

students of American agriculture. A committee of the United States Senate has pointed out that within the decade of the thirties the percentage of all farms in California which produce just over one-half the total agricultural production of that State fell from 10 to 6.8 percent, marking a growth in concentration of nearly one-third. It is not without significance as evidence of this trend that at least one group of specialty crop producers has so far changed its character away from that of family farmers and in the direction of becoming industrialists that it has found itself indicted for violation of the antitrust laws of the Nation.

The development of large-scale farming has been foremost in California. The influence of Spanish land policy, the monopolization of large areas by early comers after American statehood, the soil and climate favorable to the production of specialty crops, and congeries of other historic and economic circumstances have made California particularly amenable to industrialized agricultural production. But development of this pattern of agriculture, often operated like industry from urban centers and worked by wage labor, is not peculiar to any one part of the Nation. It has been reported in some degree from all sections.

Whether industrialization of farming is a threat not only to the family farm, but also to the rural society founded upon the family farm, is the specific subject of the present report. The purpose of this study is to test by contemporary field research the historic hypothesis that the institution of small independent farmers is indeed the agent which creates the homogeneous community, both socially and economically democratic.

The present inquiry consists of a detailed analysis and comparison of two communities, one where agricultural operations are on a modest scale, the other where large factory-like techniques are practiced. Both communities lie in the fertile southern San Joaquin Valley in the Great Central Valley of California, where highly developed and richly productive agriculture is characteristic. Limitations of time and resources dictated that no more than two communities be studied. Numerous other pairs might have been chosen which doubtless would have yielded comparable results.

The two communities studied here naturally vary in some degree with respect to proportions of surrounding lands devoted to this or that crop, with respect to age, to depth of water lift for irrigation, etc., as well as with respect to the scale of the farm-enterprises which surround them. Controls as perfect as are possible in the chemist's laboratory are not found in social organizations. Yet the approximation to complete control achieved by selection of the communities of Arvin and Dinuba is surprisingly high. Other factors, besides the difference in scale of farming, which might have produced or contributed to the striking contrasts of Arvin and Dinuba have been carefully examined. On this basis the conclusion has been reached that the primary, and by all odds the factor of greatest weight in producing the essential differences in these two communities, was the characteristic difference in the scale of farming—large or small—upon which each was founded. There is every reason to believe that the results obtained by this study are generally applicable wherever like economic conditions prevail.