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SETTLEMENT DURING THE WORLD WAR I  
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PROPOSED AMERICAN PLANS FOR SOLDIER SETTLEMENT  
DURING THE WORLD WAR I PERIOD

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PROPOSED AMERICAN PLANS FOR SOLDIER SETTLEMENT  
DURING THE WORLD WAR I PERIOD

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

To my father, democrat and gentleman

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# PROPOSED AMERICAN PLANS FOR SOLDIER SETTLEMENT DURING THE WORLD WAR I PERIOD

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

World War I brought many changes to America. These innovations included a nearly total mobilization which had never been attempted even during the Civil War. Not only did the United States raise an armed force of 4 million men in something over a year, no mean accomplishment, but 9 million workers left their customary employment to aid in the war effort.<sup>1</sup> The wartime agencies, however, illustrate more clearly the enormity of the changes in American practices than do numbers of men and women mobilized for war. The Council of National Defense, the War Industries Board, the transportation agencies, and the Fuel Administration all testify to the amount of government control exerted over the American economy during World War I. Planning and regimentation had a pioneering trial in the United States during World

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<sup>1</sup>George Soule, Prosperity Decade, From War to Depression: 1917-1929 (Vol. VIII, The Economic History of the United States, New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1947), 81.



War I. Before the struggle ended industry, agriculture, and labor had been welded into one coordinated effort straining toward maximum production for the "war to end all wars."

Before the German surrender in November of 1918, many Americans were thinking about the problems of postwar readjustment. Industry and agriculture had to be reconverted to peacetime conditions with controls relaxed or eliminated; and the war workers returned to normal pursuits. But most of all American servicemen had to be given aid in making a smooth transition to civilian life. The United States record of caring for its soldiers was an old and fairly liberal one. Among the types of aids granted American veterans land had been one of the most important. In light of past history it is not surprising that a number of advocates came forward with land settlement proposals for veterans. Many prominent leaders including Woodrow Wilson endorsed soldier settlement legislation. Wilson stated on at least one occasion:

It is possible in dealing with our unused land to effect a great rural and agricultural development which will afford the best sort of opportunity to men [veterans] who want to help themselves; and the Secretary of the Interior has thought the best possible methods out in a way which is worthy of your most friendly attention.<sup>2</sup>

Soldier settlement had a long and honorable career, dating from antiquity.<sup>3</sup> The other English speaking countries

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<sup>2</sup>From the Annual Message, December 2, 1918, in U. S., Congress, House, House Report 1081, 65th Cong., 3d Sess., 7.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. Dero A. Sounders (The Portable Gibbon; New York:

passed veterans' settlement legislation during the World War I period.<sup>4</sup> More significant, for the United States, than Roman example or English precedent was the fact the United States had habitually rewarded her veterans with land. This practice had predated the American Revolution as the English colonies had awarded land to members of their militia.<sup>5</sup> The colonial governments had also offered land to individuals who would settle on the frontier as a buffer against the Indians.<sup>6</sup>

The first offer of land to soldiers by the United States government went, ironically enough, not to Americans, but to Hessians who were willing to desert the British service. The act was passed by the Continental Congress August 14, 1776, and offered 50 acres of land to each deserter. Two years later the offer was liberalized with a bid of up to 800 acres for a captain.<sup>7</sup> This American enticement did not cause droves of discontented Germans to desert the British forces. One

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The Viking Press, 1952), 58.

<sup>4</sup>U. S., Congress, House, Committee on the Public Lands, Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, Appendix A, Exhibit D, 20-34.

<sup>5</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Government Aids to Land Acquisition by War Veterans, 1796-1944 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 1.

<sup>6</sup>Jerry A. O'Callaghan, "The War Veterans and the Public Lands," Agricultural History, XXVIII (October, 1954), 163.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

historian maintains that only a single Hessian had claimed this reward as late as 1792.<sup>8</sup> A more distinguished group of foreigners than deserters was rewarded by the American governments for their services in the Revolution. Lafayette received extensive grants from the general government, while Von Steuben was awarded land by Virginia.<sup>9</sup>

On September 16, 1776, Congress offered land bounties to its own soldiers. The act specified land warrants worth up to 500 acres for a colonel and 100 acres for a private.<sup>10</sup> Granting land was rather presumptuous on the part of Congress since it then controlled no land. The warrants for the land would be good only when Congress won control of the public domain from the states, cleared the Indian title, and surveyed the lands. By June 1, 1796, however, the federal congress set up a 2.5 million acre reserve in Ohio for officers and men of the Revolutionary War. Until 1830 land warrants issued under the act of 1776 were only valid in that reserve. By the act of 1830 the warrants could be exchanged for script and this could be used to claim land in Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois.<sup>11</sup> In all the government issued warrants for a

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<sup>8</sup>Dixon Wecter, When Johnny Comes Marching Home (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), 88.

<sup>9</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Government Aids, 2.

<sup>10</sup>O'Callaghan, "The War Veterans," 163.

<sup>11</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Government Aids, 2.

little over 9 million acres of public lands to veterans of the Revolutionary War and their descendants. The last of the warrants was not issued until 1886.<sup>12</sup>

The government continued the bounty principle in veterans' benefits for the War of 1812. In 1811, as an inducement to enlistment, Congress offered bounties of 160 acres for the completion of five years' service, or less time if the government approved. Also three months' extra pay was provided as an added attraction. At the end of the war the bounty was doubled.<sup>13</sup> On May 6, 1812, Congress set aside about 6 million acres in Michigan Territory, Illinois Territory, and Louisiana (Arkansas) Territory for the redemption of warrants. Later the land in Michigan was taken out of the reserves, but an additional 1.5 million acres was set aside in Illinois and a new reserve of 500,000 acres was established in Missouri Territory.<sup>14</sup> Officers were not eligible for these bounties and did not become so until 1855 when they were given retroactive benefits. The act of 1855 also extended bounties to those who had rendered naval service in the War of 1812. About 4 million acres of public land was set aside for the veterans of the War of 1812.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>O'Callaghan, "The War Veterans," 164-165.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>14</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Government Aids,  
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<sup>15</sup>O'Callaghan, "The War Veterans," 165.

The bounty policy was also followed for veterans of the Mexican War. The government allowed each soldier who had served 12 months 160 acres of any land open for public sale. Or, the veteran could receive treasury script worth \$100 at six per cent. For those who had served less than one year, Congress provided 40 acres or optional script worth \$25.<sup>16</sup>

Land bounties were also provided for veterans of Indian wars. Abraham Lincoln received a warrant for his service in the Black Hawk War.<sup>17</sup> Periodically, and perhaps unfortunately, the bounty acts were broadened. Finally they were extended to almost anyone who had rendered any conceivable service to the government during time of war. Broad and indiscriminate bounty laws were passed in 1850, 1855, and 1856. The act of 1855 was so comprehensive that it accounted for 32 million acres out of a total of 73 million acres designated as federal bounty land.<sup>18</sup> The policy was robbed of almost all validity as aid for legitimate veterans by the acts of 1852 and 1858 which allowed the warrants to circulate. They were regularly discounted and exchanged hands with great rapidity. Consequently speculators acquired much of the land as might be expected.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Government Aids, 3.

<sup>18</sup>O'Callaghan, "The War Veterans," 166.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 162.

The bounty laws were never revived after the Civil War. The Homestead Act of 1862 had precluded enactment of such a law, although attempts were made to pass a bounty act as late as the 1870's.<sup>20</sup> A bitter critic of continuing the bounty policy after the Civil War was Republican George Washington Julian of Indiana, Chairman of the House Committee on Public Lands. Julian played an important role in drafting homestead legislation. He declared that only 10 per cent of the warrants issued under previous laws had remained in the hands of veterans. The overwhelming majority of the warrants had passed into the hands of speculators.<sup>21</sup> Others felt a bounty law would cancel out the benefits of the recently enacted Homestead Act and that 2 million veterans would absorb all of the remaining public domain.<sup>22</sup>

Congress did, however, move to give veterans special privileges under the Homestead Act. On April 14, 1872, a law was passed which allowed a veteran who had served 90 days to apply his military service, not exceeding four years, upon the time needed for perfection of title. For those wounded or disabled the terms were even more generous. They could subtract the time of enlistment, not service, as the deduction. For those killed, the rights would be extended to sur-

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>21</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Government Aids, 4, and Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, IX-X (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 246.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 5.

vivors. At least one year's residence was required.<sup>23</sup> Additional soldiers' entry rights were passed in 1874.<sup>24</sup>

Granting preference rights or special privileges in settling upon public lands was the means of encouraging soldier settlement from the Civil War through the Spanish-American War. Laws were enacted giving a preferred status to veterans of the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, the Mexican border operation, and most of the Indian wars.<sup>25</sup>

Up to World War I the emphasis in soldier settlement had been upon individual development or "infiltration." The soldiers who received bounties or special entry privileges had been, for the most part, farmers or the sons of farmers who were following the most traditional American vocation. By the turn of the century, however, certain changes had made themselves felt on the American economy. The frontier had for all practical purposes ended. Great cities with busy factories had risen and with them big business, labor organization and violence, and slum poverty, vice, and misery. Some thinkers reacted to the urbanization of America with the theory of "back-to-the-landism." These people felt that the surplus populations of the cities could never be ade-

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

quately employed and that no satisfactory life could be made for the redundant people in urban areas. The "back-to-the-landers" believed implicitly that farm living naturally produced a more valuable citizenry.<sup>26</sup>

Closely connected with the "back-to-the-land" movement, and indeed a part of it, were those individuals who thought that not only should a portion of the population be returned to the soil but that the traditional method of colonization should be altered. These people objected to individual settlement as economically wasteful and socially disastrous. In its place they favored organizing colonies which would provide cooperative and social advantages to the colonists. Those who advocated "back-to-the-landism" and the "colony" method of settlement early fastened themselves upon the tradition of aid to soldiers to promote their schemes.<sup>27</sup>

It is not accurate to speak of a "back-to-the-land" movement in the United States before the Civil War since the American nation was predominantly rural prior to 1865.<sup>28</sup> Mention should be made, however, of the communistic and religious colonies of the Middle Period which reflected discontent with the growing complexity of society. The Mormon development of Utah occurred at about the same time. Horace Greeley promoted

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<sup>26</sup>Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow A New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959). Conkin has a good survey of these points.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 12.



a Colorado settlement in the 1870's and Archbishop John Ireland was active in Catholic settlement in Nebraska and Minnesota in the same period. General Benjamin F. Butler proposed an ambitious government colonization scheme, also in the 1870's. Finally, in the depression years of the 1870's and 1880's demands arose for the settlement of the urban unemployed on land.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1890's the "back-to-the-landers" were involved in various types of experiments. The mayor of Detroit created his "potato patches," on vacant lots, as one means of alleviating unemployment. In the early twentieth century there were Vacant Lot Cultivation Associations in Philadelphia and New York and the "school garden" movement had many adherents.<sup>30</sup> The Salvation Army experimented with relief colonies at Fort Romie in California and Fort Amity in Colorado.<sup>31</sup> Implicit in these projects were the ideas that cities were evil and there would never be enough employment for all urban people. Therefore, why not establish the unemployed on land, where they would at least have food? In the case of the "vacant lot" and "school garden" movements there were two objectives. One was to relieve the misery of

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 12-16.

<sup>30</sup>Florence Finch Kelly, "An Undertow to the Land: Successful Efforts to Make Possible a Flow of the City Population Countryward," The Craftsman, XI (December, 1906), 302-308.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 299.

joblessness by producing food. The other was to attract city people to country living. If urban dwellers liked gardening, they might enjoy farming.

One of the most interesting aspects of "back-to-the-landism" was the "garden city" concept. This movement was world-wide, having its adherents in Europe, the United States, and Australia. The idea reflected an aversion to the drabness of urban life and was an attempt to preserve the advantages of city life while adding the desirable features of rural living. If one imagines the city as a wheel, with bands or circles radiating from a center, the "garden city" concept will be clearer. At the center would be parks, surrounded by public buildings. Next would be placed the cottages, then the shops and warehouses. Between cottages, shops, and warehouses there would be parks, playgrounds, and gardens. Outside the city would be factories, and completely encircling the entire city would be the "green belt" isolating the settlement from all other communities. Various "garden city" experiments were tried in the United States, one, for example, at Dayton, Ohio.<sup>32</sup> The movement was the brainchild of Ebenezer Howard, a London reformer.<sup>33</sup> Letchworth, England, is probably the best existing example of the idea.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Georges Benoit-Levy, "The Garden City," The Craftsman, VII (March, 1904), 288-293.

<sup>33</sup>Conklin, Tomorrow a New World, 61.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 64.

In the early 1900's a good many articles and some monographs were published featuring "back-to-the-landism." Elisha Benjamin Andrews, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Nebraska, wrote a book entitled: The Call of the Land: Popular Chapters on Topics of Interest to Farmers.<sup>35</sup>

The work contained many statements such as: "One thing is certain, that the welfare of rural communities is no mere affair of these communities alone, but is important to the entire Republic. For its continuance and strength the whole nation requires that the rural classes should thrive. As these classes are, so is the state."<sup>36</sup> The Craftsman magazine featured a series of articles on farm and rural life. Such titles as "Small Farms a Solution for the Evils of Overcrowded Cities and Unnatural Living" reveal the content of these articles.<sup>37</sup> Jacob A. Riis, the reformer, wrote a nostalgic series entitled "Our Happy Valley." In it he lauded farm life and the rewards of a simple pastoral existence.<sup>38</sup>

While vacant lot associations developed and the Salvation Army experimented with its colonies a more sophisticated group of "back-to-the-landers" evolved the idea of

<sup>35</sup>(New York: Orange Judd Company, 1913).

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>37</sup>The Editor, The Craftsman, XX (June, 1911), 305-311.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., XXV (November, 1913), 143-151, and XXV (December, 1913), 262-273.

planned land development which would eliminate many of the social and economic disadvantages of individual settlement. Representative of these thinkers was Elwood Mead the expert on irrigation and reclamation. Others included high government officials, particularly in the Interior and Labor Departments of the federal government. Their ideas and concepts emphasized "government planning" in settlement activities since they were bureaucrats.<sup>39</sup>

These planners rejected the traditional American mode of settlement, the individual or "infiltration" method. They supported instead the "colony" or "community" plan for rural development. Scientific experts would be provided, the communities would be large enough for cooperative efforts and social activities, and the settler would be spared any heart-breaking effort of trying to carve out a home for himself in the wilderness. It was assumed that only the federal government, or at very least the state governments, would have the facilities to carry out such a sweeping program.<sup>40</sup>

Just prior to World War I California had launched an ambitious, and apparently successful, land settlement program along the lines suggested by Elwood Mead. Under the Land Settlement Act of 1917 colonies were established at

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<sup>39</sup>See Chapter II for a discussion of the men active in the planned settlement movement.

<sup>40</sup>Elwood Mead, "The Advantages of Planned Rural Development," Reclamation Record, X-XI (January, 1919-December, 1920), 58-62.

Durham and Delhi. Durham was created in 1918 on something over 6,000 acres of good soil, under creek irrigation. The land was divided into various size allotments, including small laborer's plots. The University of California arranged for a soil survey and preparatory work was done on irrigation ditches, control of mosquitoes, and crop planting before the settlers arrived.<sup>41</sup>

The "colony" was not open to all. An applicant had to have \$1,500 in capital reserves and this was later raised to \$2,500. Payments were five per cent down on the land and 10 per cent on the equipment. The rest of the land payments were due over a 40 year period with five per cent interest. Improvements were to be paid for over a 20 year period. The purchaser had to live on his allotment eight months of the year, he had to keep up improvements, and the settlement board could, if he failed to follow the terms of his agreement, cancel the contract and count the money paid on the contract as rent on the land and buildings. The Delhi settlement was much the same, although the selection of land was more unfortunate.<sup>42</sup>

Although both settlements later failed, in their initial period they were an apt illustration of what the "col-

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<sup>41</sup>W. A. Hartman, State Land Settlement Problems and Policies in the United States, U. S., Department of Agriculture, Technical Bulletin 357 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 36.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 36-37.

ony" type of settlement could do for settlers. The homesteaders came to ready-made farms and there was no long "hard scrabble" time. The provisions for reserve capital were intended to prevent early failures due to lack of financial strength. Advocates of "colony" settlement were eager to apply the lessons learned in California to the needs of the returning soldiers. If they could move their program onto the national scene they could demonstrate its effectiveness and value.

The need for finding some means of caring for the returning soldiers had brought forth many advocates of rewarding veterans with land. There was, as mentioned previously, strong historical precedent for this idea. The "back-to-the-landers" and champions of planned settlement supported soldier settlement as a means of carrying out their program. They were aware of a powerful American tradition which would aid them in their campaign. This was the American belief that there was a peculiar virtue in farming not as a business, but as a way of life. Honesty, integrity, bravery, and governmental capacity were all supposed to be attributes of the simple yeoman. Part nostalgia for the agrarian past, a portion of democratic idealism, and perhaps even a little nonsense were the ingredients of the tradition. It was not confined to the farm population, but was widely spread throughout the entire nation. One historian has commented:

It is no concession to mythology to recognize the popularity of the family farm as a symbol of the

good life in the United States. Plato says the ideal forms of human institutions are laid away in heaven; but this one is not. It is the daydream of city-dwellers, the inspiration of poets and artists, the biographer's security for the youth of great men. It stands for democracy in its purest and most classic form. For millions of Americans it represents a better world, past but not quite lost, one to which they may still look for individual happiness or, maybe, national salvation.<sup>43</sup>

He further stated:

The belief exists that farming is more than a business, that it is a way of life; and although farmers themselves seem to be more interested in earning a living, there can be no doubt that the concept of the way of life has greatly influenced policies conceived in the interest of the business. . . . We have a soft spot in our hearts for farming. Who talks of saving business or manufacturing as a way of life? Who does not lament an abandoned farm?<sup>44</sup>

Placed in its historical setting this attitude is not too difficult to understand. The American past is an agrarian one. Throughout most of American history a great majority of the people lived on farms or in small rural villages. To find his tradition, his roots, the American must return to the land. When a politician praises farms and farming to an urban, and even urbane, American audience he is in reality lauding the ancestors of his listeners.

Eulogizing the peasant, yeoman, or farmer has an ancient past. The Romans and Greeks often attributed uncommon virtue to the tillers of the soil. Greek writers who did so included Aristotle and Roman authors such as Cicero

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<sup>43</sup>A. Whitney Griswold, Farming and Democracy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), 5.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 14.

also venerated yeomen. Medieval and Renaissance society thought of the peasant as a crude, but essentially pure, individual. The aristocracy and royalty of eighteenth century England and France were swept by an agrarian enthusiasm. Arthur Young wrote on scientific agriculture and George III thought of himself as a gentleman farmer. France was being wooed by the physiocrats who believed that all wealth came from the soil.<sup>45</sup> By the American Revolution the groundwork had been laid for the establishment of one of America's greatest traditions: the idea that agriculture was the best way to make a living and that farm life was preferable in many ways to city life. This has been called the "agrarian myth."

Thomas Jefferson did not invent this idea, nor was he the only exponent of its doctrine. But he is by common consent the father of American agrarianism.<sup>46</sup> Speaking of farmers Jefferson said:

Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, wedded to its liberty and interests, by the most lasting bonds.<sup>47</sup>

He also expressed this concept in more mystical terms:

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<sup>45</sup>ibid., 19-21.

<sup>46</sup>ibid., 19.

<sup>47</sup>Jefferson to John Jay, August 23, 1785, in J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., The Best Letters of Thomas Jefferson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), 15.



Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which He keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age or no nation has furnished an example . . . generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any State to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer to measure its degree of corruption.<sup>48</sup>

Much of Jefferson's thinking, on agriculture and democracy, was determined by "natural right" concepts which were derived from the philosophy of John Locke. Locke assured American farmers that they had a "natural right" to the use of land. Occupancy and use became, under Locke's theories, the sole basis for ownership. The idea that the "use" of land conveyed title was important to American farmers because they had wrested their land from the Indians. According to the American way of thinking the Indians did not "use" the land. That is, they did not cultivate the land or grow intensive crops. Locke's theories justified, neatly, a common frontier practice.<sup>49</sup>

A long time friend of Jefferson's was Pierre S. Du Pont de Nemours, a prominent physiocrat. In spite of his

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<sup>48</sup>Saul K. Padover, The Complete Jefferson: Containing His Major Writings, Published and Unpublished, Except His Letters (New York: Duell, Sloan & Peace, Inc., 1943), 678.

<sup>49</sup>Chester E. Eisinger, "The Influence of Natural Rights and Physiocratic Doctrines on American Agrarian Thought During the Revolutionary Period," Agricultural History, XXI (January, 1947), 14.

close relationship with Du Pont, and that the physiocrats regarded agriculture highly, there were nevertheless points of physiocratic doctrine that made it repugnant to Jefferson. First, the physiocrats were concerned with large scale farming and extensive estates, while Jefferson was the leader of the small farmers.<sup>50</sup> Second, the physiocrats advocated a single tax on land. This would be offensive to all of Jefferson's yeoman followers.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the physiocrats followed a stilted and formal dogma. Jefferson wanted to establish the primacy of agriculture and the right of citizens to own land. He was more pragmatic than dogmatic in his agrarian philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

There were many reasons for Jefferson's agrarianism. He loved the soil, he believed in a natural right to private property, he hoped the American frontier would prevent the growth of the misery which he had glimpsed in England, and he was politically sagacious enough to realize that the farmers were, in his time, the "masses," far outnumbering the "classes." The really important point is that Jefferson arrived at the conclusion that family farmers were "the most precious part of a state."<sup>53</sup> His agrarian ideas were always concerned with the small farmers. To him, agriculture was

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<sup>50</sup>Griswold, Farming, 29.

<sup>51</sup>Eisinger, "Natural Rights," 20-21.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>53</sup>Griswold, Farming, 50.

a way of life, it had political and social value. Farming as a source of wealth, other than spiritual or philosophical, did not concern Jefferson. He claimed for small farmers an almost exclusive monopoly of desirable virtues.<sup>54</sup>

Jefferson thought of the agrarian way of life and democracy as synonymous.<sup>55</sup> To him the best and most workable democracy was one founded upon the strength and sturdy virtues of family farmers.<sup>56</sup> A secretary of agriculture has expressed Jefferson's viewpoint on farming and democracy thus: "When we consider Jefferson's love for farming, his devotion to democracy, and his dependence upon farm people to make democracy strong, we can readily see why he was constantly endeavoring to expand American agriculture and to make farmers efficient, happy, and prosperous."<sup>57</sup> The fact that Jefferson as a politician was aware of the superior voting power of the farmers does not detract from his sincere belief in the small farmer's inherent superiority as a citizen.<sup>58</sup>

Jefferson developed a well articulated theory of agrarianism. Basic to the theory was the "natural right"

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Claude R. Wickard, "Thomas Jefferson--Founder of Modern American Agriculture" (from Addresses at the Pilgrimage to Monticello), Agricultural History, XIX (July, 1945), 179.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

to property. Since the most common form of property was land and the most desirable citizen was the small farmer there was a direct connection between a "natural right" to property and Jeffersonian democracy. Obviously, you could not develop landowning, superior citizens if they did not have the right to acquire landed property. In addition, the Jeffersonians were convinced that agriculture represented a superior way of life and was something more than a means of making a living.<sup>59</sup>

Jefferson's agrarian theory did not wither and die with age. It became more potent with the passing of time, and as it acquired the stature of a "myth" or dogma there grew up in America what one historian has referred to as the "yeoman tradition."<sup>60</sup> This dogma, as Jefferson would have desired, was not a peasant tradition. Although a fairly competent agriculturalist, the American landowning farmer was never content with subsistence farming.<sup>61</sup> The farmers believed that all other occupations were dependent upon them and that their way of life was superior to all others. They had great contempt for what they considered the immorality and slackness of other segments of society.<sup>62</sup> The "yeoman

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<sup>59</sup>Griswold, Farming, 25-37.

<sup>60</sup>William Best Hesseltine, "Four American Traditions," The Journal of Southern History, XXVII (February, 1961).

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 17-18.

tradition" was one dedicated, in theory, to independence, the dignity of toil, and simplicity of life.<sup>63</sup>

The "agrarian myth" corresponded to reality as long as America remained predominantly agricultural. Before the Civil War, and as late as 1890 more Americans made a living at farming than in any other single occupation. It is confusing, however, that the "agrarian mystique" persisted in the United States after America had passed well into the industrial age. It is true, nevertheless, that the American had moved to the city, but he had not forgotten his pastoral past.

The continuing potency of the agrarian tradition can be illustrated by observing its effect upon the presidency.<sup>64</sup> From Washington to Grant the American presidents had deep agrarian roots. Most of them derived from the "squireocracy," but nevertheless they were farmers of a sort. Only Lincoln and Fillmore completely deserted agricultural pursuits and became city dwellers. As a matter of fact, Washington, Jefferson, Van Buren, and Buchanan probably enjoyed their retirement roles as agriculturalists, sages, and patriarchs more than their political careers. That the presidents were of country origin from 1790-1877 is, however, not surprising

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>64</sup>The following two paragraphs are based upon Earle D. Ross, "The Agricultural Backgrounds and Attitudes of American Presidents," Social Forces, XIII (October, 1934), 37-43.

since America was predominantly rural.

After Grant there was still a rural quality to the American presidency. Hayes and McKinley were from small towns, but they were hardly "city slickers." Garfield and Harrison had the Horatio Alger role of the country boy "making good" in the city. Benjamin Harrison was born into the "squire" society of the Old Northwest, although he preferred city life. Woodrow Wilson represented the agrarian South, at least by birth. Arthur, Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft were city men. The striking thing is not that there were four city born presidents from the Civil War to World War I, but that there were no more with urban backgrounds.

Presidential campaigns have reflected the American affection and regard for agrarian life. Before the Civil War little was said about the agricultural antecedents of presidential candidates. This was true because the country was so completely rural that most candidates would naturally be farm bred. But the more the United States developed industrially the more ardently campaign managers strove to establish the agrarian background of their candidates.<sup>65</sup>

This phenomenon cannot be dismissed as merely an attempt to appeal to the farm vote, since the attempts to establish an agrarian connection became more desperate as

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<sup>65</sup>W. Burlie Brown, "The Cincinnatus Image in Presidential Politics," Agricultural History, XXXI (January, 1957), 23-24.

the number of farmers declined. Political strategists were convinced, and they were undoubtedly correct, that Americans attached peculiar virtue to a farm background, that they trusted a man of the soil to have honesty and integrity as built-in characteristics, and they expected the farm bred candidate to have an almost instinctive capacity for statesmanship.<sup>66</sup>

The problem of how to aid four million veterans in readjusting to civilian life, then, had brought forward the suggestion that at least a portion of these men be settled in organized veterans' communities. The proposal for planned settlement seemed almost a "natural" to many citizens. This was true because of the long American tradition of rewarding her fighting men with land; because many citizens were disturbed by the evils of industrialism and advocated "back-to-the-landism"; because many other people felt that the mistake in our colonization policy had been lack of organization and desired government aid in settlement; and because of the long agrarian bias or tradition in American thinking. There were, of course, many proposals to give veterans land according to traditional methods. Congressman Dick T. Morgan of Oklahoma introduced the most important plan along "infiltration" lines.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>See Morgan Papers in the Archives, the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

## CHAPTER II

### PROPOSED SOLDIER SETTLEMENT PLANS

The soldier settlement plan of Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane received more publicity than any of the other proposals. The Interior Plan, as it was often called, included most of the principles of the "colony" idea of land development. That is, it called for communities large enough to insure social and economic advantages to the colonists with adequate governmental supervision. To carry into effect his proposed project Lane had at his disposal the experienced Reclamation Service which had just completed sixteen years of land development work. He also had recently attracted to his staff the distinguished colonization expert Elwood Mead. With great vigor Lane, other officials in the Interior Department, and the work force of the Reclamation Service pressed their proposal for veterans' settlements upon the public and Congress.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For examples of contemporary periodical articles concerning Lane's soldier settlement plans consult Walter B. Pitkin, "Swamp or Civilization? Secretary Lane's Repatriation Project," Dial, LXVII (July, 1919), 51-53, and [Special Correspondent,] "Lane and Mondell, Real Estate," Public, XXII (August, 1919), 819-821, for unfriendly commentaries. Franklin K. Lane, "Out of the Army, Back to the Land: With the Help of the United States Government," Touchstone, V



Lane was born in Canada. Educated at the University of California, he subsequently became a member of the California Bar, a newspaperman, and a public servant. Lane's elective career was, with one exception, a series of defeats, his public activity being mainly in appointive positions. Chosen in 1906 as a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission, Lane had just assumed the Chairmanship of that body when President Wilson named him Secretary of the Interior in 1913. Lane's interests included conservation and an avid zeal for "Americanization."<sup>2</sup> At his best Lane combined the praiseworthy characteristics of Wilson's New Freedom and Roosevelt's New Nationalism. Lane, a Jeffersonian agrarian, wanted to return some of the population to the soil, but he also was sufficiently Hamiltonian to favor a more active governmental role in the economy.<sup>3</sup>

The regular staff of the Reclamation Service did yeoman duty in developing plans for soldier settlement and in

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(June, 1919), 220-223, is a glowing account of his proposal by the Sec. of Int. The agrarian press featured many articles on soldier settlement such as "Bills for Soldiers' Homes," Farm and Ranch, XXXVIII (November, 1919), 6, usually from an unfavorable viewpoint. National newspapers such as the New York Times gave ample coverage to the subject.

<sup>2</sup>Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, XIX-XX (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 572-573, for biographical material. For an explanation of Lane's views on "Americanization" consult U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, pp. 13-24.

<sup>3</sup>Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1951), 51.

exploring the possibilities for colonization throughout the nation. In general charge of planning was Arthur P. Davis, Chief Engineer of the Service. H. T. Cory surveyed settlement sites in the South while Frank W. Hanna looked over possible colonization projects in the North.<sup>4</sup> The Reclamation Service also sought out the advice of Hugh MacRae of Wilmington, North Carolina, who had extensive and successful experience in colonizing immigrants around Wilmington.<sup>5</sup>

Harry A. Slattery, a member of Lane's staff at the time, drafted the original letter which Lane sent to President Wilson advocating soldier settlement as a desirable form of repatriation. Slattery was an old friend of Gifford Pinchot's and had served as Secretary of the National Conservation Association. By 1919 Slattery was apparently disillusioned with Lane's idea as he helped draft resolutions against the Interior plan for soldier settlement.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>"Memorandum for the Press," August 28, 1918, National Archives, Records of the Reclamation Service, Record Group 115. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 115.

<sup>5</sup>Hugh MacRae, "Memorandum: Farm Communities for Returning Soldiers," September 18, 1918, NA RG 115, for MacRae's advice on soldier settlement. Consult Hugh MacRae, "Bringing Immigrants to the South, Address Delivered Before the North Carolina Society of New York," December 7, 1908, copy in MacRae Papers, the Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, for his early career as a colonizer and "Prospectus of the St. Helena Colony Company," March 20, 1908, in the MacRae Papers for more specific details regarding his colonization activity.

<sup>6</sup>See copy of Lane's letter to Wilson, dated May 31, 1918, with penciled notation giving authorship to Slattery in Slattery Papers, the Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. For Slattery's friendship with Pinchot con-

Working closely with Lane in formulating soldier settlement plans was Elwood Mead. Mead had been trained in civil engineering and displayed an early interest in irrigation. He was soon the acknowledged expert in the field and became the Head of the Office of Irrigation Investigation in the United States Department of Agriculture. Mead served for a time as Chairman of the State Rivers and Supply Commission of Victoria, Australia, and was very impressed by the planned settlements of that commonwealth. Basically an agrarian and disturbed by the continuing growth of cities in the United States, Mead allied himself with Hiram Johnson and the Commonwealth Club of California to push through the California legislature the Land Settlement Act of 1917. Durham, California, was the first farm colony under this law. Mead cooperated to some extent in the proposed plans of William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor in the Wilson Administration, to combat unemployment with land settlement. In 1918 he joined Lane to work in the Reclamation Service and put his support behind soldier settlement.<sup>7</sup>

An integral idea behind the Lane plan was the belief

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sult Pinchot to Slattery, August 6, 1918, in Slattery Papers. For Slattery's drafting of resolutions unfriendly to Lane's plans see Slattery to John J. McSwain, Greenville, South Carolina, November 12, 1919, Slattery Papers. In this letter Slattery claimed that he was merely acting as a "lawyer," drawing up a brief, when he drafted the unfriendly resolutions.

<sup>7</sup>Paul K. Conkin, "The Vision of Elwood Mead," Agricultural History, XXXIV (April, 1960), 88-92.

that many soldiers would need, or desire, immediate work upon discharge. If they could apply their wages toward acquiring a farm home, the postwar labor surplus which was expected by a good many government officials might not develop.<sup>8</sup> To supply work for the returning veteran was not considered as only an humanitarian act by Lane. He firmly believed that the government should not give a farm to any soldier "for no man would want such a thing." The ex-soldiers were to be paid wages and, if possible, were to apply their savings on a down payment for a farm.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, any money which the government advanced the veteran for a down payment or improvements was to be paid back over a long period of time.<sup>10</sup> It was also thought that the veteran from the city could gain valuable farm experience by working on the reclamation projects.<sup>11</sup> Another purpose in the immediate employment of some of the doughboys was to provide ex-soldiers with a living wage, thereby stimulating postwar industrial consumption.<sup>12</sup>

The Secretary and other officials of the Interior

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<sup>8</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, p. 6, and U. S., Department of Labor, Annual Report, 1918, p. 145.

<sup>9</sup>Lane, "Out of the Army Back to the Land," 221.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 220-221.

<sup>11</sup>Arthur P. Davis, "Memorandum on Restoring Soldiers to Rural Life," July 19, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>12</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, p. 6.

Department and the Reclamation Service were genuinely concerned over a continuing shift of the population toward the city.<sup>13</sup> One hope of these men was to return as many veterans to the farm as had left to go to the army, or about 1.5 million.<sup>14</sup> In Lane's mind there were two regrettable "drifts" in the American population. One was a disturbing increase in farm tenancy and the other was the accelerated movement of the population from the rural to the urban areas.<sup>15</sup> Lane wanted to increase the proportion of landowning citizens and what better group could be chosen for this purpose than the "best-proved" Americans, the soldiers?<sup>16</sup> As for property holding in general and land ownership in particular, he said:

Unquestionably the ownership of property has a tendency to develop patriotism. The citizen who owns property feels a much stronger ownership in the institutions of his country than does the man who owns no property. There is no property, moreover, that carries with it this characteristic more strongly than does land. It is believed that if for no other reason this plan should receive the support of everybody on the grounds of the distribution of land ownership with a view to the development of a higher spirit of patriotism throughout the country.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Davis, "Memorandum on Restoring Soldiers," NA RG 115.

<sup>15</sup>Franklin K. Lane to Champ Clark, May 31, 1918, "Disposition of the Public Lands," in U. S., Congress, House, House Document 1157, 65th Cong., 2d Sess., 3.

<sup>16</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup>Franklin K. Lane to R. L. Watts, Dean, Pennsylvania State College, April 10, 1919, National Archives, Records of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48, hereinafter

Concerning tenancy he believed that "The experience of the world shows without question that the happiest people, the best farms, and the soundest political conditions are found where the farmer owns the home and the farm lands."<sup>18</sup> Elwood Mead shared this basic agrarian belief and was disturbed by the trend toward urbanization. Nostalgia for the farm was a common virus in early twentieth century America.<sup>19</sup>

Lane was convinced that one of the major reasons for the decline of rural population was dissatisfaction with the social conditions of farm life. To meet this problem he suggested:

We must turn, as Europe has in her centuries of experience, to the farm village, the settlement of farmers around a center which is their home, in which can be gathered most of the advantages of the city--the good school, the church, the moving picture, the well outfitted store--and these, with good roads, the rural express, the telephone, the automobile, and the post office will make life on the farm a thing of far different meaning from the isolated life it has been.<sup>20</sup>

Mead also believed that the social side of American agricultural life had too long been neglected. He thought that with proper effort organized communities would be "entirely unlike the individualistic settlements of the past."<sup>21</sup>

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referred to as NA RG 48. Italics mine.

<sup>18</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Conkin, "The Vision of Elwood Mead," 89.

<sup>20</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>Elwood Mead, "The Advantages of Planned Rural

In addition to social amelioration, "colony" settlement would provide cooperative and scientific advantages to the settlers. Mead believed that one of the weaknesses of American agriculture was an inability to market efficiently the large crops which American farmers produced. He felt that scattered "model" colonies would afford an example of the advantages of cooperative marketing and scientific production and might effect a revolution in American farming. Mead argued for a greater amount of planning in rural development and for a larger recognition of group needs as compared to individual wants.<sup>22</sup> Lane agreed with this reasoning emphatically:

The farmer's low wage can not now be charged to over production. Surely it is due more to the way his product is handled--to lack of cooperation in farming and marketing, leaving it to others to exploit his product. To help him in these things we need community effort. So we are seeking tracts large enough to be handled with planned rural development. Scattered farms will not do for this and would make it impossible at reasonable expense to extend personal aid and advice.<sup>23</sup>

There were two other reasons for insisting upon the "colony" method. One was the type of land which would be available for settlement. Obviously there would be no great supply of fertile Iowa corn-land for returning veterans.

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Development," Reclamation Record, X-XI (January 1919-December 1920), 58.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Lane to Edwin C. Powell, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 23, 1918, NA RG 48.

What would be available for colonization were the semiarid regions of the West and Southwest, the cutover and swamp lands of the South, the Old Northwest and New England, and the abandoned farms of the Northeast. Reclaiming this land would be expensive and time-consuming. It would call for concentrated effort over a long period of time to make it productive.<sup>24</sup> Because the land obtainable for soldier settlement was widely scattered throughout the Union, Lane early arrived at the idea of federal-state cooperation in soldier settlement matters. He thought that in order to give veterans' settlement national support, colonies would have to be established in different sections of the country. Because in many cases land would have to be acquired from the states or individuals, Lane thought it best to confine settlements to groups rather than individuals.<sup>25</sup> Federal-state cooperation was planned, basically, on the premise that the states would provide the land and the federal government donate the money for reclamation. Where agricultural training for veterans was necessary the states would furnish it, but the federal government could advance some of the money.<sup>26</sup> Lane intended to utilize, whenever possible, the cooperation

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<sup>24</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, pp. 7-8. See this footnote for amounts of land supposedly available for reclamation by irrigation, drainage, or clearing.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 6-8.

<sup>26</sup>Davis, "Memorandum on Restoring Soldiers," NA RG 115.



of existing state and local agencies and organizations in veterans' settlements. These groups would have included, particularly, local farm bureaus and agricultural colleges.<sup>27</sup>

For these reasons officials of the Interior Department and the Reclamation Service rejected the "infiltration" or individual exploitation method of colonization. They did so in spite of the historical fact that "infiltration" had been used almost exclusively by American pioneers. They repudiated the "infiltration" or "shotgun" method because it would be too expensive to establish individual farms for veterans in all the regions of the United States, because it could not carry with it cooperative advantages, and because they were committed to an idealistic concept of society as an organized group functioning for the good of the individual.<sup>28</sup>

The Interior plan included the idea of fee simple title to the lands settled. Believing that landowning was one means of ensuring patriotism, Lane remained adamant on the point of private ownership. After the land was paid for title would pass to the settler or his heirs.<sup>29</sup> Lane was always careful to make his position on this point quite clear, sending numerous telegrams at one time stating that

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>F. W. Hanna, "Soldier Settlement Under the Community Plan Versus the Infiltration Plan," Reclamation Record, X-XI (January 1919-December 1920), 148-149.

<sup>29</sup>U. S., Department of the Interior, Annual Report, 1918, p. 12.

private ownership of the land was the official policy of the Department.<sup>30</sup> Some officials of the Reclamation Service were fearful this type of title would lead to speculation as shown by the Davis "Memorandum" on soldier settlement.<sup>31</sup> Davis's adverse opinion concerning fee simple title did not, however, prevent the inclusion of that principle in the Lane bill and most of the major legislative proposals.<sup>32</sup> Louis F. Post, Assistant Secretary of Labor, maintained that Lane would not surrender the idea of private ownership of title, and therefore there could be no cooperation between the Interior and Labor departments on soldier settlement. The Labor Department bureaucracy was determined to keep some government control over title to prevent undue speculation.<sup>33</sup>

Anticipating the passage of soldier settlement legislation, a good deal of prior planning was done by officials of Interior and Reclamation. An elaborate "Tentative Plan of Operations Under Proposed Soldier Settlement Law" was drawn up consisting of questions and answers about the proposed program. This memorandum contained, in detail, the

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<sup>30</sup>Lane to H. L. Russell, Dean, University of Wisconsin, February 18, 1919, NA RG 48, as an example of these telegrams.

<sup>31</sup>Davis, "Memorandum on Restoring Soldiers," NA RG 115.-

<sup>32</sup>See provisions of H. R. 487 in "Legislative File," NA RG 48.

<sup>33</sup>Louis F. Post, "Living a Long Life Over Again," Unpublished Manuscript, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 330-331.

principles of the Interior plan.<sup>34</sup> Other data was prepared under the titles "Memorandum, Soldier Settlement" and the "Davis Memorandum."<sup>35</sup> Attempts were also made to persuade various agricultural colleges to offer classes in agriculture to veterans who might later qualify for farms under the soldier settlement law.<sup>36</sup> A good many of the colleges replied favorably to this suggestion, although they had, in some cases, already planned a similar program. Means of financing the classes was the biggest obstacle.<sup>37</sup>

Soldier settlement plans received a good deal of attention from Congress during the period 1918-1921. At any given time some measure was being introduced in one or the other house, hearings were being conducted, or debate was taking place. The legislative files of the Interior Department in the National Archives contains the summaries of well over 100 proposed bills for veterans' settlement. Only a few of these measures, however, received any serious consideration from Congress or the Interior Department.<sup>38</sup>

Lane tended to approve or disapprove of soldier set-

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<sup>34</sup>"Tentative Plan of Operations Under Proposed Soldier Settlement Law," NA RG 115.

<sup>35</sup>"Memorandum, Soldier Settlement," NA RG 115, and Davis, "Memorandum on Restoring Soldiers," NA RG 115.

<sup>36</sup>Alex Summers, Commissioner of Education to Lane, April 2, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>37</sup>E. F. Ladd, President, North Dakota Agricultural College to John W. Hollowell, April 11, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>38</sup>See "Legislative File," NA RG 48.

tlement bills depending upon how closely the measure conformed to his general philosophy. He objected outright to some of the measures and gave qualified support to those he thought would be satisfactory with modification. For example, when H. R. 12552 was introduced by Nicholas J. Sinnott, Republican of Oregon, Lane suggested that the bill be expanded to include not only the reclamation of arid land, but swamp and cutover areas as well.<sup>39</sup> He approved, in principle, the provisions of H. R. 13651 introduced by James F. Byrnes, Democrat of South Carolina.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand he objected strenuously to S. 5005 introduced by Senator Charles L. McNary, Republican of Oregon, because it would have put the reclamation of land under the Secretary of War rather than the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>41</sup> Lane also reacted adversely to those bills which had been disapproved by the Secretary of the Treasury on financial grounds.<sup>42</sup> He naturally opposed all acts for individual settlement.

The Mondell bill, or H. R. 487, was variously referred to as the National Soldier Settlement Act and the Lane-Mondell bill. It was favorably reported on in a memorandum by H. T.

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<sup>39</sup>Lane to Edward T. Taylor, Chairman, Committee on Irrigation, United States House of Representatives, December 28, 1918, NA RG 48.

<sup>40</sup>Lane to Taylor, February 17, 1919, NA RG 48.

<sup>41</sup>Lane to Henry L. Meyers, Chairman, Senate Committee on Public Lands, January 20, 1919, NA RG 48.

<sup>42</sup>Lane to Charles L. McNary, September 14, 1919, NA RG 48.

Cory and had the general support of members of the Service and Department.<sup>43</sup> This proposal, partially drafted by Elwood Mead,<sup>44</sup> sought to establish a National Soldier Settlement Fund from which the Secretary of the Interior would be authorized to acquire land for settlements. The acquisition of property was to be regulated by a representative of the governor of the state involved, an appraiser of the Federal Farm Loan Board, and the Secretary of the Interior. It was planned that so far as possible at least one project would be located in each state. The Secretary would be allowed to make such improvements as would bring the lands into profitable cultivation and veterans were to be employed in the work. Loans could be made for improvements, the land was to be divided

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<sup>43</sup>In "Legislative File," NA RG 48. Lane considered, in October, 1919, the following bills as important enough for consideration: S. 45 (William H. King of Utah), S. 792 (Henry L. Myers of Montana), S. 863 (Reed Smoot of Utah), H. R. 415 (John F. Raker of California), H. R. 457 (Edward T. Taylor of Colorado), H. R. 479 (James F. Byrnes of South Carolina), H. R. 487 (Frank W. Mondell of Wyoming), H. R. 3156 (John N. Tillman of Arkansas), H. R. 3274 (Harold Knutson of Minnesota), H. R. 4377 (Benigno C. Hernandez of New Mexico), H. R. 4094 (Paul B. Johnson of Mississippi), H. R. 5395 (Riley J. Wilson of Louisiana), H. R. 5545 (Dick T. Morgan of Oklahoma), H. R. 7004 (M. Clyde Kelly of Pennsylvania), H. R. 7351 (John M. Evans of Montana), H. R. 7622 (Scott Ferris of Oklahoma), H. R. 7710 (William W. Hastings of Oklahoma), and H. R. 8820 (Louis T. MacFadden of Pennsylvania). These were bills introduced in the 66th Congress, 1st Session, designations would vary from session to session. Lane to Frederick B. Wells, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 18, 1919, NA RG 48.

<sup>44</sup>Elwood Mead, "Lane and Mondell--A Correction," undated and unpublished article in NA RG 115. In this article Mead denied the assertion in the Public article "Lane and Mondell, Real Estate," that he had had nothing to do with drafting the Mondell bill.

into family size farms and laborer's allotments, town sites were to be reserved, and community centers were to be established for the settlers. The veteran was to pay five per cent down and make the rest of the payments over a period not exceeding 40 years at four per cent annual interest. No transfer of title could be made for the first five years without the approval of the Secretary. When a state provided at least 25 per cent of the necessary funds it could take over the administration of the projects under the general supervision of the Secretary. The bill proposed an appropriation of \$500 million.<sup>45</sup> The Mondell bill was the major act put forward by the Interior officials and the debate concerning soldier settlement was in terms of that measure.

While Lane, Mead, and others formulated their proposals another scheme was brought forward by the staff of the Labor Department. Although not as well publicized as the Lane-Mondell scheme, the Department of Labor Plan was the most significant alternative to the Interior proposals. Labor Department planners had long speculated on the need and desirability of planned land settlement before Lane came forward with his soldier settlement scheme. As early as 1915 Secretary of Labor William Bauchop Wilson had advocated land settlement as one means of alleviating chronic unemployment. It took only one more step for Labor officials to suggest soldier settlement as a part of land and resources development.

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<sup>45</sup>In "Legislative File," NA RG 48.

William B. Wilson was probably the most unique of the New Freedom team which assumed office in Washington in 1913. He did not have the intellectual stature of Woodrow Wilson or David F. Houston, he was not an elder statesman like Bryan, and unlike Lane he was not an experienced administrator. A trade unionist with some experience in politics and Congress, Wilson, for that time, had an unusual background for a cabinet member.

Wilson, the son of a labor organizer, was born in Scotland. His father moved to America because of difficulty over his union activity. Following in his father's footsteps, the younger Wilson became an enthusiastic trade unionist. Wilson had much practical experience as a laborer and union official, some as a politician, but very little formal schooling. At one time he tried his hand at farming when union members were discriminated against in employment. Wilson was instrumental in organizing the United Mine Workers of America in 1890. In 1906, he was elected to Congress, as a Democrat from Pennsylvania, and was defeated six years later. His political downfall came when a Socialist candidate deprived him of a bloc of normally Democratic votes. Wilson became the first Secretary of Labor, a fitting reward for a dedicated union organizer.<sup>46</sup> He remained a staunch

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<sup>46</sup>John D. Lombardi, Labor's Voice in the Cabinet: A History of the Department of Labor From Its Origin to 1921 (Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, 496, edited by the Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University; New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 76-83.

unionist, but with practical experience as Secretary of Labor, Wilson probably became more aware of the problems facing businessmen.<sup>47</sup>

Balancing Wilson in the Department was Louis F. Post the Assistant Secretary. Post was a veteran single taxer and had founded and edited the Public which expounded the views of the followers of Henry George. It is probably true that he wrote many of the Secretary's official reports for Wilson was not an erudite man. Post brought to the Department his influence with nonunion liberals and his unfailing concern for the cause of the common man. One writer has characterized the Post-Wilson relationship aptly: "He [Post] was the idealist, the intellectual, the man of ideas, an admirable complement to Wilson, the practical man, experienced in the rough and tumble ways of trade unionism."<sup>48</sup>

The intellectual influence of Post in the Labor Department is nowhere better illustrated than in the Labor plan for soldier settlement. Regarding the type of tenure to be given the settler, the government was to retain title to land to prevent speculative profits. This is basically single tax doctrine. Others, of course, helped with planning and drafting Labor's alternative to the Lane proposal. Frederic C. Howe, Commissioner of Immigration, Port of New York, sub-

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<sup>47</sup>Dictionary of American Biography, XIX-XX, 349, for this view.

<sup>48</sup>Lombardi, Labor's Voice in the Cabinet, 89-91.



mitted an elaborate memorandum on soldier settlement.<sup>49</sup>

Benton Mackaye, originally with the Forest Service but later transferred to Labor, had some hand in drafting the proposals. It might be added, however, that Mackaye's basic philosophy was similar to that of Post.<sup>50</sup> William Kent, Tariff Commissioner, also wrote letters to President Wilson expounding the Labor position on soldier settlement.<sup>51</sup> Part of the initial investigation of colonization possibilities was done by Leif Magnusson of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>52</sup>

Several years before soldier settlement became a public issue, Post was authorized by Secretary Wilson to investigate the possibility of utilizing public lands for the benefit of wage earners in the United States.<sup>53</sup> On the basis of Post's work, Wilson outlined his general land and resources policy in his annual report of 1915. He felt that the natural resources of the country should be so developed

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<sup>49</sup>Frederic C. Howe, "The Farm Colony and the Returning Soldier," in the William B. Wilson Papers, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>50</sup>Benton Mackaye, Possibilities of Making New Opportunities for Employment Through the Settlement and Development of Agricultural and Other Resources (United States Department of Labor, Washington, 1919).

<sup>51</sup>Kent to Wilson, June 3 and June 28, 1918, Slattery Papers, the Archives, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

<sup>52</sup>Louis F. Post, "Memorandum for the Secretary," June 3, 1918, in National Archives, General Records of the Department of Labor, Record Group 174. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 174.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

that opportunities for work would be more abundant.<sup>54</sup> One of the most striking portions of the report concerned the Secretary's aversion to fee-simple title. He believed that the government should not "lightly divest itself" of title to public lands, indeed it should be in the process of acquiring more. In other words, title would depend upon use. Wilson, influenced no doubt by Post, wanted no inflation of land values through speculation.<sup>55</sup>

One of the first results of the 1915 report was the introduction in Congress of the Crosser or National Colonization bill in February, 1916. This act proposed the establishment of a national colonization board headed by the Secretaries of Labor, Interior, and Agriculture. The board was to acquire farm land for the urban unemployed either by purchase or by setting aside public lands. Title to the land was to remain in the hands of the government and the leaseholder would pay four per cent of the development cost per year for 50 years, plus additional payment in lieu of taxes. The colonists were to be settled in organized communities somewhat after the pattern of the Australian settlements. A beginning appropriation of \$50 million was called for in the bill.<sup>56</sup> Reflecting the general policy of the Department

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<sup>54</sup>U. S., Department of Labor, Annual Report, 1915, pp. 43-44.

<sup>55</sup>ibid., 45.

<sup>56</sup>Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 49-50.

of Labor, the Crosser bill proposed the planned development of all natural resources: mineral, forest, and agricultural. Hearings were held on the Crosser bill in May, June, and December, 1916, and Secretary Wilson endorsed the measure in principle.<sup>57</sup>

Another result of the 1915 report was the immediate interest of some Forest Service personnel in the idea. Benton Mackaye, as mentioned previously, did surveys for the Labor Department, wrote a voluminous report on possible settlement projects, and eventually joined the Labor Department. Raphael Zon and Henry Solon Graves, the Chief Forester, were also vitally interested in planned settlement.

During the war there was continued concern with planned resources development in the Labor Department. With the end of the conflict approaching Labor officials included soldier settlement in their scheme for resources development. Eventually Labor bureaucrats supported the Kelly bill, or H. R. 15672. This measure called for the establishment of a "United States Construction Service" to serve not only as a means of combatting immediate postwar unemployment, but to provide a "reservoir" in times of labor surplus and a "dilutor" when there was a labor shortage.<sup>59</sup> This was a much more

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<sup>57</sup>Post, "Memorandum for the Secretary," NA RG 174.

<sup>58</sup>ibid.; Benton Mackaye, Possibilities of Making New Opportunities for Employment.

<sup>59</sup>Benton Mackaye to Louis F. Post, "Proposed Legislation in Connection With the Kelley and Kenyon Bills," February 13, 1919, NA RG 174.

dramatic and sweeping proposal than mere land settlement. If enacted, it would have pledged the government to combat unemployment in a direct way. The construction service was considered by the Labor staff as the heart of their plan.<sup>60</sup>

Labor and Interior leaders were not able to settle upon a common plan for soldier settlement that could be presented to Congress and the public. At one point an informal conference was held in the office of Louis F. Post to discuss a joint endeavor. No agreement could be reached since there were fundamental differences in the plans of Labor and Interior. Department of Agriculture staff members, also represented at the conference, were indifferent to the whole idea, if not positively hostile.<sup>61</sup>

By stressing the differences, important similarities in the proposals put forward by the Interior and Labor departments can be overlooked. Both were influenced by the Australian experience in planned agricultural settlement and the temporary success of the California colonies. Also, the ideas of Elwood Mead are as clear in the Labor plan as in the Interior scheme. Wilson and Post, as was true of Lane, emphasized

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Post, "Memorandum for the Secretary," NA RG 174, for the conference. Louis F. Post, "Living a Long Life Over Again," 330-331, for the basic disagreement between Interior and Labor concerning the type of title to be given the settlers. Consult E. T. Meredith, Secretary of Agriculture to H. H. Franklin, Syracuse, New York, July 30, 1920, National Archives, General Records of the Department of Agriculture, Record Group 16 for agrarian antipathy to soldier settlement. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 16.

community effort as opposed to the old idea of "infiltration" or individual colonization.<sup>62</sup> Along with the common concept of planning went the idea of creating a satisfactory form of rural community life for the settlers. In the minds of officials of the Labor Department, as in those of Interior men, it was necessary to prevent social isolation from striking at the roots of farm life.<sup>63</sup> It was also hoped within the Labor Department bureaucracy that preparatory work on the projects would alleviate any possibility of a dangerous post-war labor surplus.<sup>64</sup> So far as the principles of planning and community effort, and the idea that the government should play a greater role in the economy, are concerned, the two plans were very much alike.

But on three major points the two proposals were very different. The first of these was that Labor planners considered "land" in a much broader sense than did the Interior officials. When Interior people mentioned "land" they were thinking exclusively of agricultural land. When Labor officials talked of "land" development they were concerned with agricultural, forest, and mineral lands. Louis F. Post expressed the Labor definition of "land" thus:

The policy contemplated by this Department includes agricultural settlement, but is not limited to that.

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<sup>62</sup>U. S., Department of Labor, Annual Report, 1918, pp. 145-146.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 148.

We look to all the natural resources of the country as an opportunity for the returned soldier, and therefore the development of forest tracts for continuous growth, with the founding of permanent forest communities, seems to us of profound importance at this time. The study which we have started concerns land in its broadest sense.<sup>65</sup>

Secretary Wilson elaborated on this theme in his report for 1918. He advocated the establishment of permanent forest communities and the development of the forest industry on a "cultural" rather than an "exploitation" basis. He felt that this would go a long way toward eliminating the then current problem of the "wobbly."<sup>66</sup> The same policy might be employed on the remaining mineral lands on the public domain.<sup>67</sup> The Secretary was especially enthusiastic concerning the possibilities of planned development in Alaska.<sup>68</sup>

One of the most crucial differences between the plans was the type of title to be given soldier settlers. From the very beginning Wilson insisted that the government should not "lightly divest itself" of title to any of the lands used for the mitigation of unemployment.<sup>69</sup> He felt that "wherever inflation of land values might enter in, the proposed method of promoting labor distribution would be obstructed."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Louis F. Post to Elwood Mead, May 14, 1918, NA RG 174.

<sup>66</sup>Industrial Workers of the World. U. S., Department of Labor, Annual Report, 1918, p. 147.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 147-148.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 1915, p. 45.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

Wilson never altered this position. In the past he believed land grants had passed out of the hands of soldiers into the clutches of speculators. Absolute tenure rights would be "useless [to the soldiers] . . . but attractive to speculators."<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in order to make community effort possible it was necessary to make tenure dependent upon use.<sup>72</sup> To the Labor Department hierarchy the matter of tenure was one of the decisive dividing lines between its plan and Lane's.

In the Forest Service a "first cousin" of the Labor plan was formulated. As mentioned previously, members of the Forest Service had indicated an early interest in planned settlement. Raphael Zon of the Forest Service made a careful study of development possibilities with special reference to the forests of the nation. Zon had contacts with Elwood Mead and with officials of the Labor Department.<sup>73</sup> He regarded Mead's California colonies as "merely a local demonstration of the advisability of State aid in settlement on land." Zon thought the California system would not work as a postwar measure because under it farmstead prices were too high, and to settle any appreciable number of soldiers under this sort of procedure would require at least a billion dollars.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>ibid., 1917, p. 153.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., 1918, p. 146.

<sup>73</sup>Raphael Zon to Earle H. Clapp, Assistant Forester, National Archives, Records of the Forest Service, Record Group 95, April 5, 1918, for the contact with Mead. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 95. Post, "Memorandum for the Secretary," NA RG 174, for the labor connection.

<sup>74</sup>Zon to Benton Mackaye, April 23, 1918, NA RG 95.

As was true of many other postwar planners, Zon was concerned with the decline of rural life. Explaining his precise feeling on the matter, he said: "Rural decadence means the poisoning of the life blood of the nation." If some means could be found to settle jobless veterans and industrial workers on the land possibly the decline of agrarian life could be halted. Zon believed the problem of reabsorbing the soldiers and war workers into the economy could not be resolved with the old public land laws. Under that legislation the individual settler lost too much socially and economically in an unequal struggle to establish a home. He thought the solution lay in the application of more capital and less labor to the land. Also, development procedures, such as those worked out in the reclamation of arid land, would be important. Land classification, on a scientific scale, would have to be utilized. Zon also felt that collective and cooperative action was necessary to improve social and economic conditions in rural areas.<sup>75</sup> While he was primarily interested in the concept of permanent forest communities, Zon thought the forest industry was so connected with land and industrial problems that they must be dealt with as a unit.<sup>76</sup>

Zon proposed a far reaching program of rural rehabil-

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<sup>75</sup>"A Land and Forest After-the-War-Problem," in "The Returning Soldier, Data Compiled by Mr. Zon, 1918, 1919," NA RG 95.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.



itation. For one thing he believed educational agencies should be utilized to achieve a better standard of rural living, particularly on the social and intellectual level. In common with Lane and Wilson he believed in the cooperative approach to rural problems. Like Labor Department officials he was concerned about large land holdings and wanted speculative ownership eliminated.<sup>77</sup> His general settlement program was much like that of Lane, but especially as regards land tenure his philosophy was closer to that of Wilson and Post.

Zon's suggestions concerning the forest industry were more comprehensive than mere land settlement. He stated:

The lumber industry of the country, has, so far as the large operations which supply the general market are concerned, been migratory, destructive, inimical to sound development of other local resources, and a bad employer of labor. From every standpoint, it should be transformed. The key to the situation is forest ownership.<sup>78</sup>

He wanted the government to do its own logging and manufacturing with the end in mind of establishing permanent local industries and promoting the local welfare both through the stimulation of industry and the extension of farming activities. Those employed by the government should be furnished an adequate social and community life and suitable housing. Public ownership of forests should be extended and regulation applied to private holdings. He even believed that the government should produce newsprint paper.<sup>79</sup> Zon

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

was recommending federal participation in industry, not incidental intervention or regulation. Not even the permanent "construction service" of the Labor Department was so far-reaching.

Concerning soldier settlement more particularly, Zon advised the establishment by Congress of a "Federal Board of Colonization" which would consist of the Secretaries of Labor, Agriculture, Interior, and War under the general supervision of the President. This Federal Board would first make a comprehensive survey of lands available for settlement. Then, for agricultural lands, the Board would cooperate financially with the states involved in the purchase and reclamation of lands. The users of the land would pay the initial cost under an amortization plan. Control of the projects would be under the joint supervision of the Board and the states. The principles of management would include complete reclamation, adequate credit, limitation of size of farms, secure land tenure, and community cooperation.<sup>80</sup> Zon wanted the states to guarantee, in return for federal aid in settlement and reclamation, that unearned increment would not go to private interests as a result of federal investment and improvement.<sup>81</sup>

Zon believed that the government should buy, or

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<sup>80</sup>Raphael Zon, "Suggested Program for Utilizing Lands for Returned Soldiers," 1918, in "The Returning Soldier," NA RG 95.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

otherwise control forest colonization areas. The Federal Board was to control and manage each region so that there would be a continuous annual yield of timber, permanent forest employment, and a stable forest community. Any and all wages, and prices paid for timber, should be fixed or maintained at normal levels.<sup>82</sup>

Zon also proposed a government-established "construction service" similar to the one proposed by William B. Wilson. All large-scale reclamation projects under the proposed colonization board, agricultural and forest, would be handled by this service. Again, normal wages would be guaranteed, as well as other rights, such as labor organization.<sup>83</sup> At one point Zon made an offer to cooperate with the Reclamation Service in surveying cutover lands for soldier settlement. He felt the Forest Service could well advise the Reclamation Service in the use of cutover products as well as in surveying.<sup>84</sup>

Zon's proposals for planned development reflected most of the tendencies of the other planners. He was concerned about the decline of the rural population and felt that community settlement was preferable to individual effort, and he advocated a far larger role for the government in set-

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>"Plan for Cooperation with the Reclamation Service in the Survey of Cut-Over Lands for the Returning Soldier," in "The Returning Soldier," NA RG 95.

tlement than it had ever played in the past. On at least two points, however, he was more in sympathy with Wilson than Lane. He was concerned about ending land speculation and he considered planned settlement as a labor and resources problem as well as an agricultural matter.

By 1919 a new and powerful veterans' organization became involved in the controversy over soldier settlement. The American Legion was interested in the matter primarily as a part of its drive for veterans' compensation. The Legion leaders endorsed as partially satisfactory the Mondell, Morgan, and Smith-Chamberlain bills. However, Legion officials asked that all of these measures be modified. Legion heads recommended that the administration of any enacted law should be decentralized, that no heavy financial restriction should be imposed, that the right of eminent domain should be incorporated to prevent speculation, and that any measure should be administered by ex-servicemen.<sup>85</sup>

When the Legion leaders submitted their ideas to Congress, soldier settlement became part of a "Four Point" bonus package. Title I of the proposed bill was the veterans' settlement provision which was very similar to the Mondell bill except it put the administration of the act under a five man board rather than the Secretary of the Inte-

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<sup>85</sup>Earle M. Simon, Executive Commander, American Legion of Oklahoma, to Franklin K. Lane, no date, "Correspondence Relative to Soldier Settlement Legislation (Federal) through 1929," NA RG 115.

rior. The Secretary remained on the board, but three of the five members were to be veterans. Title II called for a payment of \$2 per service day toward the purchase of a city or rural home. Title III allowed \$1.50 per service day for vocational training. Title IV provided the veterans with \$1.50 per service day as a cash bonus. Each ex-soldier was to choose one of the above methods of taking his bonus.<sup>86</sup> The bill was formally introduced on March 26, 1920, and was known as H. R. 13293, the "National Soldiers' Land Settlement, Home Aid, Vocational Training, and Adjusted Compensation Act."<sup>87</sup> The settlement measure was later incorporated in a bonus bill which was vetoed by President Harding.<sup>88</sup>

The American Legion of the post World War I period was young, aggressive, and determined to reap whatever veterans' benefits could be obtained from Congress. There can be little doubt that soldier settlement legislation was really only a part of a larger Legion objective and probably not the most important.

Lane, Wilson, Zon, and American Legion officials proposed group colonization for veterans. In all their plans the government was to fill an important role in future re-

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<sup>86</sup>"Condensed Statement of American Legion Bill as Submitted to the Committee on Ways and Means, March 24, 1920," March 25, 1920, NA RG 115.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>U. S., Congress, Senate, Forestry, Reclamation and Homemaking Conference, 1923, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., Document 120, 1923, p. 14.

sources development.<sup>89</sup> However, Democratic Representative Dick T. Morgan of Oklahoma called for the continuation of individual homestead development when he introduced H. R. 5545 on June 11, 1919.

The Morgan bill provided for a government corporation to be known as the "Soldiers' and Seamen's Federal Home Founding Corporation." The Secretary of the Interior and four other persons appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate were to be the directors of this corporation. The organization was to have a capital stock of \$100 million all of which would be subscribed by the United States government. County and city boards were to be created throughout the country to administer both short and long term loans to veterans. Honorably discharged soldiers and sailors could obtain a loan of \$4,000 for the purchase of a homestead in town or country. Short term loans of up to \$1,200 were to be available for livestock and equipment for farms. Homestead loans were to be for the full value of the homestead. Livestock and equipment loans could be made up to the full value of the livestock and equipment purchased. To secure additional capital the corporation was allowed to issue both long term and short term bonds. Since the loans were to be made up to full value, the corporation was to create a guaranty fund. The corporation could use up to 25 per cent of its

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<sup>89</sup>As far as the Legion is concerned this statement applies to Title I.

revolving fund for the purchase and subdivision of rural and urban homesteads. The Secretary of the Interior, under the terms of the act, could reserve public lands for two years for veteran entry.<sup>90</sup>

Morgan admitted that loans for the full value of property were not in harmony with usual financial procedures, but he felt sufficient guarantees had been made against losses. He believed his proposal had many advantages over the Lane or Mondell plan. It would apply to all veterans in that it would provide for both city and rural homesteads. It could be put into effect immediately, and there would be no waiting for a reclamation project to be completed. The veteran could obtain his loan and settle down near his home without having to move to the arid West or the humid Deep South. Finally, all states would benefit equally in that veterans would stay at home and apply their money and effort to local development.<sup>91</sup>

Morgan's plan indicated clearly that not all American leaders were willing to abandon the traditional means of settlement and development. Morgan was not convinced of the necessity of governmental intervention, except financially, in the development of resources, and the "colony" plan of settlement was totally omitted. While Lane, Wilson, and

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<sup>90</sup>Representative Morgan addressing the Committee on Ways and Means, no date, Morgan Papers, the Archives, the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

<sup>91</sup>"Homes for Soldiers," Morgan Papers.

Zon planned future utopias, Morgan proposed the development of America along tried and true lines.

From the time Lane announced his support of a soldier settlement scheme he was plagued by suggestions, criticisms, and counterproposals. While the Labor, Forest Service, American Legion, and Morgan plans were fairly well thought out, many individuals brought forward schemes which were, to be kind, little more than nonsense. If the suggestions were not nonsensical they were so clearly self-interested that they had to be rejected.

One of the most virulent critics of Lane's plan, and indeed of all governmental colonization schemes, was Mrs. Haviland H. Lund of the National Forward to the Land League. Mrs. Lund believed in private colonization and was thoroughly convinced that the failure of her organization to found any colonies was due to wicked real estate interests and socialists in the government.<sup>92</sup> She wanted to settle city dwellers in what she referred to as "the democratized feudal village."<sup>93</sup> In spite of her obviously vindictive nature she received some support from prominent politicians including Warren G. Harding.<sup>94</sup>

Some offers of advice were pathetic. Such was the case of C. O. Holmes, a Civil War veteran and an officer in

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<sup>92</sup>Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 20-21.

<sup>93</sup>New York Times, October 13, 1918, Part 4, pp. 1-6.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.



the Cook County, Illinois, Grand Army of the Republic. He wanted to organize what he called "The Home and Land Owners' Alliance of America" to create soldiers' settlements. Clearly old, poor, and lonely, he poured out letter after letter to Lane and the Reclamation Service. Apparently he devoted much time to his projects, but just as obviously his schemes were not to be taken seriously.<sup>95</sup>

Others wanted to involve the government in private colonization ventures. Charles A. Stanton of New York City carried on an extensive correspondence with Lane about his project for a private settlement. Lane finally replied that while Stanton's ideas seemed valid enough, the government could not participate in his plans.<sup>96</sup> There were many other ideas proposed to Lane and his subordinates by landowners, dreamers, and real estate men. Few were given any serious consideration, but they were usually answered politely.

Ordinary citizens were attracted to the Lane proposal for a variety of reasons. An Iowa resident wrote:

Congressman Boise of Iowa is mistaken when he says the soldiers of Iowa are not interested in your bill for land for soldiers. I have heard a number say they were going to take one of the farms also [they] expected to go to work on the projects as soon as opportunity offered. I dont [sic] understand how any statesman could oppose it. If there ever was a time [the] U. S. needed more farms and farmers it

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<sup>95</sup>C. O. Holmes to Lane, June 12, 1918, and July 24, 1918, for examples, "Correspondence Relative to Conducting Soldier Settlements Through November, 1918," NA RG 115.

<sup>96</sup>Lane to Stanton, December 27, 1918, in ibid., "December, 1918 and January, 1919," NA RG 115.

is now. The more farmers we have the more men we will have to fight the Bolsheveki.<sup>97</sup>

Fear of the "reds" was only one motivation for rank and file support of soldier settlement. Another was an infinite variety of people who had been planning settlement projects for years. One of the most interesting proposals, along settlement lines, came to Lane from #27059 in San Quentin. The prisoner was interested in community development along specialized lines and was somewhat of an expert on poultry farms.<sup>98</sup>

There was a good deal of popular enthusiasm for soldier settlement among servicemen. The Department of the Interior prepared a booklet for distribution among soldiers entitled "Hey There! Do You Want a Home on a Farm?"<sup>99</sup> In January, 1919, C. J. Blanchard, Statistician for the Reclamation Service, gave a series of lectures, in the Virginia Tidewater region, regarding soldier settlement to veterans under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A. Blanchard estimated that 4,000 men heard the talks and 30 per cent of them were interested.<sup>100</sup> At one time Lane said he had received 25,000 replies from interest stimulated by the "Hey There!" booklet and other Inte-

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<sup>97</sup>S. B. Kennedy, Knoxville, Iowa, to Lane, June 3, 1919, NA RG 115. *Italics mine.* Bolsheveki: current vernacular spelling.

<sup>98</sup>#27059 (name deleted) to Lane, December 21, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>99</sup>"Work and Homes for Our Fighting Men," Reclamation Record, X-XI (January 1919-December 1920), 98.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 50.

rior propaganda.<sup>101</sup> At a later date, September, 1919, Lane claimed 125,000 interested inquiries had come in from ex-servicemen.<sup>102</sup> This was far short of the 1.5 million veterans that Lane hoped to return to the farms, but he maintained replies were coming in at the rate of 500 or 600 a day.<sup>103</sup> From overseas Lane received some endorsements for his plan. One correspondent wrote:

Great interest exists here in your plan now embodied in the bill before Congress to provide means to enable men of the A.E.F. to become farmers . . . no scheme could be devised which, if adopted, will prove of greater permanent benefit to the men of the army and also of the United States.<sup>104</sup>

If veterans were not overwhelmingly in favor of soldier settlement there was still a substantial amount of interest among them in Lane's scheme.

In the post World War I period "soldier settlement" was debated chiefly in terms of the Lane or Mondell plan. This was the proposal that created a national controversy. It stirred up sentimental longing for the "good old days"

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<sup>101</sup>Lane to W. Stuart Cramer, Assistant Secretary General, War Time Commission of the Churches, New York, New York, April 2, 1919, NA RG 48.

<sup>102</sup>Lane to D. R. Souers, Secretary, Agricultural Development Commission, Cleveland, Ohio, Chamber of Commerce, September 3, 1919, NA RG 48.

<sup>103</sup>Lane to Cramer, April 2, 1919, NA RG 48. The Interior Department maintained a separate file on correspondence from ex-servicemen. This writer was unable to use this file since it was destroyed by the National Archives several years ago.

<sup>104</sup>Thomas P. Harrison, Director, Post School, Rannes Barracks, Tours France, to Lane, May 31, 1919, NA RG 48.

when most Americans lived close to the soil. It exposed economic nerves as illustrated by the negative reaction of American farmers to soldier settlement. Some of the other soldier settlement schemes were interesting, and perhaps important, because of their social, political, and economic implications. This was particularly true of the Labor Plan. But the collapse of Lane's proposal and the reasons for its failure to be enacted into law, is the core of this study.

## CHAPTER III

### SUPPORTERS OF THE LANE PLAN

No sooner was Lane's proposal made public than endorsements began to pour into the offices of the Reclamation Service. Approval of soldier settlement legislation came from all sections of the country. It was soon apparent, however, that the heaviest concentration of support was in the South where there were large amounts of swamp and cutover lands and in the West which had an extensive acreage of arid and semiarid land. Both regions were sparsely populated and would welcome additional settlers. Strong endorsements for the plan also came from the Great Lakes region which had considerable cutover and swamp lands. There was even some enthusiasm from New England and the Northeast where abandoned farms were numerous.

There were other reasons than economic motivations for support of the Interior scheme. Union officials were sometimes friendly towards the Lane plan, as were business leaders. Labor representatives hoped to place some surplus workers on farms and they wanted to increase agricultural production in order to cheapen the price of food. Businessmen turned, in some cases, away from a desire for an over-

abundant labor force toward favoring soldier settlement for the jobless because they feared socialistic and communistic influence among unemployed workers. Supposedly the soldier-farmer would be less susceptible to subversive propaganda.

"Do good" elements lent support to soldier settlement.

Women's clubs, social reformers, and similar groups endorsed Lane's proposal, and local veterans' organizations sometimes supported the Lane plan. Also, the still powerful belief in the superiority of the agrarian way of life made the plan attractive to some people. The "red scare" prompted some individuals to look upon farm settlement as a means of curbing radicalism.

Southern landowners, however, were the group most vitally interested in the Lane-Mondell scheme. The South contained a vast amount of swamp and cutover land which was supposedly available for reclamation. Florida had over 18 million acres of swamp land, Louisiana somewhat over 10 million, while Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas had amounts ranging from well over 5 million acres in the case of Mississippi down to almost 2.5 million in Alabama. Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas each possessed over 10 million acres of cutover lands.<sup>1</sup> This land was in a primitive and undeveloped state, was oftentimes in

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<sup>1</sup>U. S., Reclamation Service, Reclamation Record, X-XI (January 1919-December 1920), 4.

the hands of large landowners and, in the case of cutover areas, lumber companies. If the government would reclaim this land for veterans an enormous profit would accrue to some individuals and companies in the South.

Southern interest in the Lane-Mondell plan is well illustrated by the activities of Clement S. Ucker, Vice-President of the Southern Settlement and Development Organization. Ucker's corporation was chartered in Maryland and was planned as a clearing house for the agricultural and industrial activities of the Southeastern trunk line railroads. The organization enjoyed considerable success in organizing owners of unused lands in the South and brought pressure to bear not only in the state capitols, but on the federal government as well. Ucker believed that the "real frontier" of the United States was located not in the West, but in the Southeastern United States and on the Gulf Coast. He denied that his group was interested in exploitation, or speculation, stating that the corporation was anxious to establish a landowning society in the South. He pointed to the splendid war record of the French in World War I as an example of the benefits a nation derived from a large yeoman class.<sup>2</sup>

The Southern Settlement Organization was closely

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<sup>2</sup>Clement S. Ucker to Lane, July 22, 1918, NA RG 48; Ucker to A. K. Sessoms, President Georgia Land Owners' Association, July 2, 1918; NA RG 48; and Ucker to Helen Curtis Sappington, Baltimore, Maryland, May 23, 1919, NA RG 115.

affiliated with the North Carolina Land Owners' Association, the Georgia Land Owners' Association, the Florida Cattle Tick Eradication Committee, and the Cutover Land Utilization Department of the Southern Pine Association.<sup>3</sup> Ucker denied that he, or his corporation, had any official connection with the Reclamation Service. He wrote one correspondent:

There is a great deal of misapprehension extant at this time as to just exactly what is my connection with the so-called Soldier Settlement plans of the Government. . . . I was very naturally much interested in Secretary Lane's plans. I have been very much in touch with him ever since this matter was first broached, but I have no official standing in connection with it.<sup>4</sup>

Although this may have been true, Ucker still accompanied H. T. Cory of the Reclamation Service on inspection tours of the South. Cory's party also included, at one time, A. K. Sessoms, President of the Georgia Land Owners' Association, and A. G. T. Moore, Assistant Secretary of the Southern Pine Association.<sup>5</sup>

Officials of the Southern Settlement Organization lobbied openly for the Mondell bill, employing H. C. Hallam as their publicity agent. He testified before the House committee on H. R. 487 and gave glowing accounts of the prospects for soldier settlement.<sup>6</sup> The brazenness of the officers

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<sup>3</sup>Charles A. Nichols, Republican Congressman of Michigan, to Ucker, August 18, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>4</sup>Ucker to Sappington, May 23, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>5</sup>Undated, unidentified newspaper clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>6</sup>U. S., Congress, House, Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes



of the Southern Settlement Organization in their campaign in favor of veteran settlement aroused the ire of Republican Congressman Charles A. Nichols of Michigan.<sup>7</sup> Much of the later opposition to soldier settlement legislation can be traced to the suspicion, justified or not, that the movement was backed and financed by speculators.

Many offers to sell land to the federal government came from the South. There was great variety in the size of tracts presented for sale. Lumber companies seemed especially eager to dispose of excess logged-over holdings. Random selections of the proposals reveal that the Mabury Lumber Company of Mabury, Alabama, offered land, as did the Southern Land and Timber Company of Valdosta, Georgia, and the Industrial Lumber Company of Elizabeth, Louisiana.<sup>8</sup> There were many similar propositions made to the government from scattered points throughout the Southern states.

Officials of the Southern Pine Association of New Orleans took an early interest in soldier settlement. They sent out questionnaires to their members asking for informa-

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for Soldiers, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, pp. 653-655, for Hallam's testimony.

<sup>7</sup>For Nichols' vitriolic letter see Charles A. Nichols to Ucker, August 18, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>8</sup>See proposal of Mabury Lumber Company, October 10, 1918, NA RG 115; James F. McCrackin, Valdosta, Georgia, to F. H. Abbott, Secretary of the Georgia Land Owners' Association, offering land on behalf of the Southern Land and Timber Company, October 1, 1918, NA RG 115; and R. M. Hallowell, President, Industrial Lumber Company, to Lane, October 26, 1918, NA RG 115.

tion concerning the amount, price, and description of land which might be made available to the government. From the answers that the officers of the Association received it seemed that the owners of cutover lands would be willing to part with their property for an average of \$7.50 per acre.<sup>9</sup>

One difficulty regarding cutover lands soon became apparent. For some time lumber companies had been in the habit of writing off their stump land as of no value for income tax purposes. Since the lands possessed no value, for assessment purposes, any profit made on the acreage would be excess profit and would make the lumber companies liable for heavy tax payments to the federal government. D. W. Ross, Reclamation Service agent for the Southern region, estimated that the companies would have to pay \$8 in taxes for every acre they sold to the government for \$10.<sup>10</sup>

Officers of the Southern Pine Association viewed the excess profit question as of much importance. Ross wrote: "I have already noticed a cooling of interest here in the Pine Association, and this is since the question of excess profit tax has been raised."<sup>11</sup> Fred Heiskess, editor of the Arkansas Gazette (Little Rock), considered the question so

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<sup>9</sup>D. W. Ross, representative of the Reclamation Service, to H. T. Cory, Reclamation Service, September 27, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>10</sup>D. W. Ross to H. T. Cory, December 21, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>11</sup>Ross to A. P. Davis, January 6, 1919, NA RG 115.

crucial to the success of Lane's plan that he asked the Secretary of the Interior to request an advance Treasury Department assurance that the lumber companies would not be unduly penalized if they sold their cutover lands for a fair market price.<sup>12</sup> Surprisingly enough, Lane complied with this suggestion. Writing to Carter Glass, the Secretary of Treasury, he stated:

It is feared that some of the most favorable opportunities of caring for soldiers may be lost or rendered infeasible by the high price of land, if taxes must be paid to the United States from the moneys received in connection with the purchase.<sup>13</sup>

He then suggested:

. . . that you consider the advisability of presenting to the Conference Committee now considering the revenue bill . . . a provision adding to the exemptions from taxation on normal income and excess profits, a provision including the proceeds of sales of land to the United States or to any state in connection with the soldier settlement plans of the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Glass almost peremptorily refused this proposal. He replied:

It is, of course, common enough for the vendor to Government to add something on account of taxes to his purchase price. I am, however, unable to discover, on analysis, any fundamental difference between the man who sells land to the Government and the man who sells munitions, or supplies, or personal services. The proposed exemption would, I fear, be fraught with inequalities and very difficult of administration.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Heiskell to Lane, January, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>13</sup>Lane to Glass, January 24, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Glass to Lane, January 29, 1919, NA RG 115.

Quite clearly, if soldier settlement were enacted and the lumber companies sold their lands to the government for a respectable market price they would be liable to the federal government for heavy tax payments. It is small wonder that the Southern Pine Association "cooled" toward veterans' settlement.

Other problems concerning the availability of Southern lands arose. First of all, the Secretary of the Interior decided to compute the real value of lands from the assessed valuation. In fact, A. P. Davis remarked on the subject: "I have always expected that we would find assessments very unreliable, but this is official and where they are inordinately low it is prima facie indication of fraud on the part of the owners."<sup>16</sup> Whether fraud was intended or not, the tax structure of the South heavily favored rural interests. In Tennessee land was assessed at about 15 per cent of its real worth, while in Arkansas many counties assessed real estate at approximately one-third of the market price.<sup>17</sup> This situation put the landowner in a difficult position. Lane felt the price for land should be no higher than twice the assessed valuation. If the value for tax purposes was declared at \$1 an acre it would be absolutely impossible, under Lane's ruling, to pay the average price of \$7.50 an acre quoted for

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<sup>16</sup>A. P. Davis to D. W. Ross, December 11, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>17</sup>Ross to Cory, December 11, 1918, NA RG 115.

cutover lands.<sup>18</sup>

Some Southern states could not readily cooperate with the federal government in soldier settlement activity because of constitutional limitations. As an example, the legislature of Georgia could only appropriate money for specific purposes under the state constitution.<sup>19</sup> The problem of finances was of crucial importance because of the provisions of the Lane plan. The Mondell bill provided that any state which furnished 25 per cent of the money could direct the settlements under federal supervision. A state such as Georgia could not conveniently meet that condition. Since there was little public land in the South, any used for veterans' settlement would have to be purchased from individuals or corporations and this would be necessarily expensive.<sup>20</sup> Southern landowners, realizing that they would have to wait for a federal appropriation to secure their money, were anxious to know if they could in the meantime take a first lien on their property to secure immediate cash. Some insurance companies were willing to purchase such mortgages at a discount of from four to five per cent. Ross asked the Reclamation Service if this would be permissible.<sup>21</sup> Officials of the Reclamation

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>S. G. McLendon, Atlanta, Georgia, to Lane, December 17, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>20</sup>"Prices for Land Offered Soldiers Often Excessive, Reclamation Service Agent Scores Position Taken by Some Owners," Times-Picayune (New Orleans), December 23, 1918, no page, clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>21</sup>Ross to Reclamation Service, December 11, 1918,

Service replied unfavorably to Ross's suggestion because the government would be contributing far more in development services than the price of land.<sup>22</sup>

Rumors of the impending passage of soldier settlement legislation seriously inflated the land prices in the South. Commenting on this situation Ross stated: "Although the cost to the owners of much of the land under consideration was only nominal, prices are demanded which are in some cases four to six times the assessed value of the property."<sup>23</sup> A peculiar local circumstance complicated the situation in Texas. Land-owners there, particularly near Beaumont and Houston, hoped to reserve mineral rights, particularly oil, on any lands made available to soldiers.<sup>24</sup> If the mineral rights were not reserved some owners wanted the soldiers to pay an additional amount for the real estate.<sup>25</sup>

Interest in soldier settlement in the South was not confined to the Southern Settlement Organization, the Southern Pine Association, and the lumber companies. Walter Parker, Manager of the Associate Chamber of Commerce of New Orleans, favored a plan which would have reclaimed some 4

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NA RG 115.

<sup>22</sup>Bien to Ross, December 14, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>23</sup>"Prices for Land Often Excessive," Times-Picayune, clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>24</sup>Ross to Cory, December 21, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>25</sup>"Prices for Land Often Excessive," Times-Picayune, clipping in NA RG 115.

million acres in the lower delta of the Mississippi River.<sup>26</sup> The Louisiana Wet Lands Committee also advocated the development of portions of the Mississippi Delta.<sup>27</sup>

Southern land offers ranged from those of mining companies, railroad firms, and private schemers, down to the small landowner. Mining companies in the South were sometimes eager to cooperate with the Interior Department in developing soldier settlements. L. E. Bryant, President of the Virginia Mining Company of Roberts, Tennessee, offered 50,000 acres of land in the Cumberland Mountains for \$4 an acre. Like the oil interests in Texas, however, Bryant wanted to reserve the mineral rights. In the Tennessee region there was some interest in the Interior scheme because it was felt governmental activity in the area might lead to more effective flood control. This was one of the points made by Bryant.<sup>28</sup>

Railroad corporations in the South, often saddled with surplus land, made various proposals to make this acreage available for soldier settlement. T. H. Jones, General Immigration and Industrial Agent of the Marianna and Blountstown Railroad, Jacksonville, Florida, informed Lane that he

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<sup>26</sup>Ross to Cory, October 15, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>27</sup>"Plans to Reclaim Alluvial Lands for U. S. Soldiers: Tract Between Mississippi and Lafourche to Be Offered Government," Times-Picayune (New Orleans), October 27, 1918, no page, clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>28</sup>L. E. Bryant to A. P. Davis, August 31, 1918, NA RG 115.

could supply the government with as much as 200,000 acres. Much of this land was cutover and the railroad would benefit from its profitable agricultural utilization in traffic and freight business. Jones mentioned no particular price for the land.<sup>29</sup>

Some people were simply interested in persuading the government to finance their own private plans. Colonel C. H. Alexander of Texas wanted the Interior Department to finance an irrigation scheme on the Colorado River at an estimated cost of \$75 to \$100 million. Harry A. Slattery drafted a memorandum on the request stating that Alexander was attempting to obtain as much money as possible from the Reclamation Service. Slattery believed that Alexander was little interested in the welfare of the returning soldiers.<sup>30</sup>

Another type of proposal came from owners of small farms who, for one reason or another, were anxious to dispose of their holdings. Mrs. Joseph Palmer of Parkersburg, West Virginia, the widow of a Civil War veteran, owned a 57 acre farm. She offered it to the government for soldier settlement purposes for \$2,000. Because the Lane scheme included community settlements for veterans, such small offers were invariably, but kindly, discouraged.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>T. H. Jones to Lane, November 14, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>30</sup>Harry A. Slattery, "Memorandum for Joseph Cotter" (Assistant to Lane), August 31, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>31</sup>Mrs. Joseph Palmer, Parkersburg, West Virginia, to Lane, December 30, 1918, NA RG 115.



No other region furnished more offers of land to the government for a soldier settlement program than the South. Residents of such states as Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Tennessee made particularly numerous offerings. One of the largest undeveloped Southern resources was land and, as mentioned earlier, there were, and are, vast stretches of cut-over and swamp lands in the Southern United States.<sup>32</sup>

Most of the Southern states had not passed soldier settlement acts to cooperate with the federal government by the time hearings were held on H. R. 487. Only Florida, Tennessee, and Texas had passed such bills by that time.<sup>33</sup> This fact does not indicate Southern indifference toward veterans' settlement. It does mean that Southerners had become less than enchanted with the Mondell bill which would have entailed constitutional, financial, and land problems for the Southern states. Southern desire for soldier settlement is illustrated by the fact that many state legislatures did pass resolutions calling upon Congress to enact legislation on the subject.<sup>34</sup>

Southern interest in veterans' colonization was long

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<sup>32</sup>For information concerning land offers consult the voluminous files entitled "Correspondence Relative to Lands and Projects Offered the Government in Connection with Furnishing Homes to Soldiers, etc., After the war, by State," NA RG 115.

<sup>33</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., Appendix A, Exhibit C, 6-13.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

and enduring. As late as 1921 Southern residents gave enthusiastic endorsement to H. R. 6048, introduced by Democrat William B. Bankhead of Alabama. In the hearings concerning this bill the measure was endorsed by: F. L. Finkenstadt, President of the North Carolina Land Owners' Association; Charles G. Edwards, President of the Savannah, Georgia, Board of Trade; L. N. Dantzler, Director of the Mississippi Development Board; C. Van Leuven, representing Hugh MacRae and Company; and Clement S. Ucker, among others.<sup>35</sup>

Citizens of the Far West, including those of the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming, constituted the second strongest source of support for Lane's soldier settlement scheme. During the hearings on H. R. 487 witnesses from the public land states unanimously supported soldier settlement and almost without exception were in favor of the Mondell bill. J. H. Richards of Boise, Idaho, said:

The West will be with you in the way of reclaiming and placing homes, either [on] swamp or cut over lands or desert lands. We know what it means to this country. We are with you on the whole proposition all the time.<sup>36</sup>

Members of the Public Lands Committee of the House of Repre-

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<sup>35</sup>U. S., Congress, House, Committee on Irrigation of Arid Lands, Hearings, Development of the Agricultural Resources of the United States, 67th Cong., 1st Sess., 1921, in entirety.

<sup>36</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 103.

sentatives from the Far West voted for the favorable majority report on H. R. 487.<sup>37</sup> Soldier settlement was endorsed in the hearings on H. R. 487 by F. R. Gooding, a former governor of Idaho,<sup>38</sup> D. W. Davis, governor of Idaho,<sup>39</sup> Harry L. Gandy, Democratic congressman from South Dakota,<sup>40</sup> Robert M. McCracken, a retired Idaho congressman,<sup>41</sup> and J. W. Summers, Republican congressman from Washington.<sup>42</sup> Qualified approval of soldier settlement was given by Charles Springer, representing the governor of New Mexico, and Bishop William L. Hansen, the head of colonization activities for the Mormon Church.<sup>43</sup> William Spry, a former governor of Utah, gave generally favorable endorsement of soldier settlement.<sup>44</sup>

Senator Thomas J. Walsh, Democrat of Montana, favored the Mondell bill. He wrote:

I am an earnest supporter of the so-called Lane-Mondell bill to provide homes for the ex-service men. A choice must be made between the numerous measures pending to give deserved recognition to the men who went to the front. I unhesitatingly select the measure referred to, in the success of which all of the representatives from the western

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Appendix B, Majority Report, 1-17.

<sup>38</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 228-246.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 271-280.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 381-383.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 643-647.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 423-424.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 416-423 and 728-751.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 778-796.

states are deeply interested.<sup>45</sup>

Walsh noted that the entire Montana delegation was in favor of the measure, but the Republicans would not allow the bill to come before the Senate.<sup>46</sup>

One of the most interested groups in Lane's plan was the citizens of Idaho. The residents of that Western, pioneering, and supposedly individualistic commonwealth were enthusiastic about expending federal funds on reclamation projects within their borders. They assumed, correctly or not, that veterans' settlement was an effort to secure a "great fund for reclamation."<sup>47</sup> The Pocatello, Idaho, Tribune believed that:

Not only does reclamation furnish clean, wholesome work and homes for our soldiers and sailors. . . . It is also the advance guard of agriculture, home buildings, good roads, education and the graceful solution of life's problems for millions of American citizens. . . . Secretary Lane is entitled to the loyal support of every man and woman in the west, irrespective of politics, creed or sect.<sup>48</sup>

The "loyal" citizens of Idaho proceeded to form a reclamation association presumably to lobby for the "great fund"

<sup>45</sup>Walsh to J. W. Krall, Oswego, Montana, March 28, 1920, Thomas J. Walsh Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

<sup>46</sup>Walsh to R. K. West, Great Falls, Montana, Walsh Papers, February 23, 1920.

<sup>47</sup>Telegram to Lane from W. H. Eldridge, Mayor and President of the Twin Falls, Idaho, Commercial Club; C. H. McQuown, Mayor of Buhl, Idaho; Jess O. Eastman, President of the Buhl Commercial Club; Judge E. A. Walter, President of the Twin Falls Rotary Club; June 12, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>48</sup>April 4, 1919, no page, clipping in NA RG 115.

for reclamation.<sup>49</sup> Support for soldier settlement in Idaho was not confined to commercial clubs or newspapers. Officials of the State Grange favored Lane's proposal as did certain leaders of veteran and labor groups.<sup>50</sup>

Some residents of the West Coast region were warm supporters of the Interior plan. The State of Washington established a state reclamation service and reclamation board to cooperate with the federal government in soldier settlement activity.<sup>51</sup> Officials of some California commercial organizations extended endorsements. These included the chambers of commerce of San Francisco, Sacramento, Marysville, and Corning.<sup>52</sup> Other California groups, or organizations, that supported soldier settlement legislation included the California State Realty Federation; the Rural World of Los Angeles; and the Imperial Valley County Farm Bureau.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 794, for the Grange; for veterans see 794-795 and for labor consult 795-796.

<sup>51</sup>Marvin Chase, Chairman, Washington State Reclamation Board, to Lane, June 4, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>52</sup>L. M. King, Secretary, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, to Lane, March 25, 1919, NA RG 115; H. S. Maddox, General Secretary, Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, June 16, 1919, NA RG 115; Marysville Chamber of Commerce to Lane, May 29, 1919, NA RG 115; and M. G. Rammer, President, Corning Chamber of Commerce, May 24, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>53</sup>A. P. Davis to Fred E. Reed, Executive Secretary, California Real Estate Association, February 20, 1919, NA RG 115; C. L. Schufeldt, editor, Rural World, to Lane, March 27, 1919, NA RG 115; and resolution of the Imperial Valley County Farm Bureau favoring soldier settlement legislation,

Other endorsements of soldier settlement came from the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association and the Conference of Southwestern States,<sup>54</sup> which included California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah.<sup>55</sup> Some residents of Colorado also favored a veterans' settlement program. Among these was the Secretary of the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce.<sup>56</sup> The Far Western states almost unanimously passed legislation calling for cooperation of the state and federal governments in creating soldier settlements. The legislatures of Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming passed such laws.<sup>57</sup> Citizens of the public land states were anxious for all possible expenditures on the reclamation of arid and desert lands.

When Lane announced his plan there was an immediate influx of proposals from all over the nation to sell land to the government. Relatively few of these offers came from the Western states.<sup>58</sup> The explanation for this would seem

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summer 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>54</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, Appendix A, Exhibit C, 15-18.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>56</sup>W. W. Hite, Secretary, Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce, to Interior Department, May 22, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>57</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, Appendix A, Exhibit B, 6-13.

<sup>58</sup>For this fact see "Correspondence Relative to Lands

to be that the public land states expected the benefits from soldiers' colonization to come from improvements on government lands. That is, veterans' settlements would increase population, swell the volume of business, and enhance the value of personal holdings.

There were, however, certain private interest groups in the West that lobbied aggressively for the passage of soldier settlement legislation. Probably the best example of this was the activity of John J. Harris, President of the Big Horn Irrigation and Power Company, Hardin, Montana. Harris spent much time with discharged soldiers in the Washington, D. C., area trying to build up enthusiasm for H. R. 487.<sup>59</sup> Another case was that of R. E. Shepherd of Jerome, Idaho, who represented the Twin Falls North Side Land and Water Company.<sup>60</sup>

Since much of the support for H. R. 487 came from the Far West, it is fitting that the defense of the measure was in the hands of Frank W. Mondell, Republican congressman from Wyoming. Mondell had grown up with the West, working at various trades in his youth and early manhood. He had enjoyed a long elective career and had served for a time as Assistant Commissioner of the General Land Office.<sup>61</sup> Mondell

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and Projects Offered the Government in Connection with Furnishing Homes to Soldiers, etc., After the War, by State," NA RG 115.

<sup>59</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 678-694.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 555-558.

<sup>61</sup>U. S., Congress, Congressional Directory, 66th

made an almost impassioned plea for the passage of his bill. First he played skillfully upon the agrarian tradition which was still potent in early twentieth century America:

It is entirely logical and natural that the thoughts of those who have studied and considered these things [postwar readjustment problems] should have turned to the soil--to Mother Earth--to those enterprises and occupations which constitute the most natural and sanest of all human activities, as well as those most essential to the maintenance of human life and the perpetuity of human institutions in their best form.<sup>62</sup>

Mondell next reminded the House that after all past wars the nation had generously rewarded her veterans with land and that this had led to great and rapid development of landed and other resources. He pointed out, however, that the majority of the lands available for settlement after World War I would have to be developed prior to occupancy. The only logical solution to this problem was to follow the Australian example of community settlements. The Farm Loan Act, according to Mondell, would not be adequate to help establish soldiers on farms since it provided nothing for men without collateral. The needy but deserving veteran would be deprived of his chance to secure a homestead under the Farm Loan Act. Community settlement under the terms of H. R. 487 would benefit the poorer ex-soldiers and supposedly would be successful because of the experience of the Reclamation

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Cong., 2d Sess., 1919 (Compiled under the Direction of the Joint Committee on Printing by Francis G. Matson), 126.

<sup>62</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, LVIII, Part 5, p. 4370.



Service, the Australian example, the California experiment, and the advice of Elwood Mead.<sup>63</sup> Mondell asked for a continuation of the American tradition of soldier settlement, suggesting, however, that the United States drop the "infiltration" or "shotgun" method and adopt community settlement as the mode of procedure.<sup>64</sup>

Another region which supplied some endorsements for the Lane proposal was the Great Lakes area. Interest in the Lane-Mondell plan was particularly strong in the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The reason for this support is not difficult to locate. Michigan claimed nearly 3 million acres in swamp lands, Minnesota had almost 5 million, and Wisconsin well over 2 million.<sup>65</sup> Michigan had nearly 12 million acres in cutover lands, Minnesota almost 15 million, and Wisconsin well over 13 million acres in logged-over area.<sup>66</sup> These statistics explain the intense interest shown in Lane's idea by officials of such an organization as the Upper Peninsula Development Bureau of Marquette, Michigan.<sup>67</sup> The motivation of the officials of the

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>The Mondell bill was brought before the House of Representatives for a final discussion on May 5, 1920. The debate moved into a discussion of physical fitness. At the end of the 66th Congress the bill died in committee. Dixon Wecter, When Johnny Comes Marching Home (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1944), 381, and Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 2d Sess., 1920, LVIX, Part 7, p. 6539.

<sup>65</sup>Reclamation Record, X-XI, 4.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Upper Peninsula Development Bureau to Lane, December

Minnesota Immigration and Development League in endorsing the plan was the same.<sup>68</sup> The three states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin formed the Lake States Committee which was supposed, among other things, to coordinate land settlement and reclamation activities. Soldier settlement would fall under both categories.<sup>69</sup> John I. Gibson, representing the Michigan Land Settlement Commission, testified:

Our State land commission and the Western Michigan Development Bureau are heartily in favor of the Mondell bill. We have been trying to get settlers on our cut-over lands for about 10 years and it is our experience that segregated [infiltration] settlement is a slow and unsatisfactory method.<sup>70</sup>

Citizens of the Great Lakes States, consciously or not, were primarily interested in soldier settlement as a reclamation project. Because of a surplus of idle, unproductive, swamp and cutover land property owners and speculators in the Great Lakes States were friendly toward soldier settlement.

Residents of the South, Far West, and Great Lakes States supported the Interior plan because of certain material benefits which might accrue to their section as the result of veterans' settlements. Because of much undeveloped land in those regions it is easy to see why citizens of those

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23, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>68</sup>E. E. Farmer, President, Minnesota Immigration and Development Bureau, to Lane, June 20, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>69</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, Appendix A, Exhibit B, 13.

<sup>70</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 148.

areas backed Lane's idea. Such is not the case in Massachusetts where there was some friendly feeling towards the Lane-Mondell scheme, particularly among professional agriculturalists. Wilfred Wheeler, Commissioner of Agriculture in Massachusetts, was keenly interested in soldier settlement.<sup>71</sup>

There was practically no swamp or cutover land in Massachusetts,<sup>72</sup> but there were many abandoned farms. In some cases these farms were vacant because they could not compete with Midwestern agriculture. Interest in the Interior plan in Massachusetts was a combination of nostalgia for the agrarian past and the really naive belief that food produced in the Corn Belt was more expensive than home-grown products would be. The argument continued that imported Midwestern food made labor costs in New England high and weakened her competitive position in manufacturing. Incorrect or not, this reasoning led some New Englanders to support the Interior plan.<sup>73</sup>

Because of its terms and approach, the Lane scheme found its heaviest support in those sections which possessed an abundance of swamp, cutover, or arid lands. It is not

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<sup>71</sup>Wilfred Wheeler to Elwood Mead, November 7, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>72</sup>Reclamation Record, X-XI, 4.

<sup>73</sup>Consult Franklin K. Lane, "Massachusetts--There She Stands! A Reply to Herbert Myrick," unpublished article in NA RG 115, for the argument that New England needed to produce her own food in order to cheapen the over-all cost of manufacturing in the region.

suggested that only selfish motives prompted persons to endorse soldier settlement. But potential economic advantage was a powerful factor working for the plan, particularly in the South, the West, and the Great Lakes regions.

After extensive hearings the Public Lands Committee of the House of Representatives reported favorably upon H. R. 487. Of those signing the majority report only one, Republican William J. Graham of Illinois, was from east of the Mississippi River and north of the Mason-Dixon line.<sup>74</sup> All the members of the committee signing the minority report were from the Northeastern states except Republican Hays B. White of Kansas.<sup>75</sup> Of the soldier settlement bills introduced in the first session of the 66th Congress which Lane considered important enough for consideration, only two were introduced by congressmen from the Northeast. These were H. R. 7004, introduced by M. Clyde Kelly, Independent of Pennsylvania, and H. R. 8820, sponsored by Louis T. McFadden, Republican of the same state.<sup>76</sup>

Sectional enthusiasm or disinterest can be further illustrated by the House debate on H. R. 487. Mondell led the struggle for passage and received able support from Paul B. Johnson of Mississippi. The bill was attacked with

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<sup>74</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, Appendix B, Majority Report, 1-17.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., Minority Report.

<sup>76</sup>Lane to Frederick B. Wells, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 18, 1919, NA RG 48.

considerable vigor by White of Kansas and Frank D. Scott, Republican of Michigan.<sup>77</sup> Even the opposition of Scott does not upset the sectional basis of support for soldier settlement. There was some enthusiasm for veterans' settlement in the Great Lakes area, although not the overwhelming endorsement which existed in the public land states and in the South. Charles A. Nichols of Michigan admitted that, in spite of his own objections, most of the Michigan congressional delegation was in favor of some type of soldier settlement.<sup>78</sup>

Outside of sectional support for soldier settlement certain economic groups endorsed veterans' colonization. Railroad interests often supported Lane's proposal. These firms controlled large amounts of land and welcomed the prospect of disposing of their surplus holdings to the government. Also, if vacant lands were settled this would mean a larger volume of business, more revenue for the roads, and higher profits.<sup>79</sup> H. F. Hunter, Supervisor of Agriculture for the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad, stated: "I simply want to impress upon you . . . that this proposition of Secretary Lane [sic] is absolutely feasible.

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<sup>77</sup>Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, LVIII, Part 5, pp. 4369-4379.

<sup>78</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 149.

<sup>79</sup>J. L. Edwards, Manager, Agricultural Section, U. S. Railroad Administration, to Lane, April 14, 1919, NA RG 115, for the endorsement of the plan by agricultural agents of the railroads under federal control.

The Government can not lose any money if they will advance money to the man who is willing to work." Hunter possessed 30 years experience in railroad colonization work, and although he disagreed with some details of the Lane-Mondell proposal, he felt that settlement on farms would, in general, be a laudable means of rewarding the returning soldiers.<sup>80</sup>

Many business groups endorsed soldier settlement legislation, especially various chambers of commerce.<sup>81</sup> Although business interests would ordinarily favor an overabundance of laborers to force wages down, the immediate postwar period was filled with industrial discontent. Strikes plagued business and industry. To many businessmen it seemed that one answer to this problem might be agrarian settlement for at least a portion of the returning veterans. E. W. Vanderbilt of New York City wrote Lane: "There is no more useful man in the world than the farmer. . . . I do not know an occupation anywhere that utilizes every facility that a man is capable of developing than the farmers."<sup>82</sup> That this viewpoint was not an isolated one in the business community is illustrated by the views of another correspondent. He believed: "There is nothing that will so insure the

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<sup>80</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 130-131.

<sup>81</sup>In addition to the chambers already cited see F. P. Dixon, Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to Oklahoma congressmen and senators, no date, NA RG 115.

<sup>82</sup>E. W. Vanderbilt to Lane, June 2, 1919, NA RG 115.

welfare of the people of the United States as many prosperous homes individually owned, on the land."<sup>83</sup> The "red scare" turned a significant number of business leaders away from their traditional stand of favoring surplus workers to the view that more people on the land would increase the stability of traditional American institutions.<sup>84</sup>

Leaders of labor organizations often added their approval to Lane's proposal. These officials made little attempt to cloak their motivations in supporting soldier settlement. One union leader wrote Lane:

Passage of H. R. 487 means so much for the good of the nation in the near future in the way of increased production with the resultant decrease in price of commodities, and with the consequent lessening of dissension due to the abnormal high cost of living brought on by the late war.<sup>85</sup>

Leaders of the American Federation of Labor endorsed soldier settlement legislation in order to help soldiers and prevent a glutted labor market.<sup>86</sup> Officials of the Manhattan Branch of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy recommended that soldiers and sailors receive 160 acres in the West and

<sup>83</sup>William J. Weyand, Manager, California Mealfalfa Company, to Lane, June 5, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>84</sup>For an excellent study of the first "red scare" and its effect on the thinking of the business sector in this country consult Robert K. Murray, Red Scare, A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

<sup>85</sup>S. T. Steinberger, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Cleveland, Ohio, June 23, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>86</sup>American Federation of Labor Convention Action on Executive Council Statement, 1919 (Washington, 1920), 363.

that the government should construct the buildings and sell the improvements at cost.<sup>87</sup>

Although the American Legion developed its own veterans' settlement plan there was a good deal of sentiment in local veterans' organizations in favor of the Lane plan. The ex-soldiers were impatient and they wanted a program which would give them the quickest reward for their services. To the individual veteran who was primarily interested in land, the Interior Plan probably appeared as "good enough Morgan."<sup>88</sup> In addition, the Reconstruction Committee of the National Catholic War Council announced plans for colonies for ex-soldiers. The Reverend Edward V. O'Hara was to be in charge of the settlements.<sup>89</sup> The American Legion in New Jersey proposed at one time to set up a farm colony at Winslow, New Jersey, comprising some 4,200 acres.<sup>90</sup>

Soldier settlement plans attracted the interest of reformers, "do gooders," and idealists. Woodrow Wilson endorsed the idea, but so did the Women's Club of Omaha, Nebraska. Even the National Education Association joined in the chorus of approval. The soldiers had made their

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<sup>87</sup>New York Times, March 22, 1918, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup>J. M. Saunders, Secretary, Motor Transport Corps Veterans, Cleveland, Ohio, to Lane, June 7, 1919, NA RG 115. "Good enough Morgan" is an expression dating from the political battles of the 1840's and 1850's and means that although a proposal, or plan, is not perfect it will serve the immediate purpose.

<sup>89</sup>New York Times, April 7, 1919, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., September 21, 1919, p. 18.



sacrifices, now it was time to give them their reward.<sup>91</sup> For average citizens, reformers, businessmen, and even highly placed politicians there were two really outstanding reasons for supporting soldier settlement legislation. One, as previously emphasized, was the prevalent belief in the inherent superiority of farming as a way of life. The other was the national hysteria concerning the communist menace. Many Americans were firmly convinced that there was a "red" under every bed and in every corner. Searching for a remedy for this deplorable condition many citizens fell back on the old idea, propagated by Jefferson, that the farmer was a more reliable citizen than the city dweller. One proponent of soldier settlement stated: "If there was a time the U. S. needed more farms and farmers it is now. The more farmers we have the more men we will have to fight the Bolsheveke [sic]."<sup>92</sup> The "red scare," then, emphasized the American belief in the solid virtues of "farms, farming, and farmers" and brought some support for Lane's plan.

The strongest support for Lane's proposal came from sectional interests: Southern landowners, Western reclama-

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<sup>91</sup>Fannie C. Fernald and Mrs. Earl Stanfield, Omaha, Nebraska, Omaha Women's Club, to Lane, May 8, 1919, NA RG 115; William E. Snodgrass, Assistant Secretary, National Education Association, to Lane, May 9, 1919, NA RG 115; and Reclamation Record, X-XI, 2, for Wilson's endorsement.

<sup>92</sup>S. B. Kennedy, Knoxville, Iowa, to Lane, June 3, 1919, NA RG 115, and Murray, Red Scare. Although many Americans were quite sure there was a very definite communist or Bolshevik menace, they sometimes were unable to spell either communist or Bolshevik.

tion interests, and groups in the Great Lakes region who were interested in the sale or development of cutover lands. Railroads were especially friendly toward the Interior scheme because they hoped to dispose of their excess land. Business leaders were primarily concerned with land settlement for veterans because they were afraid of the so-called communist danger to the free enterprise system. Labor leaders supported the proposal primarily as a means of disposing of what appeared to be an imminent deluge of unwanted workers. Also labor officials desired the production of more food to cheapen the price of groceries. Veterans who supported the plan were undoubtedly interested in soldier settlement as a form of "bonus."

The plan was left bereft of idealistic support outside of the Interior Department and the Reclamation Service. Even this idealism was tarnished by a too close association with landholding groups in the South. The suspicion is probably valid that "do good" sentiment in favor of soldier settlement was more apparent than real. For example, it is true that members of women's clubs wanted to do something for the "boys," but their interest would fade when those near and dear to them returned home. The endorsement of such a statesman as Woodrow Wilson was not as significant as Lane assumed. The President was too preoccupied with postwar negotiations, the fate of the League of Nations, and a host of other problems. One can only assume that his sup-

port of soldier settlement was more or less casual. The influence of the agrarian tradition was deflected because land dealers such as Ucker utilized its arguments in behalf of soldier settlement. Opponents of Lane's plan could be pardoned if they were a trifle cynical about the tradition.

Whether the accusation was true or not, Lane's proposal was open to attack as being the stepchild of selfish land speculators, grasping reclamation groups, and crackpot "do gooders."

## CHAPTER IV

### AGRARIAN OPPOSITION TO SECRETARY LANE'S PLAN

Lane's soldier settlement plan attracted considerable support from large landowners, business and labor groups, national leaders, prominent welfare workers, "back-to-the-landers," and women's clubs; but it was attacked with a good deal of vigor by the most powerful agrarian group in America, the commercial farmers and their allies. It is a seeming anomaly that the Lane scheme which implied an almost worshipful regard for country life should be opposed so strongly by the nation's "yeomanry." Yet there is no denying the existence of that opposition. Farmers, officials in the Department of Agriculture, farming specialists of the agricultural colleges, leaders of farm organizations, and editors of the agricultural press all joined in a general denunciation of the Lane proposal.

Facing a postwar economic situation of growing uncertainty, American farmers vehemently objected to the Interior soldier settlement scheme. The major concern of commercial farmers was the danger of overproduction of agricultural products and low prices. Probably expressing the general opinion of farmers a little more stoutly than most, one man pro-

tested: "For God's sake do not drive us to more complete serfdom by compelling us to compete with Uncle Sam in farming."<sup>1</sup> He also stated that "scarcely one farmer in ten in this County have broke [sic] even at farming for the past five years."<sup>2</sup> Fear of excessive competition was the major reason for agrarian opposition to soldier settlement as indicated by the remarks of another agriculturalist. He wrote "if every one who returns from the army, would go to farming and produce more than the people can consume, how about the market and price for what the farmer would raise, [it] would make a pauper out of him."<sup>3</sup> Another farmer, equally irate, asked Lane:

What right have you to ask me to help pay for a farm in the Louisiana swamps for my hired man or any soldier for that matter thereby also signing my own death warrant. It may be an abstract theoretical problem to you but it means life and death to me.<sup>4</sup>

It cannot be doubted that apprehension of unfair, and subsidized, rivalry from veterans swung many agrarians away from the Lane proposal for soldier settlement.

Practicing farmers were angry enough over the pros-

<sup>1</sup>Homer J. Sargent, Corinth, Vermont, to Porter H. Dale, Republican Congressman from Vermont, no date, NA RG 115. Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>W. W. Carder, Green Springs, West Virginia, to Lane, November 4, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>4</sup>James B. Vredenburgh, Vaucluse, Somerville, New Jersey, to Lane, March 4, 1919, NA RG 115. Italics mine; northeastern farmers thought of the Lane plan as a Southern and Western reclamation scheme.

pect of government-sponsored competition, but they were particularly incensed because no other industry was being asked to carry a similar burden in caring for returning soldiers. One of New York's most prominent agriculturalists declared: "The Government should be made to understand that they have no more normal or statutory right to go into competition with the established farms of the nation than with any other established industry."<sup>5</sup> Certainly it did seem unfair to farmers that no other business was being made responsible for unemployed veterans.

Farmers and persons familiar with farming scorned the motives and ideas of the "back-to-the-landers." At best, they considered the movement naive, and at worst, vicious. This feeling was expressed in terse language by a colonel of the Corps of Engineers with an agricultural background:

I was born and raised on a farm and know exactly what it offers. . . . I have seen no inclination or desire on the part of any man familiar with the farm to return to it as an occupation. The men who talk of going to the farm are either foreign born or those who have no knowledge of its hardships or of the little return obtained from the great expenditure of labor which must be made.<sup>6</sup>

Agrarian opinion concerning idyllic concepts of rural life is revealed in a rather bitter jest which was current in agricultural circles about 1919: "A farm is a place where

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<sup>5</sup>H. E. Cook, Denmark, New York, to Dean Mann, Cornell University, February 7, 1919, in ibid.

<sup>6</sup>T. H. Jackson to Lane, May 26, 1919, in ibid. Lane was born in Canada.

you can get rich if you rise early and go to bed late--if you strike oil." Agriculturalists probably considered this definition of farm life nearer reality than the more colorful descriptions of country life found in "back-to-the-land" propaganda.

To the working farmer it was disturbing that the Lane plan might place large numbers of inexperienced men on the land. The good agriculturalist--American, European, or Asiatic--does much of his work on an instinctive basis. He does some things simply because he "knows" the right procedure to follow. This "instinctive" method is derived from long years behind the plow. Louis Bromfield had this to say concerning the capable farmer:

I know today that any good farmer has to be a little "teched" and when I go over a list of good farmers I know, there is not one of whom it could not be said, "He is a little "teched," for it means that he loves his land, his animals and his trees and understands them all.<sup>7</sup>

What would happen to the untrained veteran who did not "understand" farming when he was located on a reclamation project and expected to make a living? One of Lane's correspondents believed that "the man who is not a farmer and thinks he can farm, should not begin farming land in the wild state, [it would] be bad enough for him to try to farm and run one under [a] high state of cultivation."<sup>8</sup> In the farmers' mind the

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<sup>7</sup>Louis Bromfield, Pleasant Valley (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1945), 88.

<sup>8</sup>W. W. Carder, Green Springs, West Virginia, to Lane,

inexperienced ex-soldier was sure to fail on the farm. Some agriculturalists opposed soldier settlement for this humane reason.

One of the bitterest accusations made by farmers against Lane's proposal was that it was an attempt on the part of the Reclamation Service to build up an extensive "empire." "Being head of the Reclamation Service you naturally wish to reclaim all you possibly can," wrote one farmer.<sup>9</sup> While commercial agriculturalists might not have resisted the expansion of other governmental agencies they were against any growth of the Reclamation Service. The objection was "the more you do the harder you make it for me to make a livelihood. I help pay the bill and help support you which adds insult to injury."<sup>10</sup> This suspicion of bureaucratic self-interest did nothing to soothe agricultural opposition to soldier settlement.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture and agricultural specialists were also unfriendly toward the Lane scheme. There was a prevailing fear among professionally trained agriculturalists, in and out of the Department of Agriculture, that the Interior plan would bring a large new area into production with resulting overproduction and low

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November 4, 1918, NA RG 115.

<sup>9</sup>James B. Vredenburg, Vacluse, Somerville, New Jersey, to A. P. Davis, April 5, 1919, in ibid.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.



prices. This had happened to American farmers in the 1870's and 1880's when the Great Plains had been brought under cultivation. Poverty, political discontent, and despair had followed for the agrarian interests. Under Lane's proposal, so reasoned many agriculturalists, great new regions would be converted into productive farms with misery and desolation following, not only for the established farmers, but for the soldier settlers.<sup>11</sup>

Officials of the Department of Agriculture criticized soldier settlement plans. The strongest argument against veterans' settlement by Department representatives was that it would lead to an increased number of farms, a larger acreage under the plow, unwieldy surpluses, and an agricultural depression. As a maze of economic problems for commercial farmers developed in the postwar period, departmental criticisms became more stringent. Secretary of Agriculture E. T. Meredith did not think opening of new land would be in the best interests of either the settlers or the public. Citing historical evidence, the Secretary linked many of the economic woes of American farmers to sudden agricultural openings with subsequent recessions. Meredith stated that frequent fluctua-

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<sup>11</sup>Consult C. E. Ladd, the University of New York, to Lane, January 15, 1919, NA RG 115, for a typical criticism of the Interior scheme by an agricultural specialist. See also "Memorandum for Carl S. Vrooman, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, from Milton Whitney, Chief, Bureau of Soils, re Secretary Lane's Proposals," June 29, 1918, National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering, Record Group 54. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 54.

tions in prosperity had caused bitter suffering and loss of property to thousands of rural people in the previous generation. He did not advise a repeat performance of that misery.<sup>12</sup> Meredith's comments were couched in diplomatic terms, but Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Clarence Ousley did not mince words in expressing his distaste for Lane's proposals. Remarking that he would go as far as any man in providing for the soldiers, he wrote: "I have no patience with much of the underlying purpose of this movement, which is merely to increase production in order to cheapen the cost of living."<sup>13</sup>

Some professional agriculturalists shared Ousley's views. Professor E. G. Nourse of Iowa State College was one of these. Nourse thought any effort to reduce prices would not appeal to farmers since the agricultural interests considered the price level fair, with the possible exception of temporary increases due to wartime conditions.<sup>14</sup>

Officials of the Department of Agriculture were positive that there could not be an indefinite expansion of the number of farms and farmers. The official viewpoint on this matter was stated in the Annual Report:

<sup>12</sup>E. T. Meredith to H. H. Franklin, Syracuse, New York, July 30, 1920, NA RG 16.

<sup>13</sup>Clarence Ousley to A. F. Lever, Democratic Congressman, South Carolina, June 5, 1919, NA RG 16.

<sup>14</sup>E. G. Nourse, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Iowa State College, "What About the Soldier Land Bill?," Iowa Agriculturalist, typewritten copy in NA RG 16.

It is not in the interest of producers or consumers to have large fluctuations in agricultural production. There is always danger of glutting the market and of serious loss. The aim rather should be to secure a steady flow of commodities of sufficient volume to supply an increasing demand at prices which will yield the farmer a decent wage and a fair profit on his investment. It seems difficult to get it into the minds of some people that farming is a business and must pay; that under modern conditions there can not be an unlimited number of farmers.<sup>15</sup>

The "back-to-the-land" philosophy of Lane's scheme aroused strenuous objections among officials in the Department of Agriculture. One of the strongest critics of "back-to-the-landism" was Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston. He referred to the concept as "fallacious" and said America could not afford ever-expanding agricultural production and continually increasing numbers of farms. The Secretary asserted the United States could have "just as many farmers as will produce what the world will take at a profitable price." He believed America could not afford an unlimited number of agriculturalists unless farmers became self-sufficient and produced little or no surplus. In other words, "back-to-the-landism" would lead to subsistence farming.<sup>16</sup>

The permanent employees of the Department of Agriculture were convinced that there was no need for "back-to-the-land" propaganda. What was needed to stop the decay of

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<sup>15</sup>U. S., Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1919, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup>Addressing the National Association of Commissioners of Agriculture in Chicago, Illinois, November 11, 1919, as quoted in Hoard's Dairyman, LIX (January, 1921), 1.

rural life, in their opinion, was an "acceleration" of the efforts being made by the Department to improve rural life. The extension service, the agricultural colleges, and other services of the Department would make life on the farm more attractive, and profitable, therefore there should be an end to the decline of rural population.<sup>17</sup>

Officials in the Department of Agriculture were quite concerned about the possible fate of inexperienced ex-service-men on "wild" land. They pointed out that many men had failed in the past on irrigation projects because of lack of seasoning. It was asserted that even an experienced man with reserves of capital would have a great deal of difficulty under reclamation conditions.<sup>18</sup> Department of Agriculture men felt, however, that money was not nearly as important as practical training in farming. It was suggested that the best procedure for the prospective, but untrained, farmer would be to become a tenant, or laborer, for a year or more. He could acquire knowledge of actual farming conditions, a reserve of capital, and most important, the farmers' viewpoint.<sup>19</sup> Many officials in the Department believed quite positively in the old upward mobility ladder of laborer-tenant-owner. Some thought the

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<sup>17</sup>U. S., Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1919, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Brant, Chief, Bureau of Markets, "Memorandum for F. R. Harrison, Assistant to the Secretary," May 23, 1919, NA RG 16.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

partnership relationship could be added to the traditional pattern.<sup>20</sup> Others in the Department thought that the established means of assisting settlers could be used to aid veterans. That is, the extension service and the agricultural colleges could provide information and advice to settlers.<sup>21</sup>

Some agricultural specialists opposed Lane's scheme because they were convinced that more effort should be expended in further development of existing agricultural regions than in expanding cultivated areas. They cautioned against opening up a large new acreage when the established farms of the nation were not fully cultivated.<sup>22</sup> Employees of the Department of Agriculture had information indicating that even in highly developed areas, such as Iowa, there was a pressing need for better roads, reclamation of certain areas, and general improvements. Possibly, it was argued, it would be better to expend money in these proven zones than to gamble on untried lands.<sup>23</sup> Agricultural experts also noted that farmers were in favor of more intensive operations on exist-

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<sup>20</sup>"Memorandum for Carl S. Vrooman, Assistant Secretary, From Milton Whitney, Chief, Bureau of Soils, re Secretary Lane's Proposals," June 29, 1918, NA RG 54.

<sup>21</sup>D. F. Houston, Secretary of Agriculture, to W. W. Watson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 24, 1919, NA RG 16.

<sup>22</sup>"Memorandum for Carl S. Vrooman, Assistant Secretary, From Milton Whitney, Chief, Bureau of Soils, re Secretary Lane's Proposals," June 29, 1918, NA RG 54.

<sup>23</sup>R. G. Nourse, "What About the Soldier Land Bill?," clipping in NA RG 16.

ing farms. This was the information Dean R. L. Watts of Pennsylvania State University gave to Lane concerning the attitude of farmers in his state toward soldier settlement.<sup>24</sup>

Lane wanted to develop veterans' settlements in the East and Northeast on the abandoned farms of those areas. This was the only possibility for soldier settlement in that section. Commenting on this idea, Professor C. E. Ladd of the University of New York remarked that Eastern farms had gone out of cultivation because "farmers had starved out while attempting to work them."<sup>25</sup> Ladd also objected to the reclamation of new lands for veterans because reclaiming land is usually very expensive. He argued that irrigated land was far too costly, and did not bring into production any considerable amount of land. Ladd said redemption of muck soil was expensive and could only be justified in gardening regions near adequate markets. He expressed serious doubts whether reclamation of new lands for ex-soldiers would be in the best interests of the veterans, the public, or the economy.<sup>26</sup>

There was information in the Department of Agriculture that some of the lands proposed for reclamation and soldier settlement were not suitable for agriculture. An official in the Bureau of Plant Industry warned that the Department would be "blameworthy" if it did not give suitable warn-

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<sup>24</sup>R. L. Watts to Lane, April 14, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>25</sup>C. E. Ladd to Lane, January 15, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

ing as to the agricultural character of the swampy land in the East before large expenditures were made to redeem it. Even though he admitted that the Department had only "limited" information concerning such lands, particularly of the Everglades region of Florida, it did seem that these lands had a tendency to shrink and become unproductive when drained.<sup>27</sup> The suspicion that much of the land slated for soldier settlement, under the Interior plan, was not fit for cultivation added to the vigor of the opposition of officials of Agriculture to veterans' settlement.

Many professional agriculturalists and Department of Agriculture employees believed there was no necessity for Lane's proposal because there were sufficient individual farms available for veterans. Ladd suggested, for example, that the federal and state governments should cooperate in obtaining farms already under cultivation for returning soldiers. He argued that the procedure could be safeguarded by having the regular appraisers of the District Federal Land Bank make their reports on a fair price. The terms of sale could be on a long amortization plan. He thought some means should be found to weed out incompetents who merely wanted a government handout. One method of doing this would be to set up approved agricultural short courses for the settlers, plus a period of "on the farm training" for the veterans.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Karl F. Kellerman, Associate Chief of Bureau, Bureau of Plant Industry, to S. J. Christie, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, January 29, 1919, NA RG 16.

<sup>28</sup>C. E. Ladd to Lane, January 15, 1919, NA RG 115.

The attitude of some state agricultural colleges toward the Interior soldier settlement scheme is illustrated by the action of Maryland State College. Officers of that institution offered to furnish information on available farms for ex-soldiers and were willing to give necessary training to veterans. Some means of financing the program was all that remained to be done.<sup>29</sup> This plan conformed more closely to the thinking of Agriculture Department employees than to the philosophy of Lane's proposal.

Leaders of farm organizations also reacted adversely to Lane's soldier settlement scheme. These men were primarily concerned, in most cases, about the possibility of over-expansion, overproduction, and lower prices for farm commodities. Officials of the National Grange denied, on the record, that the organization was opposed to increased production, but they went on to attack Lane's proposals in the strongest possible terms.<sup>30</sup> Officers of the International Farm Congress endorsed the Mondell bill. It soon became clear, however, that they would oppose the act if subsequent

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<sup>29</sup>"Summary of Maryland's Policy on Land for Soldiers," no date, in NA RG 115.

<sup>30</sup>A. M. Loomis, Assistant, National Grange, to Morris Bien, Acting Director, Reclamation Service, April 2, 1919, NA RG 115, for the denial that the Grange was opposed to increased production. But see the testimony of Thomas C. C. Atkeson, Grange representative, against the Mondell bill: U. S., Congress, House, Committee on the Public Lands, Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, p. 74, for the clear implication that the Grange was indeed worried about excessive production from the veterans.



amendments allowed any significant number of soldiers to settle on the land.<sup>31</sup> A representative of a local Farm Bureau testified that his members were fearful of veterans' competition which might result from the passage of the Lane proposal.<sup>32</sup> Fear of a return to depression conditions which had existed in the farming community less than a generation before undoubtedly motivated this type of opposition on the part of farm organization leaders. There was, however, a minority opinion on the matter of overproduction. Benjamin C. Marsh, Secretary of the Farmers' National Council, testified that in his opinion "Overproduction never exists without underconsumption somewhere."<sup>33</sup> Marsh was, however, definitely a "voice crying in the wilderness." Most agrarians were unalterably afraid of excessive production.

Officials of farm organizations quickly noticed that the Lane plan was a departure from normal economic patterns. Thomas C. Atkeson, representing the National Grange, slashed at the Interior scheme as "paternalistic, socialistic, communistic, bolshevistic."<sup>34</sup> There was a good deal of humbug in Atkeson's outburst. He was to a considerable extent, follow-

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<sup>31</sup>Testimony of W. I. Drummond, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the International Farm Congress, Oklahoma, U. S., Congress, House, Committee on the Public Lands, Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 503.

<sup>32</sup>Testimony of Elwood V. Titus, President of the Nassau County, New York, Farm Bureau Association, ibid., 628.

<sup>33</sup>Statement of Benjamin C. Marsh, ibid., 408.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 73.

ing the then prevalent procedure of attacking any disliked idea as "red." Reflecting more genuine farmer opinion, a representative of a local New York Farm Bureau asserted that other economic groups, as well as agriculture, should help to reabsorb veterans into the national life.<sup>35</sup> If organized farmers were going to suffer competition from returning soldiers, they hoped other businesses would have to share the burden.

Organized farmers also said sharp things concerning the "back-to-the-land" agitation. Atkeson believed one force behind the "back-to-the-land" movement was an effort to obtain cheaper food by increasing the number of farmers. He also expressed the opinion that "everybody wants everybody else to go back to the farm except himself." Atkeson added that the farmers were just a little sick and tired of the whole idea.<sup>36</sup>

The National Grange adopted a rather stern official attitude toward "back-to-the-landism." Under the heading "Back to the Farm Agitation," the 1919 Annual Session declared:

Many farmers, some farm papers and a few farm organizations have allowed themselves to be deluded by the back-to-the-farm movements promoted by men and women who never expect to go upon the farms themselves, and who would be horrified at the idea of preparing their sons and daughters for careers as actual producing

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<sup>35</sup>Statement of F. A. Saulsbury, President of Ontario County, New York, Farm Bureau Association, *ibid.*, 630.

<sup>36</sup>*ibid.*, 74.

farmers. There are strong social and moral reasons why a "back-to-the-farm" movement should command the support of public-spirited people, as a social welfare movement; but there is no sound economic or industrial demand for such a movement at this time, nor has there been in the years past. The rapid drift of active producing farmers into other industries is only natural, and will continue until there shall be sufficient demand for food and fiber crops to render their production as profitable as other industrial activities. Our active ambitious young people are not going to remain on the farm with more remunerative employment, offering more congenial working conditions and better opportunity for advancement awaiting them elsewhere. Whenever society is willing to pay for its food, its cotton and its wool a price that will make farming as profitable as other occupations, involving the same amount of investment, business ability and hard work, the movement to the cities will cease.<sup>37</sup>

This statement of the Grange's opposition to "back-to-the-landism" makes the point found in nearly all agrarian opposition to the idea. Whatever "social and moral" reasons might be advanced to justify a movement back to the soil, the fact remains that there was no economic justification for such an effort. Farming was a business and the industry was already suffering from a surfeit of operators. No amount of oratory or argument could change that basic condition, nor alter agrarian opposition.

Leaders of farm organizations expressed some concern about the Lane plan because they thought the chances of an untrained ex-soldier succeeding in farming under reclamation conditions were dubious at best. Members of at least one New York Grange held this opinion. Representatives of this

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<sup>37</sup>Journal of Proceedings, Fifty-third Annual Session, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1919, p. 119. Italics mine.

group wrote Lane that "men not experienced in farm work would make [in the majority of cases] a miserable failure on such reclamation land."<sup>38</sup> That some farm organizations would adopt this attitude is not surprising, since most agriculturalists felt experience was of supreme importance in successful farming.

One of the most common alternatives to the Lane scheme among organized agricultural groups was that there was an abundance of abandoned farm land near market centers to absorb all veterans who might wish to farm. Officials of the National Grange accepted this idea. Under this Grange scheme there would be no need to reclaim arid, swamp or cutover lands for the use of the returning soldiers.<sup>39</sup> The Farmers' Union of Maine adopted a resolution noting that there were thousands of acres of semi-improved farms in that state which could be reclaimed at very little expense. The Union officials naturally favored this approach over Lane's "reclamation scheme."<sup>40</sup> A representative of a New York farm organization testified that there were many abandoned farms in his state which could be redeemed at very little cost.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>John J. Martin and Margaret J. Putnam, Pine Grove Grange of Calcium, New York, to Lane, January 19, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>39</sup>Press Notice, The National Grange, no date, probably the summer of 1919, clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>40</sup>Clipping sent Lane by Clarence G. Penny, Bowdenabone, Maine, no date, no name of paper, clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>41</sup>Testimony of Elwood V. Titus, President of the

The idea that vacant farms could be converted into soldiers' settlements was popular in the Northeastern states where "rural decay" was a century old.

Leaders of organized farmers were guilty of a bit of intellectual chicanery in this part of their attack upon Lane's plan. While these officials favored the use of abandoned farms for veterans' settlements they were also announcing that these lands were not fit for cultivation. Testifying against the Mondell bill, Atkeson was reminded that Secretary Lane had mentioned certain areas near Washington as being available for development under his plan. The Grange representative replied that the farms were not cultivated because they were not a paying proposition. In other words, practical farmers had abandoned them because they could not show a profit on the lands.<sup>42</sup>

Organized farmer leaders objected to the type and location of land proposed for settlement under the Lane scheme, and expressed doubts about its suitability for agriculture. Their opposition was particularly vociferous regarding the reclamation of arid, swamp, and cutover lands. Atkeson said that if farm prices dropped to their prewar level no ex-soldier would be able to pay the costs of a reclaimed farm, not even "if he should live 1,000 years."<sup>43</sup>

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Nassau County, New York, Farm Bureau Association, Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 619.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 365.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 363.

He further stated that it was an economic impossibility for veterans to take the proposed lands and "get ashore" with them.<sup>44</sup> As mentioned earlier, the official position of the Grange was that the government should aid veterans in locating farms near markets, not engage in large-scale reclamation projects in the South and West.

Officials of farm organizations offered various alternatives to the Interior plan for soldier settlement. Atkeson was of the opinion that if a veteran, or anyone else, wanted a farm he could secure one through the Federal Farm Loan System. Such a homestead would be, of course, located in the region in which the soldier wanted to live.<sup>45</sup> Leaders of the International Farm Congress suggested an amendment to the Lane-Mondell bill calling for aid for individual soldiers to enable them to replace retiring farmers or tenants. This would, in theory, also help relieve the tenant problem.<sup>46</sup> W. I. Drummond, the representative of the Congress, believed that some aid should be provided for any ex-soldiers who preferred not to settle on reclamation projects. He proposed a loan system for those who desired to settle in their own state and neighborhood.<sup>47</sup> Officials of the International Farm Congress suggested federal aid for urban homes and busi-

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 364.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 504.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 507-508.

nesses for those veterans who were not inclined toward farming. This would be similar to the Morgan plan and would make some ex-soldiers customers of the farmers instead of competitors.<sup>48</sup> The striking thing about most of the alternative plans, presented by farm organization leaders, is that they were similar to the Morgan or traditional "infiltration" plan of settlement. Farmers did not fear the old way of creating new farms, they were afraid of governmental planning which might open up new acreage too quickly.

Officials of the National Grange, the International Farm Congress, local Farm Bureaus, and various other local farm organizations opposed the Interior scheme. They dreaded unfair governmental competition, were contemptuous of "back-to-the-landism," and feared that inexperienced veterans would be located on worthless land and would fail. These organizational leaders did not, however, strike the Lane proposal at its weakest point. The plan was an open invitation to the rankest type of land speculation. By its very terms--the reclamation of arid, swamp, cutover, and abandoned areas--it attracted the support of practically every owner of worthless real estate in the Union. Yet organized farmers did not hit at this vulnerable spot. The logical question is, why not?

The answer is found in the type of farmer that developed in the United States. The American farmer is not prima-

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<sup>48</sup>ibid., 504.

rily a peasant; he is first of all a businessman. From the beginning of English settlement in America the colonists strove to acquire one of the few commodities which had a speculative value, land. Simply by accumulating surplus acres a man could, if population increased, provide himself with a comfortable old age. And the population did grow. Because of this acquisitive part of their nature, American farmers do not have a peasant revulsion against unused land; they consider it their money in the bank, their protection against adversity, and their hope for the future. Needless to say, the officials of the traditional farmer organizations could not object to one of the most common practices of their own membership, the holding of land for the purpose of speculative profits. This was left to the leaders of two rather unorthodox agricultural organizations: the Farmers' Single Tax League and the Farmers' National Council.

Carl Brannin, Secretary of the Farmers' Single Tax League, testified against the Lane-Mondell bill and in favor of preventing land speculation. He declared:

In view of the experience of other countries, in view of the experience in a limited way in this country, I had hoped the committee would see that if you want to do away with land speculation in any plan for bringing land to the soldier, or getting the soldier on the land, you must use the power of taxation or you must fix on some scheme that will discourage speculation and encourage the use and development of land. Now, it seems to me that in this colony idea this could be done if the title to the land remained in the Government.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>ibid., 226. Italics mine.



Brannin's objection to Lane's scheme was basically the same as that voiced by officials of the Labor Department. He feared the enactment of a measure such as the Mondell act would pave the way for widespread speculative profits and would not benefit the ex-soldiers.

Benjamin C. Marsh, Secretary of the Farmers' National Council, opposed the Lane-Mondell bill. He disliked settling veterans in swamps and upon cutover lands, objected to ex-soldiers paying interest for forty years, and thought the act was a plot of the "privileged" classes against farmers and laborers.<sup>50</sup> More specifically Marsh stated that:

. . . to come down to what should be done, Australia, particularly New Zealand, I understand, and Canada have suggested buying lands for the soldiers: but they have done this: They have levied in most of the Provinces of Australia and Canada an additional tax on land values, so that the Government will not have to pay the enormously inflated prices which you are going to be required to pay when the Government goes into the business of buying land for soldiers.<sup>51</sup>

Marsh was in favor of soldier settlement, but he believed the title to the land should remain in the hands of the cultivator. He said:

I am in favor of it [soldier settlement] provided the Government adopts a method which will protect the soldier, as our program says, in the ownership of his home, provided he uses it, I know of no other title except use.<sup>52</sup>

Marsh's major objections were very similar to Brannin's. He

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 388.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 406.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 414.

was concerned about the accumulation of unearned increment and he believed title to land should depend entirely upon use.

Editors of the agrarian press were wary of soldier settlement, fearing that it would lead to overproduction and depression. The argument was advanced by a writer in the Middlesex Farm Bureau News (Massachusetts) that excessive production led to low prices and depressed conditions to soil exhaustion. The farmer, it was said, when faced with unfavorable conditions "mined" his soil to achieve maximum production.<sup>53</sup> The point was also made, by the staff of the American Agriculturalist, that the competition resulting from veterans' settlement would be doubly unfair since it would be paid for by the taxes of its principal victims, the farmers.<sup>54</sup> Other agricultural journals carried articles repeating the same idea. The publishers of Wallaces' Farmer felt the chief beneficiary of the plan would be city consumers who were interested in purchasing their groceries at less than cost.<sup>55</sup> A Farm and Ranch writer believed that "The idea [soldier settlement] doubtless originated with city reformers or

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<sup>53</sup>John B. Abbott, "More Harm Than Good," Middlesex Farm Bureau News (Massachusetts), 1 (November, 1918), 3, clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>54</sup>American Agriculturalist (June, 1919), clipping in ibid. No page, no volume given.

<sup>55</sup>"The Soldier and the Land," Wallaces' Farmer, XLIV (January, 1919), 249. Farm papers, unless otherwise indicated, were located in the Library, United States Department of Agriculture.

consumers who desire greater production on farms as a means of reducing the cost of living."<sup>56</sup> The editors of the New England Homestead adopted a similar stand stating that more farms and overproduction would lead to lower prices.<sup>57</sup> The paper's editor also wrote that the New England region was only beginning to recover agriculturally from the boom and bust period following the Civil War.<sup>58</sup> Not to be outdone, the staff of the Progressive Farmer declared:

That [soldier settlement] could only result, as did the over-stimulation of Western farm settlement fifty years ago in reducing the too small margin of profit for laborers already on the farm and in the long run the number of agricultural workers added and the number of productive acres added by opening up the proposed new area would probably not exceed the number of workers forced off the soil, and the number of acres thus forced out of production, in the areas now under cultivation.<sup>59</sup>

The chief objection of the agrarian press to soldier settlement was undoubtedly the fear of excessive competition and depression.

Farm journalists were concerned that under the Lane plan no other industry was being asked to absorb any large

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<sup>56</sup>"Bills for Soldiers' Homes," Farm and Ranch, XXXVIII (November, 1919), 6.

<sup>57</sup>"Congress in Session Next Monday," New England Homestead, LXXVIII (May, 1919), 2.

<sup>58</sup>"Injustice to Soldiers and Farmers," ibid., LXXVII (December, 1918), 508.

<sup>59</sup>Clarence Poe to Richard T. Ely, Secretary, American Association for Agricultural Legislation, in "Should We Develop New Lands or Utilize Lands Already Cleared for Our Returned Soldiers," Progressive Farmer, XXXIV (January, 1919), 59.

number of veterans. The New England Homestead editorial staff wanted to know:

Where is the justice of asking a single industry, like agriculture, to carry the entire competition of furnishing jobs for returning soldiers? What would other industries say about government support in starting the boys into competition with their lines of work?<sup>60</sup>

The publishers of Wallaces' Farmer suggested establishing soldiers in storekeeping, or in some other business, as well as in farming.<sup>61</sup> The belief that the Lane scheme was essentially unfair caused the staff of the Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman to support the Morgan bill because it provided for more than one type of aid to veterans.<sup>62</sup> The publishers of Wallaces' Farmer also favored the Morgan plan.<sup>63</sup> The belief that other businesses were not being required to carry their share in rehabilitating veterans caused the editors of many farm papers to turn against the Lane proposal.

The farm newspapers of the World War I period featured many articles discussing at some length the "back-to-the-land" aspects of Lane's soldier settlement plan. The staff of Wallaces' Farmer made the following statement:

From the standpoint of corn belt farming, back-to-the-land movements are not justified except in so

<sup>60</sup>"Injustice to Soldiers and Farmers," 506.

<sup>61</sup>"The Government Land Scheme," Wallaces' Farmer, XLIV (May, 1919), 1104.

<sup>62</sup>Carl Williams, "Talks With Our Readers," Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman, XXXII (July, 1919), 681.

<sup>63</sup>Wallaces' Farmer, XLIV (June, 1919), 1288.

far as permanently increased prices for agricultural products operate of themselves to hold back on the farm a larger percentage of the oncoming farm generation than usual.<sup>64</sup>

Herbert Myrick, editor of Farm and Home, associated the leaders of the "back-to-the-land" agitation with the "ne'er do well" elements among the city population. He was convinced that this class of people could never be successful in farming.<sup>65</sup> The writers of the Rural New Yorker warned against plans to make agriculture the "social heap" upon which would be tossed all the failures of society.<sup>66</sup> The editorial staff of Hoard's Dairyman felt the "back-to-the-landers" did not realize that the majority of people choose the occupation which is most likely to yield the best possible income. They also argued that it was unreasonable to expect all young people to remain on the land, since many of them were better suited for city occupations. Then, too, it was only an intelligent human reaction that large numbers of rural inhabitants were leaving farms as better economic opportunities and greater social activity were readily available in the cities. The editors of the paper thought they might eventually sponsor a "stay-on-the-farm" movement. This

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<sup>64</sup>"Are There Enough People on the Land?," ibid. (March, 1919), 660.

<sup>65</sup>Herbert Myrick, "The Land Question Solved: New Use of Well Tried Means Whereby You May Acquire A Farm of Your Own," Farm and Home, XL (June, 1919), 3-4. Clipping in NA RG 115.

<sup>66</sup>Rural New Yorker, LXXVII (December, 1918), 1428.

would be done, however, only if and when farming became more profitable and attractive.<sup>67</sup> The editors of most of the farm journals had little good to say concerning "back-to-the-landism."

Farm journalists objected in some cases to the Lane proposal because they feared many unseasoned men would attempt farming under reclamation conditions and not succeed in the effort. The editor of Wallaces' Farmer wrote:

Those soldiers who have had farm experience and who really want to become farmers ought to have government help in locating themselves. But they should be located in a reasonably sure-crop country and under conditions which will give them at least a fair chance to make good. The government of the United States should not be a party to any scheme which will lure a lot of inexperienced men onto farms in districts where the chances of success are not reasonably sure.<sup>68</sup>

Herbert Myrick agreed with the idea that "on the farm training" was crucial for successful farming. He wrote that no man should begin farming, even with some capital, without a period of practical rural life. He stated that possibly 1 million of the 7 million American farm owners had begun their careers as laborers, worked up to tenant, and then became owners. Myrick did not believe this route had been closed to any settler, veteran or civilian, who had the "grit, will,

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<sup>67</sup>"Back to the Land," Hoard's Dairyman, LVIII (January, 1920), 1176. For a discussion of farmer income prior to World War I, from the viewpoint of a farm journal, see "The Soldier and the Land," Wallaces' Farmer, XLIV (January, 1919), 249.

<sup>68</sup>"The Government Land Scheme," 1104.

determination, and sense" to go through with it. Without these qualities he thought any settler would fail. As for financial aid he believed the Federal Farm Loan System should be amended and supplemented by state agricultural banks so that it could more effectively aid prospective farmers. Myrick's views were remarkably close to the position taken by certain officials in the Department of Agriculture.<sup>69</sup> The American Agriculturalist agreed with Myrick, especially regarding the means of financing settlers.<sup>70</sup>

Some farm journalists favored the rehabilitation of older agricultural areas, especially the Northeastern states. Significantly enough, an article appearing in the Rural New Yorker was entitled "Repopulate the Cleared Farms First, A New England Experience."<sup>71</sup> The editor argued that Eastern farms could absorb many of the ex-soldiers and that the East could offer excellent farming opportunities for returning veterans.<sup>72</sup> The writers of the Country Gentleman believed that with the proper amount of labor the established farms could meet any need for increased production by simply plowing out the corners of the cultivated fields.<sup>73</sup> The publish-

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<sup>69</sup>Herbert Myrick, "The Land Question Solved," 3-4, in NA RG 115.

<sup>70</sup>American Agriculturalist (June, 1919), 3, clipping in ibid., no volume number given.

<sup>71</sup>"Repopulate the Cleared Farms First, A New England Experience," Rural New Yorker, LXXVIII (April, 1919), 637-638.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., LXXVII (July, 1918), 398.

<sup>73</sup>"New Lands or Old?," Country Gentleman, LXXVII

ers of Hoard's Dairyman doubted the necessity of Secretary Lane's reclamation plans since many farms could be restored by drainage, fertilization, and rotation of crops.<sup>74</sup>

The opposite side to this question was presented by the editors of Wallaces' Farmer. Objecting to Lane's proposal to found veterans' colonies in abandoned areas of the Northeast, the writers of the journal pointed out that Eastern farms had been left untenanted because they could not be cultivated in competition with the more fertile lands of the Corn Belt. The writer warned that to settle veterans on these lands would doom the ex-soldiers to a life of hardship and want.<sup>75</sup>

Some farm newspapermen opposed the Lane plan because they did not consider swamp, cutover, and arid lands as suitable sites for veterans' homes and because they felt there were plenty of improved farms available for veterans if money could be found to pay for them. A Farm and Ranch editorial stated:

The question is: how many of them [soldiers] want to begin life on a cut-over land farm, an arid farm or a swamp location? There are farms for sale and at reasonable prices with long term payments where the land is fertile, schools, roads, markets and other necessities for successful farming are already established. . . . The facts are there are more farms than farmers and more labor than laborers on

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(December, 1918), 16.

<sup>74</sup>"Land Reclamation," Hoard's Dairyman, LVII (April, 1919), 562.

<sup>75</sup>"The Soldier and the Land," 249.



farms today.<sup>76</sup>

Some agrarian journalists, doubting the desirability of the lands proposed for development, opposed the Lane scheme. Also, many of them were convinced that there were farms readily available for the soldiers without the Interior proposal.

There was a definite sectional pattern in agrarian opposition to soldier settlement. The strongest reaction against Lane's proposal came from the Northeastern states and the Middle West. In New England and the Middle States farmers were hanging at the edge of an economic precipice, in fear that the slightest jar would push them over into commercial ruin. Therefore they opposed soldier settlement vigorously except for some halfhearted suggestions that abandoned areas in the Northeast be converted into veterans' settlements. In the Middle West agriculturalists wanted only a continuation of their commercial supremacy. They were against soldier settlement because they instinctively reacted against further competition.

There was even a distinct wavering in farm opposition from the South and West. The editor of Farm and Ranch, a Texas journal, supported the idea of veterans' land settlement as a patriotic gesture, at least as long as the war continued.<sup>77</sup> The publishers of the Progressive Farmer, a South-

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<sup>76</sup>"Bills for Soldiers' Farms," 6.

<sup>77</sup>"More Farms After the War," Farm and Ranch, XXXVII

eastern paper, advocated at one time some type of governmental activity in land settlement.<sup>78</sup> No such concession, no matter how temporary, was found among farm journalists from the Northeast or Middle West. The attitude of these Southern and Southwestern editors can be explained by the fact that in the South and West there was much unused land. If this land was developed the residents of those regions would benefit. There was undeveloped land in the Northeast, and some farm writers from that area favored its reclamation, but the majority of farm editors in that region were afraid of additional rivalry for already unstable markets. In the Corn Belt there was little or no land available for reclamation. In the Far West some reclamation groups supported soldier settlement strongly, an example being the endorsement by the officials of the Idaho Reclamation Association.<sup>79</sup> But more significantly, a scattering of farm and ranching interests in that region did also. The approval of the Imperial County, California, Farm Bureau leaders of Lane's plan being an illustration of this support.<sup>80</sup> In the cutover areas around the Great Lakes there was some sentiment favoring soldier

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(October, 1918), 6.

<sup>78</sup>Tait Butler, "Placing Soldiers and Sailors on the Land," Progressive Farmer, XXXIV (September, 1919), 1300.

<sup>79</sup>Idaho Reclamation Association to Lane, May 22, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>80</sup>See Resolution of Imperial County, California, Farm Bureau, summer of 1919, in ibid., favoring soldier settlement as an example of this.

settlement. The Minnesota cutover country was the site for the later experiment by the Veterans' Bureau in the 1920's in establishing veterans' farm colonies for disabled ex-soldiers.<sup>81</sup> This area, too, was in some respects a pioneer one and its residents could profit from more intensive development. New farms and new people were needed in the South, West, and Great Lakes region, but this was not true of New England and the Middle West.

Undoubtedly the most important cause of agrarian opposition to soldier settlement was a fear of excessive competition from the veterans which might lead to depression conditions. This anxiety was a mixture of memories of past hardships and practical business realism. While some farm leaders did concede that Lane's plan presented no immediate threat to the commercial interests of farmers, they did not wish to set a precedent for such settlement. The agrarian groups were worried about long range as well as present rivalry. They wanted neither.

The leaders of farm groups were clever in adopting the position that all economic interests should share in re-absorbing veterans into civilian life. This argument appealed not only to the doctrine of laissez faire but to the traditional American sense of fair play. Certainly the most conservative citizen could not object to this reasoning.

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<sup>81</sup>See National Archives, General Records of the Veterans' Bureau, Record Group 15, hereinafter referred to as NA RG 15.

Agrarian leaders and practical farmers were eloquent in their contempt for "back-to-the-landism," regarding the idea as reformist quackery. "Back-to-the-landism," they believed, was based on an unrealistic appraisal of farm conditions and was a pipe dream of reformers who had no desire to return to the farm themselves. They also suspected that behind the idealistic facade of "back-to-the-farm" movements was the desire of city consumers for cheaper food prices.

The demand for the restoration of abandoned farms attracted the support of some farmers of the Northeastern states. Agrarians in New England and the Middle States could honestly state that many semi-improved farms in their section could be brought into production at a lower cost than reclaiming Western deserts and Southern swamps. Some sentiment for more intensive development of existing agricultural areas was found among officials of the Department of Agriculture. On the other hand, there was the argument by some agriculturalists that vacant farms had been abandoned precisely because they could not be cultivated profitably.

Other agrarians objected to the reclamation of new land because it was too expensive and was not in the public interest. Warnings were issued about "empire" building tendencies in the Reclamation Service, against the possible dire fate of veterans if prices dropped to prewar levels, and about misinformation concerning the quality of the lands slated for reclamation.

A strong case was made by officials of farmer groups that not all available means had been exhausted to settle farm-minded ex-soldiers on the soil. Suggestions ranged from an improved Federal Farm Loan System to the prosaic proposal that the veterans acquire land, as had many home-owning American farmers, by working up from laborers to owners.

Strongest agrarian opposition to Lane's plan came from the Middle West and the Northeastern states. Northeastern farmers opposed the Interior idea because of their perilous economic position and the Middle Western agrarians did not want to jeopardize their primary position in agriculture. Special conditions, such as in the cutover regions of the Lake States, added some support for Lane's proposal.

Lane's soldier settlement idea was based upon idealistic hopes for a better society. The Secretary of the Interior was an advocate of "back-to-the-landism" as a corrective for the ills of an industrial society. To be translated into reality, however, idealism must have political support. There can be no doubt that many of the endorsements of Lane's plan were more apparent than real. In time of war people are inclined to be generous toward the men who are protecting them. Approval of soldier settlement was, to many people, simply a means of showing gratitude. Then there was the backing of groups that were all too obviously interested in selfish gain. Western reclamation people and Southern landowners certainly had much to hope for from the passage of

soldier settlement legislation. The more intensive development of agricultural resources of the West and South would mean pecuniary gains for landowners in those regions. In order to put his program into effect, Lane needed to win agrarian support. He received instead determined resistance from commercial farmers and their allies in the farm press, agricultural colleges, farm organizations, and the government. The only landed groups supporting Lane's proposition were the pressure groups of the West and the South, with incidental support in other sections. The significance of agrarian opposition to soldier settlement was that it robbed the idea of respectability. This is of crucial importance in American politics.

## CHAPTER V

### OTHER OPPOSITION

The opposition of farmers, and other agrarian groups, to the Lane scheme was the most serious source of trouble for that proposal. Sectional animosity toward the plan was closely related to agricultural antipathy. In the Northeast there was opposition stemming from existing farmers who were wary of veteran competition. These agriculturalists had some influence on their representatives in Congress. The Midwestern farmers, while more affluent, also feared over-production and used political pressure against the Lane proposal. The views of the minority members of the House Committee on Public Lands concerning H. R. 487 reflect somewhat the power of the farmers in the Northeast and Midwest. All of these congressmen were from east of the Mississippi and north of the Mason-Dixon line except Hays B. White of Kansas.<sup>1</sup> In the Northeast there was--among large segments

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<sup>1</sup>See previous chapter on Agrarian Opposition, and also consult the minority report on U. S., Congress, House, Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 15-17. Members of the minority were: Bertrand H. Snell, Rep. of N. Y.; Charles A. Nichols, Rep. of Mich.; Hays B. White, Rep. of Kans.; and John S. Benham, Rep. of Ind.

of the population--simple indifference toward the Secretary's idea. New England and the Middle States were heavily industrialized and the people there had other interests. Such apathy, too, had adverse political consequences for soldier settlement proposals.<sup>2</sup>

Lane had advanced the soldier settlement plan as a palliative in expectation of depressed postwar labor conditions. The minority group argued that the Interior plan was unnecessary because the anticipated unemployment in the postwar period had not materialized. These opponents reported that instead of a labor surplus there was an actual shortage of hands on the farms and of workers in the cities in 1919. They believed this condition cancelled out one of the important reasons for passing a soldier settlement law. Their reasoning was correct because a labor surplus had not developed. This was one unexpected economic phenomenon of 1918-1919. Learned predictions were confounded and labor conditions were far from depressed.<sup>3</sup>

The minority members stated the Lane-Mondell measure was grossly unfair because although it carried an appropriation of \$500,000 it would actually provide homes for not more than 80,000 veterans out of the four and one-half mil-

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<sup>2</sup>Consult Dixon Wecter, When Johnny Comes Marching Home (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), 378, for this argument.

<sup>3</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, Minority Report, 15.



lion who had served honorably during the Great War. Also, they attacked the bill because it required each settler to pay \$1200 as a down payment. In addition the minority was concerned because the act required a soldier to put up one-fourth of \$1500 as collateral for an equipment loan and the same security for a livestock advance. Also, the members estimated that if an ex-soldier were to work on the projects to save the initial outlay it would take him five years to accumulate \$1200 out of \$4 a day wages. They objected as well to the fact that veterans would have to pay back borrowed money at the rate of four per cent interest. The minority members also thought the "project" farms would be more expensive than existing improved homesteads.<sup>4</sup>

The minority men suspected the Mondell bill, masquerading as a soldier settlement measure, was in reality a great reclamation scheme with ominous speculative overtones. Their report obviously refers to the activities of the Southern Development Corporation when it protests against the actions of a "publicity agent" in spreading propaganda for the Lane Plan throughout the country. The conclusion that the Interior scheme was a speculator's conspiracy was far from uncommon.<sup>5</sup>

Members of the minority favored the "infiltration" mode of settlement. They believed each soldier should locate

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 16-17.

his own farm with funds from a government loan, maintaining that such individual choice would be the best assurance of success for the veterans. They thought that not only should the farm-inclined ex-soldier be the beneficiary of government largess, but that the city-bred soldier might also benefit from federal generosity. The committeemen especially emphasized that one of the best means of discouraging Bolshevism was to help the city man own his own home. This would give him a "stake" in society. The minority favored appropriating money for reclamation to be divided among the states. But these monies should be provided only in those regions where development was feasible.<sup>6</sup>

The striking thing about both the criticisms and the recommendations of the minority members is that they so closely resemble the Morgan Plan. It must be borne in mind that most of these men were actually against reclamation, but not necessarily opposed to the establishment of veterans on existing farms. General opinion in the northeastern United States and the Middle West was that there were plenty of developed farms for the soldiers and there was no need to bring more acres under the plow and risk overproduction. Therefore the Morgan scheme appealed to the minority.<sup>7</sup>

Widespread unfriendliness in the northeastern region

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>7</sup>The exceptions to the rule such as Commissioner of Agriculture Wheeler in Massachusetts who favored the Lane Plan must be kept in view.

toward the Lane proposal was reflected in the thinking of John W. Weeks, a former United States Senator from Massachusetts. Weeks thought the Interior plan was being paraded before the public as a free bonus to soldiers. In reality the veterans would not only have to return the borrowed money, but would be compelled--according to Weeks--to pay the costs of government administration. Weeks also felt that the reclamation of vast agricultural regions in the South and West was unnecessary since there were many uncultivated areas in the Northeast much closer to established markets.<sup>8</sup> Weeks' final objection was actually a conservative political reaction rather than a sectional argument. He believed the Mondell bill had all the trappings of a socialistic program and would subject ex-soldiers to a type of government control which was essentially un-American. Weeks was expressing the objections found among Northeasterners--rural and urban--to the Lane Plan almost in summary form.<sup>9</sup>

The honest and open testimony of Congressman William R. Wood of Indiana against H. R. 487 illustrates midwestern antipathy toward Lane's soldier settlement idea. Wood stated that he, and the Indiana delegation, was opposed to the Mondell bill because the measure was "primarily a reclamation project and, so far as it interests the soldiers,

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<sup>8</sup>Consult Chapter IV, Agrarian Opposition, for similar arguments from northeastern farmers.

<sup>9</sup>"Statement of Former United States Senator John W. Weeks," no date, NA RG 48.

that is only secondary." He also believed the Interior plan could not be put into effect in Indiana or any of the older states since there was little undeveloped land in those commonwealths. Wood thought a certain amount of money should be apportioned among the states and each government could then devise its own plan if reclamation was possible or desired. He stated that more boys would leave the farm after the war than would be anxious to return or to go there, thereby eliminating one reason for soldier settlement legislation. At least this had happened after other conflicts. Finally Wood objected to the community settlement aspect of the proposal. Wood argued that such communistic experiments had been tried over and over again and had always failed. He cited Robert Dale Owen's colony in Indiana as an illustration of his point. Wood's criticisms were fairly typical "farm state" objections to the Lane Plan.<sup>10</sup>

Another farm state congressman who opposed the Interior scheme was Republican Hays B. White of Kansas. He was a member of the minority on the Public Lands Committee, shared the views of their report, and favored in general terms a plan similar to the Morgan proposal for soldier settlement. He stated:

. . . I want to say to you gentlemen that the untrained, uninitiated soldier buying land that must be reclaimed, when it is known that the best land in this country has already been occupied, and owned, has no chance whatever, when he shall have paid the

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<sup>10</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 531-532.

overhead expense, to compete with the young, ambitious soldier who is willing to go on a piece of land and work from 12 to 16 hours a day to make a home for his wife and children.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to routine farm state objections, then, White was concerned with governmental interference in the nation's agricultural enterprises. He did not believe, as a matter of fact, that subsidized veterans could ever compete effectively with private initiative in agriculture.<sup>12</sup> White's arguments were common in his region. It should be noted that his blunt assertion that the best land had already been settled was shared by many professional agriculturalists.<sup>13</sup>

There was a good deal of friendly sentiment toward soldier settlement in the Great Lakes region. But Republican Congressman Charles A. Nichols of Michigan became bitterly opposed to the passage of the Mondell bill because of the lobbying activities of officers of the Southern Development Corporation. Writing to Clement S. Ucker of that corporation he took Ucker to task for employing a press agent to favorably publicize the Interior plan. Nichols stated that he was not opposed to the reclamation of all the waste lands in the nation,<sup>14</sup> but he did not want this accomplished by under-

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<sup>11</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 1919, LVIII, Part 5, p. 4375.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>See Chapter IV, Agrarian Opposition, for this fact.

<sup>14</sup>*Italics mine.*

handed subterfuge. He wrote Ucker:

It is too bad that in the mad and heartless rush for individual gain even the soldier had to be included and victimized. . . . I think the conduct of your organization was most reprehensible and no quibbling will conceal the real motive impelling a Development Organization to employ a press agent to put over a bill which was presumed to aid the soldier.<sup>15</sup>

Once again the ugly head of speculation had reared into public view and had damaged the chances of the passage of a soldier settlement law. Nichols' estrangement was particularly serious since there was considerable interest in veterans' colonization in the Great Lakes area.<sup>16</sup>

Several factors contributed to unfriendliness found toward the Lane Plan in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Great Lakes country. The relative economic weakness of northeastern farmers led them to oppose the enactment of a soldier settlement law. They did not want to court final business disaster through excessive veterans' competition. Nonagrarian interests in New England and the Middle States also caused a good deal of apathy there toward the Lane scheme. The strength of the midwestern agrarian element added to intense opposition in that region toward soldier settlement. These Corn Belt farmers, and their congressmen, did not want to jeopardize their favored agricultural position. In the Great Lakes area Nichols' dislike of the Inte-

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<sup>15</sup>Charles A. Nichols to Clement S. Ucker, August 18, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>16</sup>See Chapter III, Supporters, for indications of this support.

rior plan was caused by disgust with the machinations of land speculators. Another significant explanatory factor was the strong conservatism of many midwestern and northeastern representatives. The Lane Plan, from the right-wing view, resembled too closely the principles of the Square Deal, the New Freedom, and progressivism in general. White of Kansas was not the only conservative in 1919-1920 who wanted a halt to nostrums and a return to "normalcy."

The Lane Plan did not receive the ultimate support of the proponents of alternate schemes for soldier settlement. Democratic Congressman Dick T. Morgan of Oklahoma had proposed a plan based upon the "infiltration" method of colonization and individual loans as previously mentioned.<sup>17</sup> Morgan's endorsement of the Interior scheme was lukewarm and was extended only in case no other bill could be enacted by Congress. Morgan stated:

. . . If the Lane proposition shall be brought to a vote, and other propositions shall be voted down, I shall, of course, support the Lane measure, and do not appear in opposition to the measure so much as I do for the purpose of giving you my ideas of what I think would be a better way.<sup>18</sup>

Morgan's objections to the Mondell bill were remarkably similar to those of the minority members of the public lands committee.

Because Morgan believed that only a few specially

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<sup>17</sup>Consult Chapter II, The Plans, 55-57, for the Morgan proposal.

<sup>18</sup>Hearings, H. R. 487, Homes for Soldiers, 281.

qualified veterans would benefit from the Lane Plan, he opposed the proposal. As an example, there was no attempt to help city veterans with the purchase or construction of a residence. Only the soldier interested in farming need apply. In addition ex-soldiers who already possessed homes would not be aided by the measure. Morgan also objected rather strongly to the fact that only soldiers who could afford a five per cent down payment would be able to acquire a farm. And, finally, veterans who worked on the projects would receive preferential treatment.<sup>19</sup> Morgan's criticisms were valid up to a point. It is important to remember, however, that Lane intended to make just those discriminations which offended Morgan. The qualifications and specifications were designed to make the Mondell bill correspond to the Secretary's ideals.

Morgan's position on veteran settlement had considerable support and some of it emanating from the Southwest. Democratic Congressman John Nance Garner of Texas had much the same opinion as Morgan regarding soldier colonization. He believed the federal government should sell a soldier his farm home in "the community where he desires to live." Garner suggested that the federal treasury loan veterans \$5000 for the purchase of a home in "any portion of the United States that he desires." From the viewpoint of a realistic politician, however, Garner was aware that the

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.



people of Texas generally favored the soldier settlement proposition.<sup>20</sup>

Officials of the Labor Department, and men who had helped draft the Labor plan for soldier settlement, were particularly virulent in their criticism of the Lane Plan. William Kent, partially responsible for the Labor scheme, expressed quite accurately the distrust Labor personnel felt for the Interior Secretary's idea. The heart of their criticism was the belief that excessive land speculation would result from Lane's proposal. Kent wrote:

. . . The evils of the present land situation have largely grown out of speculation, and speculation is based on the violent assumption of fee simple title, carrying with it the right to destroy and misuse or to leave unused the land of the country, and to transfer, irrespective of use or misuse, the ownership to "heirs and assigns forever". . . .<sup>21</sup>

Kent had discussed the matter with 15 Labor officials and they all agreed that a colonization program would be a mistake unless it made security of tenure dependent upon use. They believed this would be possible only by having the state or federal government retain the fee simple title.<sup>22</sup>

Most officials in the Labor Department agreed with Kent's position. One wrote:

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 188-189.

<sup>21</sup>William Kent to President Woodrow Wilson, June 3, 1918, Records of the War Labor Policies Board, Files Nos. 31 and 31a, National Archives, Record Group 1. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 1. Kent was a tariff commissioner and a former congressman and was not actually in the Labor Department.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

. . . With regard to the other defect in our old policy, Secretary Lane has again chosen the wrong method. Just as he has chosen homesteading instead of colonization, as championed by Secretary Wilson, so he has also broken with the latter in failing to seek a means for checking speculation. The grandsons of the original homesteaders are today in many cases absentee landlords. Under Secretary Lane's plan this process will continue.<sup>23</sup>

Antipathy toward the fee simple provision of the Lane Plan was the primary factor in the opposition of Labor personnel. They were firmly convinced any settlement program would lead to widespread speculation if not controlled by the governments retaining title to the land. It is also true that there was a good deal of bureaucratic jealousy between officials of the departments. Labor men were rather aggressively trying to acquire some jurisdiction in land policy matters. Interior officials, on the other hand, would naturally resent and resist this attempt since their department had controlled the public domain in the past.

Leaders of the American Legion expressed early interest in soldier settlement, but in the final analysis did not support the Mondell bill. Legion officials chose to incorporate veterans' colonization into their "Four Point" bonus package. As mentioned earlier, it cannot be seriously doubted that farms for soldiers was not of primary concern to the Legionnaires. The bonus, and other benefits, was considerably more important.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Undated, unsigned, untitled memorandum on Secretary Lane's Plans, War Labor Policies Board, Files Nos. 31 and 31a, NA RG 1.

<sup>24</sup>See Chapter II, The Plans, 53-54, for the Legion

A unified plan for soldier settlement was never presented to the public. This seriously hampered the chances of the passage of such legislation. Powerful agrarian opposition made it imperative that supporters of veterans' colonization join forces. This did not happen. Morgan was lukewarm to the Lane Plan and favored "infiltration." Legion officials looked upon "farms for soldiers" as merely one means of enhancing the popularity of their "Four Point" program. And Labor personnel were almost vicious in their attacks upon the Lane scheme. These circumstances go far toward explaining the fact that the United States was the only English-speaking country that did not seriously experiment with soldiers' colonization after the Great War.

Officials of Western reclamation organizations favored the Lane Plan or almost any development scheme. George Maxwell, of the National Reclamation Association, however, was definitely against the proposal. His primary objection was to the land purchase portion of the Interior proposition. This part of Lane's idea had caused a "back-fire" against it in the public mind and had, according to Maxwell, brought to its support practically every holder of surplus swamp, arid, or semiarid land. On the other hand Maxwell thought the elimination of the land-buying

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proposal. Also consult Earle M. Simon, Executive Commander, American Legion of Oklahoma, to Franklin K. Lane, no date, NA RG 115. The writer was unable to discover whether the author of the other major plan, Raphael Zon, ultimately opposed the Lane scheme.

feature would deprive the measure of its only important support--the landowners. Maxwell did not believe the soldiers were really in favor of the Mondell bill. Certainly there was a general enthusiasm for the Interior proposal wherever there was surplus and salable land, and there was a good deal of validity to Maxwell's point.<sup>25</sup>

Maxwell's second criticism was that the Mondell act --after appropriating a huge sum of money--would actually provide very few homes for servicemen. He foretold a continuous cycle of huge appropriations for small numbers of veterans' homesteads until finally the total sum expended would be impracticable. That the measure did provide only a few rural homes is absolutely true. The men who drafted H. R. 487 intended to provide for only those veterans who met special qualifications.<sup>26</sup>

Maxwell was opposed to the idea of "segregated" colonies for veterans. He thought every such ex-soldiers' settlement would be a "hot-bed" of agitation for further subsidies and for the cancellation of obligations to the government. Also Maxwell believed extensive aid to veterans would actually thwart their ingenuity and that it would stunt their capacity for self-help. He felt that if left to

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<sup>25</sup>George Maxwell, letter, copy for the information of William E. Smythe, no date, NA RG 115. See Chapter III, Supporters, for relative interest in various parts of the country toward Lane's Plan.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

their own resources most servicemen would be successful without coddling. Objections of this type were fairly common in the general criticisms of the Lane proposal.<sup>27</sup>

There was a lack of interest--and even antipathy--toward the Lane scheme among major segments of the veteran population which was as important in defeating it as much of the overt opposition. Some soldiers were suspicious of the Interior plan because they believed it was a device of selfish landowners to advance their own fortunes. A Mississippi ex-serviceman wrote Lane:

While I have not had the opportunity to examine all the facts, I have seen enough to cause me to believe that the force behind the deal is the land owner and not the soldier or sailor . . . there are large bodies of cut over lands in these Southern States that although productive are absolutely worthless to the soldier, because we flatly refuse to live on [sic] it.<sup>28</sup>

Since some soldiers shared this very common apprehension about the Interior scheme there was a serious lack of backing from what was supposedly the most important source of support.

Sheer indifference toward the Lane Plan was the reaction of some urban veterans. This was because the Interior proposal appealed only to those ex-servicemen already interested in farming and even many of them found the Morgan Plan much more attractive. An historian of veterans' affairs

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>W. L. Shaddis, Jackson, Mississippi, to Lane, May 9, 1919, NA RG 48.

has phrased this point in the following fashion:

But these arguments [Lane's] appealed chiefly to men already in love with the soil, and left cold those for whom the field lark never sang. The city-bred veteran, who could not tell clover from alfalfa, simply did not respond to Mr. Lane's questionnaires.<sup>29</sup>

And the urban soldier, if he did not care for the Morgan proposal, tended to favor a cash bonus. Veterans' indifference toward the Lane scheme contributed significantly to the failure of the plan.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the unfriendliness toward the Interior proposal can be traced to a conservative bias among the opponents. A good many people felt Lane's scheme was too strongly tinged with progressive and liberal ideas and not a few went so far as to label the plan "socialistic" or even "communistic." Opposition stemmed also from the Republican party. That party was riding high in 1919-1920 and was preparing a crushing defeat for the Democrats in the latter year. Almost any tactic which would discredit the Administration was used by the Republicans. Mondell was a Republican, but the passage of a soldier settlement bill might have aided the Democratic party since veterans' colonization was endorsed by Wilson. Pleased by the enactment of such a law, servicemen might have voted Democratic out of gratitude. A. P. Davis had this to say about the situation:

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<sup>29</sup>Dixon Wecter, When Johnny Comes Marching Home, 378. Italics mine.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

Mr. Mondell is said to have received a severe scoring from the Republican leaders . . . and was very glad to compromise matters by agreeing not to call his bill up but let it slumber on the calendar instead of being slaughtered.<sup>31</sup>

Democratic Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana also blamed the Republicans for the fact that the Mondell bill did not receive early consideration.<sup>32</sup> Any measure which had received the blessing of the Wilson Administration was apt to run into Republican opposition. One has only to recall the fate of the Treaty of Versailles for that fact to become crystal clear.

Agrarian opposition to soldier settlement legislation was the most decisive, but there were other forms. The fact that the Mondell bill failed to attract much support in the Middle West and the Northeast was as much a farmer reaction as a sectional one. Agriculturalists in the Midwest wanted to retain their farm supremacy, while farmers in the Northeast feared that more competition might push them farther along the road to ruin. In the Northeast there was an apathetic attitude toward soldier settlement because the population there was predominantly urban. Conservative political opinion lined up against the Lane Plan in both the Middle West and the Northeast.

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<sup>31</sup>A. P. Davis to Elwood Mead, March 23, 1920, NA RG 115.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas J. Walsh to R. K. West, Great Falls, Montana, Walsh Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

Lane was not able to attract the support of other men and groups who proposed alternative plans for soldier settlement. Morgan never directly endorsed the Interior plan, Labor personnel were openly hostile, and American Legion officials were more interested in their "Four Point" program.

Many people were not convinced that planned, or community, settlement was necessary and this complicated matters for the sponsors of the Mondell measure. The popularity of Morgan's plan was based upon the fact that it proposed to keep intact the traditional "infiltration" method of settlement and did not have any "socialistic" overtones. The minority of the House Public Lands Committee endorsed "shot-gun" colonization as did the Texan John Nance Garner. Morgan's intention of retaining the historic method of colonization explains much of the support for his proposal. Conservatives--urban and rural--preferred his scheme above the others.

The widespread fear that the Lane proposal was backed by speculators influenced adversely such widely different people as Nichols of Michigan, George Maxwell of the National Reclamation Association, and Labor officials. In addition, some veterans shared the opinion that the Interior scheme was a money grab on the part of greedy landowners. Maxwell's assertion that this suspicion had caused a "backfire" in public opinion against the Interior plan was absolutely cor-



rect.

A good many veterans were indifferent or hostile toward the Lane idea. Urban veterans preferred a bonus, rural soldiers were often attracted by the Morgan idea, and some soldiers feared the speculative aspects of Lane's idea. Without overwhelming veteran support no soldier settlement program was possible. A more comprehensive plan might have attracted more support, because many veterans were just not interested in farming.

Finally, the plan attracted the hostility of conservatives generally and the Republican party in particular. Without bi-partisan support the measure foundered on the calendar. All of these factors help to explain why the Mondell bill was never brought to a vote.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AFTERMATH: STATE LAND SETTLEMENT EXPERIMENTS AND DISABLED VETERANS' COLONIES IN MINNESOTA

The Lane Plan was abortive in the sense that it was never put into effect on the scale intended in the United States, nor with all its features intact. The only attempts to make portions of the Interior scheme a reality were certain state controlled projects of "ready-made" farms and an effort to rehabilitate disabled veterans on the land, particularly in Minnesota, by the Veterans' Bureau. These experiments did not entail the sweeping use of the resources of the federal government combined with those of the states.

During World War I, or immediately thereafter, the legislatures of 37 states enacted some type of soldier settlement law. But since most of these acts contemplated federal participation, as called for in the Lane-Mondell proposal, a majority of them were not implemented.<sup>1</sup> A few

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<sup>1</sup>Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959), 54, and "Correspondence in Reference to State Soldier Settlement Legislation, thru March, 1921," and "Correspondence in Reference to State Soldier Settlement Legislation, thru April, 1921," NA RG 115. The Hearings on H. R. 487 contain a listing of state legislation.

state legislatures made provisions for loans to ex-servicemen to purchase farms. These included California, Oregon, and South Dakota.<sup>2</sup> Six states embarked upon a policy of planned colonization and gave some preference to veterans in acquiring homesteads. These states were California, Washington, South Dakota, Arizona, Minnesota, and Oregon.<sup>3</sup> None of the state land settlement enterprises were ultimately successful.

As previously mentioned, the settlements at Durham and Delhi, California, were almost "models" for the Lane scheme. The father of the California Plan, Elwood Mead, had a very important role in the drafting of the Mondell bill.<sup>4</sup> The Delhi Colony was a veteran's project.<sup>5</sup> In 1919 a California act provided for cooperation with the federal government in soldier settlement activity. This was actually an amendment to the land colonization law of 1917 and did not require prior federal action to become effective.<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup>Bertha Henderson, "State Policies in Agricultural Settlement," Journal of Land and Public Utility, II (July, 1926), 287.

<sup>3</sup>W. A. Hartman, State Land Settlement Problems and Policies in the United States, U. S., Department of Agriculture, Technical Bulletin 357 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 1-37, for a rather full account of state settlement activities up to 1930-1931.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter I, Introduction, 13-15, for a discussion of the California Plan. Consult Chapter II, Proposed Soldier Settlement Plans, 28, for Mead's role in the Interior Plan. And 38 for Mead's specific part in drafting the Mondell bill.

<sup>5</sup>Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 47.

<sup>6</sup>State Library of California, Sacramento, California,

spite of all hopeful early signs the California demonstration failed and by 1931 the state withdrew completely from the settlement program.<sup>7</sup> Mead blamed the collapse of the colonies upon an unpredicted depression, a sharp political swing away from the progressive outlook of Hiram Johnson, and the low ability of the colonists.<sup>8</sup> Of these factors probably the most important was the unexpected agricultural recession. Homesteaders who had paid high prices for their land could not meet their payments from depressed farm commodity prices.<sup>9</sup> Mead had allowed the use of only the best land for colonization purposes. This procedure had been necessarily expensive and was disastrous when hard times came.<sup>10</sup>

In 1919 the Washington state legislature passed two laws dealing with reclamation and soldier settlement. The first act was the Reclamation Act with an initial appropriation of \$1 million. The second enactment was the Land Settlement Act providing for cooperation with the United States in veterans' colonization and appropriating \$150,000 out of the state reclamation fund and \$10,000 from the general

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to Reclamation Service, April 6, 1921, NA RG 115.

<sup>7</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 35.

<sup>8</sup>Conkin, Tomorrow a New World, 48.

<sup>9</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 25.

<sup>10</sup>Douglas C. Marshall, "Soldier Settlement in Agriculture," Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics, XX (August, 1944), 270.

fund.<sup>11</sup> Upon this basis Washington officials developed the White Bluffs-Hanford Project. This was an "infiltrated" colony of some 102 farms scattered over an area of 14 miles in which veterans were given preference in the assignment of plots. The homesteads were about 20 acres in size and each tract required an individual irrigation pump. The soil was examined by personnel of the State College prior to settlement. Unlike the California colonies there were no community improvements and buildings were constructed only at the request of the settlers after they had purchased the land. The Washington enterprise met the same fate as the California experiment, death because of the agricultural slump of the 1920's. By 1925 the settlement was in dire straits.<sup>12</sup> The quality of the land was a serious weakness of the project. The soil powdered when cultivated, making crops difficult to start, and irrigation costs were so high as to be prohibitive.<sup>13</sup> In 1925 state officials in desperation conveyed land titles to the colonists for a nominal consideration of \$1. The unsettled area was auctioned off. Even so in 1930 many of the farms--thus sold--had reverted back to the state. A farm depression, poor soil, and costly water led to the project's failure.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>"Correspondence in Reference to State Soldier Settlement Legislation, thru March, 1921," NA RG 115.

<sup>12</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 39-40.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., 40.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., 40-41.

In South Dakota there was some, if not considerable, interest in soldier settlement. Governor Peter Norbeck favored the Lane Plan, but he was aware that, because of legal complications, land in the state could not be reserved entirely for veterans. He wanted to grant ex-soldiers generous terms on loans with which they could purchase rural homes.<sup>15</sup> The South Dakota colonization act of 1919 provided for cooperation with the United States in soldier settlement aid, made an appropriation of \$100,000, and authorized a bond issue of \$1 million. Loans could be made under the law up to \$10,000 for the "purchase of farms, improvements, stock, etc."<sup>16</sup> The land settlement board, established by the 1919 law, was in "substance" empowered to create group colonies such as those at Delhi and Durham, California.<sup>17</sup> Ten quarter sections were at one time acquired for developing a planned settlement, but that plan did not mature.<sup>18</sup> Boyd Wales, of the settlement board, estimated in 1921 that 130 "boys" had selected homesteads under the act.<sup>19</sup> Ex-soldiers had prior rights as the law was interpreted by board officials. An official statement

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<sup>15</sup>Peter Norbeck to Lane, January 9, 1919, NA RG 115.

<sup>16</sup>"Correspondence Relative to State Soldier Settlement Legislation, thru March, 1921," NA RG 115.

<sup>17</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 41.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>"Boys" meaning veterans. Boyd Wales to A. P. Davis, April 26, 1921, NA RG 115.

read, in part:

The main purpose of the Land Settlement Board is to assist discharged soldiers to locate on farms of their own, to stock and equip and improve the same. A soldier with very little money can, in this way, obtain a good home and in a very short time become independent. After the soldier is cared for, the Board may make loans to those who have not been in the service, but soldiers always have the preference.<sup>20</sup>

Board personnel experienced some early difficulties when the validity of their bond issue was challenged in the courts.<sup>21</sup> Such complications were not, however, the major cause of the failure of the enterprise. Unfavorable agricultural conditions were the primary factor in the decision to abandon South Dakota's improved farm experiment. The legislature abolished the settlement board in 1925 and its functions were taken over by the Rural Credit Board for salvage purposes. An authority on state colonization activities sums up the failure of the South Dakota effort in the following manner:

Out of a total of 347 farms improved by the land settlement board only 36.3 per cent represented live loans in April 1930, 54.8 per cent had been foreclosed, and 2.9 per cent were under foreclosure. Two farms had been foreclosed and resold, and 20 had completed payments.<sup>22</sup>

Twenty successes in 347 attempts was certainly no great

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<sup>20</sup>Italics mine. "Purpose and Plan of the Land Settlement Board," South Dakota Land Settlement Board, in "Correspondence Relative to Soldier Settlement Legislation, thru March, 1921," NA RG 115.

<sup>21</sup>Wales to Davis, April 26, 1921, NA RG 115.

<sup>22</sup>Hartman, "State Settlement Policies," 42.

record of achievement.

The Arizona legislature enacted a soldier settlement law in 1919.<sup>23</sup> The aim of the act was "to provide homes for soldiers, sailors, marines and others, to assist in the purchase, reclamation, and settlement of farms and workers' allotments, and . . . for making loans to settlers." In its major provisions the enactment was quite similar to the California Plan, calling for prior improvement of the land, construction of buildings, and other features recommended by Elwood Mead.<sup>24</sup>

In 1922 Arizona officials purchased 970 acres, divided them into 20 acre plots, and made essential improvements--including houses, fences, and wells. They also undertook to rent machinery to the settlers. As far as veterans were concerned, 40 had been settled on state lands by 1930. Arizona authorities at that time maintained that neither had one dollar been paid on the principal nor had interest been collected on the homesteads. All monies appropriated under the act had been expended.<sup>25</sup> Not even in semipioneer Arizona could planned settlement succeed in the 1920's. The profits were too small from low priced farm commodities. Veterans or other colonists simply were not able to pay for

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<sup>23</sup>"Correspondence Relative to State Soldier Settlement Legislation, thru March, 1921," NA RG 115.

<sup>24</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 42.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 42-43.



their farms.

The Minnesota legislature did not legislate concerning settlement as such, but put into effect what was referred to as the Minnesota Land Settlement Project. The act carried an appropriation of \$100,000. The state auditor was in charge of the program and he in turn appointed a land improvement board which began to function in 1918 and was active through 1924. By the latter date the board had improved 600 forty acre tracts in the cutover country. One of the purposes of the act was to determine the feasibility of developing cutover lands. Some \$90,000 was expended by 1930, but many of the farms had reverted back to the state by that date.<sup>26</sup>

The Oregon experience with planned settlement was the most successful, primarily because it consisted of only three demonstration farms. The original act, 1919, had contemplated some cooperation with the federal government in soldier settlement. Since the national Congress never enacted any veterans' colonization legislation, that idea was impossible.<sup>27</sup>

Poor soil conditions were partially responsible for the failure of state sponsored planned settlements, as in Washington. But the most important factor in the collapse of these enterprises was the high cost of farms and low

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 44-45.

agricultural commodity prices in the 1920's. The settlers were unable to meet their installments and state governments were unwilling to pour unlimited money down an endless sink-hole. Had the Lane Plan been enacted into law it probably would have met a similar fate.

The most important American experiment in soldier settlement was the attempted agricultural rehabilitation of disabled ex-soldiers by the U. S. Veterans' Bureau in the 1920's. Bureau personnel in District 10--especially in the Minnesota portion of the district--put farm training of wounded veterans into effect on a substantial scale.

Officials of the Veterans' Bureau at one time favored a "Lane type" arrangement for disabled ex-soldiers. The act proposed by Bureau personnel created a Veterans' Settlement Board, carried an appropriation of \$25 million, and made the Bureau Director the executive of the Board. This would have, in effect, put the Director in charge of some aspects of public land control. Such interference was officially opposed by the Interior Department because that branch of government had historically managed the public domain.<sup>28</sup> Director C. R. Forbes presented a draft bill to President Harding. But, since Interior Department personnel were opposed to the measure and Congress was in no mood to pass any soldier settlement legislation, the proposition was shelved.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>"Memorandum by Chief Counsel, U. S. Reclamation Service, Relative to Proposed Bill Drafted by U. S. Veterans' Bureau," April 25, 1922, NA RG 115.

<sup>29</sup>C. R. Forbes to Warren G. Harding, April 8, 1922,

Although Congress refused to permit a general soldier settlement act it did react favorably toward a rehabilitation program for disabled veterans. The original law--Public No. 90--was passed October 6, 1917. It provided for "rehabilitation, reeducation, and vocational training" for those ex-soldiers<sup>30</sup> who had been actually injured as a result of their service. This act placed training in the hands of the Bureau of War Risk Insurance.<sup>31</sup>

The "vocational rehabilitation act"--Public No. 178--was enacted June 27, 1918. This law maintained the original definition of a disabled veteran--one who had sustained physical injuries--and made the Federal Board for Vocational Education the agency for carrying out the program.<sup>32</sup> Public No. 178 was amended in 1919 to provide for the retraining of those ex-soldiers suffering from mental and physical diseases caused or aggravated by military duty.<sup>33</sup> Under the "vocational rehabilitation act" a veteran had to prove at least 10 per cent disability. His training allowance was set at a maximum of \$80 monthly for a single man

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NA RG 115.

<sup>30</sup>Meaning all veterans.

<sup>31</sup>United States, Statutes at Large (1917-1919), Public No. 90, sec. 304, p. 407.

<sup>32</sup>United States, Statutes at Large (1917-1919), Public No. 178, secs. 1-2, p. 617.

<sup>33</sup>U. S. Veterans' Bureau, Annual Report, 1922, p. 4. *Italics mine.* A much more liberal interpretation since it is much easier to qualify with a disease than an injury.

and \$170 for an ex-serviceman with several dependents.<sup>34</sup> The law carried an appropriation of \$2 million.<sup>35</sup> As far as the agricultural rehabilitation of disabled veterans was concerned there was no provision made for assisting them in the purchase of land.<sup>36</sup>

In 1921 Public No. 47 was passed which created the Veterans' Bureau. The Bureau promptly took over the functions of the Federal Board for Vocational Education in training disabled veterans.<sup>37</sup> Rehabilitation was to be carried out under a decentralized system with district offices in various parts of the country. These offices were to be closed in 1926; therefore, by implication the period of training for the ex-soldiers ordinarily would be roughly five years.<sup>38</sup>

In 1923 the Veterans' Bureau stated that the "out-standing" development of that year in agricultural training was the increase in the number of veterans participating in "project" training on the farms as compared to those train-

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 281.

<sup>35</sup>United States, Statutes at Large (1917-1919), Public No. 178, sec. 8, p. 619.

<sup>36</sup>U. S. Veterans' Bureau, Annual Report, 1922, p. 323. This became an extremely important point when District 10 officials encouraged veterans to purchase farms. There was no way the Bureau could assist them in the matter.

<sup>37</sup>United States, Statutes at Large (1921-1923), Public No. 47, sec. 8, p. 149.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., sec. 6, p. 149.

ing under academic conditions.<sup>39</sup> Even if men were renting, leasing, or purchasing farms for training purposes the

Report warned:

The fundamental act under which the bureau operates does not permit the extension of financial assistance or of financial backing other than the ordinary allowance for maintenance, support, and equipment for purposes of training during the period of training.<sup>40</sup>

The fact that no assistance could be given to veterans in the acquisition of land was an almost fatal flaw in the Bureau's land settlement experiment in Minnesota.

Public No. 242 was enacted in 1924. It was a summation and a supposed improvement on the earlier acts providing for rehabilitation of disabled soldiers. This act definitely terminated allowances and training as of June 30, 1926, and stated that "the test for rehabilitation shall be employability, to be determined by the director."<sup>41</sup> In agricultural training the latter provision was to prove very difficult of interpretation. Did "employability" mean farm ownership, tenancy, or merely the ability to work effectively as a farm laborer?

Agricultural rehabilitation of disabled veterans

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<sup>39</sup>U. S. Veterans' Bureau, Annual Report, 1923, p. 419. "Project" training in agriculture is a near equivalent to "on the job" training in industry. That is, it is practical rather than academic experience in farming.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 420.

<sup>41</sup>United States, Statutes at Large (1923-1925), Public No. 242, secs. 406 and 404, p. 628.

was carried out in all the Veterans' Bureau districts, but District 10 had by far the largest number of farm trainees. Ninety-one per cent of the students in District 10 were undergoing "project" training and only a small percentage were attending exclusively institutional classes. The majority of the "practical" trainees were in the Minnesota area of the District.<sup>42</sup>

Farm training in District 10 went through three phases. The first period, immediately following World War I, was an orthodox Smith-Hughes approach under the general supervision of Professor D. D. Mayme of the University of Minnesota Farm School. Students under this plan attended classes in the winter and worked on "projects" in the summer, a procedure very similar to 4-H Club or Future Farmers of America activities.<sup>43</sup> As a matter of fact, there were enrollees at the University of Minnesota Farm School under the direction of the Federal Board for Vocational Training as early as 1919.<sup>44</sup> Committees of trainees traveled throughout

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<sup>42</sup>C. D. Hibbard, Chief, District 10, to Veterans' Bureau, March 5, 1925, Records of the Veterans' Bureau, National Archives, Record Group 15. Hereinafter referred to as NA RG 15. In this chapter trainees' names are deleted. This is done at the request of the National Archives and the Veterans' Administration.

<sup>43</sup>F. J. Mabry, Regional Agricultural Agent, Districts 8, 9, and 10, to Chief, Agricultural Training Subdivision, U. S. Veterans' Bureau, September 13, 1924, NA RG 15.

<sup>44</sup>Major George P. Ahern, Employment Service, Rehabilitation Division, U. S. Veterans' Bureau, to the Director, through Acting Assistant Director, Rehabilitation Division and Chief, Employment Service, U. S. Veterans' Bureau, "In-

Minnesota during the winter months of 1922 searching for suitable sites for disabled veterans' colonies. They reported their findings back to the Farm School, Bureau of officials, and other ex-soldiers. The obvious drawback to inspection tours in Minnesota during the dead of winter is that the ground is covered with snow. Stumps, stones, and undesirable soil are hidden from the unwary eyes of prospective buyers.<sup>45</sup> Groups of ex-soldiers were established in April, 1922, at Argonne Farms, Veteransville, Onamia, and Moose Lake.<sup>46</sup>

The second period began when Mayme, in 1920, attended a Washington conference with Central Office officials on agricultural training and enthusiastically endorsed the "colony" idea of settlement. Orchard Lakes, or Argonne Farms, was formed under his direction. Mayme still wanted the trainees to return to school in the winter. This, however, was discouraged by District 10 personnel who preferred a system of local instruction.<sup>47</sup>

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vestigation of Land Settlement of Trainees in Minnesota, General Report," May 25, 1923, NA RG 15. Hereinafter referred to as "Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>45</sup>ibid.

<sup>46</sup>ibid. Argonne Farms was 20 miles from Minneapolis, Veteransville was about 80 miles from Duluth, Onamia was approximately 90 miles from Duluth, and Moose Lake was located just outside of Barnum, Minnesota. All were in the so-called cutover country.

<sup>47</sup>F. J. Mabry, Regional Agricultural Agent, Districts 8, 9, and 10, to Chief, Agricultural Training Subdivision, U. S. Veterans' Bureau, September 13, 1924, NA RG 15.

District 10 officials then embarked on a program of "establishment" which brought a good deal of criticism from the Washington office. The law made no provision for helping a veteran purchase land. The definition of "employability" by the central office was the ability to make a living at farming. District 10 personnel felt the ex-serviceman should own his farm.<sup>48</sup>

There were several disabled veterans' colonies in Minnesota which were well enough organized to justify a name and a detailed history. One of the most important, and controversial, of these was Argonne Farms or Orchard Lake. This settlement was founded in April, 1922, by about 30 trainees under the general supervision of Professor Mayme.<sup>49</sup> The farm community was located only 20 miles from Minneapolis on a paved road and three miles from a railway station.<sup>50</sup>

Central and District office officials bickered, from the inception of the Argonne Farms project, over several issues. One conflict was the exact state of title to the homesteads. District Office personnel maintained that there was no problem concerning ownership because the veterans had purchased the land from the fee simple owner, R. H. Benham.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid. "Establishment" meant the ownership of a farm.

<sup>49</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.



Major George P. Ahern, of the U. S. Veterans' Bureau, however, asserted that Benham owned no land in the vicinity of Argonne Farms having turned everything, including the trainees' contracts, over to Thompson Yards, Inc., which firm had charge of construction in the settlement. Ahern also seriously doubted Benham's integrity because of complaints from residents of the small civilian settlement of Orchard Lake.<sup>51</sup>

The problem of correct title to land in the cutover area of the Lake States was a sticky one and not easily settled. Throughout the region the local banker was usually also the land agent. "Wild land" was not easily disposed of although partially improved farms were. The first man on the land, or the pioneer, often worked a few years and then drifted on, leaving behind him no one to defend his equity. Because of that factor when the trainees appeared on the scene they were a "windfall" to the banker-agents. Their monthly paychecks would insure payments and high interest rates could be concealed within the installments. Most agents did not have an absolute title to the land.<sup>52</sup> There was a good deal of argument concerning the type of deed being paid for by the trainees at Argonne Farms. The American

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For the role of the bankers, land agents, and the pioneer farmers in confusing land titles in the Minnesota cutover region see the portion of the Ahern Report entitled "The Land Agent."

Legion investigators assumed the veterans had a clear right of possession which was also the contention of Fred J. Mabry, the Regional Agricultural Agent.<sup>53</sup>

One of the most serious disagreements concerned soil conditions at the colony. District 10 officials maintained that the land was "rolling and has a small amount of stone in it" and believed the acreage would not be difficult to clear.<sup>54</sup> The ex-soldiers were offered the land at an average price of \$200 an acre.<sup>55</sup> Central Office investigators, however, took a more unfavorable view of the quality of land available for trainees at Argonne Farms and also objected to the price charged for plots. Ahern believed the area was unsuitable because "this tract is not level; . . . it is in Quack grass; . . . the soil is not as good as that found in the bottom lands of the vicinity; . . . the price charged for the land is high."<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly \$200 an acre for partially cleared cutover land was somewhat excessive. This was not an isolated opinion as demonstrated by the report of the American Legion investigating committee

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<sup>53</sup>Report of the Committee on Land Colonization, The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, 1923, NA RG 15. Hereinafter cited as "American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15. Fred J. Mabry to Assistant Director, Rehabilitation Division, U. S., Veterans' Bureau, "Inspection of Group Projects in District 10," May 10, 1923, NA RG 15. Hereinafter cited as "Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>54</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

on Argonne Farms. The members of that board thought that "these men paid maximum prices for the land and they would have been much better off had they located farther back from the main highway where they could get land at \$100 or less per acre."<sup>57</sup> Professor John D. Black, an eminent agricultural economist, also felt that the men would have improved their condition by acquiring cheaper land a little farther from such central points as Minneapolis. This would have reduced their debt load considerably.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most serious drawbacks to the experiment at Argonne Farms was the fact that the farms, or really plots, averaged only four and one quarter acres. This was far too small to make the men eligible for a Federal Farm Loan after rehabilitation since the Federal Farm Loan Board required a 40 acre improved farm for a long term advance. Also, the tracts were totally inadequate for the veterans to make a decent living at farming.<sup>59</sup> In spite of this limitation on long term loans District 10 officials still thought the

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<sup>57</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>58</sup>"Estimate of the Minnesota Project," supposedly authored by Professor Black. This portion was attached to the Ahern Report, but was not considered an integral part of said report, no date, NA RG 15. One should bear in mind that the debt load factor was of crucial importance to the trainees. They were receiving no government aid in the purchase of their land, it had to be paid for out of their allowances.

<sup>59</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15. For specific information on the limitations of Federal Farm Board loans consult "Black Report, Exhibit 6, Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

trainees could secure federal assistance at the end of their schooling.<sup>60</sup> Mabry anticipated the farms could be employed as the California Land Settlement Board utilized farm laborers' allotments. He wrote: "These men will use these homes as farm homes and will depend upon receiving employment near at hand, or will load in a flivver and go to Minneapolis, which is only twenty miles away on fine paved roads."<sup>61</sup> Whether this was true or not, only the most specialized type of agriculture would make such small plots capable of completely supporting a man and his family.

One of the dreams of Franklin K. Lane, Elwood Mead, and other planned settlement enthusiasts was that community effort would make farming a more lucrative occupation. Argonne Farms was a "group" colony and some attempt was made in cooperative endeavor. Since the tracts of land were so small the trainees and their advisors believed they should concentrate on crops and products which could, with intensive cultivation, produce a comfortable income. It was decided to grow berries and raise poultry and bees. The Argonne Farms Egg and Berry Association was an outgrowth of this decision. Ahern, however, was of the opinion that even such a program would not make the project a financial success. Poultry houses at Argonne Farms, he wrote, were designed to care for 250 hens. The most profit a trainee could expect

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<sup>60</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>61</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

per hen annually would be \$2 or a total income of \$500.

This figure did not take into account the ever recurring possibility of an epidemic wiping out the flock nor the expense of paying for overcapitalized and underdeveloped land. Ahern also believed each poultry establishment would require at least two and one half acres for a green run. This would leave--out of four and one quarter acres--very little land for berries, bees, truck gardens, fruit trees, and pasture. Nevertheless, the veterans embarked with some cheer upon their experiment.<sup>62</sup>

Ex-soldiers at Argonne Farms received both academic and on-the-job instruction. Originally the District Office signed a contract with the Orchard Lakes School Board providing for such training. The cost of instruction was approximately \$32 per man each month. Major Ahern criticized the program severely because the practical work consisted mostly of land clearing and house building.<sup>63</sup> Later it was considered more feasible to take training duties out of the hands of the local school board and transfer them to personnel of the District Office and the University of Minnesota Farm School. This was done primarily because rehabilitation dates were imminent and Bureau officials wanted to reduce overhead expenses.<sup>64</sup> The trainees also received a good deal

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<sup>62</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>63</sup>ibid.

<sup>64</sup>C. D. Hibbard, District 10 Director, to Frank J.

of group equipment, consisting in the main of incubators, brooders, and farm and garden tools, as provided for in enabling legislation.<sup>65</sup>

There was a good deal of complaint about the caliber of the veterans at Argonne Farms. Not only were the ex-soldiers disabled, but some of them were misfits psychologically as well. Alcoholic sprees handicapped some trainees.<sup>66</sup> Loose financial standards, however, more seriously threatened the success of the colony.

All of the reports on Argonne Farms listed the trainees' expensive homes as a crucial error in business judgment. The American Legion Report stated: "The homes of the men are of the bungalow type and the plans for building them have been quite elaborate."<sup>67</sup> One of the Mabry Reports also scored the costly houses. Mabry believed:

These trainees have built homes that are a little too expensive for a man who is starting to pay for a farm on a shoestring. . . . The matter of homes is a vital problem, amounting in some cases, to almost \$3,000. This places a rather large overhead on the man with a farm whose producing capacity is limited.<sup>68</sup>

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Kuboushek, Chairman, Orchard Lakes School Board, February 28, 1925, NA RG 15. Similar letters were sent out to other school boards in Minnesota.

<sup>65</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15. An allowance of \$30 per trainee for group equipment was standard. See ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Dixon Wecter, When Johnny Comes Marching Home (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), 382.

<sup>67</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>68</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

Professor Black thought it was a "serious mistake" for the trainees to spend so much money on their homes.<sup>69</sup> In fairness to the men it should be remembered that the plans for farm homes were drawn up by Farm School personnel. The propensity of this group of veterans toward reckless spending, however, complicated their financial position. District 10 officials admitted that the veterans had "over-capitalized" their homes.<sup>70</sup>

After all the extenuating circumstances are considered the trainees at Argonne Farms probably were less capable of rehabilitation than were the ex-soldiers in the other settlements. Their problem was aggravated by the smallness of their farms and other factors, which only makes their story more regrettable.<sup>71</sup>

The settlement at Argonne Farms did have at least two distinct advantages. First of all was its closeness to the Twin Cities which under ideal conditions should have furnished a ready market for the products of the colony. The other was the fact that the men could engage in cooperative activity which could, again in theory, help them to improve their situation. Unfortunately for the trainees

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<sup>69</sup>"Estimate of the Minnesota Project," NA RG 15.

<sup>70</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>71</sup>Fred J. Mabry to Chief, Rehabilitation Division, U. S. Veterans' Bureau, through channels, "Report on Agricultural Training in District 10," August 8, 1924, NA RG 15. Hereinafter cited as "Mabry Report, 1924," NA RG 15.

the "ideal situation" did not exist. Their farms were too small, they had paid an excessive price for the land, their homes were much too expensive for their economic condition, the soil was not improved and cleared, nor as perfect for small farming as pictured by District officials, and the trainees' own weaknesses contributed to ultimate failure. The settlement's epitaph could have indeed read "The Sad Story of Orchard Gardens."<sup>72</sup>

Two other colonies for disabled veterans in Minnesota, Veteransville and Silver Star, were founded near the small town of McGrath. This was approximately 80 miles from Duluth. Veteransville was established in 1922 under circumstances similar to those of Argonne Farms.<sup>73</sup> Silver Star was located a little later than Veteransville, but it was on land purchased from the same agents and had a similar development.<sup>74</sup>

Title to the farms at both Veteransville and Silver Star was a complicated issue. E. O. Buhler was the banker in McGrath, as well as the Mayor and the Treasurer of the School Board. The town was in reality his fief. He was also the de facto founder of Veteransville and Silver Star. Buhler was not, however, the fee simple owner of the land.

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<sup>72</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15. The men arrived at Silver Star in the winter of 1922-23.



He was holding the property under a contract of sale from the owner James McGrath. Buhler made all arrangements for land sales, furnished credit for the purchase of livestock, feed, and other supplies, and received regular installments from the trainees, plus collecting money from the Veterans' Bureau for instructional purposes. Ahern estimated that Buhler received each month, in cash, \$2,000 from the men at Veteransville and \$1,000 from the trainees at Silver Star. As Treasurer of the School Board, Buhler also had control of \$1,500 paid monthly for the instruction of ex-soldiers.<sup>75</sup> Buhler promised Mabry that he would furnish a bond guaranteeing the validity of the payments the men made, but apparently Ahern was not convinced of Buhler's sincerity in the matter.<sup>76</sup> Officials of the District Office had approved the land purchases, or at least J. C. Batten, Chief of the District Rehabilitation Division, had done so. District Office personnel had done nothing to make certain of the honesty of the banker's operations until the Ahern investigation because they considered Buhler a "reliable businessman." Only after Ahern began his inspection did District officials move to secure a bond from Buhler.<sup>77</sup> The American Legion committee found a good deal of dissatisfaction among

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<sup>75</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>76</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15 and "Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>77</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

trainees at Silver Star because their payments went directly to the banker rather than to the owner.<sup>78</sup> Buhler undoubtedly was making a large, and probably unearned, profit. The controversy concerning correct title to the lands at Veteransville and Silver Star illustrates very aptly the general instability of equity holdings in the cutover regions of Minnesota.<sup>79</sup>

The soil at Veteransville and vicinity was, according to District personnel, rolling, of a clay nature, and quite fertile. Almost in parentheses these men admitted that the land contained "much loose stone," but they maintained this condition would not interfere with farming when development was completed. Upon the matter of how difficult clearing would be, Ahern and the District officials agreed for once. A representative of the District Office stated: "[The] soil is not uniform in quality because the cutover regions of north-central Minnesota are streaked with stone; consequently the [region] offers one of the most difficult clearing problems that will be found in the state of Minnesota."<sup>80</sup> Ahern concurred with that statement completely.

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<sup>78</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>79</sup>Trainee bitterness against Buhler is brought out by the fact that a veteran filed suit against him March 1, 1925, for falsely advertising the land sold the ex-soldiers. Consult, "Rehabilitation Division, General Files, Box #19, Regional and District Files, District #10, Bundle #2," NA RG 15.

<sup>80</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

He wrote: "The question naturally arises, why were disabled veterans placed on such lands when there is so much other better and partially improved lands available at reasonable prices?"<sup>81</sup> Then he added that the reason would be clear when one read the portion of his report entitled "The Land Agent."<sup>82</sup> In contrast American Legion investigators had a more favorable impression of the soil at Veteransville. Their report reads:

It is the opinion of your committee that the criticisms of soil conditions there are not wholly justified and that the descriptions of rocky land have been exaggerated. The soil is generally good and there are a few instances of excessive rock.<sup>83</sup>

They also reported that the soil at Silver Star was the best of any found in the community projects.<sup>84</sup> Such an independent conclusion on the part of the American Legion inspectors indicates that the real point of contention between Ahern and the personnel of the District Office was not the inherent fertility of the land, but the difficulty of making the land productive. District officials were at pains to make the land appear as potentially productive as possible, thereby playing down the tough clearing job ahead. Ahern emphasized the stony quality of the soil and hardly mentioned the very real possibility that the land might be valuable in

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> "American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

the future.

Compared to Argonne Farms the price of homesteads at Veteransville and Silver Star was rather low. The land sold for from \$17 to \$25 an acre depending upon the type of soil. The farms at Silver Star were slightly higher in price. The trainees paid down \$50 or more and agreed to pay \$50 monthly, plus six per cent interest. While this ordinarily would not seem a burdensome amount it should be remembered that the veterans were receiving not over \$170 a month, with several dependents, in training allowances, and that this monthly installment did not include loans from Buhler for equipment, seed, and livestock. The "equipment" loans, carried at eight per cent interest, were carefully glossed over by District personnel.<sup>85</sup> It should also be noted that the trainees were totally dependent upon their stipends until they could get their farms into production. Since the land was unusually difficult to clear, it is doubtful that the farms were worth their purchase price, particularly for the use of disabled veterans. The American Legion investigators declared: "It was the conclusion of your committee that at Veteransville the men paid a maximum price for their lands although the committee is not in a position to say that the price was exorbitant, although they feel that it was very high." They did not comment on the price paid for the homesteads at Silver Star.<sup>86</sup> It is

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<sup>85</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>86</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

altogether probable that the farms were excessively costly.

The homesteads at Veteransville and Silver Star were rather large in contrast to those at Argonne Farms. The plots at Veteransville were 40 and 80 acres in size, while the farms at Silver Star were 80 acres in extent.<sup>87</sup> The difficulty at Veteransville and Silver Star was the plots were too large. Mabry stated:

It is our opinion that 80 acres is too much for these men who are buying land with no funds at all to attempt to handle, as they will have to be carrying the overhead on raw land which is non-productive for some time. We believe that it would be wiser for them to purchase 40 acres rather than 80.<sup>88</sup>

Professor Black agreed with Mabry's reasoning emphatically.

He wrote:

My judgment is that 40 acres is the best size of holding for an able-bodied trainee. . . . The trainee should not reason on the basis of the size of farm that he expects to want someday--but on the basis of what he can handle in the next ten years. If he wants more when his family is grown enough to help him, he can in most cases buy it conveniently.<sup>89</sup>

Peculiar conditions in the cutover country cancelled out the usual advantages of holding uncultivated land for speculation. Cutover real estate had practically no agricultural value until developed. Clearing and improving the soil was a long,

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<sup>87</sup>For the size of the Veteransville farms consult "Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15 and for Silver Star "Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>88</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>89</sup>"Black Report, Exhibit 6, Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

laborious, and expensive task. Ideally, this work should be accomplished in spare time and, if possible, by the cheapest possible method--manual labor. Only if the cost was kept low by physical effort would the development of the land pay for itself. Disabled veterans were at a serious disadvantage for that reason. Black was undoubtedly correct in advising trainees to acquire smaller blocks of land. Perhaps the most vital portion of his advice were the words "able-bodied." Clearly the severely handicapped veteran should be placed on cleared, or partially developed, farms.<sup>90</sup>

There was a good deal of group activity at Veteransville and Silver Star. Land purchases were arranged by a "cooperative association" of trainees who received the general counsel of Professor Mayme.<sup>91</sup> One feature of the attempt at "group" living was the community center at Veteransville. This was located on a 40 acre plot and contained several improvements. The buildings included a social hall and, also, sleeping quarters for single men. The veterans paid \$13 a month rent on the tract, although they had an option to buy.<sup>92</sup> The ex-soldiers at Veteransville formed the "Veteransville Association" for the purpose of marketing crops, purchasing equipment, livestock, and seed.<sup>93</sup> The men

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<sup>90</sup>ibid. That is, if one argues that agricultural rehabilitation was a valid program for disabled veterans in the first place.

<sup>91</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>92</sup>ibid.

<sup>93</sup>ibid.

at Silver Star worked together in a cooperative spirit, but how they managed their organization is unknown.<sup>94</sup>

The idea of District officials, and the trainees themselves, was to develop two distinct kinds of farms in the Veteransville and Silver Star colonies. The 80 acre homesteads were to become dairy farms, while the 40 acre tracts would be utilized for commercial poultry purposes. The Veteransville Association intended to standardize the breeds of cattle and poultry, with Guernsey cows and White Leghorn chickens as the standard breeds.<sup>95</sup> Again, as at Argonne Farms, the veterans were attempting to compensate for their disabilities by a high level of specialization. Their judgment was correct, but mistakes in training policy, difficulties in clearing land, and too many overhead expenses made their task difficult, if not impossible.

Instruction for the men at Veteransville and Silver Star followed the pattern previously mentioned in the portion on Argonne Farms. District officials took out a contract with the School Board at McGrath and the trainees were supposed to receive both practical and theoretical schooling in farming. Ultimately the work was transferred to the University of Minnesota Farm School and the District Office. Ahern, however, criticized the training program at Veteransville and Silver Star sharply. He wrote:

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<sup>94</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>95</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

It would be interesting to learn why the instruction of fifty trainees in the two settlements, Veteransville and Silver Star, in the vicinity of McGrath, costs \$1500 per month, or \$30 per man, and but \$1000 per month for the instruction of the same number of trainees at Moose Lake, but thirty miles distant.<sup>96</sup>

He also recommended that the activities of instructor C. J. Bowe be investigated to determine just what service, if any, Bowe had rendered to the trainees.<sup>97</sup> The ex-soldiers at Veteransville received the usual group equipment, but there seems to have been some confusion as a few trainees received wagons when they had no horses to pull them. Ahern did not think, however, that the District request for expensive clearing machinery should be met as the training program did not include development on such a large scale.<sup>98</sup> The Highway Department of Minnesota furnished some tractors for clearing purposes and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion auxiliary provided funds for other equipment. It was vital to get adequate clearing done or the communities would never flourish.<sup>99</sup>

The ability of the trainees at Veteransville was higher than those at Argonne Farms. Ahern stated:

This group of disabled veterans include quite a number of unusually fine men with all the fighting spirit that made our great West what it is today; men who made good records in the war, but they are now in bad

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<sup>96</sup>ibid.

<sup>97</sup>ibid.

<sup>98</sup>ibid.

<sup>99</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.



physical condition and not able to surmount the tremendous obstacles ahead of them. However, they believe in their instructors and Supervisors and are willing to continue this hopeless fight. . . .<sup>100</sup>

In spite of the original high morale of the men, Ahern thought the project hopeless. His trip to individual trainee's farms gave him that impression.

On one veteran's homestead, as an example, Ahern found a heartbreaking tale of woe. The trainee had a small shack, an inadequate barn, and only eight acres brushed--out of 40--but none broken, as he had no breaking equipment. He had tried to raise vegetables the year before, but had been unsuccessful. The ex-soldier had been furnished a wagon, but no team. As a result of these factors the trainee regarded himself as a failure.<sup>101</sup> Other veterans had the same, or similar, hopeless story to tell. They had plenty of land, 40 to 80 acres, but little or none of it was in production. Their physical disabilities prevented them from developing the soil by physical labor and they did not possess adequate clearing machinery. It is little wonder that the trainees were becoming discouraged.

A brighter picture was found by American Legion investigators at Silver Star. The men there seemed more optimistic, were working together in an amiable manner, and seemed to be quite stable in their financial arrangements.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

The reason for better conditions at Silver Star is found in the fact that the land was much easier to clear, having been burned over several times. Thus the major obstacle to success at Veteransville was not found at Silver Star.<sup>103</sup>

The settlements at Veteransville and Silver Star had two very real advantages compared to Argonne Farms. The homesteads were of adequate size; also, the men living at the colonies were more capable of adjusting to farm life. These favorable factors were cancelled out, particularly in the case of Veteransville, by other conditions. In the first place development was so difficult that in 1923, at the time of the American Legion investigation, the ex-soldiers at Veteransville had only eight acres, per farm, cleared.<sup>104</sup> The soil was not only difficult to improve, but the job would be exceptionally expensive if it had to be done by machinery. Mabry estimated that the cost of land clearing at Veteransville would be as high as \$60 to \$65 an acre.<sup>105</sup> Since so little land was developed it would be impossible for the trainees to qualify for a Federal Farm Loan after termination since that agency required an improved farm of at least 40 acres.<sup>106</sup> To complicate the veterans' problem still further they had contracted for payments to Buhler which totalled

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<sup>103</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>104</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>105</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>106</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

well over half of their monthly allowance under the rehabilitation program. Unable to improve their farms and hard pressed to make payments it is small wonder that ex-soldiers, especially at Veteransville, became listless and discouraged.

There were a number of trainees located between Barnum and Moose Lake, Minnesota. This project was referred to as Moose Lake. Most of the controversy concerning Moose Lake centered around the notorious "Smith Tract." This was the only "colony" portion of the project, the rest of the veterans being scattered in the vicinity of Barnum and Moose Lake.<sup>107</sup>

The history of the "Smith Tract" was not especially unusual in the cutover region of Minnesota. Originally the 240 acre holding was school land and was purchased from the state by John F. Hynes, a banker at Carlton, Minnesota. Hynes had 40 years to meet his installments and agreed to pay \$5 an acre for the land. Until he sold to Smith he had paid only the interest on his contract.<sup>108</sup> In 1921 A. C. Smith, an instructor in poultry at the University of Minnesota Farm School, bought the land from Hynes for an average price of \$40 an acre. Hynes felt in 1923 that he could not again obtain that price for the tract.<sup>109</sup>

At the time he purchased the land Smith had been

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<sup>107</sup>"Mabry Report, 1924," NA RG 15.

<sup>108</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>109</sup>ibid.

teaching poultry production to disabled veterans for a year. One of Smith's pupils--a non-trainee--was R. J. Lewis, a banker and land agent at Moose Lake. Mrs. Lewis had been Smith's secretary for a number of years. It will be recalled that 1921 was the year that Professor Mayme was advocating "group settlement" of trainees in Minnesota. Smith purchased the land with the intention of subdividing it for poultry farms.<sup>110</sup>

In 1922 a group of disabled veterans visited Moose Lake in company with a District 10 official to "inspect" the land. D. B. Lynch, President of the Commercial Club in Moose Lake, reported that the men were "herded" into Lewis's bank, rushed to dinner and a show, and "herded" to their train. The "inspection" occurred during a Minnesota winter when the soil was covered by ice and snow. The men contracted to pay from \$47 to \$100 an acre for the land.<sup>111</sup>

Ahern had this to say concerning Smith's activity:

When we stop to think of the natural influence of an instructor over his students, especially when he is regarded as an expert in his subject, and we see him giving instruction on suitable land for poultry raisers, the location of that land as regards markets, transportation, etc., and we see him buying and subdividing land into five acre lots for sale to poultry raisers, and then see his former pupils leading trainees to that land, the natural inference is that these prospective buyers have been subjected to unusual influence to purchase.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>ibid.

<sup>111</sup>ibid.

<sup>112</sup>ibid.

Regardless of the propriety of Smith's role in the affair, title to the "Smith Tract" remained in the State of Minnesota. Both Hynes and Smith merely had a contract of purchase and, in Smith's case, it was a second hand bill of sale from a man who did not own the land. Ultimately, because of a District 10 investigation, the two banks in Moose Lake took over the proceedings and made adjustments in the price of land. The average reduction was about \$16 an acre.<sup>113</sup> For this concession the trainees agreed to construct a road through their holdings. Under the original contract Smith had promised to do the road work.<sup>114</sup> In spite of the reduced price Mabry felt that the land was not worth the amount paid by the veterans. He believed, however, that because of local conditions the compromise agreed upon was about the best the veterans could obtain.<sup>115</sup>

Various reports were made on soil conditions on the "Smith Tract." The American Legion investigators found much of the land "too thin and sandy." They contended that if the plots were used primarily for poultry production and berry farming this would not be too serious a drawback. The official Legion Report, however, stated that the land was very expensive, even after a reduction in price, and in spite of the fact that it was advantageously located.<sup>116</sup> Mabry

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<sup>113</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>114</sup>"Mabry Report, 1924," NA RG 15.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

agreed that the cost of land was excessive, particularly on those farms that were purchased in a "raw" or unimproved state.<sup>117</sup> Ahern found that some trainees were quite dissatisfied with their farms after they had had a chance to closely inspect the soil. One veteran on the "Smith Tract" stated:

Mr. Lewis said it was all like this [pointing to the fair looking acres of cleared land nearby], then he hurried us off, and when I returned to examine my land more closely, I found a very large area of stony land and stumps that will be impossible for me to clear on account of my disabilities.

Other trainees in the Moose Lake region had similar tales to relate.<sup>118</sup> District officials made no effort to reply to the general criticism of soil price and conditions at Moose Lake. Undoubtedly the land was overpriced and the real estate agents made a handsome profit.

The average size of farms at Moose Lake and the "Smith Tract" was five to 10 acres. Ahern gave the size of the "Smith plots" as five acres, while the American Legion report mentioned 10 acre tracts. As if to contradict their own figures the American Legion investigators related the experiences of a trainee who was located on a 40 acre homestead. Apparently there was a good deal of variation in the size of the plots, rather than the uniform scale found at Argonne Farms.<sup>119</sup> The essential point is that

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<sup>117</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>118</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>119</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15 and "American Legion

on the small tracts the trainees would not qualify for a Federal Farm Loan after the expiration of their rehabilitation period and since much of the land was in a raw state those with larger farms would not be eligible.

The trainees at Moose Lake had no formal cooperative association such as those found in the other colonies. They did, however, work together enough to build the road through the "Smith Tract" which had originally been contracted for by Professor Smith.<sup>120</sup>

The veterans at Moose Lake, and especially on the "Smith Tract," intended to establish themselves as poultry specialists, with some production of berries.<sup>121</sup> Trainees at Barnum, Minnesota--which is only four miles from Moose Lake--went into egg production extensively since Barnum was a recognized poultry center. A good many of the ex-soldiers in the Moose Lake area had milch cows and Mabry was especially pleased with this development. Dairy cattle are one means of reducing the cost of living on a farm and are also a source of income.<sup>122</sup>

The training program in the Moose Lake area was above average for District 10. Mabry stated: "Each of the five instructors has a definite routing, and definite assignment

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Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>120</sup>"Mabry Report, 1924," NA RG 15.

<sup>121</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>122</sup>"Mabry Report, 1924," NA RG 15.

is made of the lessons so that the work is made as seasonal as possible. Arrangement is made for interchange of instruction in case there is need for a specialist in any line."<sup>123</sup> This contrasts favorably with the situation at Veteransville and Silver Star where Major Ahern wondered what specific service was being rendered by a particular instructor.<sup>124</sup>

The ex-soldiers at Moose Lake were average in ability for the District. They received neither good nor bad marks in the various reports. Some specific cases indicate that a few of the men were not suited for pioneer farming. Ahern described one trainee in the following manner: "His disability, ulcers of the stomach, has left him rather frail, and not fit for hard work. This man's outlook is not hopeful. He is not thrifty; he apparently has a low mentality; is inexperienced in farming and not keen about it."<sup>125</sup> This man was not typical of the student farmers at Moose Lake.

Every man has his weakness, however, and the veterans at Moose Lake were too rash in credit buying. Mabry wrote: "In one instance, a trainee confidentially informed us that sometimes the banks were even too lenient in their loans to the men, which enabled them to purchase articles which were not necessary."<sup>126</sup> Automobiles turned out to be the real

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<sup>123</sup>ibid.

<sup>124</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>125</sup>ibid. Italics mine.

<sup>126</sup>"Mabry Report, 1923," NA RG 15.



nemesis. Of the 50 disabled veterans in the area 27 owned cars. One of the reasons for this situation was that the Commander of the American Legion in Moose Lake was also the Ford Dealer. He let the trainees have automobiles for \$20 down and \$20 a month. Combined with their heavy land payments this was a serious drain on the men's training allowance.<sup>127</sup>

The settlement at Moose Lake had some advantages. The trainees, if not outstanding, were in most cases at least suitable material for rehabilitation. Since the objective was to concentrate upon poultry raising it was fortunate that Moose Lake was located near an egg center--Barnum, Minnesota. The schooling furnished by the Bureau was good. These favorable factors gave investigators some reason to hope that the colony would succeed.

Disadvantages, however, exceeded the advantages. The controversy over the price and quality of the land was bitter and enduring. This was especially true of the "Smith Tract." The improved acreage was too small to qualify for Federal Farm Loans after rehabilitation dates. This was true of the five to 10 acre plots and also of the larger farms which were mostly uncleared. A serious factor pointing toward failure was the veterans' propensity toward spending beyond their means, particularly upon automobiles.

The colony near Onamia, Minnesota, was considered

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<sup>127</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

by District 10 officials as an "infiltrated" group. Onamia was approximately 90 miles from Duluth and 100 miles from the Twin Cities. The 15 or so veterans were scattered within a one to seven mile radius of the little town of Onamia. Roads led from all the holdings to the village.<sup>128</sup>

In most cases the ex-soldiers purchased from the fee simple owner, but in some instances the local banker--Benzie--bought land and sold it to the veterans on a contract basis. There seems to have been little, if any, of the usual chicanery in real estate dealings in the Onamia region.<sup>129</sup> The price paid for the farms varied from \$30 an acre to \$112 an acre.<sup>130</sup> The criticism would apply here that the cost was somewhat high, although not as seriously as in some areas.

Actually the soil around Onamia was fairly good, especially if cultivated properly. Ahern stated: "Clearing is not too difficult, the soil is good if properly treated. A prosperous farming community in the vicinity testifies to the possibilities of the region."<sup>131</sup> After his scathing

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<sup>128</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15. Information on Onamia is far from extensive. This portion is based almost in entirety on the Ahern Report since the other accounts either do not cover the settlement or mention it only in a very minor way.

<sup>129</sup>ibid. The writer was unable to locate Benzie's initials.

<sup>130</sup>ibid.

<sup>131</sup>ibid.

reports on land conditions at other settlements, this was high praise indeed.

The size of the farms at Onamia varied from 80 acres down to 10, but the average plot was approximately 35 acres. The land was not too difficult to clear and some of the larger holdings could be improved up to 40 acres. A good number of the trainees at Onamia, therefore, would qualify for Federal Farm Loan assistance after their termination dates. This fact encouraged Ahern to predict a high percentage of successful veterans there although he believed: "Failures are inevitable due to a lack of a tryout process, and also due to faulty advisement as to objective."<sup>132</sup> This was a far cry, however, from foretelling the collapse of an entire project.

Although Onamia was not a "colony" in the traditional sense there was some cooperative activity among the trainees. An example of this was the organization of the Disabled Soldiers' Welfare organization which had as its major objective cooperative buying and selling of farm supplies, livestock, and seed. This was evidence of intelligent self-help on the part of the veterans at the settlement.<sup>133</sup>

The type of farming decided upon at Onamia depended primarily upon the trainee's objective. The men who intended to specialize in poultry took the smaller tracts, while those

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<sup>132</sup>ibid.

<sup>133</sup>ibid.

who wanted to go into general farming established themselves on larger farms. Probably the larger plots, up to 40 acres, would have been a wiser choice even for the men who wanted poultry farms. The Federal Farm Loan Board officials positively insisted upon 40 improved acres for a loan.<sup>134</sup>

Training at Onamia, before transfer to the Bureau and the University of Minnesota, was furnished by one full time teacher. There were adequate academic class room facilities in Onamia. Although the Bureau furnished some individual supplies, the District Office seems to have been derelict in supplying group equipment. Of particular note was the fact that some men could have profited by owning incubators, but none was available. Ahern found little to criticize in the schooling program, except perhaps there was too little of it.<sup>135</sup>

Among the trainees at Onamia there were some excellent prospects for rehabilitation. Mabry described one veteran in the following terms:

This man has ninety-three acres and the timber on his land is rather heavy. He has nine acres now under the plow and six acres brushed, has built a house and barn, has eight cows, three horses, forty sheep and four pigs. This man is a very hard worker and has gone very heavy on the building and livestock program, considering the number of acres he has cleared.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>ibid.

<sup>135</sup>ibid.

<sup>136</sup>"Mabry Report, 1924," NA RG 15.

Ahern believed: "These men average seven months on this project, and have made a fair showing in improvements. . . . No elaborate attempts at residences, expensive poultry houses, barns, or automobiles are in evidence."<sup>137</sup> That there would be failures is indicated by Ahern's comments upon one veteran who had reached his termination date. He stated:

One rehabilitated trainee at this place . . . had paid \$450 of the \$1200 due on his forty acres. He has no income from his land. In addition to his debt on the land he owes \$117 on his insurance. He had brushed ten acres of his land and plowed one more. His only income is derived from his compensation \$12.50. He has applied to the St. Paul sub-district for retraining. He is a typical result of conditions as brought out in the main report.<sup>138</sup>

Even under rather favorable conditions such pathetic endings were common in the cutover country.

The trainees at Onamia had certain advantages. They had a fairly good location, there was little if any attempt to get them settled upon highly priced and unsuitable "raw" land, and the soil of their farms was fairly good. Many of them would be able to clear enough land to be eligible for a Federal Farm Loan. An important factor was that many of the veterans were competent. Favorable reports on the project came from both Mabry and Ahern.

The disadvantages of the project were minor and were what would be expected in a heterogeneous society. Some of

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<sup>137</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid. Name deleted.

the trainees did not finish their projects by termination dates as an example. Nevertheless, Onamia was the most promising of the projects in Minnesota.

There were three minor disabled veterans' settlements in Minnesota which were investigated by the American Legion Committee, but not by Ahern or Mabry. These colonies were Brainerd, Bemidji, and Grand Rapids. At Brainerd members of the Committee found that some land had been sold for as high as \$350 an acre and some "wild" land for as much as \$130. This was in spite of the fact that the Legion men believed: "The soil conditions west of the city of Brainerd are very poor in places, the soil is very light and sandy and the veterans will have considerable difficulty in making a success." The instructor at Brainerd seemed competent enough, but his training center was poorly equipped and he had had very little experience. The ability of the ex-soldiers ranged from good to one who "appears to be a mental case." Brainerd offered very little to be enthusiastic about.<sup>139</sup>

At Bemidji the committeemen found that most of the trainees had purchased directly from owners and not from agents. They discovered that one plot had sold for \$150 an acre, but that farm was located near a major highway giving it a higher value than ordinary. The trainees seemed to be

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<sup>139</sup>"American Legion Report, 1923," NA RG 15. Italics mine. Brainerd was about 100 miles southwest of Duluth, Bemidji was about midway between the Lower Red Lake and Leech Lake in north central Minnesota, and Grand Rapids was about 100 miles northwest of Duluth.

above average although one veteran was obviously not suited to farming.<sup>140</sup>

At Grand Rapids the Legion investigators found sullen discontent. The report reads, in part: "Bitter complaint was voiced by the trainees of delay in payments, lack of help by the Government in clearing the land, insufficient equipment, defective tools and incompetent teachers." The instructors and the superintendent of the public schools had scathing things to say about the laziness and indifference of the trainees. The Legion men took matters up with the Veterans' Bureau and many of the defects in the settlement were remedied. Although there were only six or so veterans at Grand Rapids they succeeded in making enough noise to improve their condition.<sup>141</sup>

In 1930 C. D. Hibbard, Director of District 10, estimated that more than 75 per cent of the Minnesota colonists had abandoned their holdings. Many of the veterans had left their farms at the expiration of the training period.<sup>142</sup> The reasons for that situation are found in a series of mistakes, false assumptions, and blunders made by officials charged with directing the settlements.

A crucial mistake was in locating the settlements in undeveloped cutover country. Clearing such land is back-

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<sup>140</sup>ibid.

<sup>141</sup>ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 46.

breaking, time-consuming, and expensive. And the men who were supposed to accomplish this development during a relatively short training period were disabled--always physically, and, too often, mentally and emotionally as well.

Mabry's query "Why were disabled veterans placed on such lands?" is not only a haunting question, but an essential key to understanding the collapse of disabled veterans' colonies in Minnesota. Professor Black's comment on this point is revealing. He believed: ". . . none but the physically fit should start out on cutover land."<sup>143</sup> The record of the trainees is proof of the correctness of Black's opinion.

Another factor in breaking down the spirit of the ex-soldiers was that they almost invariably bought highly priced farms from real estate agents who often had no real title to the land. Professor Black stated: ". . . a piece of land that costs \$75 per acre to clear, and will be worth \$127.60 per acre in 5 years, and rent for \$7 per acre is worth only \$16 per acre as wild land today."<sup>144</sup> A cursory survey of the prices the trainees paid for their land reveals that they had plunged too deeply into debt for their farms. At Argonne Farms the average cost was \$200 an acre. Land expenses at Veteransville and Silver Star were relatively

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<sup>143</sup>"Black Report, Exhibit 6, Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15, italics mine.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.



low--\$17 to \$25 an acre--but the soil was inferior and at Veteransville clearing was difficult. At Moose Lake--on the "Smith Tract"--the men contracted to pay \$47 to \$100 an acre, although the price was later reduced. At Onamia the men paid \$30 to \$112 an acre. At Brainerd some trainees bought land for as high as \$350 an acre and paid as much as \$130 an acre for "wild" land. At Bemidji the price per acre was \$150 in some cases. There can be no doubt that attempting to pay such prices out of a meager training allotment was an impossible task for men who had already suffered much from the grievous blows of fate. The temptation to give up must have been overwhelming in most cases when the allowance was cut off.

The role of the land agent and the banker was more complicated than merely forcing up the price of land, which was in itself extremely serious. The agents usually had only a contract of sale which meant that the veteran would have no legal equity in his farm even after making extensive payments. Officials of the District Office were derelict in their duty in not checking and verifying titles. To excuse this lapse of responsibility by maintaining that the agent or banker was a "reliable businessman" is exactly like allowing the officers of a financial institution to audit their own books. Since the training period was short--about four and one half years--the ex-soldiers needed a clear title to their land in order to secure long term loans.

The local bankers, who were usually the real estate agents, made a profit not only on their land contracts, but on loans to the trainees for seed, equipment, and other supplies. These advances were carried at eight per cent interest, and were therefore more lucrative than the installment payments made by the veterans on their farms. District officials stated that the interest rates extended to ex-soldiers were reasonable by citing the six per cent land notes. They never mentioned the eight per cent "equipment" loans, leaving that indiscretion to Ahern. Ahern also believed some profit was made on local instructional allowances, at least at Veteransville and Silver Star. He was, phrasing it mildly, extremely suspicious about the cost of training at those centers.

The soil at the various settlements varied a great deal in quality, amount of sand and stone, and the extent of standing brush and timber. It is significant, however, that in none of the reports, not even in District 10 rebuttals, can one locate a description of "excellent" or even "good" land conditions. The nearest to this was found at Onamia, but even there it was necessary to "improve" the soil by fertilization and other methods. At Moose Lake trainees complained about the stones which cropped up in their fields in the spring. The settlers at Veteransville were not happy with the extremely heavy timber and brush on their fields. Ahern believed the land at Argonne Farms was

not as good as could be found in that vicinity. The soil at Brainerd was generally poor according to American Legion investigators. Conditions at Bemidji and Grand Rapids were apparently only fair since members of the Legion Committee made no comment on the land. In fairness cutover lands require an extremely long development process to bring them into profitable production. But the other side of the picture is that only the best of cutover soil can be converted into top grade farm land. The disabled veterans' settlements were handicapped at the start--perhaps fatally --by the fact that much of the land was inferior and the top range was only "good."

The size of the farms turned out to be a major stumbling block to the success of the experiment. Homesteads ranged from four and one quarter acre plots at Argonne Farms to 80 acre farms at Silver Star. The extent of the holdings was important because of the rulings of two separate government agencies. The first of these was that Veterans' Bureau training would terminate, except in exceptional cases, in 1926. Along with the end of schooling would come the cancellation of allowances. Most of the veterans, therefore, would have to find another way to pay for their farms. The Federal Farm Loan Board was the best source for a long term loan. The Board, however, required a 40 acre improved farm before it would extend such credit. Professor Black estimated it would take seven years for an

able bodied man to clear 20 acres and acquire the small animal herd--cattle, chickens, and horses--which was necessary in cutover areas.<sup>145</sup> As a result most of the men would never qualify for a Federal Farm Board loan. The ex-soldier's holdings at Argonne Farms were too small and the men at Silver Star could not improve 40 acres in four years, as examples. The long term credit which was needed for success was denied, then, for reasons which should have been obvious to District 10 officials. These officers maintained, however, in the face of evidence to the contrary, that even the farms at Argonne Farms would qualify for such credit.<sup>146</sup> It is small wonder that "more than" 75 per cent of the trainees abandoned their farms upon the termination of their stipends. They had no other choice.

Cooperative effort by the trainees at the various colonies was one of the bright spots in the disabled veterans' settlement experiment. Cooperative enterprises were attempted at Argonne Farms, Veteransville, Silver Star, and Onamia. Although it cannot be definitely stated that these endeavors were a positive benefit, it certainly is reasonable to assume that such activity indicated an intelligent effort to make the best of what rapidly became an impossible situation.

There were no serious mistakes made concerning the actual farming program undertaken by the ex-soldiers.<sup>147</sup> The

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<sup>145</sup>ibid.

<sup>146</sup>"Ahern Report, 1923," NA RG 15.

<sup>147</sup>Unless one assumes that ownership, i. e., "estab-

cutover country of Minnesota was noted for poultry, berries, and dairy cattle. All of these forms of agriculture were contemplated by the veterans. The settlement at Moose Lake, as an example, was only a few miles from Barnum, Minnesota, which was an established poultry center. The trainees at Moose Lake intended to concentrate on chicken raising.

Another example of an excellent choice of products was the program at Argonne Farms. Had the trainees there been successful they would have had an ideal market for poultry, eggs, and berries in Minneapolis and St. Paul. It cannot be contended that the type of farming undertaken by the veterans contributed to their ultimate failure.

The training given the veterans came under rather severe attack. Schooling was originally handled under contract by the local school boards with periodic visits by the trainees to the University of Minnesota Farm School. Eventually control of the training program was transferred to District 10 officials cooperating with the Farm School. The efficiency of the schooling process varied from colony to colony. The instructional situation at Veteransville and Silver Star came under particularly heavy criticism because of its high cost compared with other settlements. Teaching in all colonies was supposedly both academic and practical, but the former predominated. Many, or most, of

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lishment," was a basic mistake as did officials of the U. S. Veterans' Bureau.

the veterans had to spend too much time clearing land to receive much practical farming instruction. Group equipment was furnished for training purposes in all the larger settlements, although some weird mis-shipments seem to have been made. It cannot be denied that the program was weak. It must be borne in mind, however, that District officials learned from experience. They eventually put instruction firmly under their own control. Development of land was, however, a permanent barrier to practical training. This problem was never solved.

One of the most serious defects in the entire experiment were the disabilities of the trainees themselves. The comment that developing cutover farms is only for the "able bodied" is literally true. Why then compound the difficulty by attempting to make cutover pioneers out of alcoholics, mental cases, men with ulcers, and veterans with low mentalities? Probably in no situation was the Greek ideal a "sound mind in a sound body" needed more than in the cutover regions. To be a success the pioneering farmer had to be as strong as Hercules, as wise as Aristotle, and as frugal as Grover Cleveland. Trainees who habitually spent themselves into the poorhouse, suffered "alcoholic lapses," and were weak mentally and physically, hardly fitted the prerequisites for success. With due consideration to the veterans who did fill the qualifications, it still must be maintained that the lack of farming--and business--ability among the ex-soldiers

contributed mightily to the failure of the experiment.

Although based in theory on the Lane-Mead community soldier settlement idea, the agricultural rehabilitation of disabled veterans in Minnesota fell far short of the actual outlines of that plan. A serious weakness of the experiment would have been avoided if the predevelopment phase of the Lane scheme had been put into effect. This was impossible since Congress refused to pass enabling legislation. Veterans were as a result forced to clear their own cutover farms and were foredoomed to failure. This obstacle alone could explain the poor showing of the trainees without taking other factors into account.

The agricultural depression of the 1920's contributed to the collapse of the enterprise. With underdeveloped, overpriced land few veterans could be expected to purchase their farms out of low commodity prices even had they had long term credit. Like the state land settlement experiments, the farms recession of the 1920's sounded the death knell of veterans' colonies in Minnesota.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Hartman, "State Land Settlement Policies," 1-84, is a sound discussion of the effect of agricultural depression on planned settlements.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem of restoring a regimented wartime society to peaceful conditions after World War I brought forth many demobilization ideas. One suggestion was to establish a proportion of the veterans on farms. The United States had customarily given homesteads to its ex-servicemen after each war, a tradition begun before the Revolution when the colonial governments rewarded their militia with land grants. Before the Civil War Congress granted veterans land under the bounty system which led to a great deal of speculation on the warrants. Because of that factor, and the passage of a general homestead act, Congress after the Civil War did not renew the bounty policy. Instead, soldiers were granted special preference rights after the Civil War and the Spanish American conflict and this privilege was also extended to veterans of the Indian Wars.

Up to World War I soldier settlement had been upon the basis of "infiltration" or individual colonization. Certain changes in American society--and the economy--however, made many people "back-to-the-land" advocates. The end of the frontier meant the growth of cities and slums with



attendant problems of big business, organized labor, unemployment, vice and poverty. "Back-to-the-landers" felt a possible solution for these problems was to return some of the city population to the soil. Closely associated with--and a part of--the "back-to-the-land" agitation were those people, such as Elwood Mead and Hugh MacRae, who favored the development of organized colonies rather than personal, single settlement.

The "back-to-the-land" movement became important with the end of frontier conditions. There were, however, earlier colonization experiments which reflected a creeping dissatisfaction with the complexities of society. The communistic and religious colonies of the Middle Period and the Mormon movement of the same time are worthy of mention. The activities of Horace Greeley and Archbishop John Ireland in the 1870's mirrored a widespread desire to return to Arcadia. Periods of depression, particularly after the Civil War, usually called forth demands for some sort of homestead relief. By the turn of the century there were several "back-to-the-land" projects in the United States. The "potato patches" of Detroit and the Vacant Lot Cultivation Associations in Philadelphia and New York attested to a growing concern of some thinkers with urban misery. Mention should be made also of the School Garden movement which was an attempt to train city children in rural pursuits. The Salvation Army established relief colonies in California and Colorado in the 1890's. In the same period, in England,

Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept attracted the attention of some people. Howard hoped to combine the conveniences of the city with the pleasures and comfort of the countryside. His idea found some adherents in the United States.

By the turn of the century there was a well developed philosophy of "back-to-the-landism." This was reflected in a good deal of periodical literature--in such magazines as The Craftsman--and even in a few specialized monographs. The articles, and books, were often nostalgic--and even saccharine--in spirit. Less sentimental were the advocates of planned settlement who realized that rural life in America had often been unprofitable, uncomfortable, and dull. "Planners" such as Elwood Mead hoped governmental supervision in the founding of rural communities would remedy many defects in agrarian living by the means of cooperative effort and organized social life. These men recommended ending "shotgun" methods of settlement and the substitution of the "community" plan of colonization. California pioneered in the development of such settlements. Under the supervision of Mead the communities of Durham and Delhi were established according to the provisions of the California Land Settlement Act of 1917. Planned settlement enthusiasts all over the nation were enthralled with the early success of these rural havens.

Some advocates of organized colonization suggested that since the California communities were so successful it

might be well to continue the experiment by establishing some returning veterans in similar pre-planned settlements. The "back-to-the-landers" were quick to note that such a project would have the support of a powerful tradition in American society--the idea that there was a peculiar good in farming as a way of life. This belief in the farmer's higher calling extended back to the ancient Greeks and Romans and was a potent intellectual concept in eighteenth century England and France.

Thomas Jefferson gave the concept its impetus and respectability in American thought and particularly emphasized the virtues of the small family farmer. There were a good many reasons for Jefferson's agrarian philosophy. He loved the earth, he believed in a "natural right" to property--a farm--he wanted to prevent the growth of slums and an industrial class, and as a politician he appealed for support to the largest class of people, the farmers. He arrived, in all sincerity, at the conclusion that small farmers, the yeomen, were "the most precious part of a state." Jefferson thought of the agrarian way of life and democracy as synonymous. A society founded on farmers tracing their property rights to natural law was, according to Jefferson, the most workable form of self-government.

Jefferson's agrarian philosophy did not become weaker with age. It acquired, with time, the stature of a dogma, what one historian has referred to as the "yeoman tradition."

Farmers in the United States were convinced that they were the most moral class in society and tended to look down upon the slackness of other groups. Agriculturalists were supposed to possess, according to the yeoman ideal, independence and a life based upon simplicity and dignity of toil. These beliefs were shared by both city and farm people. The agrarian ideal or the "yeoman tradition" had an effect upon American politics and ultimately upon the presidency. From Washington to Grant all American presidents possessed farm backgrounds. This was very natural because most Americans were farmers at that time and the chief executive represented the majority of the population. After Grant, however, most American presidents continued to be from rural areas or small towns. Up until the first World War, only Arthur, Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft were city men. Actually, attempts to establish an agrarian connection became more desperate as the number of farmers declined, illustrating the continued influence of the "ideal" or "tradition." The "back-to-the-landers" had this concept on their side in their campaign favoring soldier settlement legislation.

Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane advanced the best known proposal for veterans' colonization. Lane had several ideas in mind when he advocated soldier settlement. It was generally believed that a severe period of unemployment would occur at the end of World War I. If this happened, soldiers working on the proposed reclamation

projects would be taken care of. Lane did not want to give the veterans their farms; he thought it would be much better for servicemen, and the country, for them to work and pay out their homesteads. The city bred ex-soldier also could gain valuable farm experience laboring on the projects, and the soldiers would be paid a living wage, thereby stimulating postwar industrial consumption.

Lane hoped to stop the population drift toward the cities and to partially stem the growth of farm tenancy. He thought it was very important, for the preservation of the American system, that a large proportion of the population own property. Lane believed property owners in general were patriotic and landowners were especially so. He was an exponent of the Jeffersonian belief that farmers are superior citizens.

The Lane Plan contemplated the "community" form of settlement. Lane was convinced that one reason for the decline of rural population was dissatisfaction with social conditions in the countryside and organized colonies would have neighborly advantages. Cooperative colonization would also allow group activity in buying and selling and scientific advice would be readily obtainable. Most of the land available for settlement was swamp, cutover, or arid which made reclamation of such areas expensive and time consuming. It was therefore impossible to develop individual farms for soldiers. Suitable tracts of land were scattered all over

the country and, because of this, Lane decided it was wise to make federal-state cooperation a part of his scheme. This implied the location of colonies, wherever possible, all over the nation. Basically joint federal-state activity was to mean that the states would furnish where possible the land for colonies and the federal government would supply the finances for development. Lane hoped to utilize the facilities of existing state and local agencies in carrying out veterans' colonization. Another reason for insisting upon the "community" method was Lane's idealistic belief that society was an organized group functioning for the benefit of the individual.

The Interior Plan included the concept of a fee simple title to the lands settled, because of Lane's insistence that property owners, and particularly landed ones, were a better type of citizen. This position on title brought Lane into direct conflict with Labor Department officials, among others, who felt that an outright title to the farms was inviting to excessive speculation.

Although many ex-servicemen settlement acts were introduced into Congress, the Mondell bill, or H. R. 487, was the bill most enthusiastically supported by Lane and other Interior officials. The measure included most of the provisions for veterans' colonization that Lane considered important, including absolute title for the settlers. Elwood Mead partially drafted the bill. Proposals for soldier set-

tlement were debated in terms of the Lane-Mondell act.

Labor Department personnel under William B. Wilson brought forward a veterans' colonization plan. The Labor scheme differed from the Interior proposal on three points. Labor officials thought of "land" development as including agricultural, forest, and mineral lands. Their program, then, was much broader in scope than mere agricultural reclamation. The Labor proposition called for the establishment of a United States Construction Service which would act as a fixed barrier against unemployment. This went beyond the limits of the Interior Plan. Lane hoped to use soldier settlement as a temporary guard against labor distress. But he did not advocate the establishment of a permanent governmental agency acting as an economic balance wheel. Finally, Labor personnel felt a strong aversion against a fee simple title for veterans. Wilson, Post, and other Labor officials believed that complete title would only advance the interests of speculators. The conflict over fee simple title prevented personnel of the two departments from advancing a joint soldier settlement plan.

Raphael Zon of the Forest Service developed an independent veterans' colonization proposal. He had conferred with Elwood Mead and was especially influenced by the thinking of Labor officials regarding soldier settlement. Zon was interested in making such a colonization plan the cornerstone in a drive for governmental control and ownership of

the national forests. He went so far as to advocate national production of newsprint paper. He would not only regulate the economy, but would have the government actively participate in economic affairs. Instead of the Secretary of the Interior having complete charge of soldier settlement matters, Zon proposed that a federal board be set up which would include the Secretaries of Labor, Agriculture, Interior, and War acting under the supervision of the President.

American Legion officials adopted soldier settlement as a part of their "four point" veterans' benefit scheme. The Legionnaires suggested several modifications in Lane's plan for soldier colonization. They believed that administration of veterans' settlement should be decentralized, ex-soldiers should not have a heavy financial burden imposed upon them, eminent domain should be exercised to prevent speculation, and servicemen should administer any measure enacted. Their bill, H. R. 13293-Title I, was very similar to the Mondell act except it placed control of soldier colonization affairs under the direction of a five man panel instead of the Secretary of the Interior alone. The Secretary would remain on the board, but three of the five members had to be veterans. The settlement portion, as a part of the "four point" program, was later passed by Congress but was vetoed by President Harding. There can be little doubt that Legion leaders were primarily interested in a bonus and not veterans' settlement.



A proposal for traditional "infiltration" settlement was brought forth by Democratic Congressman Dick T. Morgan of Oklahoma. He advocated the establishment of a federal corporation which could advance loans, up to the full value purchased, for homes, livestock, and equipment. Morgan believed city veterans should be allowed to participate in the program and hoped to provide assistance for them. Morgan thought his idea was superior to the Interior proposition since veterans could settle near home and would not have to move to arid, swamp, or cutover regions. Because of this provision he felt all states would benefit, not just a favored few. The Morgan Plan attracted a good deal of support, particularly in the farm states and among conservatives who did not like the "socialistic" aspects of the Lane scheme.

There were some private proposals for soldier settlement. Among these projects were Mrs. Haviland H. Lund's idea for "the democratized feudal village," C. O. Holmes' proposed "Home and Land Owners' Alliance of America," Charles A. Stanton's proposition of community development under private auspices, and San Quentin's #27059's proposal for community development with a concentration upon poultry production. These plans, and sometimes criticisms, were of little importance except to indicate considerable public interest in the Lane scheme.

The Interior project for veterans' colonization

received strongest support from sections of the country where large amounts of swamp, cutover, or arid lands were located. For that reason, the proposal attracted considerable enthusiasm in the South, the West, and the Great Lakes region.

Southern endorsement of Lane's proposal can be explained by the extensive cutover and swamp lands in the region. The Southern Development Corporation lobbied actively for the Mondell bill. Southerners eventually cooled toward the Lane Plan because it would have complicated certain constitutional, financial, and land problems of the region. There was a continued Southern interest in soldier settlement and congressmen from the section endorsed a veterans' colonization scheme as late as 1921.

Western support for the Lane Plan was caused by the need for reclamation of vast areas of arid land in that region. The Big Horn Irrigation and Power Company of Montana campaigned vigorously in favor of the Interior proposal.

Residents of the Great Lakes region supplied some backing for the Plan because of their desire for the reclamation of the large cutover areas. There were also some endorsements from New England and the Northeast where abandoned farms were numerous.

Union officials endorsed soldier settlement because they wanted to place surplus workers on farms and to cheapen the cost of food by expanded production. Business leaders

sometimes supported the Lane Plan because they were more frightened by the Red Scare than by a more restricted pool of labor. Such men now favored a stable, patriotic, farm-bred population. Railroad officials often backed the Lane scheme since their corporations controlled surplus land and they would be happy to sell it to the government. These officials also hoped that the settlement of vacant lands would mean a larger volume of business and higher profits for the railroads.

Some local veterans' organizations supported the Interior proposal even though the American Legion eventually developed its own plan. Individual ex-servicemen were anxious to receive some sort of reward for their services and it might be supposed that they considered the Interior scheme a "good enough Morgan."

Endorsement of Lane's proposal was made by powerful political figures such as Woodrow Wilson, but support ranged down to the "do good" manifestos of women's clubs. The still powerful agrarian tradition caused many people to support the plan. There was also a good deal of sentiment to use soldier settlement as a brake on radicalism. Supposedly, according to the "myth," soldier-farmers would not become Bolsheviks.

The most powerful backing for Lane's plan was sectional and economic. The initial idealism of the proposal was tarnished by the spectacle of selfish landed groups rush-

ing to make their property available for soldier settlement purposes. Even "do good" support was not as powerful as might be assumed. After the "boys" were home the Interior scheme for veterans' colonization was forgotten.

The most important opposition to Lane's proposal came from commercial farmers, the Department of Agriculture, agricultural colleges, leaders of farm organizations, and editorial boards of agricultural journals. The major concern of the practical farmer and professional agriculturalists was the fear of overproduction of farm products and consequent low prices. Some farm leaders admitted the Interior scheme did not pose any immediate threat. They did not want, however, to set a dangerous precedent whereby the government could at any time flood their world with surplus farms and agriculturalists. Overexpansion and overproduction were unwanted in the present or the future. The nightmare of a farm depression, such as had happened in the past, explains much of the agrarian opposition to Lane's plan.

Farm leaders attacked the Interior idea by posing the realistic question: "Why should the farm industry alone bear the burden of reabsorbing veterans into society?" This question was germane and the Morgan Plan, supported by some agrarian groups, was an attempt to make all economic interests share in the sacrifice. Farmers were therefore appealing to two venerable American traditions, laissez faire in

economics and fair play in all phases of life.

The "back-to-the-land" aspects of the Lane Plan aroused the ire of farmers. "Back-to-the-landism" was, according to agriculturalists, a pipe dream, a form of quackery, and advocated by persons who had no intention of returning to the agrarian life themselves. Not a few farmers believed the real motive behind "back-to-the-soil" agitation was the desire of urban dwellers to reduce the price of groceries.

Noting that the Interior proposal called primarily for the reclamation of swamp, cutover, and arid lands, several Northeastern agriculturalists suggested that some effort might be expended in restoring the abandoned farms of New England and the Middle States, a sentiment shared by members of the Department of Agriculture. Other farmers, however, took the opposite position, maintaining that vacant farms should not be recultivated since they had been abandoned precisely because they could not be worked for a profit.

There was agrarian opposition to the reclamation of new land because the process was considered too expensive and the areas selected for development were not believed to be of such fertility as would justify a large expenditure of time and money. Agriculturalists were also concerned about the "empire" building propensities of the Reclamation Service. There was, too, some feeling among farm groups that the

first victim of a postwar drop in prices would be the veterans settled under the Lane proposal.

Various officials of farmer organizations believed farm-minded veterans would have no difficulty locating homesteads if they took advantage of all available opportunities. Suggestions ranged from an improved Federal Farm Loan System to the proposal that ex-soldiers work up the ladder from hired hand to owner. Many agrarians felt, therefore, that the sincere soldier would have no difficulty in acquiring a farm and there would be no need for organized soldier settlement.

Agrarian opposition toward soldier settlement was strongest in the Midwest and the Northeast. Farmers in New England and the Middle States did not want any further competition to drive them into complete economic ruin. On the other hand, agriculturalists in the Middle West were opposed to the Lane proposal because they wanted to maintain their supremacy in farming. Special conditions, such as in the cutover country of the Great Lakes region, caused some agrarians to support veterans' colonization. Farmers in the Southwest and the West, where development was needed, were not completely opposed to Lane's idea.

The opposition of practical farmers and allied groups to the Interior proposal left the proposition bereft of landed support except from obviously selfish landowners in the West, the South, and the Great Lakes area. The defection

of the agrarian bloc caused the soldier settlement idea to lose its idealistic glow. It could then be attacked as a speculator's plot or, at best, a reclamation scheme. This loss of respectability helps to explain Congress' failure to pass a veterans' colonization act.

Opposition to the Interior idea tended to be sectional. Opponents were particularly vocal in the Midwest and the Northeast. As mentioned above, one source of this unfriendly attitude was agrarian. In the Northeast, however, there was another factor involved. That region had basic industrial, commercial, and financial interests and there was also a good deal of simple indifference toward Lane's scheme in New England and the Middle States. And in both sections conservative opinion was against the Interior scheme.

Among the most effective enemies of the Interior proposition were groups or individuals who had proposed alternative schemes for veterans' colonization. Lane never obtained the support of Morgan, Labor officials, or American Legion leaders. If soldier settlement was to run its opponents' gauntlet, a unified front was necessary. This was never achieved.

A large number of people did not approve of planned settlement. Many individuals, as a matter of fact, considered such a procedure "socialistic," turning their support to the Morgan Plan. The continued support of the older "in-

filtration" method of colonization--particularly among conservatives, Midwesterners, and Northeasterners--sapped the Interior proposal of needed strength.

A feeling in some quarters that the Lane Plan was speculative in nature, caused much overt opposition to the proposal. Even some long-time advocates of reclamation, such as George Maxwell, backed away from the Interior scheme for that reason. Lane was never able to convince these people that his proposition was not primarily a promotional scheme for large landowners.

Veterans did not support the Interior Plan enthusiastically. Many favored the Morgan Plan, some wanted a bonus, and urban soldiers tended to lack interest in soldier settlement altogether. The proposal needed the overwhelming support of the servicemen's bloc in order to succeed.

The Lane Plan did not receive bi-partisan endorsement. Republicans, and conservatives in general, looked with disfavor upon the planned colonization aspects of the proposal. These people often thought of such governmental activity as socialism--pure and simple. Also, the Republicans blocked soldier settlement legislation because it was endorsed by the Wilson administration.

A general soldier settlement law was never enacted in the United States. During and soon after the war period 37 states passed veterans' colonization legislation, but since most of these acts anticipated federal participation



the majority were not implemented. Six states, California, Washington, South Dakota, Arizona, Minnesota, and Oregon, attempted planned settlement projects after World War I and extended special preference rights to veterans. These state experiments collapsed primarily as a result of the agricultural depression of the 1920's.

The most important American veterans' colonization project was the attempted agricultural rehabilitation of disabled ex-soldiers by the Veterans' Bureau in the 1920's. This experiment was carried on with particular vigor in the cutover regions of Minnesota where several colonies of wounded soldiers, Argonne Farms, Veteransville, Silver Star, Moose Lake, Onamia, Brainerd, Bemidji, and Grand Rapids, were founded. Although the experiment was influenced by planned settlement enthusiasts, the operating legislation did not provide for veterans' aid in the purchase of land. Also, the government was not involved in the projects, except in matters of training and equipment, to the extent that Lane had desired.

The colonies for disabled veterans failed. By 1930 approximately 75 per cent of the trainees had abandoned their holdings. The collapse of the experiment was caused by a series of errors made in founding and administering the projects. The first mistake was in locating veterans in cut-over country. The clearing of such land is back-breaking if done by hand and expensive if accomplished by machinery.

Only the physically fit should ever attempt cutover development and farming. To settle disabled ex-soldiers, sometimes physically and mentally ill, on such land invited disaster.

Another factor in the failure of the Minnesota settlements was the men bought highly priced farms. They paid as much as \$350 an acre for land and their payments consumed a major portion of their meager training allowances. The objective in cutover country is to buy cheap land, clear the farm by hand labor, and reap the benefits of more valuable, improved property. In some cases veterans were paying more for their farms than developed homesteads were worth. This unwarranted financial burden was caused by the operations of unscrupulous land agents and by Bureau laxness in supervising land purchases.

The land agents, who were usually also local bankers, not only charged exorbitant prices for farms, but in many cases they did not even have absolute title. A veteran could make payments for years and not be sure of a clear deed. The agents and bankers also made a substantial profit on "equipment" loans which were usually carried at a higher rate of interest than land notes. Veterans' Bureau officials were negligent in not verifying titles and in not stopping usurious interest rates.

Soil conditions at the settlements ranged from bad to merely good. Heavy brush, standing timber, stone, sandy soil--all these conditions describe the land ex-soldiers

purchased in Minnesota. Only the best of cutover land is suitable for redemption; a more thorough investigation of the farms would have greatly improved the veterans' chances of success. Officials of the Veterans' Bureau were definitely derelict in not obtaining accurate information concerning the homesteads. The chicanery of the land agents was also a factor; some inspection tours were conducted while heavy snow was on the ground; only with spring did a veteran discover that he had bought inferior land.

The size of the homesteads was a major obstacle to the trainees. The Federal Farm Loan Board required a 40 acre improved farm before it would extend credit. Since training, along with rehabilitation allowances, would terminate in 1926, the veterans had to find some means of maintaining their land payments. The farms ranged from four and one-quarter acre plots at Argonne Farms to 80 acre homesteads at Silver Star. Even the large farms, however, were unimproved. Professor Black believed it would take an able bodied man seven years to clear 20 acres. Obviously handicapped veterans could not accomplish as much. The best source of long term loans, the Federal Farm Loan System, was not available to disabled ex-soldiers.

Various cooperative endeavors were a progressive attempt by the veterans to solve their own problems. Some sort of group enterprise was begun at practically all the colonies. Under more auspicious, or less hopeless, condi-

tions the trainees' gregarious spirit could have been their salvation. Other factors were so unfavorable, however, that community activity could not surmount them.

The type of farming undertaken by the veterans was suitable for the cutover country of Minnesota. The region specialized in poultry, berries, and dairy cattle. These were the crops and produce contemplated for production at the disabled veterans' settlements. It cannot be argued that the actual farming program contributed to the colonies' failure.

The training program in Minnesota was criticized sharply, particularly during the period when it was handled by local school boards. There was too much concentration on academic aspects of farming, misuse of group equipment, excessive time spent in clearing land, and suspected dishonesty in the educational boards. Taking these factors into account, District officials took steps to place rehabilitation under their control. Had they done so earlier a good many errors would have been prevented.

The inferior caliber of some trainees partially explains the collapse of the Minnesota projects. Physical disability was enough of a handicap, but there were alcoholics in some settlements, low mentalities adversely affected the training program, and not a few veterans displayed poor business judgment. Cutover farming requires a strong, sturdy physical constitution and a frugal and saving character plus

an astute business sense. Trainees who lacked these qualities were doomed to failure.

Because the Minnesota experiment did not include the predevelopment phase of the Lane-Mondell Plan veterans had to spend more time clearing land than in actual farming. The Minnesota projects were handicapped because the soldiers were unable to develop the land by hand labor and the Veterans' Bureau had no funds to pre-clear the farms. This drawback alone fatally crippled the demonstration.

Combined with other negative conditions the agricultural recession of the 1920's ended disabled veterans' colonization in Minnesota. With training allowances ended and overpriced and underdeveloped land on their hands, it is small wonder that 75 per cent of the soldiers had abandoned their farms by 1930. The farm depression merely terminated an experiment which foundered from the very beginning.

The Lane Plan for soldier settlement was based upon two American traditions. One of these was the habit of rewarding veterans with either land warrants or homestead rights. This custom had been followed from colonial times to the Spanish-American War. Many people were confident that the government would continue that procedure after World War I. Granting farms to soldiers stemmed basically from the American idee fixe that the family farm produced a superior citizen. This belief began in the early stages of American history and had a profound impact upon life and

politics in the United States. It should also be remembered that land was the most abundant resource of the federal government prior to 1865 and land grants saved the United States considerable pension outlays.

The rising tide of business growth after the Civil War brought with it many problems of adjustment to urban life. Persons who were impatient with the shortcomings of an immature industrial society and who longed for a less complicated culture became in some cases ardent "back-to-the-landers." They believed that if a substantial percentage of the population returned to the country, slums, unemployment, poverty, and misery would be ameliorated, if not ended.

The growth of liberal reformism after 1900 added the final ingredient to the Lane proposal. Some progressives thought "back-to-the-landism" was a worthwhile objective in itself. But why not--they asked--incorporate into the movement the planning aspects of the New Nationalism and create a better agrarian society than had existed in the past? Lane's ideas cannot be properly understood without keeping in mind the soldier settlement custom of the United States, the powerful agrarian tradition of America, the "back-to-the-land" reaction of some persons to the growth of industry, and the impact of planning concepts upon the Progressive movement.

The Lane Plan grew out of puissant idealistic traditions, but it stirred up heated opposition and was never

enacted. The most important reason for this was the determined opposition of commercial farmers to the proposal. With the people on the farm opposed to a "back-to-the-land" program, many persons hesitated to support the proposal. There is no doubt that agricultural organizations--such as the National Grange--spent considerable time, effort, and money in defeating the Mondell bill. The Interior scheme had little chance when confronted with such powerful opposition.

A second factor in explaining the proposal's defeat was it attracted the support of persons and organizations that were primarily interested in private pecuniary gain. The fact that Southern landowners, Western reclamation groups, and Great Lakes cutover country promoters were the source of greatest enthusiasm for the Plan branded it as at least a reclamation scheme, if not a speculator's plot. When the utopian Lane Plan donned speculator's robes it was doomed.

The promoters of various soldier settlement schemes never agreed upon a common measure. The indifference and even hostility of Labor officials, Legionnaires, and Morgan toward the Interior proposal meant a scattering of effort in obtaining veterans' colonization legislation. Without a unified drive the vigorous opponents of soldier settlement easily triumphed.

The Lane Plan was imbued with progressive motives. Primarily it proposed to reorganize rural society along

rational and planned lines. The scheme was brought forward, however, during a time of reaction against liberalism and what Warren G. Harding referred to as "nostrums." Both conservatives and Republicans were determined to prevent any further experiments in "socialism." It is significant that right wing congressmen, such as White of Kansas, did not object to veterans homesteading. They were opposed, however, to planned settlement. In such a political atmosphere the Interior Plan did not attract sufficient backing to carry it into effect.

Finally, although the proposal received "nationwide support" much of this enthusiasm was less than genuine. Woodrow Wilson endorsed the Plan, but his main concern was with the peace settlement. Club women sent telegrams to Washington in support of the idea, but when the "boys" were safely home their interest waned. Even veterans did not "rally 'round" the concept as much as Lane had hoped. Urban idealists might be enthusiastic, but the ordinary big city resident was indifferent to the proposal. Endorsements of the Plan were numerous, but interest was certainly "more apparent than real."

Would the Lane Plan have served the best interests of veterans or the nation? With the failure of the state experiments in planned colonization in the 1920's and the tragic story of the disabled veterans in Minnesota in mind, it is doubtful if the proposal had a great deal to offer



either the soldiers or the country. Its critics were probably correct in asserting that the chief victim of the scheme would be the veterans. American agriculture was heading for depression conditions in 1919-1920 and the passage of a soldier settlement law would only have further complicated a difficult situation. The future of America lay in smoking factories and busy counting houses, not in clover-scented Arcadian settlements.

But interest in planned settlement did not end with the Lane Plan. Hugh MacRae and Elwood Mead campaigned throughout the 1920's for experimental colonies in the South.<sup>1</sup> During the New Deal a community settlement program was undertaken with much of the idealism which Lane and Mead had put into their proposal.<sup>2</sup> And during World War II Harold Ickes brought forward a soldier settlement plan.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Materials in National Archives, Records of the Reclamation Service, NA RG 115, and the Archives of Duke University.

<sup>2</sup>Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Settlement Program (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), 1959.

<sup>3</sup>Material in NA RG 115.

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