

Rice Milling Process Interesting

Special to the Gazette. 9-26-37

Harrisburg, Sept. 25.—Viewed from the highway as one comes into town from the west, Harrisburg does not present what some might term an inspirational sky line, but three buildings—the high school, the courthouse and the Mouton rice mill stand out against the Crowley's Ridge background. The county seat town is proud of all three for what they mean to the community. High schools, however, are numerous, and there is a courthouse for every county. But a rice mill is something that not many towns can claim.

The Mouton rice mill, built in 1933, and owned by the Mouton Rice Milling Company, of which George A. Mouton is secretary and general manager, is a valuable asset not only to Harrisburg and Poinsett county, but to the counties of Craighead, Jackson, Cross and Woodruff, a region commonly called "the north end rice area of Arkansas." The mill handles around 400,000 bushels of rice each season, for which the growers are paid approximately \$320,000.

With a noticeably increasing migration of rice farmers to "the north end" area, where there is an abundance of cheap land suited to the crop, where the sub-water strata range from 15 to 60 feet, making possible a very much lower irrigation cost per acre, where the field yields are 25 per cent to 35 per cent higher, and where even the quality of rice is superior, it is predicted that the mill within a very few seasons will increase its trade to 600,000 bushels a year, paying the growers around \$500,000. The Mouton Rice Milling Company visualized these advantages and selected Harrisburg for its mill.

Sees Oklahma Growing Rice If Reservoir Constructed.

Oklahoma City, Oct. 15 (AP).—Rice may become an important crop in the Poteau river valley of eastern Oklahoma if the river is harnessed against overflow by the construction of a reservoir near Wister. F. L. Vaughan, head of the Water Resources Division of the Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board, declared today.

The Wister reservoir, he said, will be included in recommendations of Oklahoma representatives to a regional meeting of representatives of the National Resources Committee at Hot Springs, Ark., October 18 to 20. He said estimates of the cost of the Wister reservoir ranged from \$1,800,000 to \$3,000,000.

Other major projects Vaughan said would be recommended by Oklahoma delegates included: Twenty upstream reservoirs on tributaries of the Washita river, to prevent floods and conserve water for flushing the channel in dry months. "That's a \$12,000,000 job," he said.

Rice Harvest In Northeast About Ended

Democrat 11-28-37

Rapid Increase in Acreage in Six Counties Yet Unchecked.

Jonesboro—Harvesting of the rice crop in northeast Arkansas is nearing completion, O. C. Burk, rice buyer at the Jonesboro Rice Milling Company, announced today. Approximately 90 per cent of the crop in the Jonesboro district of the rice belt is estimated to be harvested, with less than 10 per cent still remaining in the fields.

Heavy rains have delayed the harvest, but no great damage to the crop resulted, growers reported here. Within 10 days, with favorable weather conditions, the harvest in the Jonesboro section will be practically completed.

Acreage of rice in the northern district totaled approximately 40,400, Mr. Burk said. Compared with acreage figures of last season, an increase of nearly 10,000 acres, or about 25 per cent, is shown for this area.

More than 606,000 barrels of rice have been milled at the Jonesboro Rice Milling Company plant here. The mill here and the Mouton Milling Company at Harrisburg are the only two mills in this district.

The rice growing industry is increasing in importance in northeast Arkansas, where large areas of low-priced land suitable for the cultivation of this crop are available, officials of the Mouton Rice Milling

Company and the Jonesboro Rice Milling Company plants state. The northern district is indicated as that area north of and including Cross county. The heaviest production is centered in Cross, Poinsett and Craighead counties, with some in Lawrence and increasing acreage in Jackson and Woodruff.

"This section offers one of the most favorable rice growing areas in the South," says George A. Mouton, general manager of the Mouton Rice Milling Company of Harrisburg, "as irrigation cost is from one-third to one-half less than that in other sections. Field yields are from 60 to 90 bushels an acre and, in some cases, up to 100 bushels an acre. An increasing number of rice farmers are migrating into this section each year."

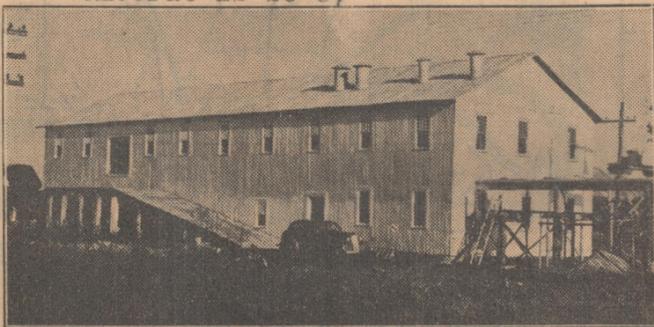
Clearing of new acreage for the 1938 crop has already started in Craighead, Jackson, Poinsett, Woodruff, Lawrence, Monroe and other counties in this area. In 1936 there were 30,261 acres in the Jonesboro-Harrisburg-Newport district. This year the acreage has increased to 40,400, the largest increase during the period of any section in the state.

Just what the increase in this area will be next year cannot be determined as yet. County Agent A. Raybon Sullivan indicated here that the increase in acreage would probably be determined by the government's new farm program, although nothing definite can be estimated in this direction.

In commenting on the basis of the migration to this area by rice growers, rice mill officials here, as well as well drillers, say the lower irrigation costs is the principal cause for the new activity in this area. As lands are cleared, more fertile fields are secured. The water level, well drillers indicate, is much higher in the northern district than in the Stuttgart area.

First in New Rice Region

Democrat 12-26-37



Newport—Graham Bros. Co. of Tuckerman the past week started operating its new \$15,000 rice mill there. It is the first rice mill to be placed in operation in Jackson county, a relatively new rice-growing section. The mill is a double-break huller and will handle 200 barrels of rice in 12 hours. It was installed by H. T. McGill of Stuttgart. Harry Winfree is head miller.

The appearance of a rice mill in this section is heralded as a signal for farmers to consider their fling at rice farming a successful venture. This section has come to be known as the "north end rice area of Arkansas". There is an abundance of land here suited to the crop; land where the sub-water stratum ranges from 15 to 60 feet, making irrigation cost per acre very reasonable.

S. G. Graham, senior member of the Graham Bros. Co. firm, pointed out that there are a half-million bushels of rice grown annually within easy reach of the mill and that his company is going into the milling end of the business with the intention of putting a part of this rice on the market, ready for the retailer.

The mill will be operated on the "merchant plan". That is, Graham Bros. Co. will buy the threshed rice, mill it and sell the rice and the rice bran.

New Rice Areas Boom Near McCrory

Democrat 3-14-38

Resources Committee Alarmed at Depleted Supply.

McCrory, Feb. 12.—Expert rice growers have been negotiating with land owners in the McCrory area and have leased many acres for the growing of rice this year. Rice was one of the largest crops grown in Woodruff county in 1937. It was first grown as an experiment in 1930, and each year since the crop has increased until one cannot drive in any direction out of McCrory in the summer months without seeing fields of waving green rice.

The Morton community, six miles east of McCrory became interested in the new crop first and then Hunter, south of Morton changed its one year crop of cotton to rice and today grows

more rice than any community in this part of the state. It has formed a co-operative buyers' association and fuel is furnished to the growers for operating at a low cost. In 1936, McCrory business men saw the possibility of money in the rice business and started buying all timber land from the government available in this section. Thousands of acres are being cleared and a boom in the timber business is on. A large warehouse for the storage of rice was built in November by Gerald Morris, druggist and it is expected that the large increase of acreage there will be a rice mill built here in the near future.

Southwest's Flood Control Needs Cited

Gazette 3-13-38

Washington, March 12 (AP).—The National Resources Committee has informed Congress that outstanding needs of the southwest Mississippi drainage basins, which embrace portions of Arkansas, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma, are irrigation, water conservation and flood control.

"An outstanding need of the upper basins is more water for large areas now partly irrigated; of the middle basins, feasible measures for saving variable supplies of water not now put to beneficial use; of the lower basins,

multiple control and development," it said.

The committee's analysis was contained in its six-year construction and investigation program for utilization and conservation of the nation's water resources submitted to Congress by the president.

Re-Study Advocated. It said flood control was the principal problem in the plain of the lower Arkansas river, and that a "re-study of available data and also new investigations are essential to preparation of plans for a comprehensive flood control and water use program on the rivers of the Arkansas basin.

"Numerous reservoirs and levee projects have been proposed," the committee said. "Most of the reservoirs have been investigated primarily from the standpoint of a single use. In view of the critical needs along stretches of these rivers many other proposals merit attention with consideration of all the benefits which might accrue.

"Pending completion of these comprehensive examinations these projects should be held in abeyance, with only such exceptions as are clearly indicated to be feasible by data in hand."

The committee said "one such project" was the Great Salt Plains reservoir in Alfalfa county, Oklahoma, which it said would curb floodwater and provide a wildlife refuge.

Rice Water Survey Urged

Democrat 3-14-38

Resources Committee Alarmed at Depleted Supply.

By BASCOM N. TIMMONS. (Democrat Staff Correspondent) Washington — A recommendation for appropriation of \$75,000 for a study of the water supply for the rice-growing industry in Arkansas was before Congress today.

The proposal was advanced by the National Resources Committee in its annual report, transmitted to Congress by President Roosevelt. "Deep-well pumping for irrigation in the rice fields of Eastern Arkansas has depleted underground waters to an alarming extent," the committee said.

"A study of the situation in both its technical and economic phases is needed."

Further expansion of the rice-growing industry is contingent upon the development of reliable supplies of water, it was pointed out.

Of the \$75,000, the committee recommended that \$25,000 be spent the first year under the six-year irrigation program outlined in its report. It was estimated that \$50,000 would be needed to complete the study over succeeding years.

An additional study of the problem is being made by the committee, it is said, and a detailed report is expected in the near future.

Sub-Surface Water Will Be Studied

Gazette 1-1-39

A study of sub-surface water which has sunk steadily to lower levels the past few years in rice-growing areas dependent on it for irrigation, was included in a tentative 1939 program drafted for the Lower Mississippi Basin Committee of the National Resources Committee, at a meeting at the office of L. A. Henry, engineer-director of the state Planning Board, at the War Memorial building Friday.

The St. Francis river basin or the Ouachita river basin, or both, would be included. Study of the Ouachita basin would depend on wishes of Louisiana interests. The program will be submitted to the Basin Committee, composed of representatives of Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee and Louisiana.

The studies are designed to obtain information about the basins under 10 general subjects: General description, the extent of human occupancy, transportation facilities available, characteristics of the streams, extent and adequacy of existing water development efforts, sub-surface water, malaria prevalence, the need for a comprehensive plan for development and a schedule for construction of needed facilities.

A comprehensive flood control program, including the reconstruction and extension of a levee system and a dam near Poplar Bluff, Mo., is under way now in the St. Francis basin. The Carpenter and the Rammel dams have been built on the Ouachita river, and a third, the Blakeley Mountain, is proposed.

The tentative program was drafted by Mr. Henry, S. L. Hiding, water consultant of the National Resources Committee, and Print Hudson, regional director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Rice Growers Will Confer At Stuttgart Tomorrow.

2-3-40

L. A. Henry, engineer-director of the state Planning Board, will preside at a conference of about 100 rice growers at Stuttgart tomorrow to consider water rights and legislation to afford improvement of water use in irrigation.

Wells A. Hutchins of Berkeley, Cal., irrigation economist of the United States Department of Agriculture, will speak. Others invited are Earl O. Mills of St. Louis, counselor of the National Resources Planning Board; D. G. Thompson of Washington, senior geologist of the United States Geological Survey; H. K. Thatcher, executive director of the state Agricultural and Industrial Commission; Dr. John B. Hanley, assistant state geologist, and officials of the Arkansas Agricultural Extension Service.

The meeting will follow a field trip by the rice farmers today to inspect surface reservoirs and deep well water sources near Stuttgart.

Using Surface Water Urged In Rice Belt

2-18-40

Special to the Gazette. Stuttgart, Jan. 24.—Increased use of surface waters for rice irrigation, to relieve pressure on underground supplies was advocated by agricultural leaders at a meeting of rice growers and business men here today. Use of surface waters on an extensive scale will involve the question of water rights, and growers contemplating the extension should establish those rights, speakers pointed out. A committee was named to study the best method of procedure.

Problem a Serious One. D. G. Thompson of Washington, senior geologist of the United States Geo-

logical Survey, said that water levels in the underground wells on the Grand Prairie had dropped an average of one foot a year for the past 10 years and "something must be done in the near future to reduce the consumption of underground water."

"If water levels continue to go down, a good many wells eventually will have to be abandoned," he said. "It is estimated at the present time about 32,000 acres in this area are affected by lack of sufficient supplies of water and within 10 years, at that rate, about 70,000 acres would be affected."

Surface Water Best Remedy. He said several remedies have been considered during the nine years the survey has studied the problem. These include artificial recharging of underground wells, deeper wells, restricted use of underground water and more extensive use of surface water. He said a more extensive use of surface waters appeared the logical solution, deepening wells tends to diminish the flow and artificial recharging is impractical on the prairie, due to the presence of a clay hard pan, which the water would not penetrate.

He said the data of the survey was obtained from a comprehensive study of the water situation in the rice area, involving from 300 to 400 wells a year and records of their operation for a full 24 hours.

Water Rights Explained. Wells A. Hutchins of Berkeley, Cal., irrigation economist of the United States Department of Agriculture, explained laws governing water rights in other states and pointed out possible interpretation in Arkansas.

He said there are not many Arkansas court decisions on the subject but, it appeared that the riparian doctrine was favored. The doctrine maintains that all qualified landowners adjacent to the stream have equal rights to the use of its water. The appropriation doctrine maintains that landowners may use a specified amount of water from a stream, according to the priority of their appropriation.

Co-Operation Advocated. Earl O. Mills of St. Louis, counselor of the National Resources Planning Board, urged rice growers to co-operate with the Arkansas State Planning Board in working out their problem.

L. A. Henry, engineer-director of the state Planning Board, said the board had spent three years studying the natural resources in the state, particularly the water situation.

The Water Committee is composed of V. L. Tindall, C. C. Cox, J. R. Crowe, William Freeman, Frank Freudenberg and P. R. McCoy. Mr. Henry presided today. Other speakers included: Jacob Hartz, Stuttgart; Peyton Moncrief, DeWitt; L. K. Buerkle, Joe Morrison, Mr. Freeman, Stuttgart; Dr. C. O. Brandon and Mr. Elmer, Fayetteville.

White River Projects To Be Urged

3-21-40

Officials of the state Flood Control Commission and state Planning Board will appear before the House Flood Control Committee at Washington Monday to urge authorization of multiple-purpose projects on White river.

Those who will attend are Chairman R. E. Overman and Charles S. Christian, engineer, of the commission and Engineer-Director L. A. Henry of the board. Chairman Thomas Fitzhugh of the state Utilities Commission may join the delegates.

Governor Bailey made public a telegram from Congressman Clyde T. Ellis of Bentonville advising that the hearing would be held and urging state officials to attend. The hearing will be on the proposed authorization of dams at Bull Shoals, on the Baxter-Marion county line and Table Rock, in Missouri.

Caverns Beneath Wildcat Shoals. If authorized, Bull Shoals would replace Wildcat Shoals on the Flood Control Commission's approved list of projects. Mr. Christian said United States army engineers, in testing for a possible foundation at Wildcat Shoals, discovered caverns beneath the area. They moved up the river to Bull Shoals, a few miles distant.

The only authorized development on White river for which funds have been allocated is Norfolk dam on the north fork, Mr. Christian said. Engineers now are seeking the proper location of the foundation. This project would include a high-head dam for power development and flood control and would cost about \$27,000,000.

Mr. Christian emphasized that, if Bull Shoals and Table Rock are authorized, funds will not be available until appropriated by Congress.

To Present Data. He said the Arkansas group will present data to the committee concerning flood control proposals on the lower Mississippi, Arkansas, Ouachita and Red rivers.

White River Project Will Be Reviewed

GAZETTE 3-23-40

Washington, April 22 (AP). — Maj. Gen. Julian Schley, chief of army engineers, directed a review be made of existing reports on proposed improvements to the White river in the vicinity of Greer's Ferry, Ark.

Reservoir Might Serve Rice Field Irrigation Needs.

Features of the proposed dam will be studied to find how much added expense there would be if the project is made into a triple purpose dam for irrigation as well as flood control and power development. Capt. Lee B. Washbourne, executive officer of the Little Rock District of the engineers, said last night.

Charles S. Christian, engineer for the Arkansas Flood Control Commission, said he appeared before the National Rivers and Harbors Congress and the House Committee on Flood Control with proposals that irrigation be added to the purpose for which the Greer's Ferry dam was authorized.

He said the proposed dam, near Heber Springs, has been authorized by Congress for flood control and power development. He said the commission desired that the dam be constructed as a triple-purpose project to include irrigation for rice farmers in the Grand Prairie section.

Rice Growers to Ask Board To Study Water Supply.

3-29-40

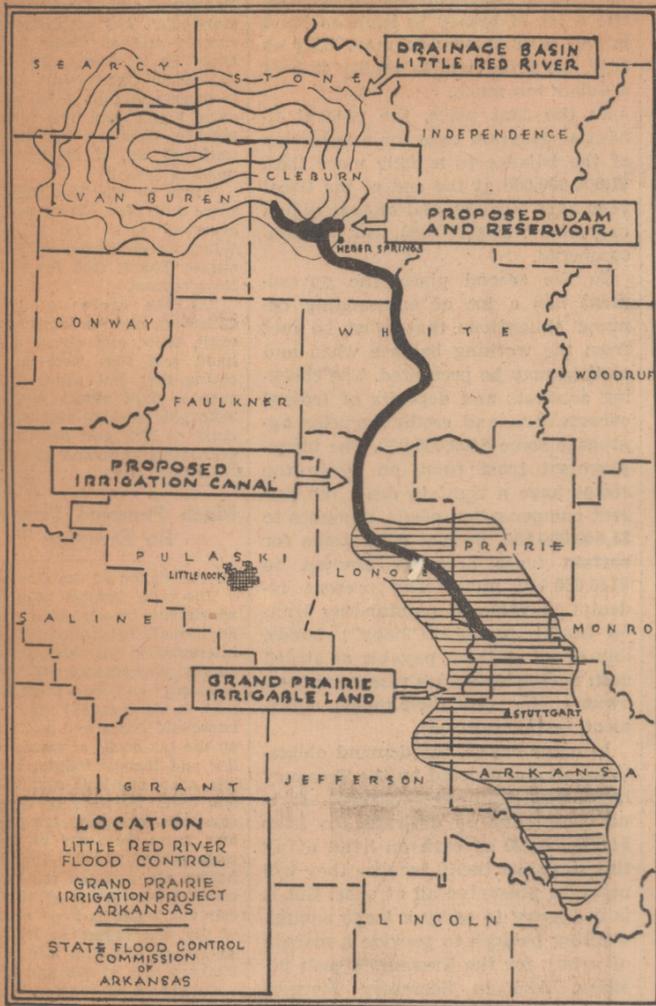
The state Planning Board will be asked by a group of rice growers to make a study of surface water which could be used to supplement ground water supplies in the Grand Prairie rice district of the state at a meeting of the board at the capitol at 10 a. m. today. F. A. Freudenberg of Stuttgart is chairman of a committee of 75 which will present a resolution urging the study.

A gradual lowering of the water level in some sections of the Grand Prairie has increased the need for an additional water supply, Mr. Henry said.

A proposed dam on the Little Red river at Greer's Ferry, near Heber Springs, in Cleburne county, and a 107-mile irrigation canal to the rice district in eastern Arkansas has been suggested by the state Flood Control Commission as a solution of the problem. The commission said the dam and irrigation canal "eventually would have to be built." The proposed project has been approved by the Projects Committee of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress. Arkansas witnesses before the House Flood Control Committee Monday will urge authorization of the project by Congress.

Mr. Henry said committee reports would be made at the meeting today.

PLAN FOR IRRIGATION



A plan under which the state Flood Control Commission hopes to provide irrigation for the Grand Prairie rice section of Arkansas is shown above. A \$7,000,000 dam would be built on the Little Red river at Greer's Ferry near Heber Springs, forming a reservoir with 400,000 acre-foot capacity. The heavy black line, originating in Cleburne county, represents the proposed 107-mile canal which would end

near Fairmount, Prairie county. It would have a capacity of about 1,200 cubic feet of water a second. The canal and distribution system would cost approximately \$8,000,000. The canal would drop about 160 feet in the 107 miles. The project, already approved by the Projects Committee of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, will be presented to the House Flood Control Committee at Washington.

Water Code For State To Be Drafted

8-16-40 Gazette

A proposed water code stabilizing water rights of rice farmers and reservoir owners in the Grand Prairie region will be submitted to the 1941 General Assembly by an Advisory Committee of the state Planning Board.

The board's Executive Committee authorized Chairman James H. Penick of Little Rock to appoint the Advisory Committee after it considered a request for a legislative enabling act presented by Verne Tindall of Stuttgart, chairman of a rice growers' committee on water legislation. The farmers asked the Planning Board to serve as an agency which would study and recommend legislation protecting the use of surface water to augment ground water supplies now used by rice growers.

Because the ground water level is falling, the pumping of water from wells is becoming more expensive. The Grand Prairie region has approximately 120,000 acres in rice. Five thousand acres are irrigated from surface reservoirs, L. A. Henry, engineer-director of the Planning Board, estimated. Rice producers have hesitated to construct additional reservoirs because they cannot be assured there would be no "upstream" interference.

The National Resources Planning Board will co-operate in the Arkansas study.

Program of Work Projects Will Be Compiled.

Within the next two or three months, Mr. Henry said, the state Planning Board will determine proposed projects for highways, airports, institutional construction and other work to be incorporated in a two-year program for submission to the General Assembly, required by Arkansas statute.

The two-year program plus a six-year program subject to revision every two years, will be submitted to federal authorities as part of the state board's participation with the National Resources Planning Board in a six-year federal works program.

Earl O. Mills, regional counselor for the national agency in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma, said under a new system, state and national agencies "make each other aware of their construction programs" to prevent conflicting or untimely projects.

A presidential order requires all federal construction agencies to submit six-year programs to the Bureau of the Budget and to the National Resources Planning Board, both of which are in the president's Executive Department. The bureau and board advise the president and Congress regarding acceptable projects, Mr. Mills explained. The board refers projects to its regional offices.

The regional Planning Advisory Committee of the Dallas office includes Mr. Henry; Dr. G. C. Branner, state geologist, and H. E. Thompson, assistant director of the Agricultural Extension Service, as well as state representatives.

Committee Appointed For Water Study.

8-18-40 Gazette

An 11-member committee to make a study of legislation needed to protect water rights in Arkansas's Grand Prairie was named by James H. Penick, chairman of the state Planning Board yesterday. The survey was requested by rice producers and millers, who said the only state law providing protection of water for irrigation purposes was an act of 1919 giving irrigation corporations the right of eminent domain.

Members of the committee are Dr. George C. Branner, state geologist; H. E. Thompson, assistant director of the Agricultural Extension Service; K. A. Engle, director of the Rice Branch Experiment Station at Stuttgart; Dean J. S. Waterman of the University of Arkansas Law School; Thomas J. Frickle of Stuttgart, representa-

tive of the Federal Land bank; L. A. Black, DeWitt; A. H. Hunt, Carlisle; L. Hodue, Weiner; Vance Thompson of McCrory; L. A. Henry, engineer-director of the Planning Board; and C. S. Christian, engineer of the state Flood Control Commission.

No date for the first meeting of the committee was fixed.

Mr. Penick also appointed a four-member committee to represent Arkansas at the Midwest Defense Conference in Kansas City on August 30. Members named were J. W. Fulbright of Fayetteville, president of the University of Arkansas and Dr. E. N. Barron, W. E. Lamb and Floyd Barry, all of Little Rock.

Conference Friday On Water Conservation.

Gazette 1-14-41

Proposed legislation for a water code governing Arkansas irrigation projects will be discussed at the Albert Pike hotel at 10 a. m. Friday by a state Planning Board committee appointed at the request of rice growers interested in the apportionment of surface water rights in the Grand Prairie section.

Wells A. Hutchins, irrigation economist of the United States Department of Agriculture, is here to participate in discussions at the board's request. A preliminary conference was held yesterday.

Bill Drawn To Regulate Irrigation

1-22-41

Special to the Gazette.

Stuttgart, Jan. 21.—A water rights bill has been drafted by a committee of Stuttgart rice growers, the state Planning Board and Harry E. Meek, Little Rock lawyer, to meet possible controversies over surface water use, Kyle Engler, water expert of the University of Arkansas College of Agriculture, told Rotary Club members at a luncheon here today.

"For several years, consideration has been given the possibility that future expansion in use of surface water for irrigation might result in serious controversy between water users," Mr. Engler said. "Use of surface waters for rice irrigation has increased until now approximately 15,000 acres are irrigated in this manner."

Provisions of Measure.

The tentative bill provides:

1. That future use of surface waters shall be supervised by the state Department of Public Utilities.
2. That all future users of surface water for crop irrigation shall have a right to their use.
3. That persons affected by other users or by decisions of the Department of Public Utilities shall have a recourse to state courts.
4. That use of surface waters for irrigation shall be limited to a reasonable and beneficial use.
5. That provisions of the bill shall not affect in any way any valid existing right to use of water.

Pertains Only to Irrigation.

The bill does not limit or affect the use of water for purposes other than irrigation, nor attempt to control or affect use of ground waters, Mr. Engler explained.

The bill will tend to secure rights of water users to sources of supply and will encourage future expansion in use of surface waters, it was said. An expansion in use of surface waters should relieve to some extent demands on underground sources, and presage an upward trend in underground water levels, he said.

RESERVOIR FOR GRAND PRAIRIE STIRS DISPUTE

Would Repeal Right Of Eminent Domain

Gazette 2-13-41

After more than three hours of heated testimony, the Senate Levee and Drainage Committee returned without recommendation last night a bill by Senator Albert Erwin of Des Arc to repeal Act 87 of 1909, granting the right of eminent domain to irrigation projects.

Cheered by a large delegation from the Grand Prairie rice belt, Senator Erwin and Representative H. B. Eddins of Prairie led the argument for the bill introduced as a result of a plan of the Arkansas Irrigation Company to build a 4,500-acre reservoir in Prairie county for irrigation purposes.

The bill's supporters charged: Act 87 was passed when governmental regulation of utilities was in its infancy.

The Arkansas Irrigation Company was not subject to regulation by either the state Utilities or Corporation commissions. Irrigation from wells is satisfactory and the proposed reservoir is not necessary.

Drop of Water Level Seen as Dangerous.

Spokesmen for the company, led by Al Meehan of Stuttgart and E. L. McHaney Jr. of Little Rock, lawyer, said:

Repeal of Act 87 would prevent the company from proceeding with its project and result in the loss of "substantial investments."

Acquisition by the company of some 3,800 or 4,200 acres of land has been accomplished through friendly negotiations, but the company needs the right of eminent domain in event a property owner should seek to charge an exorbitant price for a small piece of land needed as right-of-way for a canal.

Prices for water from the company would be on the area's long-established "crop basis," and a farmer could continue to pump water from wells if he chose.

Continued drop of water level, estimated at 65 feet since 1910, and excessive use indicate a "dangerous situation" approaching inadequacy and an eventual resort to surface water for irrigation.

Heated Debate on Bill By Witnesses.

Kyle Engler, assistant professor of agricultural engineering, University of Arkansas, said tests revealed annual drop from sevenths to one foot in the water level of a well near Stuttgart and an average annual drop of sevenths of a foot in the Grand Prairie area of Arkansas county and parts of Lonoke, Monroe and Prairie counties.

Charging the company has "hired every lawyer from Texarkana to the Rocky mountains," John Davis of Monroe county contended "no one needs to ask a reservoir for water," as the wells are adequate.

The continued policy of over-using wells may result in the ruin of the Grand Prairie area as the plowing of grass lands converted parts of the West into dust bowls, Mr. Meehan said.

Rumors that the company was seeking to obtain land for \$4 per acre were discounted by Mr. Meehan. He introduced former landowners who said they received satisfactory prices from the company for their land.

Rice Growers Oppose Water Rights Bill

Special to the Gazette, 3-1-41
Stuttgart, Feb. 28.—Rice growers

voted an overwhelming disapproval of a proposed water rights bill, which would vest in a state authority the right to regulate their methods of diverting surface waters, at an open meeting at the courthouse here last night. Approximately 250 farmers, representing practically all the Grand Prairie growing section, attended. The consensus was that present methods of irrigation from reservoirs and stream dams were working in practice and a need for legal regulation had not manifested itself.

The practice has been for each grower to supply his needs for surface water individually. Testimony indicated that there has been no serious conflict between neighboring growers over the use of water sources.

Writers of the bill explained that it had been drafted in lieu of any law to regulate the diversion of surface water, and not as a perfect instrument for the regulation of irrigation in the rice section. Agricultural leaders have foreseen that ultimately a law to regulate surface water irrigation would be necessary, it was pointed out, and such a bill was believed timely for two reasons: (1) That underground water supplies are diminishing and surface water use is increasing, and (2) there is an imminent possibility of the need of an interpretation of the rights.

Author Explains Measure.

Harry E. Meek of Little Rock, author of the bill, explained that the bill had been drafted at the behest of the Arkansas State Planning Board Irrigation Bill Committee, in consultation with Wells A. Hutchins of Berkeley, Cal., Department of Agriculture irrigation economist and a leading authority on irrigation legislation. The provisions of the bill were patterned on the irrigation laws of Oregon, adapted to conditions existing in Arkansas, he said.

The bill provides two main points, he said. "It expressly declares that the individual first to make a bona fide apportion and use of surface waters has a prior use to those waters, and his claim must be satisfied before others. It provides that the administration of the provisions shall be delegated to the Utility Division of the state Corporation Commission.

Growers were told that priority in use of water under the proposed bill would include any stream, natural or artificial, which flowed past one grower's lands onto another grower's land. It was brought out that a reservoir operator at the "foot" of a small drainage ditch would be entitled to all the water flowing into his reservoir, by a prior right, even though the ditch flowed through the farm of the landowner above.

U. of A. Specialist Testifies.

Kyle Engler, irrigation specialist of the University of Arkansas College of Agriculture, explained that a lowering of water levels in the prairie wells had led to the need for expanded use of surface waters. He said he believed the proposed bill would encourage this expansion.

"It has been declared that sooner or later Arkansas is going to have a water law, and we have here a bill which I believe is suitable," he said. "The University of Arkansas is interested in this bill only insofar as it will help the people of the Grand Prairie rice region."

Readings on the "steel tape," he said, had showed that water levels around Slovac and Fairmount were dropping at the average rate of 1.3 feet a year, east of Stuttgart 1.1 a year and around Olena more than one foot a year.