Dust Bowl Tragedy

By Thomas Alfred Tripp

G O I N G B A C K recently to a community known intimately and studied by this writer fifteen years ago, there is a vividness of the flood, the drought, the hail, the wind, the overclouded atmospheres which are so well remembered. The place is a county seat in the southern Great Plains, a town which had a population of about 3,500 in 1924. At that time almost all the farms in the county were quarter-sections, 160 acres, though some farmers already had obtained possession of a half-section or more. Wheat farming was good, the town prosperous and everyone looked to the future with great optimism.

There were seven churches in the town. It was a somewhat overclouded situation but there was good cooperation among the denominations and evidence was not lacking of increasing vigor in religious thought. Many active churches did the farming areas of the county. There was a great display of civic pride and nearly everyone in the region testified to his satisfaction at living in the town or on the surrounding farms. The pace was set by a live group of successful businessmen and progressive farmers. A high percentage of the young people went to college and many returned to marry and enter the expanding business and agricultural system. Came the dust storms. The changes I have found wrought by the "black blizzards" are amazing! The town has grown in population from 3,500 to over 5,000. The population has doubled, consequently, the farming population has been reduced. Instead of a family on nearly every quarter-section, as was the case fifteen years ago, today there is hardly one occupied farmstead to a section. Many farmers grow on twenty or even quarter-sections of wheat. The displaced farmers have lost the left state or have gone to town, many of them to get on relief. The enlargement of the farms and the rise of relief explain, almost entirely, the growth of the county seat.

Interviews with farmers indicated their longing for the old days when they had "near neighbors" and there was "more going on in the community." The little active churches, dishes, schools and other farmer social groups have nearly all disappeared. All the hamlets are entirely gone, except for the grain elevators, and the small towns have declined to half their former size.

In the county seat one misses many of the enterprising and successful men of former years. A few of the best of them are in Boston, New York, Chicago and other cities. When their business began to fail or the dust became too uncomfortable the more alert people took the opportunity to move more than $100,000 for every man, woman and child in the county for each year since 1933.

Wheat growing still persists on a large scale although the landowners are not making the fortunes that practically the entire country was returning to grammar schools. Rainfall has been 18.3 per cent below normal since 1930, in an already dry county. Few youthful farmers are to be found in this country. Practically young men have left the farm homes for the cities or towns or military service; exceptions, only the older men and women and the girls remain in the agricultural households. Almost no young people, either the farms or the towns, are today going to college.

The moral tone of the county seat is definitely down. An increase in sexual irregularity is revealed in the many cases of "swapping partners" among young people who have been brought up with fine traditions of purity and devotion. Nearly everyone can tell the details of every so many clandestine affairs. Unfortunately, this community was known to have had more than the usual amount of these irregularities fifteen years ago. Today there is, evidently, more of it and there is a greater tendency to accept the situation. Somehow, it seems, even some of the best people have lost the power of indignation. This state of things is probably due among other factors to the drop in the statics rate, the surrounding the population of the static community culture, the increase of an abnormal number of unattached women, the high percentage of underemployment among people who are in the prosperous-appearing surface and the desire to escape the shame of the harsh struggle for existence for even the relatively fortunate group.

Arrival at Hollines Churches

The seven county seat churches are still there and several "hollines" groups have come in. Church attendance and participation are going as they did a decade and a half ago. There is greater competition among the ministers and churches. Religious ideas and social ideals are more conservative, if not reactionary, of former neighbors and the present pastors are to be looked to as going out of firsts. There is less social and political discussion among the "hollines" groups. This, no doubt, will give them a taste of life but those in the middle group are beginning to fear that they will never have a chance to achieve anything worthwhile.

Effect of Government Spending

Despite the deteriorating dust storms which still occur every week, this county seat town or hamlet and the other farming areas of the county, where the relief spending, feeding, education and a fair wheat crop during the past two years. A state institution providing a pension to a retired farmer and a PWA outlet. Several local public build-

What, if anything, is to be done for the growing population in a declining rural society such as this case
Defense or Despotism?
By Harold E. Fey

The Industrial Mobilization Plan is a scheme worked out by the United States army and navy. It aims to extend the principle of conscription from man power to include the total productive mechanism of the country in war. The plan is subject to a constant process of revision. Four of these revisions have appeared in published form. The latest came public knowledge following a telegram from Secretary of War Stark to General Pershing: "Carren secured unanimous consent to have it published as a Senate document. In spite of all the criticisms of former editions of the plan its tendencies towards dictatorship in the latest edition make it in essential respects the pattern of regimentation which had previously appeared.

The "Industrial Mobilization Plan, Revision of 1939," tells something about the matter of the total organization for the totalitarian organization of the United States for war, but it is revealing, nevertheless, of what high agencies of our government are planning to do to the American way of life. The foreword disarmingly describes the plan as "a guide to be available in time of major war. It would apply only for the duration of such a war..." This plan does not propose the modification of any of our constitutional process. Yet the plan goes on to show that instead of waiting for a major war to make itself ready partly in fact, that its operations are spreading like an epidemic of economic influence, and that it will probably continue in operation after a war has concluded. It further reveals that it will be impossible for the plan to fulfill its purposes unless the United States sells the Constitution and becomes a dictatorship.

The reason is outlined in the beginning of the plan, the first section which deals with the effect of industrialization upon modern methods of human slaughter. The introductory statement says: "War is no longer simply a battle between armed forces in the field—it is a struggle in which each side strives to destroy the enemy the coordinated power of every individual and every material resource at its command. The conflict extends from the soldier in the front line to the citizen in the remotest hamlet in the rear."

It is important to realize what lies behind this sentence. The theory and scope of war have changed. The Industrial Mobilization Plan is the American version of a new thing familiarly known to general staffs as "total war." Its chief theoretically was the German General Ludendorf. In brief summary, total war requires the mechanismization of mass conscript armies. This necessitates the conscription of the factories and the labor that make the machines. While this pattern is not likely to be completely filled, the point of concentration spread to sources of raw materials, the short, complete regimentation of the total productive life of the nation for war. But people will not tolerate this, hence the channels of public opinion are also conscripted. So the planning and coordination measures of the plan 1939 must be made public and political and social organization must be forced to speak with practical unanimity. Dictatorship alone insures this result.

"Voluntary Cooperation"

But even this is not enough. Conflicts of whole peoples cannot be won if citizens merely tolerate war. They must fight with single-minded hate and passionate determination. So religion also must be conscripted. Either Christianity must renounce the ethics of Jesus and return to Old Testament tribalism, or it must be repudiated altogether, and if that can be done, then perhaps a new Christianity might soon become the direct, powerful, and therefore the most important means of directing the flow of our industrialization. "50 percent of our production, which is applied through "clamping" the means of trade, to further a "monopoly" is therefore a "fostering" of the war economy. Whether our national economy will be "clamped" is entirely up to the people, what the result will be in what we are hard pressed to know.

Pointing out that in the World War belligerents understood what was necessary, and that this caused rising prices, profiteering and waste, the present plan provides its own key by saying that these conditions "soon made apparent the necessity for reaching direst ant degrees of governmental control over essential raw materials, labor, power, capital, industry and transportation."
The new Industrial Mobilization Plan (I.M.P.) says that this will be done by "voluntary cooperation." The following developments of the I.M.P. Plan of 1939 insures the beginnings for us in America.

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Such an administration was set up by the President in May 1932, and dissolved on November 9, 1933. So far as we are aware, no change or improvement in the establishment of this agency is held up, as for example, Congress should probably be construe about surrendering democracy, the "Army and Navy Munitions Board should assume the responsibility for guidance during.