

Inefficient Marginal Farmers Are Seen Sitting On Government Cushion

By BRUCE BLOSSAT

Economic policy in Washington is curiously muddled. There's a big hue and cry these days for higher productivity to support a growing population at a rising living standard. But at the same time government is effectively blocking some of the most desirable results of greater efficiency on farms and in factories.

The doings of the Agriculture department afford the most striking example. In one set of buildings men are finding out how to enrich and preserve soils and step up crop yields. Their goal is more food and fiber at less cost in men and money.

If their discoveries are to be translated into better living, they obviously must be passed on to consumers through lower farm prices.

But elsewhere in the department the emphasis is on restricting output and keeping prices up. Thousands of farmers got federal money for NOT producing. And the huge support-price program is a stubborn roadblock checking any downward push of prices in response to increased efficiency.

Protecting farmers against the hardship that follows from glutted markets and tumbling prices is surely a wise and necessary objective. But we must find a way to do it that will not penalize con-

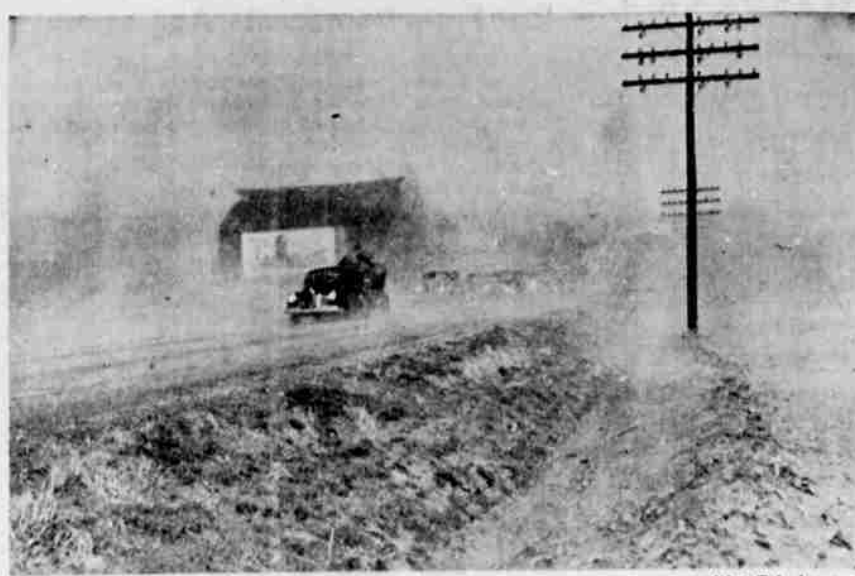
sumers and reward grossly inefficient producers.

The Brannan plan aims at one part of this dilemma, for it would allow farm prices to seek their own level in an open market. Yet it would still safeguard the inefficient—at evident cost in taxes to the very consumers supposed to benefit from lower prices. It would do this by paying farmers the difference between market prices and the "support" level.

The truth is, inefficient marginal producers aren't entitled to such protection. They are the necessary casualties of technical progress. To insist on keeping them in business at the taxpayers' expense is to misunderstand the whole purpose of a sound economy.

These producers do deserve some sort of aid to ease the pain of their transition to another field. It is not their fault that a government scientist may have discovered a better way to raise corn which suddenly makes their farms too costly to run in competition with others.

Still, the mere fact that a man decides to undertake farming as a business shouldn't mean a government guarantee of profitable operation regardless of his possible inefficiency. It's a weird kind of welfare program that seeks to cushion



DUST STORMS SWEEP MIDWEST—At least eight persons died as dust storms swept across the Midwestern states. Above, drivers on US Highway 24 near Lawrence, Kan., crawl along as blinding dust, whipped up by winds of 80 mph velocity, lowers visibility and almost obscures background.

every producer against failure. Some men in Congress are showing signs of applying this same odd reasoning to the coal industry, which is expected to be troubled soon again with overproduction. We hear talk of producer quotas, controlled output and the like. To the obvious end of keeping afloat all the present producers, marginal and otherwise.

Where is the advantage of technical progress to the average consumer if he must pay in taxes or artificially supported prices for

outmoded, inefficient production methods?

Cut-Back In Civilian Employees Of U. S. Told

WASHINGTON, April 6.—(AP)—Defense Secretary Johnson's job cut-back order has reduced civilian personnel in the military establishment by 113,559 during a six-month period ended Feb. 28.

This was reported by the joint committee on reduction of non-essential federal expenditures. Johnson's retrenchment drive was started last August. The establish-

ment had 745,227 employees during

Coastal Areas Got Large Bite Of Tourist Funds

SPOKANE, April 5.—(AP)—The Pacific coast area got a little more than 10 percent of the nation's estimated vacation budget of \$7,000,000,000, Clifton Housley of Philadelphia said Monday.

Housley, representative of a large eastern publishing company (Curtis), spoke at the third annual tourist and resort conference at Washington State college.

The speaker said his figures had been taken from reports made by 4,000 representative families.

Housley said the amount of money spent by tourists and vacationers averaged between \$200 and \$300 per family. He added that many sources estimate vacation travel costs at 10 or 12 billion dollars but his company's survey had not determined that figure to be accurate.

"It is in fact," Housley said, "a multi-billion dollar industry and for that reason there is no need to exaggerate its size."

The middle Atlantic states draw the largest number of tourists with 19.2 percent. The Pacific area with 10.3 percent ranked behind four

other areas, but was ahead of several others. Housley's report showed that 23,893,000 families take 43,000,000 vacation trips annually, with travel heaviest in June, July and August. He said, however, that only 49 percent of all leisure time trips are taken during those months and that industries catering to tourists should try for a year-around expansion. Travel by automobile was the big favorite—79.5 percent. Railroad, bus, air and boat methods followed in that order.



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