

CHAPTER I

NATURE OF INVESTIGATION

PURPOSE

This study of two rural communities is an endeavor to analyze social causation. In it an attempt has been made to demonstrate the kind of society that results when large-scale farm operations dominate the economy of a community as contrasted with society under moderate-size farm operations. To this end a detailed analysis of two towns lying in the industrialized specialty-crop farming area of California's Central Valley, one surrounded by large farms and the other by enterprises of moderate size, was made. The present report sets forth in detail the social and pertinent agricultural and other economic facts about each community, and concludes with an analysis of these differences which indicates the extent to which they may properly be attributable to the scale of farm operations.

It should be made clear at the outset that this report is a study of the social and business effects of large-scale farming operations as they apply to the local agricultural community. Investigation of the effects upon major urban centers or the character of social and economic conditions of the Central Valley or of the State as a whole are not a subject of the present analysis, except insofar as they are affected by the welfare of the local community.

Research methods are commonly affected by the costs of various procedures. The desirability of analyzing a series of communities, or of establishing indexes which might make possible simpler studies of additional communities, was recognized and at one time specifically planned. Shortage of time, manpower, and funds made such a program impossible. It has, therefore, been necessary to develop conclusions by internal analysis of the data.

Arvin and Dinuba, the communities studied, are not a sample of all communities of California or of the Central Valley. They are cases, a method which has gained acceptance in the social sciences generally and particularly in the study of the community.

It has been the method used by Lynd for Middletown, by Warner for Yankee City, and by every student of the rural community. The case study depends not upon adequacy of sample but upon the soundness of the selection of the cases as representative of the phenomena subjected to analysis.

CHOICE OF COMMUNITIES

The importance of proper selection was recognized at the outset, and extreme care was used to get a fair and representative selection. The fundamental criteria were that the two communities (1) be sufficiently similar in size so that they could be expected to support similar institutions; (2) have similar and, if possible, reasonably diverse agriculture; (3) have existed for enough years to allow time for the development of social institutions; (4) not be confused with