

SOCIAL EVALUATIONS

Thus far the description of the social life in Arvin and Dinuba has largely rested upon factual data, with a minimum of descriptive material and subjective evaluation. In order to develop a rounded picture, the evaluation of community life made by the residents themselves must be recorded and the evidence of the spirit of the communities presented.

Arvin residents generally recognize the limitations of their community; some do not care, others are concerned but do not take action, while a few make an effort to improve the community. It is this last group which participates in Booster Club and Lions Club activities, and which endeavors to get a park, high school, and other facilities for Arvin. But there are too few, who can and will devote their time and energy to the endless, and often thankless, task of community improvement.

At a Booster Club meeting, when this study was being discussed, one community leader said:

We think we have a pretty good town and that we have done a lot for Arvin but we have to admit that we don't stack up very well against Dinuba. They have a high school, paved streets, good buildings, and so forth.

A small farmer blamed the poor quality of the Arvin community on the fact of absentee farm ownership and farm operation, and the fact that nobody made Arvin his permanent home. "I venture to say that 80 percent of the people here have no roots in the community," he said. He admitted many were buying their homes, but said that this was only because it was necessary to buy in order to have a place to live. Concerning this impermanence one woman who had come to Arvin as an agricultural worker said, "The trouble is mostly that people don't feel permanent here. Now we came here 9 years ago and we never expected to be permanent here. People feel transient." This woman felt Arvin was a poor place to raise children because there were no facilities for them and all they had to do was "lounge around the pool halls." The impermanence of the situation affects business people as well as laborers. One merchant said that "the trouble is that no one here plans for the future. People who start stores do not build them for permanent investments but build them cheaply with the idea of making as much money as quickly as possible while times are good. This does not lead to the kind of community where a man can plan for the future and set up a business that will go to his children."

A minister said of Arvin:

The big farmers are not interested in the town; they go to Bakersfield or Los Angeles for all their wants and don't care whether the town is here or not. There is practically no one who is interested in the welfare of the community. The church should take care of that, but it can't because its congregation is made up of transient people who do not have a stake in the community.

Another minister said:

Frankly, this is the worst town I have ever seen. I don't think there is another like it.

He pointed to the absence of sidewalks, and blamed the lack on the fact that there were not enough citizens interested in working for the community welfare. He went on to enumerate other failings, such as the failure to incorporate and the lack of parks.