senate bill. Instead it adopted an amendment proposed by Chairman Wayne Aspinall of Colorado "which would prohibit a family from owning more than two units by creating trusts for children under 18."[100] The existing CBP Act had been interpreted to allow trusts to be established to hold land for minor children. Early in May, Chairman Aspinall wrote the

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to, was "not a matter of statutory enactment, but of departmental interpretation." He also explained that "the point I made about a husband, wife, and each minor child owning and getting water for 160 irrigable acres of private land under the 1902 act is also the result of departmental interpretation," in that the 1902 law states only: "no right for water in private ownership shall be sold for a tract exceeding 160 acres to any one landowner." No mention is made about the age of the landowner.

[97] Columbia Basin News, 24 January 1957.

[98] Columbia Basin News, 4 April 1957.

[99] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1957 and 27 June 1957.

Department of Interior asking if the proposed legislation would permit, "under a trust arrangement, the ownership of 320 acres for a man and wife and an additional 160 acres for each minor child." The Department responded that H.R. 4802 "would not change the basic rules with respect to ownership of property in trust that obtan (sic) under the present Columbia Basin Project Act." A man and wife "could, under certain conditions, arrange through establishment of a trust estate for an additional unit or units totaling not more than 160 irrigable acres to be held by a proper trustee for each minor child."[101] Aspinall's amendment specifically prohibited "a family from owning more than two units by creation of a trust or trusts for minor children." Nothing in the bill as passed by the Senate addressed this problem.[102]

There was another point of disagreement between the Senate and House. The Senate committee report specified that its bill was "confined to acreage limitation provisions" and would not affect what the DOI speculated might be a possible liberalization of the repayment capacity of water users. The House committee report, on the other hand, stated that "increased ownerships presumably will increase the repayment ability of owners. . . [and]. . .it is assumed that in the event this legislation is enacted, the Secretary of the Interior will make a redetermination of repayment ability for two-unit ownerships and will readjust the construction charges

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[100] Columbia Basin News, 11 June 1957.

[101] Fred G. Aanhahl to Mr. Aspinall, 16 May 1957, Box 130, Jackson 3560-3, M&UAD, UW. Aandahl further explained that if the beneficiary was not to receive any benefit until reaching the age of 18, the trustee "would be entitled to the delivery of project water." However, "under such an arrangement the trustee could not either own as trustee or individually other farm units which, together with the trust property, exceeded the permissible limit."

[102] U.S. House, Report No. 810 to accompany S. 1482, Amending Certain Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 15 July 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess. This report specifically mentioned that "The Senate-passed bill contains no provision relative to trust arrangements." The House committee did specify the amendment was not to affect any irrevocable trust for

accordingly." In a minority view, however, Representative Clair Engle of California, a member of the House subcommittee, pointed out that nothing in the bill required that repayment "would be increased if the Columbia Basin Project Act is amended to permit larger ownerships." He argued that S. 1482 "could result in unjustified enrichment of individuals at the expense of the Federal Government."[103]

Engle also faulted the language on acreage limitations. He argued that the bill as written "would permit a single landowner to hold out of his present ownership or acquire from the Federal Government, with the attendant financing benefits. . . two economic farm units." He had two criticisms. First, an individual landowner "having legal title" prior to 1937 could hold "as much as 320 acres to which water could be delivered." A legislative history of the bill issued by the office of Senator Jackson later agreed that the Senate bill would have allowed this interpretation. Second, although the House committee had indicated it did not believe an individual should be allowed to acquire more than one unit from the federal government, Engle argued the bill did not specifically prohibit the practice.[104] Once again, he argued, "Care must be taken to provide safeguards against individual enrichment at the expense of the Federal Government."[105]

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the benefit of a child under 18 created prior to this amendment that would have been consistent with the original CBP Act.

[103] U.S. House, Report No. 810 to accompany S. 1482, Amending Certain Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 15 July 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess. Engle subsequently introduced a bill that would require landowners to pay full construction chargers on property in excess of 160 acres. Columbia Basin News, 14 August 1957.

[104] This could have decreased the opportunities available through the settler selection program.

[105] U.S. House, Report No. 810 to accompany S. 1482, Amending Certain Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 15 July 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess.; and Office of U.S. Senator Henry M. Jackson, Explanation of S.1482, Box 130, Jackson 3560-3, M&UAD, UW. Engle concluded that "if we are to retain national support for a reclamation program we must, first, limit the subsidy to irrigators to historically acceptable levels and, second, limit the benefits to family-size farms. This bill fails on both points."

A month later a conference committee met to iron out differences, including the concerns voiced by Representative Engle. The compromise they arrived at retained the Senate land limitation, specifying that water could be delivered to 160 acres "held by" an individual and 320 acres "held by" a family. In their report, however, committee members did indicate a concern with limiting the financial subsidy and speculative gain an individual could reap. They wished, first, to prevent "undue enrichment of present landowners" and, second, to maintain, not increase, the financial benefit an individual could receive from the government through the settlement program. To this end, the compromise bill specified that an individual could retain a maximum of 160 irrigable acres owned prior to May 1937. It also specified that in all other instances "an owner or family" could retain only one unit. To prevent circumvention of this provision, language was included that prohibited delivery of water to any excess land sold and then reacquired within five years. It also barred a settler from acquiring more than one unit from the government. In addition, although the Bureau previously had established regulations requiring a purchaser of government land to sell any currently held farmland, the new bill specifically prohibited the sale of a government unit to anyone who "then owns a farm unit within the CBP." Finally, the bill prohibited the establishment of new trusts as a means of exceeding the 320-acre limit.[106] Congress passed this compromise on August 26.[107]

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[106] The report specified that the amendment did not affect prior irrevocable trusts established for a minor child, which were consistent with the CBP Act.

[107] U.S. House, Conference Report No. 1238 to accompany S. 1482, 23 August 1967, 85th Cong., 1st sess. See also See also Office of U.S. Senator Henry M. Jackson, Explanation of S. 1482., mimeographed, Box 130, Jackson 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; and U.S. House, Report No. 810 to accompany S. 1482, Amending Certain Provision of the Columbia Basin Project Act, 15 July 1957, 85th Cong., 1st sess. The House Committee report had discussed the sale

The amendment to the CBP Act was not as far reaching as the irrigation district leaders and like-minded proponents of extensive change to acreage limits had desired. East district officials, in particular, who had wanted to place the CBP under the acreage limitations of the general reclamation law, were very critical of the provisions limiting the amount of land an existing owner could retain. They also criticized the limits on purchase of publicly owned land.[108] Still, the consequences were significant for settlement. The law did increase markedly the amount of land for which an individual or family could receive water. As a result, although it did not ease limits on purchase of publicly-owned land, it had the potential to reduce markedly the number of settlement opportunities available through private purchase.

The outcome also encouraged settlement by farmers with significant financial resources. The argument for change often had centered on the need to provide settlers enough land to make a "fair living from the fruits of their toil." Whether an increase in acreage limits would help large numbers of settlers achieve this goal, however, was debatable. Only those who could afford to buy more land and had the resources to develop it would be helped. Others would be no better off. As a WSC study from the time pointed out, "larger ownership units would require greater amounts of capital to be furnished by the farmer. " Further, for a settler already trying to develop soil that required "fertility adjustment and physical conditioning for better water penetration," increasing the size of the family farm "would have pyramided"

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of units by the federal government. It specifically pointed out that although the law contained no prohibition against an individual acquiring two farm units from the government, it was the consensus of the committee that no individual should be allowed to do so and that the Secretary of the Interior had the authority to establish regulations "for the disposal of only one unit per individual."

[108] Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1957, 17 October 1957, 21 October 1957, 8 December 1957; and ECBID, Minutes, 2 October 1957.

financial losses.[109] Heading into their second year on the project, Gloria Nelson wrote to her folks that "84 acres isn't enough at least for the way we want to live," but two months later was worrying that they would not have enough money to buy needed fertilizer for their existing unit and wondering "if we will make enough to pay our bills."[110]

This outcome had parallels with the Bureau decision the previous year to increase the financial assets required for purchase of public land, particularly for those buying units suitable only for pasture and livestock. Both policy changes seemed to be driven by a tacit understanding, first, that costs to develop farms were greater than originally anticipated due to the marginal quality of much project land and, second, that the settler, not the government, would have to shoulder these additional expenses. The balance between rewarding the deserving or providing opportunities for the qualified was shifting toward the qualified, particularly the financially qualified.

The signing of the amendment into law on September 1, 1957, however, did not end efforts to change the regulations governing the CBP. Rather, it opened the way for the emergence to center stage of another battle in the fight over the future of the project. In this instance, the need to find additional money to fund construction, particularly to rectify drainage problems, and the question of who should pay became linked with an effort to further modify the CBP Act. Once again land quality figured, both directly and indirectly, in precipitating the issue and shaping the outcome. Once

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[109] [Washington State College], The Columbia Basin Project, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU, pp. 14 and 9. See also, Franklin, et.al., Economic Progress and Problems, 1959, 43-44.

[110] Letters, 29 January 1955, 22 March 1955 and 30 August 1955, Nelson acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.

again the outcome undermined the original goals of settlement, decreasing the number and affordability of opportunities available.

Hints of the problem to come had emerged as soon as project operations began. In 1945, before construction commenced, costs for irrigation facilities were estimated at $342 million. At the same time, the repayment contract between the irrigation districts and the Secretary of the Interior placed a ceiling of $281 million on the amount the federal government would provide, stipulated that not more than $8 million of that was to be spent on the construction of drainage works, and required water users to repay $87 million. This latter obligation translated into an average cost of $85 per irrigable acre, payable over forty years. The contract also gave the Secretary of the Interior the authority to fix annual operation and maintenance (O&M) charges paid by the water user and collected by the district to cover a variety of on-going, though fluctuating, expenses.[111] This financial arrangement quickly proved inadequate. Even before water from behind Grand Coulee was first delivered to the land in 1951, it was evident that "costs attributable to irrigation would far outrun" the 1945 estimate.[112] In January 1953, Howard Stinson, regional Bureau counsel, informed the joint boards that estimated costs to build irrigation infrastructure had "leaped" from $342 million to over $530 million.[113]

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[111] House Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, House Document No. 172, Letter from The Secretary of the Interior, Transmitting a Report on the Columbia Basin Project Bureau of Reclamation, 10 May 1945, 79th Cong., 1st sess.; N .a., Analysis of Columbia Basin Project Contract Situation, Box 58, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Columbia Basin News, 2 December 1953; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1957, 10G; U.S. Senate, Hearings on S. 3162, A bill to Approve an Amendatory Repayment Contract, 20 June and 18 July 1962, , 87th Cong., 2d. sess., 2 ; Tri-City Herald, 18 November 1958. Among O&M expenses was the cost of power to lift water stored behind Grand Coulee Dam for delivery to project lands.

[112] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 6.

[113] Columbia Basin News, 13 January 1953.

Although rising postwar construction costs factored significantly into the financial dilemma, the unexpectedly rapid onset and widespread occurrence of drainage problems, heralded by a rising water table, soon became more critical.[114] A Grant County Extension agent reported that even before the completion of the 1952 irrigation season, surface water appeared in low spots. In 1954, an Adams County agent noted that "areas of land are water logged from seepage water during the first years that a number of farms have been under irrigation," the Bureau irrigation supervisor reported that the groundwater level rose 200 feet in a section of the Quincy District, and Gloria Nelson sympathized with a neighbor saddled with a "terrible mosquito pest" at the "bottom of his place" where "his neighbor's waste water settles." In January 1955, a Franklin County Extension Agent warned that "water bogs" threatened to create alkali problems and that large areas of the basin would become worthless without adequate drainage systems.[115] Over the next few years, the situation continued to worsen.[116] In 1956, 1,500 wet acres were declared unsuitable for crop production.[117] In 1958, Earl Gregory reported that on 3,000 acres in the Quincy district, the water table had risen sharply, nearing and sometimes reaching the surface.[118] In 1960 agronomists at Washington State University reported that approximately 50,000 acres had been "subjected to flooding by

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[114] Christopher and Campbell, Drain Construction, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.
[115] Ben Roche, Monthly Narrative--March 1953: Grant County Extension; Gene Thompson, Monthly Narrative--August 1954: Adams County Extension; Letter, 5 May 1954, Nelson Acc. 205, SHS, Spokane; USBR, Annual Project Report: CBP, 1956,1-4; Columbia Basin News, 14 January 1955; and Columbia Basin News, 31 January 1955. It is difficult to overstate the attention given in the press and government reports during this time to the problem of drainage.
[116] Columbia Basin News, 2 January 1956 quoted the CBP manager as saying that drainage loomed as "our biggest problem" in the coming year, citing rising water tables throughout the entire project.
[117] USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1956, 2d.

seepage or drainage water." They warned further that the "margins of these flooded areas" could become "heavily infested with weeds and practically useless" and "too wet. . . to support tillage." Finally, the Bureau, in 1960, while reporting that 20 percent of the project lands were already wet, warned of worse to come, estimating that without concerted action 40 percent eventually would be lost to seepage. [119]

Financial pressures emerged in tandem with the wet lands. By early 1955, the Bureau was telling farmers, SCS officials, county commissioners, and the irrigation districts that the $8 million ceiling on expenditures for drainage was inadequate and would be reached within a few years. It estimated that an additional $40 million would be required to continue needed drain construction. In 1957, it indicated that funds for drainage were expected to run out in four years. In mid 1959 the project manager reported to the districts that the entire $8 million had been committed. By 1960 the Bureau predicted drainage construction costs of more than $49 million. In 1961 the annual expenditure had reached $1.6 million and was rising rapidly.[120] At the same time, wet lands threatened to pare district income. In January

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[118] Tri-City Herald, 16 November 1958.

[119] R. W. Van Keuren, V. F. Bruns, and D. D. Suggs., Forages for Grazing and Weed Control in Wet Areas of the Columbia Basin, Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations Circular 374, August 1960, intro and 1 Hereafter Van Keuren, et al, Forages for Grazing and Weed Control); Christopher and Campbell, Drain Construction, 1980, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[120] USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1957, 10f and 10g; John A .Richardson to Goodrich Lineweaver, 12 August 1959, Box 58, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Goodrich W. Lineweaver to Hon. James E. Murray, Preliminary Review of Columbia basin Project Repayment Contract Controversy, 5 March 1960, Box 57, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW, p. 13; and William O. Watson, Pre-Construction Drainage Investigations for Columbia Basin Project Lands, Presentation to Pacific Northwest Section, American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 17-19 October 1962, p. 7; and Christopher and Campbell, Drain Construction, 1980, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata, pp. 4-10. In his letter to Lineweaver, Richardson said the $1.6 million included an estimated $821,000 needed in FY 1961 on critically-needed drains and $242,000 which the House committee had not financed for FY 1960 at the request of the East District, which expected a new contract to be approved, allowing the amount to be

1956 the Quincy district cancelled 1956 assessments on nearly 300 acres declared temporarily non-irrigable. By the end of the year the Bureau reported that 1500 acres had been relieved from water assessment for 1957 due to high water tables.[121]

During these years, the political climate for reclamation in general as well as the CBP deteriorated along with the environmental and financial situation. Eastern Congressmen and pundits attacked the "excessively expensive demands" of arid states. In 1955 the Eisenhower administration threatened drastic cuts in reclamation funding, in part to offset rising defense costs. In early 1958, Clarence Cannon of Missouri, the chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, told Reclamation Commissioner Floyd Dominy that CBP " landowners either must pay more—you must revise your contracts and get more—or you are going to reach the stopping point . . . .You are going to have to stop the work, and if you do not stop it this committee is going to stop it."[122] A year later, Don Magnuson, representative to Congress from central Washington, wrote home that failure to approve an amended repayment contract "simply will mean – and I think I can state this categorically – that further extension of the project will not occur." Responding to the suggestion that the federal government should bear the mounting expense for drainage, he warned that "it cannot be expected, realistically, that Congress would stand for it. Believe me,

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capitalized. Christopher reported in 1980 that annual costs for drain construction had reached $3.5 million in 1965 and $5.6 million in 1970.

[121] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, A-28; Columbia Basin News, 24 January 1955; and Christopher and Campbell, Drain Construction, 1980, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata.

[122] Newsweek, 31 January 1955; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1957, 10F and 10G; Columbia Basin News, 8 February 1955, and 2 January 1958; Tri-City Herald, 16 November 1958, 18 November 1958, and 20 November 1958; and Van Keuren, et al, Forages for Grazing and Weed Control, 1960, summary and 1-2.

strong doubts about the project have gained ground with a good many members of Congress, and we from Washington have been hard put to it in recent years to keep appropriations coming at anything like the proper levels."[123] Finally, public power interests, which enjoyed political influence and visibility, were adamantly opposed to putting the burden on Grand Coulee Dam revenues. In 1960 a Congressional committee, hearing testimony from local interests advocating the use of additional power revenues to defray costs borne by project water users, pointed out that such a proposal "was without precedent" and that CBP farmers "already had more favorable terms than are available on most projects."[124] Even Senator Jackson, a tireless advocate for the project, made it clear that he "would be opposed to any proposal that would necessitate an increase in the power rates of the Bonneville Power Administration." [125]

Even as these environmental, financial and political problems first arose, the Bureau approached the districts about revising the repayment contract. At a joint boards meeting in January 1953 the Regional Manager explained that costs had risen by nearly $200 million and warned that existing contracts limited the financial obligation of the federal government, adding that water users could not expect power revenues to pick up the slack. He proposed that the Bureau and the districts approve an amended contract that included an increased charge payable over a lengthened time period. Bureau officials believed that as long as the ceiling on the government's

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Members of Congress from the east had been objecting to what they termed "handouts" to western reclamation interests for years. See Columbia Basin News, 11 November 1954.

[123] Don Magnuson to Mike McCormack, Don Magnuson 293, M&UAD, UW.

[124] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 11-12.

financial obligation remained, construction would come to a halt with the project less than half completed and that Congress would not lift the ceiling until the contract was amended. With this in mind, the Bureau made an administrative decision in 1953 not to ask Congress to lift the ceiling on the government's financial obligation until a new repayment contract was in place. In November the project manager presented two specific alternatives to the boards, which the boards refused to consider.[126]

Over the next nine years, until the issue was finally resolved, the Bureau, although modifying details, held firm to two positions, on project size and settler ability to pay, that put it at odds with most project farmers. First, it remained focused on the completion not only of the first half, but also of the entire one million-acre project, adopting "the premise that Congress has already authorized a project of 1,209,000 acres, of which the new 390,000 acres are a part."[127] Internal documents from 1958 indicate that Bureau officials believed lands to be served by the East High Canal were particularly suited to reclamation, describing them as "more productive under dry-farming conditions than those that already have been developed under irrigation." Topography appeared to be somewhat limiting, but analysts expected it could be overcome to a large degree by sprinkler irrigation. Soils were described as "fine sandy loam to silt loam in texture. . . uniformly deep and . . highly fertile.. . the

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[125] Senator Henry M. Jackson to Hu Blonk, Managing Editor, 19 February 1960, Box 57; Goodrich W. Lineweaver to Hon. James E. Murray, 5 March 1950, Box 5, p. 5; and Analysis of Columbia Basin Project Contract Situation, n.d., Box 58, all in HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

[126] Columbia Basin News, 13 January 1953; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1957, 10G and 10H; Tri-City Herald, 18 November 1958; and Senate, Hearings on S. 3162, A bill to Approve an Amendatory Repayment Contract, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th Cong., 2d. sess., 31.

[127] C. R. Maierhofer and E. R. Fogarty to Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer, 14 October 1959, Box 266, BR Records Center, Denver. These comments and others indicate that the Bureau believed that the full project would be "considerably larger than the 1,057,000 acres." Normally used to describe it. See also, Project Manager to Regional Director, 22

largest body of high quality lands on the project."[128] The Bureau also hoped drainage would be less troublesome than on the first half. Investigators reported that "in contrast to conditions on most of the developed, irrigated lands of the project, inspection of the East High lands disclosed that reasonable uniformity of the soils and profiles can be anticipated."[129] Such uniform conditions would greatly ease the difficulty of developing solutions to drainage problems and estimating costs. Finally, related salinity and alkali conditions were not expected to be widespread.[130]

Second, the Bureau publicly and repeatedly argued that water users had the ability to repay more than their current obligation. Central to the original contract between the Department of Interior and the districts had been a decision by the Reclamation Commissioner on the probable earning capacity of project lands, referred to as the water users' ability to pay. This had translated into the average $85 an acre payment. To be politically acceptable, any new or revised contract putting an increased burden on the water user would have to confront the issue of ability to pay. In the early years of project operation, as it tried to negotiate a new contract, the Bureau proceeded without any evidence that water users could pay more.[131] Then in the spring of 1958, citing specifically a possible change in "water user repayment

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October 1959, Columbia Basin Project Completion of Irrigation Facilities, Feasibility Grade Study, Appendix, Volume VI, USBR Library, Boise.

[128] C. R. Maierhofer and E. R. Fogarty to Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer, 14 October 1959, Box 266, USBR Records Center, Denver.

[129] J. T. Maletic and C. R. Maierhofer to Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer, 1 June 1962, Columbia Basin Project Completion of Irrigation Facilities, Feasibility Grade Study, Appendix, Volume 1, USBR Library, Boise.

[130] See also Acting Project Manager to Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer, 6 March 1958; and Chief Development Engineer to Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer, 14 April 1959, both in Columbia Basin Project Completion of Irrigation Facilities, Feasibility Grade Study, Appendix, Volume VI, USBR Library, Boise.

[131] George Macinko, "Types and Problems of Land Use in the Columbia Basin Project Area Washington" (Ph.D. diss, University of Michigan, 1961). (Hereafter, Macinko "Types and Problems," 1961.

ability in light of Public Law 264," it undertook a restudy of payment capacity.[132] In addition to the effect of multiple unit operation, the study evaluated the consequence of platting increasingly larger units; the on-going reclassification of light-textured and rocky soils; the waterholding capacity of soils under mature development; and full development of 1,029,000 acres. It also made a number of assumptions about future costs, prices, and productivity.[133] In late 1959, the Bureau concluded that "Columbia Basin farmers have an ability to pay construction charges which may be assessed with proposed amendment of the repayment contracts."[134]

The Bureau immediately began to use the information in negotiations with irrigation district officials. Its data and conclusions, however, quickly came under fire. In the course of its investigations and in support of its conclusions, the Bureau had consulted scientists from Washington State University (formerly Washington State College) and used information from a study by Experiment Stations scientists on the economic problems and progress of project settlers. In various analyses, including a confidential in-house memorandum, the authors of the study took issue with the Bureau's use of their research to support a position for which they argued it was not intended. They also pointed out how differences in assumptions and forecasts about the future had a consequential effect on conclusions. The Bureau, they argued,

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[132] Regional Manager to E. J. Working, n.d., in U.S. Department of Interior, Supporting Data for a Payment Capacity Analysis of Lands in the Columbia Basin Project, Washington, USBR Library, Boise.

[133] J. Karl Lee to 740 Files, 28 May 1958, 237-239, and Project Development Supervisor to Chief, Repayment and Statistics Branch, 28 October 1958, 250-253, both in Supporting Data for a Payment Capacity Analysis on Lands in the Columbia Basin Project, Washington, 1959, USBR library, Boise.

[134] Regional Director to Commissioner, 21 April 1959, Box 262, USBR Records Center, Denver.

assumed higher prices and lower costs for the settlers in the future.[135] They also argued the Bureau projected on the CBP a "greater intensity of land use than for any other area except the Minidoka Project," an area with uniformly high quality land. In point of fact, the WSU scientists pointed out, the Columbia Basin Project had "large areas of problem soils" that would produce relatively low yields if cropped intensively. They asserted that BR researchers selected higher quality rather than typical land types to represent the various land classes. They concluded that the Bureau's estimates of budgets for these better lands were not misleading, but that its approach contained a "bias toward showing a greater payment capacity especially on the Class 3 and 4 land." An operator on these lower quality lands, WSU scientists argued, would have difficulty making ends meet "even if he pays no water or drainage charges."[136]

It was among these settlers, who were trying to make a living from some of the poorer and less productive land in the project, that adamant and vocal opposition arose to the Bureau's position on amending the repayment contract. Beginning in January 1959, a number joined two organized groups that eventually combined forces, claiming 1500 members in January 1960 and 2400 members in May 1961.

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[135] The Bureau assumed an upward adjustment of 6.4 percent in agricultural prices while WSU believed a decline was more likely. The Bureau also anticipated a drop in farm costs to the 1951 level. Washington State College became Washington State University in September 1959.

[136] B. D. Parrish and E. R. Franklin, Confidential Appraisal of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Review Draft, Report of Payment Capacity Study, Columbia Basin Project, January 1959, Box 1, Coll. of Agr. 193, MASC, WSU; E. R. Franklin and B. D. Parrish to E. J. Working, 4 April 1960, Box 262, USBR Records Center, Denver; and Dr. E. J. Working to Director C. A. Svinth, 18 April 1969, Box 262, USBR Records Center, Denver.

The Bureau's Regional director in a letter to the Commissioner later disavowed any attempt to use the university's original study to support its conclusions, adding that "we cannot underestimate the gravity of having differences of opinion on so important a matter at this time. Regional Director to Commissioner, 27 April 1969, Box 262, USBR Records Center, Denver.

These groups drew many of their members from the sandy areas of the South district and blocks in the north plagued by shallow, sandy, and rocky soils.[137] Arguing that if additional money were needed it should be found elsewhere, from Grand Coulee power revenues for instance, they were unrelenting in their opposition to the Bureau on both the question of the settlers' ability to pay and the desirability of completing the project. They also argued that much of the drainage problem stemmed from errors made by the Bureau.

These opponents believed that ability to pay had determined the farmer's original repayment obligation and that no basis existed for an increase. Many farmers, they argued, had a net income lower than what had been estimated in 1945. They emphasized problems on the less productive land. They cited the Washington State University memorandum rebutting the Bureau's repayment study and calculating that farmers on approximately one-third of the project would receive less than 22 cents a hour for their labor. Many would actually lose money.[138] They cited their own surveys, such as one in the south district where many farms were beset by sandy soils, in which more than half the respondents stated they depended on off-farm income to stay in operation. Although Bureau proposals, which included extending the repayment period, would decrease the annual charge in early years, the farmers perceived any increase in the total obligation, no matter how structured, to be an added financial burden. They believed it would raise their debt, diminish their borrowing ability, lower resale value of property, and set a precedent for future

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[137] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, A-43 and A-44.
[138] Washington State College became Washington State University in September 1959.

increases.[139] Many simply argued that the land was rocky and sandy and was not worth and could not support the cost of drainage.[140]

Further, many farmers saw not only the increased repayment but also the project expansion that it was intended to enable as potentially harmful and as a betrayal of settlement goals. The government should live up to its obligations, particularly to the veterans for whom the chance to make a farm on the project had been held out as a reward for service to the country and without whom the project would not exist.[141] They emphasized, as had the editor of the Columbia Basin News, that "the notion of turning the project over to veterans as a reward for good and faithful service" had been crucial to Congressional approval. Yet, as poor land and poor credit aggravated conditions created by a poor agricultural economy, the opportunity to make a farm on the project proved to be a millstone, not a reward. Now the government, adding insult to injury, wanted existing farmers to subsidize those to come, to pay more to enable a larger project that would bring increased

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[139]Two newspaper clippings, Tri-City Herald, stamped 27 January 1959, Box 103, Rosellini 2R-1-143, WaA&RM, Olympia; Statement of Board of Directors of The South Columbia Irrigation District Water Users Association, Inc., 18 April 1959, Box 57, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Mike McCormack to Congressman Don Magnuson, 27 June 1959, Donald Magnuson 293, M&UAD, UW; Fellow Farmers of the Columbia Basin Project to Water Users, July 1959, Box 58, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Columbia Basin Landowner's Association to Senator Henry J. Jackson, 15 December 1959, Box 58, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; USBR, Annual Project History: CBP (1959), 8; Ray A. Whitlow to Hon James Murray, 26 January 1960, Box 57, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Statement of L. W. Whitlow, President Columbia Basin Landowner's Association, 16 May 1961, attachment to Board of Consultants, Report 28 July 1961, A-42; and Harold J. Eidemiller to Consulting Board, n.d., attachment to Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, A-39;. Extensive material on the repayment dispute is available in the archives of Senator Henry Jackson at the University of Washington, the records of the Columbia Basin Commission and Governor Albert Rosellini at the WaA&RM, Olympia, and in such local newspapers as the Columbia Basin News and the Tri-City Herald. See also Paul Pitzer, "Visions," 1990 and his research materials deposited at WaA&RM, Ellensburg.

[140]Board of Consultants, Hearing, 17 May 1961, Box 10, Batcheller 195, M&UAD, UW, pp. 45, 42. (Hereafter Board of Consultants, Hearing, 18 May 1961.)

competition, worsen overproduction, and put further downward pressure on prices. Rather than fearing an end to construction, "most farmers," in the words of one opponent, "would not mind seeing the Project stopped now."[142] Another wrote Senator Jackson advocating that the Bureau be forced to cease developing new land in the Basin for at least five years and "let the people catch up with the production."[143] Some suggested, in the words of one, that it would be better to let "presently seeped land remain in that condition" rather than expend the money needed for drainage.[144]

The opposition of farmers to a change in their repayment obligation arose in part from their belief that the need for an increase lay primarily if not entirely with the Bureau, which they charged had made "a lot of mistakes" in planning, building, and operating drainage facilities. Farmers talked about "faulty construction," "excessive leaking," and "catastrophic failure" of the canals. They made estimates of large quantities of water lost, including 49 percent in the West canal.[145] Floyd Dominy, they told Congress, admitted "the canals leak like sieves." They argued some drainage facilities, such as a large wasteway in the South district, were not needed and should not have been constructed.[146] The bottom line in their opinion was that

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[141] Glen Edmiston, Franklin County Commissioner, to Honorable Henry M. Jackson, 15 April 1959, Box 57, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.
[142] Tri-Cities Herald, 9 July 1959.
[143] Arthur C. Johnson to Hon. Henry Jackson, 22 January 1959, Box 57, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW. See also, Board of Consultants, Hearing, 17 May 1961, 6-7, 47-50.
[144] ECBID, Minutes, 7 October 1959.
[145] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 9, 7, 15
[146] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, A-43 and A-40.

these errors were costing the farmer money. "What drainage work has been done," one farmer told Congress, "has cost the Bureau about twice what it should."[147]

These farmers saw themselves as victims of the false promise of an opportunity to make a "fair living" for their families on the land of the CBP. Instead, as they struggled, in many cases without adequate credit, to make poor and marginal soil productive, they were being asked to pay more to enable project boosters to make their situation worse, to keep the project growing and bring in competition. They saw no upside to compromise and would not negotiate.

Gradually, however, some district officials and farmers, often on the better land, came to believe that it would be to their benefit to accept increased repayment. Among them were officials along the east side who were motivated by the threat to project expansion. They also hoped to gain concessions for their support, linking approval of an amended contract with changes to project regulations. Other officials and farmers centered in the Quincy district were motivated by the increasing spread and cost of the drainage problem and the threat it posed to the agricultural viability of significant and often quite productive areas within the district. They eventually indicated a willingness to negotiate a new contract with the government, creating a wedge in what previously had been a unified front of local opposition.

After the passage of the 1957 amendment to the CBP, a number of East district officials tried an approach to contract negotiations that put them at odds with the views of the majority of farmers in their jurisdiction. They were motivated both by their desire for east half development and their disappointment with key compromise provisions included in the 1957 legislation and the response to them by the

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[147] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 52. See Also Board of Consultants, Hearing,

Department of Interior. They had wanted a law that would encourage further development of the project. They believed acreage limits were at the root of opposition in the dryland areas and that "wheat farmers who now own 2,000 and 3,000 acres" would not join the project if the land many could retain was limited to one unit as the 1957 law stipulated. The DOI's response to the amendment further upset them. The department drew up regulations that not only required some farmers who owned more than one farm unit on September 1, 1957 to dispose of the excess land, but also, in response to concerns voiced by legislators, prohibited any family from receiving water for more than 320 acres, even if all or part were leased. District officials also believed that restrictions on the sale of federally owned units should be eased to speed their sale and development. [148]

In January 1958 the East district directors, in discussing an amendatory contract draft prepared by the Bureau, indicated they ascribed to two positions that would prove to be irreconcilable. They continued to assert that the ability of water users to repay had not increased. But they added that "our primary concern is the orderly construction of the balance of the project including all necessary drainage." While the first position put them at odds with the Bureau, the latter put them at odds with existing irrigators who, in addition to opposing an increase in their repayment

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17 May 1961, 7-9, 14-16, 49-50, 52 and 59.

[148]Columbia Basin News, 4 September 1957, 17 October 1957, 21 October 1957, 8 December 1957; and ECBID, Minutes, 2 October 1957. Such criticism rarely acknowledged that the restriction was not new but merely repeated the limit already in effect in the original CBP Act and applied only to landowners who had not held title to their land before May 1937. Pre-1937 owners would be able to retain 320 acres. The legislation read: That notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, water shall not be delivered (1) to more than one farm unit held by any one owner or family on September 1, 1957, except that, I the case of land held by one having equitable or legal title on May 27, 1937, or by the heir or devisee of such owner, delivery may be made to farm units comprising not more than one and sixty irrigable acres or a nominal quarter section, or (2) to any excess lands disposed of after

obligation, had little interest in bringing water to more land.[149] At the same time, district officials reiterated their opposition to what they termed objectionable, discriminatory and unfair CBP rules, such as acreage limitations on water delivery, anti-windfall provisions, and leasing regulations.[150] By year's end board members suggested they would accept an amended contract, "with every possible benefit" to the water user, if it were tied to their other goals, including "full and timely development" of all irrigable lands of the project and a legislative amendment to correct "discriminatory provisions" of the existing CBP Act.[151] They had made overt a link between a new contract and long sought changes to laws and regulations.

The directors, however, acknowledged that while they believed the project should be constructed "in its entirety," existing farmers remained more concerned with their own finances than with the possibility of adding more irrigated land. With these differences in mind, the directors determined that negotiations with the Bureau on the amendatory contract should be done "in private." At the same time they would try to convert landowners and waterusers by explaining that amending the contract could reap benefits other than capitalizing drainage costs and bringing water to "some 500,000 acres of irrigable land within the boundaries" of the East district. An "integral part" of a renegotiated contract would be Bureau agreement to such policy changes as deletion of the anti-windfall provision, authorization for all landowners to bring 320 acres per family into the project, easing of restrictions on

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September 1, 1957, which are reacquired. . . by the present owner or a member of his family within five years from the date of their disposition.

[149] ECBID, Minutes, 2 January 1958. By January 1959 South district farmers publicly repudiated the contract renegotiation policy of their directors. Tri-City Herald, 27 January 1959.

[150] ECBID. Minutes, 2 April 1958.

[151] ECBID, Minutes, 9 December 1958.

sale of government units to existing farmers, and removal of restrictive leasing regulations. The directors hoped that by linking increased repayment to such policy concessions, an approach with which they said Bureau representatives had "agreed completely," farmers would approve the new contract. Thus, in June, they called for an election on a contract that would require an average repayment of $125 an acre, payable over forty-five years.[152]

The officials, however, had seriously misjudged farmer opposition, including that of drylanders, who one director later acknowledged "vigorously oppose irrigation development."[153] On July 28, East district voters overwhelmingly rejected the proposal. The Quincy and South districts then canceled scheduled elections, and the Bureau informed the district boards that it would levy a drainage charge of $1.65 an acre to be added to the 1960 O&M charge.[154] Faced with the farmers' overwhelming rejection of their efforts, East District directors reverted to their earlier opposition to any increase in the repayment obligation, though they did not abandon their desire and push for changes in project law and regulations.[155]

The Quincy board, however, as early as 1955 had indicated it favored negotiating with the Bureau and did not retreat from this position. In the wake of the

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[152]Other changes sought were to make unconformed farm units eligible to receive water; give the government authority to sell farm units and portions thereof to existing farmers; remove restrictive leasing regulations; and expand BPA transmission capacity to handle increased pumping load and acreage. ECBID, Minutes, 9 December 1959, 4 March 1959, 18 March 1959 and 4 June 1959; and John A. Richardson to Hon. Henry M. Jackson, 5 June 1959, Box 57, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

[153]Harold J. Eidemiller to Honorable Henry Jackson, 9 November 1959, Box 58, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

[154] John A. Richardson to Goodrich Lineweaver, 12 August 1959, Box 58, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW; Statement of Wm. L. McAnlis, before House Sub-committee on Irrigation and Reclamation, 16-18 May 1960, Box 10, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia; and QCBID, Minutes, 4 August 1959.

East district election, it passed a resolution in favor of a new contract in which drainage costs over $8.176 million would be paid on the same basis as construction expenses.[156] Waterlogging threatened the loss of more and more Quincy district farmland, motivating many farmers as well as directors to find an accommodation with the Bureau. Drainage problems plagued the entire project, but in the Quincy area they were particularly "perplexing" and "acute."[157] A saucer-shaped topography with "restricted subsurface outlets" blocked drainage, causing even high quality land to go wet. By 1958 the water table on over 3,000 acres in the district had risen to within ten or fewer feet from the surface. Two blocks on the western edge were extremely hard hit.[158] In October 1959 at a district meeting, one settler complained that some of the land in his area was "so wet that it was not safe to walk upon," and that "any farmer within the district could possibly have a drainage problem even if he were situated upon a hill." It was essential, he and others testified and the directors agreed, that the necessary drainage work be carried out both to "reclaim lands presently lost and to prevent the loss of future lands going wet."[159]

In early 1960, Quincy director Sid Flanagan told the Joint Boards that wide differences were developing between the three districts in the type of settler, the type of land, the seriousness of the drainage problem, and the basic philosophy of the

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[155] Board of Consultants, Hearing, 17 May 1961, 34-35, 40. The Secretary of the ECBID asked at the hearing held to investigate the amendatory repayment question that "early consideration be given to the modification of the Project Act and to Federal regulations."
[156] QCBID, Minutes, 4 August 1959 and 6 October 1959; and Statement of Sid Flanagan, Before the Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, House of Representatives, 15 May 1960, Box 10, CBC Records, WaA&RM, Olympia.
[157] Tri-City Herald, 16 November 1958.
[158] J. Harlan Bretz, Washington's Channeled Scabland, Division of Mines and Geology, Bulletin No. 45 (Olympia: Washington State Department of Conservation, 1959); and Macinko, "Types and Problems," 1961, 110-111; and Tri-City Herald, 16 November 1958. Blocks 72 and 73 on the western edge of the district were the hardest hit.

farmers relative to the Basin's problems. There was wide interest, he indicated, among water users in his area in an amended contract that would add no more drainage costs to annual O&M charges and would lower repayment during development years. Many Quincy farmers were less concerned with their total obligation than with keeping annual water costs as low as possible in the near term. They believed the Bureau's latest proposal, in comparison to the existing contract, would save approximately $1,000 over the next ten years by keeping O&M charges in check; if the joint boards could not agree to accept it, the Quincy district should call for a separate vote.[160] Local opposition to the Bureau's proposal had fractured.

The East and South district directors, however, "not. . . as concerned with drainage problems," continued to assert that any proposal that raised the repayment figure would not be acceptable to them or their water users.[161] Thus, negotiations with the Bureau continued at an impasse, and in early April 1961, the Secretary of the Interior appointed an outside Board of Consultants to study the repayment problem and recommend a solution.

After three and a half months of study, the Board concluded that "there is no doubt. . . that an amendatory contract is required." Further, by the end of its investigation the Board defined its warrant not as limited to the repayment impasse, but as more broadly encompassing the "principal problems" facing the project, and concluded that a solution would require attention not only to the obligation of the

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[159] QCBID, Minutes, 6 October 1959.
[160] Joint Board of Directors, Minutes, 13 February 1960, SCBID, Pasco. See also QCBID, Minutes, 6 October 1959, in which one farmer argued "some provision must be found for paying the costs other than on O&M."
[161] QCBID, Minutes of Special Meeting, 10 May 1960; and Joint Boards of Directors, Minutes, 13 February 1960, SCBID, Pasco.

water users, but also to the "adverse effect" of restrictions "peculiar" to the CBP.[162] Thus, it linked, as had the East district board, amending the repayment contract with changes to project laws and regulations. While the local officials had pushed the link as a quid pro quo, the consultants framed it as two interrelated components of one larger problem.

The consultants pointed to the role played by the quality of project land, both directly in causing the drainage problem and indirectly in aggravating settler difficulties they believed could only be rectified with this broader approach. First, rather than blaming either Bureau error or farmer over-irrigation for creating drainage woes, they cited the area's intrinsic natural conditions, concluding that "unlike many projects, soil and bedrock conditions on Columbia Basin are such that drainage problems frequently become severe very soon after initial conveyance and delivery of water."[163] The result was a rapid increase in the need to construct facilities to remove the water, coupled with a slow but steady decrease in the acreage over which the cost could be spread. Second, the Board accepted, as relevant and valid, settler complaints that their finances and credit were inadequate to absorb additional expenses. As had proponents of change during the acreage limitation fight, the consultants linked these problems to poor land quality. They called attention to the low productivity and "less than normal yields" coupled with high development costs that plagued much project land in the early years of farming and made the struggle particularly difficult for "many small operators." They stressed the overlap of this

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[162] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 2, 11-12, and attachment entitled Estimates of Probably Actual Drainage Costs, n .p.

[163] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 25. During a hearing held in the basin, one consultant indicated that a solution was necessary as soon as possible. Otherwise O&M fees would cause many farmers to go broke. Board of Consultants, Hearing, 17 May 1961, 38.

period of low income and high costs with the early onset of waterlogging. They pointed out that the result of the convergence of these difficulties, both with roots in the quality of the project soil, was the need to institute expensive corrective measures when the lands were "least able to pay."[164] Based on this analysis and responding to concerns of both proponents and opponents of a new contract, the board recommended a multi-part response that linked the decision to raise the repayment required of water users with both lowered charges in the early years and modification of the CBP Act and project regulations.

First, the average repayment of the water users would be raised to $131.60 an acre, including $46.50 dedicated exclusively and specifically to the construction of drainage facilities. In order to ease the pressure on hard pressed farmers, however, the payout period would be extended to fifty years. The resulting amortization schedule would decrease the amount due during the first twenty years of repayment when development expenses were expected to be high and productivity to be low. Then, supporting proponents of continued expansion, the Board recommended that the construction cost ceiling be eliminated, paving the way for additional Congressional funding, "in order that the project may be completed to serve the 1,029,000 acres."[165]

Second, the Board recommended that a number of administrative and legislative changes be made placing the CBP under the laws and regulations found "on the average reclamation project." These paralleled what district officials had been advocating for years. The need to make such changes, the consultants

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[164] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 25 and 9; and Board of Consultants, Hearing, 17 May 1961, 47.
[165] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 2.

stressed, lay with the "inadequate earning capacity" during the early years on the farm when settlers were saddled with a combination of low productivity and high costs. Although this difficult time was "the rule" on reclamation projects, the Board asserted it was protracted on the CBP. While the "process of converting raw land to fully developed farms," they argued, "usually" took "between ten and twenty years," for "many small Columbia Basin operators" twenty years would be a minimum not a maximum. Most ways of redressing high costs and limited yields during this drawn out development period, the consultants believed, were "beyond our reach." But it was possible," in conformance with policies acceptable to Congress and in keeping with those applied to reclamation projects generally," to institute some helpful "modifications" that could "improve the economic opportunities of some of the more hard pressed operators." Beyond stating that it hoped these regulatory changes would "make it possible for the water users to achieve maximum efficiency in farm production and to realize maximum income," however, the Board merely asserted and did not give any explanation of how the hard pressed operator would be helped.[166] Rather, the changes in regulations appeared to help not the neediest, but the farmers with sufficient financial resources to take advantage of them.

The Department of Interior readily accepted the recommendation of the Consultants to link an amended contract with legislative and regulatory change. After receiving the report, DOI announced that in order "to solve the long-standing

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[166] The board also indicated such changes would "shed many of the inequities, irritations and limitations that now plague" the project. Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 18, 30 and 31. Looking back forty years, a settler who began farming on the project in 1956, commenting on how long it took to build up a farm, said that "when you just take it out of sagebrush, it doesn't have humus in it. We thought it would only take about 10 years, but it took about 20 before it actually changed it enough." Ted Christensen quoted in Ellis Wayne

Columbia Basin Reclamation Project repayment controversy," it was "willing to support legislation to modify certain unique provisions of the Columbia Basin Project Act . . . and to remedy other problems not requiring legislation."[167] In February 1962, Quincy district farmers voted in favor of a new contract. In April, DOI submitted a bill to Congress that called for approval of the Quincy contract, authorized similar contracts with the other districts, and amended the CBP Act.[168] By tying the amended contract to changes in project laws and regulations, it both opened the way for the continued construction of the project that the Department had desired and incorporated much that district officials had advocated. The settlement program, however, paid the price for this quid pro quo.

The bill approved the amendatory repayment contract for which the Quincy farmers had voted and authorized its application to the other districts when ratified by the farmers. The contract followed the recommendations of the Consultants, capitalizing the cost of drainage, and increasing the repayment charge to an average $131.60 per acre spread over fifty years.[169] It also removed the expenditure ceiling "to permit completion of the project at a reasonable rate and within such cost limits of economic and financial feasibility as are required by the Secretary under the Federal

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Allred, Mid-Twentieth Century Pioneering of the Royal Slope of Central Washington (March 1996), 66.

[167] U.S. Senate, Hearings on S. 3162, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th cong., 2nd. Sess., 9, 11.

[168] USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1962, 11; and Henry M. Jackson to K.S. Karlsson and P.V. Jacobson, 14 April 1962, Box 81, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

[169] U.S. Senate, Hearings on S. 3162, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th cong., 2nd. Sess, 1-2, 4-7.

reclamation laws," eliminating a major stumbling block to the development of the east half.[170]

The bill also authorized the "fringe benefits" desired by the districts, to be available when each approved the amended contract. These benefits repealed or modified sections of the CBP Act peculiar to the project, including three that had a direct effect on the course of settlement.[171] First, the special land limitation provision, amended only five years earlier, was lifted to put the CBP in line with other reclamation projects. As district officials had wanted, water then could be delivered, without regard to when the lands were acquired, to 160 irrigable acres held by an individual and to 320 irrigable acres held by a husband and wife. It could also be delivered to irrigable lands held by minor children in their own right.[172] Second, the antispeculation provision, limiting the price at which private property could be sold during the first five years after the delivery of water, would no longer apply to nonexcess land, though it would be retained to cover the sale of excess lands. This change placed the project "in conformance with other reclamation projects."[173] Third, the bill amended section 4 of the CBP Act that authorized the Secretary of the Interior to sell farm units. It was this wording that allowed Interior to divide government land into settlement and nonsettlement units and to sell to existing project landowners those determined to be "of questionable suitability to support a family."[174] While the government described this change as a means to "expedite settlement of federally owned lands," it more realistically appeared to expedite the

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[170] U.S. Senate, Hearings on S. 3162, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th cong., 2nd Sess., 11, 1-8.
[171] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 4
[172] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 5.
[173] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 15 and 5.

sale and farming of federally owned lands by limiting the requirement for settlement.[175]

Finally, as part of the "fringe benefits," the bill authorized the Secretary to "amend or modify all existing documents, rules, regulations, forms, and procedures entered into or issued under the Columbia Basin Project Act."[176] It allowed the changes pushed by the districts and supported by the Board of Consultants to be made. Most significantly for settlement, this section paved the way for the "elimination of leasing restrictions and government supervision of leasing."[177]

The bill passed Congress with relatively little opposition. Legislators, eager for a solution to the repayment stalemate, accepted with minimal questioning the need to link an amended contract with a rollback in laws and regulations. When called on to justify the changes, Senator Jackson periodically reverted to the questionable quality of project land. Responding to a question on repeated requests for larger units and in order to downplay the idea that CBP farmers were getting special treatment, he responded that "the variation in the fertility of land enters the picture." Jackson also pointed to the existence of "marginal units" to justify the change in the law to allow the creation and sale by the government of nonsettlement units that could be sold to existing owners rather than to new settlers.[178] Legislators

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[174] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 6.
[175] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 14. See previous discussion.
[176] Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 2 and 6.
[177] U.S. Department of Interior, Advance Information on New Columbia Basin Project Law, 2 October 1962, Paul Pitzer Records, Box 9, WaA&RM, Ellensburg; and Board of Consultants, Report, 28 July 1961, 8, 15.
[178] Senate Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 3162, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th Cong., 2d. sess., 92, 94. Gilbert Stamm of the DOI also made references to the inferior quality of CBP land in comparison to that found on other projects to explain why settlers were not asked to repay even more and to explain why drainage problems were so severe. (pp. 170 and 20.)

did acknowledge that these and other changes would obviate much that made the CBP unique, but they did not manifest much concern, as some had five years earlier, with the effect these changes would have on project settlement.[179] The Chairman of the Committee, Senator Anderson of New Mexico, opened the hearings by remarking that the bill proposed by the Department would "strike out" and "overcome" all that Congress had done in the "long session" of 1943 and "make the general reclamation law applicable."[180] Further, at various points in his testimony, Gilbert Stamm of the DOI laid out quite specifically how changes would affect the special provisions of the original CBP Act. Unlike 1957, however, no legislators attempted to mitigate proposed changes in order to protect the original settlement goals and policies, even though the consequences of these changes would be as significant as they had been five years previous. The President signed the bill into law on October 1, 1962.[181]

The first consequence would be to decrease the number of both public and private opportunities available to potential settlers. As discussed earlier, the effect of amending Section 4 to allow the government to divide publicly owned farm units into those suitable and not suitable for settlement was to diminish the opportunity for new settlers to purchase land from the government. Specifically, farm units declared

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[179]Representative Wayne Aspinall of Colorado, who had led opposition to the 1957 legislation, introduced the bill into the House. N.a., Disposition of Repayment Controversy, Columbia Basin Project, Washington, Box 93, HMJ 3560-3, M&UAD, UW.

[180] Senate Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 3162, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th Cong., 2d. sess., 30.

[181] Senator Miller of Iowa did mount an ultimately unsuccessful fight for an amendment that would have barred for ten years the delivery of water for production of a basic agricultural product officially declared surplus. 20 September 1962, Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 2d sess., 18953-18959; and Senate Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, Hearings on S. 3162, 20 June and 18 July 1962, 87th Cong., 2d. sess., 68-84, and 94.

nonsettlement would be open to resident project landowners, and those farming near the unit for sale would be given priority.

Changes in the acreage limitation provision of the law also had the potential to pare severely the opportunity for would-be settlers to buy private farms. Existing private owners, who had purchased their property between May 1937 and October 1, 1962, were put on the same footing as pre-1937 owners. They would be able to retain twice as much land as before. Putting the CBP under the same acreage limitation regulations as found on other projects plus other wording used in the law, however, expanded the consequences much further. As explained in a notice sent by the DOI to all owners of CBP land in March 1963, "all landowners, regardless of age, are now entitled to receive water within an irrigation district for not more than 160 irrigable acres in any one beneficial ownership or 320 irrigable acres for husband and wife." [182] The consequences could be significant. First, owners would be allowed to retain additional land by conferring up to 160 acres on each minor child to hold in his or her own right. Second, by applying acreage limitations district by district, it would be possible for an individual, family or minor child to own up to the limit in each district, thereby potentially tripling the legal ownership for each within the entire project.[183] The result would be to depress the amount of land placed on the market.

The lifting of restrictions on the leasing of private land also had the potential to diminish both the quantity and quality of purchase opportunities. Because operators would not be restricted on the number of acres they could lease, owners would find the rental market more favorable than before. Owners of the better quality

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[182] U.S., Department of the Interior, Interim Arrangements for Delivery of Water in 1963 on the Columbia Basin Project, 12 March 1963, Paul Pitzer Records, WaA&RM, Ellensburg.

land, in particular, would be apt to see an increase in demand. WSU researchers had found in a 1960 study that renters, particularly those who leased all the land they farmed, placed soil quality at the top of the characteristics they considered when choosing land to rent.[184] With limits on their potential customers lifted, owners would find more opportunity to lease and less pressure to sell.

The second consequence of the 1962 law would be to increase the cost of the settlement opportunities that did remain. Advocates of change had argued that market forces would moderate rises in price because supply would increase with the lifting of price restrictions. Yet other aspects of the law affected the demand side of the equation, with the potential to cancel out downward pressure on prices. The pool of potential buyers, and thus the demand, would increase at the same time that government restrictions on pricing were eased. Because minor children could own land in their own right and because acreage limits were applied separately in each district, existing property owners would be able to buy more land. The number of potential customers would expand, increasing demand and putting upward pressure on price. At the same time, revision of the anti-speculation provision in the CBP Act undermined the ability of the government to hold this upward pressure on prices in check. Henceforth, price limitations would apply only to the sale of excess land. An owner could sell nonexcess land at market price without waiting five years after the delivery of water.

Finally, the full import of these various changes can only be understood if their synergistic effect is taken into account. Under the amended acreage limitation

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[183] The districts rather than the Bureau would maintain the ownership records necessary to determine that limits were being adhered to. ECBID, Minutes, 6 March 1963.
[184] Parrish and Franklin, Farm Adjustments on Leased Land, 1960, iii and 7.

requirements, much more land in private ownership would be classified nonexcess. All this land subsequently classified in this way would be exempt from price regulations. Thus, potential settlers would find a tighter and more costly market when they searched for a farm on the project. The result was to accelerate the shift in balance begun in 1957 between rewarding the deserving or providing opportunities for the qualified further toward the qualified, particularly the financially qualified.

In April 1964, eighteen months after the law went into effect, the Columbia Basin Commission prepared a report on the real estate market that provided specific numbers for these consequences. First, a survey of land prices in irrigation blocks near Quincy and Moses Lake showed sale prices rising rapidly, from an average per acre cost of $209 in the years 1958 through 1961 to $326 in 1964. Prices on "particularly choice" land rose as high as $750 per acre. The sales history of one unit, described as fairly typical, showed the price rising from $33 an acre in 1951, dropping to $26 an acre in 1954, then rising again to $95 in 1956, $268 in 1963 and $292 in 1964. The authors reported evidence that increased demand, driven in part by local buyers, as well as the loosening of price restrictions, contributed to the price rise. Realtors from throughout the Basin agreed a sellers market predominated in farm property and estimated that half the buyers were existing project farmers seeking to expand. Northern Pacific reported "more interest from within the project." The authors concluded that demand was such that "a situation has developed whereby land prices in the project are likely to exceed 'reasonable limits.'"[185]

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[185] Columbia Basin Commission, Report on the Farm Real Estate Market, Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, 20 April 1964, Box 21, Nat Washington Records, WaA&RM, Ellensburg.

The Columbia Basin Commission report also found "more demand for leased land than the market can provide." With government restrictions removed, instances soon emerged of large scale leasing. In 1965 Balcom & Moe, a farming corporation, raised crops on 3,000 acres of land in Block 17, all of it leased.[186] By 1967 the president of the Columbia Basin Development League expressed the fear that through extensive leasing large farm corporations would crowd out the small operator. Instead, he said, "we want the families."[187]

But a trade-off had been made. When project vitality and viability were threatened, long-standing settlement goals were compromised in order to ensure continued growth and expansion. Economics prevailed. But the caliber of the land played a major role in setting in motion the chain of events that led to the perceived need to choose between financial well-being and optimum opportunity for settlement. It both caused the immediate problem and made agreement on a solution extraordinarily difficult to secure.

Project land was less capable than originally thought of handling the vast amount of water required to bring a dormant desert to life. As drainage problems grew, costs rose in tandem, and the DOI and project administrators were ill-prepared financially to effect a solution. At the same time, too many small farmers were pushed to or over the edge of insolvency when they tried to support their families on farms carved out of land with limited fertility and productivity and incapable of providing them a "fair living from the fruits of their toil." They became unrelenting in their opposition to any increase in their financial participation in the solution: they

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[186] "They Added 3,000 Irrigable Acres in the Columbia Basin," The Northwest, January-February 1965, 12-13.
[187] Seattle Times, 12 December 1967.

could not afford it, the land was not worth it. To secure the political support needed to compel them to pay more and to ensure the financial health and continued growth of the project, the DOI made concessions to those who wanted to increase the opportunities for monetary gain, even if the sacrifice of settlement goals were required.

Thus, the dream of farms for the deserving veteran, which had propelled victory in the fight to win approval for the CBP in the 1940's, faded in the 1950s and 1960s. The financially qualified replaced the deserving in the farm lottery. The government withdrew some of its land from settlement entirely. It screened both settler and land for the capability to produce a living. The same philosophy came to govern assistance to all farmers, whether they secured their land privately or from the government. As the drawbacks of the land became more and more evident and problematic, the Bureau, FmHA and eventually Congress aided and abetted those most likely to succeed on their own during difficult economic times. They made it easier for existing owners to retain land and for those with capital to expand their operations. In the "fight to prove the project," settlement by "farmers who are also businessmen" prevailed over the social dream of settlement by family farmers, whether veterans or not.[188]

[188] Tri-City Herald, 11 January 1962. Comment by Pasco FmHA Supervisor, Ken Hougland.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

"When you have a big project like this, you never know what will come out of it."

Mel McInturf, 1997[1]

In October 1953, Warren and Audrey Clifford, the first settlers on Block One, decided they could no longer endure the blowing dirt, the poor crops, the struggle and hard life. They sold their farm for $45,000 and returned to the Puyallup valley of western Washington, which they had left nearly six years earlier. Five months later the new owners pulled out, and the Cliffords returned to the project. That spring the wind blew unceasingly for three days and three nights. The price of fertilizer rose. The harvest was disappointing. By 1956 bank foreclosure loomed. Twenty years later they bought an adjacent unit and installed circle pivot irrigation. In December 2000 Audrey wrote that "our son," who a few years earlier had purchased a unit of his own, "has taken over the farming now and Warren has retired."[2]

In the spring of 1955 Donald Dunn announced to the dismay of project boomers that he was deeply in debt and was selling the Block 40 farm he had received in the farm-in-a-day celebration three years earlier. The family moved to Colorado. When Dunn failed, many locals feared negative publicity and blamed his problems entirely on poor management and over-expansion. Dunn admitted his mistakes, particularly too-rapid growth, but in his own defense cited as mitigating

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[1] Tri-City Herald, 17 August 1997.
[2] Audrey Clifford, 8 December 2000 (in possession of author); and Tri-City Herald, 10 August 1997.

factors the lack of long-term financing and a dairy market that developed too slowly to help him. No one mentioned the shallow Ephrata soil with rocks in the plow zone that suited the farm primarily to dairy and pastures.[3] Illustrating promoters' fears that three tries would be necessary before success, the farm quickly turned over again. The third owner bought in 1957. He expanded the dairy operation and planted only oats, alfalfa or pasture, raising no row crops at all. When he left in the 1970's, he was farming 455 acres. By 1995 the farm had changed hands two more times.[4] In 2004, rocks still litter fields throughout Block 40, damaging the plows of those who try to work the soil in order to plant anything deeper-rooted than pasture grasses.[5]

On August 28, 1956, after three years on the project, Gloria Nelson wrote home that "we let the news out here that we were moving and would rent the farm about a week ago and have been deluged with requests and inquiries."[6] They did not seriously consider selling, since "we felt we made more money by renting it out for many years before selling," but were determined not to rent the farm to potato growers "for they just bleed the soil and we want to keep the place built up." [7] Three

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[3] Gilkeson, Washington Soils and Related Physiography, 6 and 2; and Brough, et.al, CBP Land Productivity, 1956, 6-7, 13.

[4] Wenatchee Daily World, 6 March 1955, Columbia Basin Herald, 8 March 1955; Dale W. Fields, "Columbia Basin's Farm-in-a-Day Pays Its Way," The Washington Farmer, 1 August 1957, 9; and Pitzer, Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream, 296. In the Columbia Basin Herald article Dunn placed the "lack of long-term financing" at the top of his list of factors contributing to the decision to sell, explaining that it had been the "the largest single problem with all basin farmers." A year later the loan manager for a major bank in the basin said that a critical problem area for loans was "farms on which dairying was the major enterprise." D. C. Amo to B. E. Kuhns, 10 December 1956, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. By 1996 the farm had changed hands a total of five times: Blaine Harden, A River Lost: The Life and Death of the Columbia (W. W. Norton; New York, 1996), 121

[5] An irrigation district official encountered in the area in the spring of 2004 commented that farmers continue to find rocks in their fields and sarcastically joke that rocks are their best crop.

[6] Letter to You All, 28 August 1956, Nelson acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.

[7] Nelson to Utter, e-mail, 22 January 2002; and letter You All, 28 August 1956, Nelson acc. 205, SHS, Spokane.

months later, after choosing to rent to the brother of a neighbor, they moved to Spokane where Lee had taken a job with the Soil Conservation Service. Over the next thirty-two years, she recalled, "some of our long time renters were great and took good care of the farm using good farming and conservation methods as required in the lease. We had a few that just didn't do the job. One soon bought their own farm near Mesa, WA and moved there."[8] In 1988 the Nelsons sold the farm to their tenant, but soon took it back and rented it to him again when he had difficulties making payments. In 1991 they resold it to him. Ten years later their son has taken over the contract, and "the fellow that bought our land farms his own plus about five more units."[9]

In 1956 the government postponed construction on Block 17, saying that because of the uneven surface and exceptionally light soil, the cost to develop and farm would be too high for most settlers. In 1964 the Bureau opened the block, but warned potential settlers that development expenses would run from $35,000 to $45,000 a unit. By January 1965 Balcom & Moe, a farming corporation established 25 years earlier and with operations throughout Central Washington, had leased eleven units comprising 3,000 acres on which it planned to raise potatoes. It estimated "an investment of $500,000" would be necessary to get all units into production. In preparation it cleared and leveled the land, applied 700 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer per acre and lesser amounts of potash and zinc, and sprayed on DDT to prevent wireworms. It planned to apply additional fertilizer at planting time. It also dug a series of storage ponds, and installed pumping stations and motors to deliver water to sprinkler lines. The company expected to employ thirty people

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[8] Nelson to Utter, e-mail, 22 January 2002.

locally. By 1970, Balcom and Moe farmed nineteen units totalling 4,000 acres, nearly one-third of the available land in the Block, and had established a fully integrated operation from growing to shipping. In addition to potatoes it also raised wheat and cherries. It expanded in part by buying land from a local irrigation business owner who had drawn a government unit. By 1996 the company had joined with three other "potato barons" operating in the greater Columbia Basin to jointly market their crops.[10]

Individual stories such as these are one way to depict the unfolding history of settlement on the project. Numbers are another. Those that are available for the project are limited in what they portray and hard to pin down, yet they do point both to size and ownership trends over time and to the gap between expectations and reality.

Pre-settlement estimates reflected hope rather than experience. In the late 1930's, envisioning a compact agricultural landscape of 40-acre farms, President Roosevelt dreamed of a new life for up to 80,000 settler families, refugees from the dust bowl who would own and operate their own small farm. Bureau officials somewhat more realistically spoke of 30,000 settlers and their families. A few years later, after the first land classification studies, the Joint Investigators touted the possibility of slightly more than half that many. In 1952, with the project's official

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[9] Nelson to Utter, e-mail, 22 January 2002 .

[10] Farmers Home Administration: A few points to be considered when purchasing a farm unit in Block 17, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata; The Northwest, May-June 1964, 10; The Northwest, January-February 1965, 12-13; Ronald Weinkauf, The Columbia Basin Project, Washington: Concept and Reality, Lessons for Public Policy (Ph.D. diss, Oregon State University, 1973), 145, 155-158; Blaine Hulse, "Block Seventeen: The First Farm," Franklin Flyer, September 1996, 9; Tri-City Herald, 20 April 2000. In the 2000 article Balcom & Moe cited the desire of large scale grocery chains to deal with only one supplier as the reason for joining with other large scale growers.

opening, boosters, continuing to describe the CBP as a million-plus acre project, prophesized 13,000 settlers, primarily veterans, rewarded for honorable service to the country.[11]

Reality proved different than any version of expectation, though it must be acknowledged that even after water and settlers arrived, hard and fast numbers continued elusive. In 1973 a Ph.D. researcher, attempting "to determine the number of operational farms on the Project as a measure of settlement opportunities provided," found "this was difficult to do," as "Bureau of Reclamation reports mask operational size."[12] In the late 1970's Jim Bauermeister, Assistant to the Washington State Grange Master. complained that "there are no absolutely reliable figures on the size of farms in the Columbia Basin Project. . . . Bureau and districts often do not have any idea how large some farming operations are."[13] Twenty years later, a long-time SCS official in Ephrata, expressing the same frustration, admitted that "we can't tell you today how many operators there are in the Basin."[14] Still, though not definitive and at times fuzzy and imprecise, the numbers seem to mirror the stories told by individual histories. They show farms neither as restricted in size as proponents had predicted nor as large as critics feared and thus settlement opportunities neither as numerous nor as concentrated.

Ten years after the project's official opening in 1952, water was available to 460,585 acres, divided into 5333 farm units, although only 4601 were irrigated.

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[11] Harold T. Rogers, "The Columbia Basin Project Present and Future," The Washington Farmer, 15 May 1952, 33.
[12] Ronald Weinkauf, "The Columbia Basin Project, Washington: Concept and Reality, Lessons for Public Policy" (Ph.D. diss., Oregon State University, 1973), 163.
[13] Jim Bauermeister to Hazel Wolf, 16 January 1978, Box 2, Hazel Wolf Acc. 3647-3, M&UAD, UW.
[14] Telecom with Dwayne Luhn, 6 August 1999.

These were farmed by 2371 operators.[15] With the passage of another decade and after the consequences of amendments to the CBP Act in 1957 and 1962 had had time to unfold, the project in the early 1970's contained 5752 fulltime farm units, 2290 farm operations, and 518,249 irrigable acres, 473,854 of which were irrigated. Although the amount of land with water available had increased in the preceding ten years, there were 81 fewer farmers.[16] One of the few tabulations showing the number of farm operations of various sizes is available for this period.[17] It indicates that 55 percent of the units contained less than 160 acres. Together these 1261 farms totaled approximately 24 percent of the irrigable land.[18] Conversely, 24 units, or slightly less than one percent, were over 900 acres each and contained a total of approximately 5 percent of the irrigable land.[19]

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[15] Arthur W. Peterson, The Economic Impact of Irrigation on the State of Washington, 4 October 1963, Box 22, Nat Washington Acc., WaA&RM, Ellensburg.

[16] The number of farmers peaked at 2,466 in 1966. Dwaine E. Umberger and Norman K. Whittlesely, Effects of Legal and Financial Constraints on Growth of Columbia Basin Farms: A Simulation Analysis, WSU College of Agriculture Research Center, Bulletin 815, September 1975, 2

[17] Columbia Basin Project Farm Operations, Tabulation Based on Irrigated Acres in 1973, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. I found two separate versions of this tabulation. They do not match. One, which was found in the files of Nat Washington, a Washington State Senator, appears to be a draft but is not marked as such. I have used the version that I found in the files of the USBR in Ephrata.

[18] The acreage totaled between 110, 015 and 120, 144 acres. The range results from the tabulation of results which are in ten acre increments.

[19] N.a., Columbia Basin Project Farm Operations: Tabulation Based on Irrigated Acres in 1973, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. Even this is somewhat skewed as it contains a number of farms less than 40 acres in size, probably what planners considered part-time farms, though they are not labeled as such. It also dumps the largest farms into a category of greater than 2,000 acres, with no indication of the size of the largest. Other research from the time, by Ronald Weinkauf, found one operation of 4,000 acres, another of 5117 acres and a third of 5600 acres. The draft version of this report shows a greater number of farms containing 900 or more acres.

Again, the acreage total is imprecise, ranging from 20,291 to over 31,500 acres. This range of total acres farmed result from the groupings used in the tabulation. For the smaller acreages, the intervals for each group are ten acres. The larger farms are grouped in 100-acre intervals.

The limited numbers available further indicate, as did the individual accounts, that both leasing and ownership factored into the increase in size of farm operations and the consequent decrease in settlement opportunities. By 1962, 838 of the 2371 operators owned more than one unit, including eight who owned five or more. At the same time, thirty percent of the owner-operators rented at least one unit, and five hundred operators leased all the land they farmed, more than half of them renting over one unit. No similar breakdown was available for the 1973 figures, but a 1972 Bureau memorandum on residency provided some insight into the extent of leasing. The authors reported that nonresidents owned approximately one-quarter of the total irrigable acreage and that a "significant number of leased farm units" were owned by project residents. Assuming that any absentee-owned acreage would be farmed by tenants, leased units would make up, at a minimum, one-quarter of the total land being farmed.[20]

The numbers, therefore, just as the individual histories, tell a mixed and ambiguous story. Twenty years after the project's official opening, operating farms were significantly larger than one unit per farmer. One percent of the operators controlled between four and nearly seven percent of the irrigated land, while 55 percent worked between 23 and 25 percent. As a result of this consolidation, the number of settlement opportunities in 1973 was significantly less than supporters had hoped. Still, farm opportunities remained quite widely dispersed. Over half the farmers worked farms of 160 or fewer acres, while approximately 14 percent worked more than 320 acres, with those farming 900 acres of more controlling between four

[20] Regional Director to Project Manager, Review of Water-User Residency, 1 February 1972, uncatalogued storage, USBR, Ephrata. The nearly 25 percent of the owners who were

and six percent of the land farmed. Finally, leasing was widespread but was used both by small operators to get a start in farming and by large operators to amass acreage far exceeding the ownership limits.

The Bureau officially ceased the sale of settlement units in 1968. Then in 1970 it decided not to renew the settler assistance program with Washington State University.[21] By 1977, with one exception, it had brought project water to the last platted farm units in the project's first half.[22] Further, although the Bureau continued to cling to its dream of a million-acre empire, there would be no second half. In 1966, four years after changes to the CBP Act, the Bureau hoped for eastside support of project expansion. It argued that "the half-completed portion is on by far the poorest land. . . . The half yet to be completed, by contrast, is rich soil which has been dryland farmed for generations. Its transition to diversified farming under irrigation, once started, will be smooth and rapid. The pioneering has been done, and the owners in this new area are adequately financed.[23] But the transition never began. Frustrated in large part by the continued opposition of dryland farmers who did not wish the change, the dream of irrigating the fertile wheat lands of the east side never materialized.[24] Thus, although not fully acknowledged at the time, the foray into land

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nonresidents, owned 24 percent (or 121,131 acres) of the total irrigable acreage. Also, only 14,000 acres in the project for which water was available were not irrigated.

[21] USBR, Annual Project History: CBP, 1960, 6.

[22] In 1984, after a delay of seven years in which no water was brought for the first time to a platted irrigation block, the Bureau delivered water to Block 26 in the far southwestern corner of the project.

[23] N .a., Columbia Basin Project, Status Report, 8 February 1966, Records of Governor Daniel Evans 2s-2-92, WaA&RM, Olympia.

[24] For instance, see Katherine Bohnet, "Dryfarmers oppose Columbia River Irrigation Project," Outdoors West, Winter 1978-1979; Grant County Journal, 12 July 1984; John G. White, "Second half of Columbia Basin Project facing stiff financing battle," Irrigation Age, October 1984, 46-48; and Douglas Canning and Katharine Bauer to Pam Crocker-Davis, et.al., 5 December 1984, Box 2, Hazel Wolf Acc. 3647-3, M&UAD, UW, 20.

settlement on the CBP ended less than twenty years after the project officially opened, when the government disbanded the settler assistance program.[25]

History is a combination of the catholic and the particular. The history of land settlement over time on the Columbia Basin Project is no exception. The great depression, World War II and the socioeconomic and cultural changes that followed as well as the cost-price squeeze and the technological revolution that buffeted agriculture all played roles. But settlement on the CBP was a product also of historically specific events and of the natural environment, in particular the quality of the land that as much as larger societal forces structured both the possible courses of action open to historical actors and the outcomes and consequences of their decisions. Unraveling the history of project land settlement requires analyzing the role of the government, of the land, and of the settler, and determining how each not only sustained but constrained the others.

The Columbia Basin Project and the settlement of the vast acreage proponents hoped to irrigate would not have been possible without the leadership and resources of the federal government. Within that larger truth are many surprises, however. As Karen Merrill has reminded historians of the American West,

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[25] Over the next two decades, ownership and size of CBP farms would continue to evolve, fostered in large part by amendments in 1982 to the general Reclamation Act, which governed the CBP after 1962. The changes allowed a family to own 960 acres while tightening leasing regulations. By the end of the century, a draft study by the World Commission on Dams concluded that the average farm operation on the CBP averaged 500 acres. But again, averages tell only part of the story. In September 1999, the director of the Quincy District reported that approximately 850 operators farmed 221, 523 irrigable acres in platted farm units, plus slightly over 17,000 acres not in platted farm units that were served through special water service contracts. Including the land served by water service contracts that averaged approximately 280 acres per operator. It is likely that the project wide average is affected by the existence of what the authors of the World Commission study termed "a small number of very large farming operations." World Commission of Dams, Grand Coulee Dam and Columbia Basin Project, Circulation Draft, December 1999, 3.1-7 and A3-2 through A3-4; and Keith Franklin, 21 September 1999 and 3 February 2004.

understanding the capacity of a federal agency to implement initiatives requires identifying and examining forces that constrain as well as empower.[26] Foremost among these constraining forces on the CBP were institutional imperatives. While absolutely essential to the development and implementation of project land settlement, the agencies of the federal government, specifically the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture, proved in many ways their own fiercest enemies. Each had resources and skills that could have advanced land settlement on the project, but they too often worked not to defeat mutual foes and pursue agreed upon goals, but rather in fits of institutional rivalry, "grabbed each other by the tail and . . . gulped and swallowed and gulped and swallowed until they swallowed each other."[27] Eventually the two combatants reached a rapprochement, but not until many battles with enemies of a strong government presence in land settlement were lost or earlier gains diluted. Among the results was a compromised system of settler assistance.

Further, not only did potential political allies too often work at cross purposes, the land itself, instead of functioning as a passive stage on which settlement could play out, at times became a troublesome obstacle. Ted Steinberg recently reminded historians that even when the natural world is not the focus of their work they must not stop digging for enlightenment before reaching the land and the soil itself.[28] The wisdom of such advice is clear in understanding the unfolding of government efforts to direct settlement on the Columbia Basin Project. Too often boosters and decision-

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[26] Karen Merrill, "In Search of the Federal Presence in the American West," Western Historical Quarterly 30 (Winter 1999): 449-473.
[27] House Subcommittee on Public Lands, Hearings: Irrigation and Reclamation, 1947, 129.
[28] Ted Steinberg, Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History (Oxford University Press; New York, 2002), ix.

makers ignored or misunderstood the nature of the land and its power to thwart, rather than propel forward, their hopes and plans. The settlers could not do so. When they arrived, they had to face the consequences of irrigating on land where water disappeared like "sand down a rat hole."

Throughout the effort to adopt and implement a socially beneficent, government-directed land settlement program for the CBP, the role of the land changed. Originally, it was rhetorical and supportive. Project promoters did not consider the nature of the land in any detail, if they analyzed it at all. They proceeded with the assumption, based on hope rather than investigation, that the land would respond productively and positively to the application of water. Gradually, however, reality intruded. The true nature of the land became clearer, first through a series of investigations by the Bureau, the Joint investigators, and agricultural scientists connected with Washington State College, the Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service, and then by the actual experience of farmers. Ultimately, with this more realistic and more nuanced understanding of the land, not just the settlers but planners and other project proponents came to realize that farm-making and land settlement would be more difficult, time consuming, and expensive than had originally been assumed.

Finally, no action takes place in isolation. As the settlement of the Columbia Basin Project progressed, a synergy, too often negative, between the land and political decisions emerged that had repercussions both for the individual settler and for the larger project. It complicated and magnified the consequences of policy compromises. Repeatedly, political actions and decisions either aggravated difficulties posed by the land or limited the amount of assistance available to settlers

in overcoming them. To mute local opposition, early legislation allowed property owners to withdraw from the project. Much good land left the project, while the marginal remained. Later, to appease Congressional opponents of government involvement in settlement, the Bureau and members of Congress working for passage of the 1943 Act agreed to ease the pressure to sell, either to the government or to private buyers. Owners of good land, who remained in the project, tended to retain it until able to sell at market price. Owners of poor land were more apt to dispose of it to the government. The result of both these legislative decisions and the reaction of property owners to them was to downgrade the quality of land available for settlement.

Congress did not compensate for this downward shift by increasing the amount and variety of assistance available to settlers who were trying to carve out farms that would return them a living income before their personal resources were exhausted. Rather, it consistently rejected or limited the requests made by the Bureau for authority to level land, install irrigation systems, and provide credit or other financial assistance. Opponents of such government involvement were aided in their effort by the schism within the ranks of those who agreed on the desirability of aid but not on what agency should control and administer it.

The result was that as the difficulties of making a successful farm on the project became evident and the percentage of the land that would require large resources both increased and became more obvious, the government, rather than responding with compensatory aid, turned to the farmers themselves to provide the needed resources. This response followed a policy trajectory established by the Fact Finders in the 1920's and tailored to the CBP by the Act of 1943, after a minor

flirtation with social welfare idealism. Instead of aiding the needy and destitute, the social largesse of the government would be directed at deserving but qualified veterans who also possessed a minimum amount of the resources required. As the settlers arrived and the difficulty and cost of transforming the desert lands of the CBP became clearer, the reaction of the government was to ask more of the beneficiary and to turn increasingly to farmers, veteran or not, who could carry more of the burden.

Throughout the history of the settlement of the Columbia Basin Project, environment and government acted as both stimulant and deterrent. The vast stretch of undeveloped land so close to abundant water made the project possible, but it also imposed unanticipated restrictions on how it would be developed and settled. The vast resources of the federal government enabled the water to be brought to the land, but decision-makers understood this land too poorly, for too long and did not provide the assistance many settlers needed to meet the challenges for farm-making. The result was an experiment in land settlement that took as its starting point an unrealistic conception of the land as needing only water to make it productive and that in the end on the real land did not meet the goals set for it.

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M&UAD: Manuscripts & University Archives Division, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Washington.

WaA&RM, Bellingham: State of Washington Archives and Records Management, Bellingham, Washington.

WaA&RM, Ellensburg: State of Washington Archives and Records Management, Ellensburg, Washington.

WaA&RM, Olympia: State of Washington Archives and Records Management, Olympia, Washington.

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