TEXAS GULF COAST PICTURED AS LAST FRONTIER LEFT FOR COLONIZATION OF FARMERS

The Galveston News

The Texas coastal plain between Galveston and Corpus Christi, comprised of hundreds of thousands of acres of virgin land given inhabited only by roaming herds of cattle but capable of supporting a highly diversified agriculture will be the scene of the greatest colonization movement of the 20th century if plans of the recently organized Texas Gulf Coast Development Association are realized.

Inspired by the federal government's proposed rural rehabilitation and resettlement program, officials of this organization believe that this area, approximately 250 miles long and 50 miles wide, offers the last great frontier available for colonization.

Here, they hope, some 200,000 farm families from the drought-stricken areas of the Midwest and the submarginal lands east of the Mississippi River, will eventually be transplanted through efforts of the federal government. No other section of the country, it is contended, is so ideally suited for this vast experimental program of the new deal. Nowhere else may be found so large an acreage of potentially productive land available at small cost, a climate so mild, or rainfall so abundant.

This last point was emphasized in a statement by Prof. Walter B. Pitkin of Columbia University, close friend of Rexford G. Tugwell, undersecretary of agriculture who is in charge of the resettlement program.

The association, composed of civic organizations in counties facing on the Gulf of Mexico, is now collecting data which it intends to submit to federal authorities along with a request that this section of Texas be considered in connection with plans for relieving thousands of farm families now compelled to eke out an existence on soil so incapable of supporting them.

"There can be no question of the necessity of removing thousands of thrifty farmers from the dry areas of the Midwest and from the worn out farm lands east of the Mississippi River," E. O. Taulbee, of Bay City, president of the association, said recently in explaining the organization's program. "Regardless of our attitude toward other experiments of the federal government under the new deal, we are certainly in accord with that one which proposes to aid these unfortunate farm people whose efforts have proven unprofitable through no fault of their own. They are entitled to some measure of assistance. Removing them to some section of mild climate, productive soil, and adequate rainfall is the only alternative to placing them on relief. These are the things which the upper Texas gulf coast has to offer.

"There being no controversy as to the need of the probable results of the government's resettlement problem that remains to be done is to locate land available in sufficient quantity that is capable of supporting the class to be aided. A survey of the Texas gulf coast will show that it is the only large area available which possesses all of the requirements for the satisfactory resettlement of distressed farmers.

"Most of the land is now held in large tracts by cattlemen who are resident owners, the latter receiving very small returns, if any, on their investments. Our survey reveals, however, that such crops as corn, rice, cotton, small grain feeds, and every variety of vegetables grown in the United States can be produced successfully here by intelligent and industrious farmers.

"The potential possibilities of alfalfa in three counties in which a survey has been completed are particularly impressive. There are in the counties of Matagorda, Wharton and Brazoria approximately 50,000 acres of land available which is well suited to the growth of alfalfa. Ground alfalfa is now bringing from $35 to $40 a ton on the Atlantic seaboard. The freight rate by water from Freeport is only $4 per ton, leaving a wide margin of profit for the grower and processor. Since artificial curing is now possible there should be no question as to the possibilities of alfalfa as a money crop.

"The soy bean, which is becoming extremely popular as feed as well as for chemical properties, can be grown successfully in any county along the gulf coast. Our survey has revealed the fact that the tung tree, which is now grown commercially in Louisiana and other Southern states, can also be grown along the gulf coast of Texas. The oil extracted from the nut of the tung tree is in universal demand and the price has increased more than 100 per cent during the past two or three years. This oil has no satisfactory substitute in the manufacture of varnishes and paints. Little cultivation is required.

"Any small farmer in this section may have a pecan orchard, for the pecan is native here, and some progress has been made in grafting the paper-shell varieties to native stock.

"The gulf coast is an ideal location for the truck farmer since climatic conditions are favorable, and he may continue his activities throughout the entire year. In two of the counties along the coast there are large irrigation systems with water available in any quantities. This will guarantee crops under any conditions.

"From this survey, it may be readily seen that here is an ideal location for the farmer who,