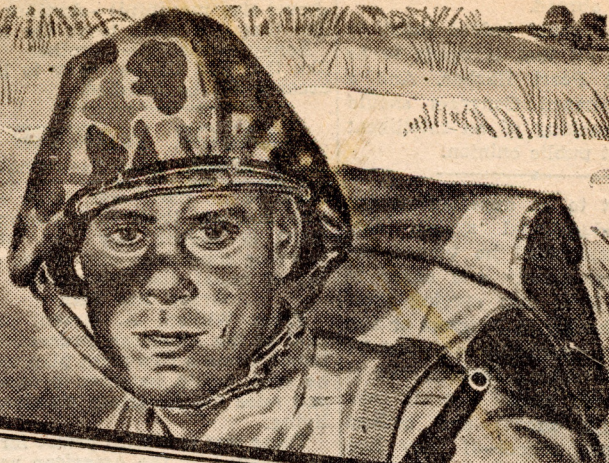


PUBLICITY

**"WILL YOU TAKE MY PLACE
ON THE FARM?"**



4,000,000
extra farm helpers
needed!

says U. S. Department of Agriculture

Men, Women, Boys, Girls! GET A FARM JOB!

**A huge farm-help shortage exists in
this area! Our crops must be saved!**

Get a farm job—spare time, week-ends, Sundays,
during your vacation. Help feed our Armed Forces,
our fighting Allies, our civilian population.

The war effort needs every scrap of food grown.
Yet—if the 1945 food crop is to be saved,

4,000,000 volunteer farm workers will have to help.

You can do no more patriotic act than help bring
in the food. You'll enjoy the healthful, outdoor
life; and you'll be paid prevailing rates as you
serve your country.

VOLUNTEER NOW—IN YOUR AREA

See the Farm Labor Supervisor in your County:
Androscoggin & Sagadahoc, C. L. Eastman, P. O.
Bldg., Lewiston, Tel. 3410, 1790; Franklin County,
N. R. Ness, Main St., Farmington. Tel. 322, Farmers
30-12; Oxford County, L. W. Marston, Odd Fel-
lows Block, So. Paris, Tel. Norway 200.

He will explain how you can help farmers in their
apple picking, sweet corn picking, potato picking.
Workers are needed from Sept. 4 to Oct. 20.

Don't delay. This is an emergency. Act now.

**Country
Gentleman**

NATIONAL SPOKESMAN FOR AGRICULTURE

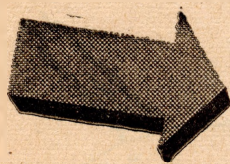
A CURTIS PUBLICATION

*This campaign is one of several sponsored by The Curtis
Publishing Co. in support of the war effort. It is being
placed in newspapers throughout the country by Country
Gentleman as a special service to Agriculture.*

Bangor Daily News
July 28 & 29, 1945

EMERGENCY!

"THOUSANDS OF EXTRA FARM HELPERS NEEDED!"



says U. S. Dept. of Agriculture

MEN, WOMEN, BOYS, GIRLS!
Get a Farm Job

SPARE-TIME,
WEEK-ENDS, ANY
SPARE TIME YOU HAVE
Our nation faces a grave food
crisis. There isn't enough labor on
our farms to harvest the food crops.

A Colossal Job—
Needs Your Help!

1945 is seeing the most serious farm-labor shortage since the war began. If the 1945 food crops are to be saved, thousands of extra farm helpers will have to volunteer.

You can do no more patriotic act than enlist for farm work. Decide now to spend your spare time on a farm. You'll enjoy the healthful, outdoor life—and you'll be paid prevailing rates as you serve your country.

VOLUNTEER NOW— IN YOUR AREA

See the Farm Labor Supervisor in your County: Androscoggin & Sagadahoc, C. L. Eastman, P. O. Bldg., Lewiston, Tel. 3410, 1790; Franklin County, N. R. Ness, Main St., Farmington, Tel. 323; Farmers 30-12; Oxford County, L. W. Marston, Odd Fellows Block, So. Paris, Tel. Norway 200.

He will explain how you can help farmers in their apple picking, sweet corn picking, potato picking. Workers are needed from Sept. 4 to Oct. 20.

Don't delay. This is an emergency. Act now.

Country Gentleman

NATIONAL SPOKESMAN FOR AGRICULTURE

A CURTIS PUBLICATION

This campaign is one of several sponsored by The Curtis Publishing Co. in the public interest. It is being placed in newspapers throughout the country by Country Gentleman as a special service to Agriculture.

EMERGENCY IN HOULTON

Bean Pickers Needed

**Beans Are Going To Waste Unless
Pickers Are Available AT ONCE**

*225 acres, enough to fill 750,000 cans, are ready to be picked
and much of the help planned on is busy with peas.*

**BOYS AND GIRLS NEEDED AT ONCE
WOMEN NEEDED AS SUPERVISORS**

HERE ARE THE DETAILS:

PICKERS—Meet at Fire Station, on Water street, at eight every morning. You will get back there at six each night.

TRANSPORTATION—Free ride to the bean field and back in trucks having adequate safety protection.

PAY—You will receive 2½c per pound for the beans picked. You can earn \$1.25 to \$2.50 or more per day. You will be paid by the General Foods Corp., at the Fire Station at six each Friday night for beans picked the previous week.

SUPERVISORS—Women and girls are needed to work as supervisors in the field. Rate of pay you will receive is 60c per hour.

***Absolutely Necessary To Contact The Farm
Labor Office The Previous Day For
Registering Purposes!***

Maine Dairy Farmers Worked Much Harder During This War

Maine dairy farmers increased milk production during the war period by working harder, working longer hours, making greater use of machinery, and because essential dairy workers were deferred for farm work by the local Selective Service boards. That is the conclusion drawn by George F. Dow of the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station from a study made of

Maine dairy farms when the war was at its height.

Dairy farm operators average slightly over fifty years of age. They do nearly half the work on their own farms, members of their families do about one-third, and the rest is hired.

Dairymen, on the whole, who keep the most cows and have the largest farm business make the most efficient use of labor on their farms. High milk production per cow and large crop yields also are important in the economical use of labor. The farmers who made the most efficient use of farm help had labor incomes considerably larger than those who used labor the least efficiently.

A small farm, where labor is used efficiently, is more profitable than a large farm with inefficient use of labor. However, the most profitable farms are those having a large farm business with a high labor efficiency.

These are some of the conclusions that Dr. Dow draws in his new Experiment Station research bulletin No. 436, "Use of Labor on Maine Farms with Dairy Cows." Copies of this bulletin may be obtained free by writing the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station, Orono.

October 1945

Emergency Crop Corps Picks 23 Tons Of Beans

More than 46,000 pounds of beans were picked by the boys and girls recruited by the extension farm labor in Ellsworth this year. Dante Forni, who has been in charge of farm labor in Hancock county reports that sixty-seven grade school youngsters picked 46,274 pounds of beans this year.

Farmers who had beans to pick notified the farm labor office in Ellsworth of the number of bean pickers they wanted. They came in and got these youngsters in the morning and brought them back at night.

Some of these members of the Emergency Crop Corps were only able to go out picking beans two or three times. There were others who were out picking beans seven or eight different days. Most of the farmers would have been unable to harvest their beans without this help.

Kennebec Farmers Short of Labor Victory Farm Volunteers Assisting

Victory Farm Volunteers are assisting farmers in growing crops and harvesting hay at a time when their regular sources of seasonable help have disappeared. These Victory Farm Volunteers are city and village boys 14 to 17 years of age who are working on farms during their summer vacation. These boys were recruited and placed by the Extension Farm Labor Office and are under their supervision. Most of these boys were not familiar with farm work but they have been quick to learn. They can be proud of their part in helping to insure food production.

The Kennebec County Farm Labor Office has 32 Victory Farm Volunteers working on farms throughout the county at the time this article is being written. Nine of the boys are from Massachusetts. Seven from Kennebec County and sixteen from other Maine counties. Boys from Kennebec County are George Hopkins, Hallowell, working at E. F. Cunnighams, Augusta; Robert Gosline working at Arthur Goslines, Gardiner; Harold Childs, Gardiner, working at Ernest Olivers, Waterville; Edward Millier, Augusta, working at Hanna Raymonds, Winthrop; Fred Thompson, Augusta, working at Guy Whittens in Clinton; Robert McLaughlin, Togus, working at Kenneth Dockendorff, Pittston; and Robert Cray, working at Wilford Fortiers, Benton.

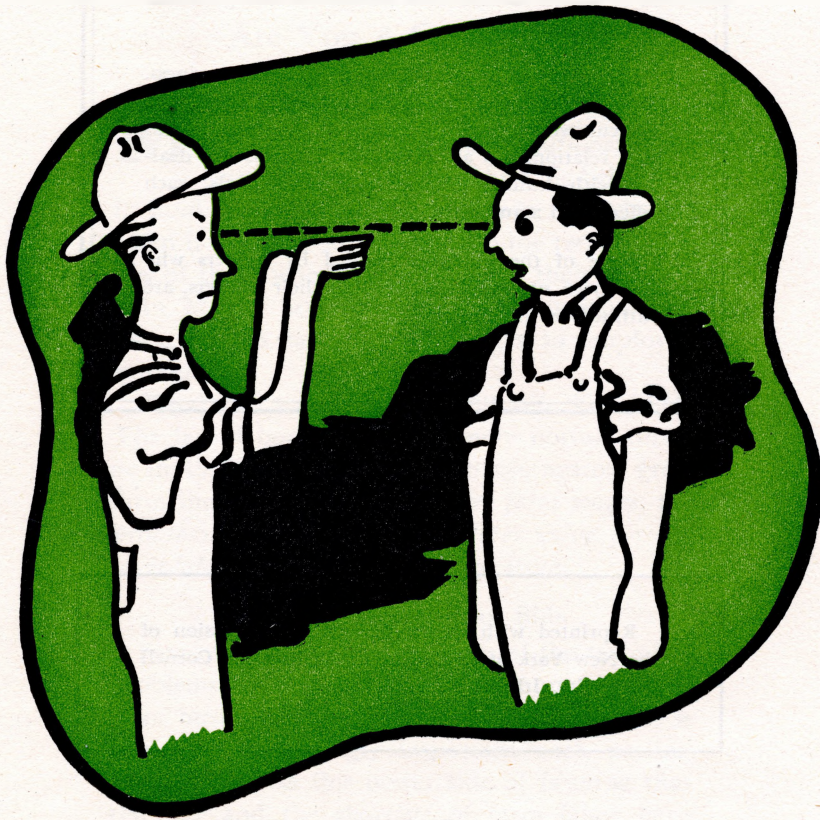
Boys from other Maine counties are: Vance Frost at William Pelottes, Sidney; Ralph Parlin, at Frank Prebles, Pittston; Paul Hershall at Donald Pipers, Monmouth; Wayne Bridges at C. R. Percivals, China; Harold Staples at George Roberts, China; Robert Johnson at Fred Votoes, Manchester; Earl Cummings Jr. at Frank Wixsons, Winslow; Souran Manougian at E. E. Wards, Mt. Vernon; Paul Schoolcraft at Edward Besseys, Clinton; David Finnigan at A. W. Black's, Winthrop; Richard Austin at Lloyd Boyntons, Vassalboro; Bion Farnsworth at Maurice Cannons, Sidney; Floyd Lancaster at Samuel Cates, Vassalboro; Stephen Smallidge at Herbert Curriers, Mt. Vernon; Paul Thurston at F. R. Kents, Vassalboro; Donald O'Farrell at Thomas Maines, Windsor; and Clayton Hardy at Harry Mitchells, China.

Boys from Massachusetts are: Arthur Sparr at Harold Hinkleys, West Gardiner; James Wright at Elliott Hawkes, Manchester; Robert Rivard at Fred Irelands, Pittston; Anthony Thomas at Guy Lyons, Sidney; Richard Conlon at Henry Pipers, Clinton; Richard Southerly at George Webbers, Winslow; and James Hanna at Russell Taylors, Belgrade.

Maine Extension
Bulletin 334

August 1945

Are You A Good Boss?





A large crowd was on hand at Hazard, Ky., on September 6 prior to the departure of the 16-car special train which carried workers from Eastern Kentucky to help harvest the Maine potato crop.

Old Reliable Aids Maine Spud Harvest

By Bruce Poundstone

State Farm Labor Supervisor, Lexington, Ky.

THIS year, as in 1943, the Old Reliable played an important part in the harvesting of Maine's potato crop, one of the nation's largest, by helping to transport some 1,500 farm workers from 30 Eastern Kentucky counties to Aroostook County, Me., the center of potato

production in that section of the country. Three special trains were operated by the L. & N. to carry the Kentuckians northward, through the Cincinnati gateway, departures being made on September 6, 8 and 14. The largest of these trains, which left on September 6, was made up by the Old Reliable at Whitesburg and Hazard, Ky., and consisted of 16 coaches and four diners. This train, which made the entire trip through to Maine, carried 808 workers.

The problem of transportation for such a movement from this locality at a time of peak rail travel seemingly would have been a difficult matter. However, the Louisville and Nashville R. R. (the initial carrier) handled this movement as though it were a daily routine.

The prompt and efficient serving of wholesome meals in the L. & N. dining cars caused much favorable comment.

Maine's potato crop is harvested in September and October and ordinarily workers for this job migrate to the potato-growing section from nearby New England states. In 1943, the shortage of workers brought about by the war effort and the increased production of potatoes, resulted in an acute labor situation. This recurred in 1944. To alleviate this labor shortage, the Federal Government, in cooperation with the Maine and Kentucky agricultural extension services, arranged to hire workers from Eastern Kentucky, where there was a temporary surplus of such labor, and to transport them to Maine to help harvest the spuds. The Maine farmers expressed themselves as highly satisfied with the help received from below the Mason and Dixon line. The first group of these workers left Maine for Kentucky on October 13 and all were back home by October 20.

Fellows On Harvesting

It is thanks to Congressman Frank Fellows that Northern Maine will get those prisoners-of-war it has wanted to help with this year's harvests:

The need was urgent. Upper Aroostook County pea-growers had to have 200 POW's in or near Presque Isle, 500 near Houlton, from the first of next month to the middle of September. From mid-September to the end of October, the potato-men of the same district called for 1,500 at Houlton, 2,500 at Presque Isle. Last year's importation of harvesters—1,400 of them POW's—had proved quite inadequate for the Central Aroostook area.

For 1945 the trouble rested with the military. The farmers had obtained their "certificates of need" from the War Manpower Commission and the Agricultural Extension Service—but there the matter stalled. It stalled long and hard. Questions of housing the prisoners arose. The Geneva Convention is particular about these things; approval to establish the camps had to come from the uppermost Army brackets, where investigation-processes are slow and any action except combat is rarely rapid.

It was then that Mr. Fellows was appealed to, and there that he intervened. The result is that the Army's Provost Marshal General, Major General Archer L. Lerch, announces:

"Approval in the use of housing for prisoners-of-war at the points listed has been granted, and you may be assured that every effort will be made by the War Department to establish prisoner-of-war camps at these points as expeditiously as possible. It is believed, therefore, that sufficient prisoner-of-war labor will be available for the harvesting and processing of the pea and potato crops in Aroostook County."

Whether Mr. Fellows' intervention was made with a pep-talk or a shotgun is beyond guessing. And it doesn't matter. This is one of the times when the end justifies the means.

2 - Meredith C. Wilson, Aug. 21, 1945

Organized transportation is essential to the success of this project largely because the Army's installations have been used as camps since. This makes it impossible for farmers needing the workers to transport, particularly due to the distances and in part due to the confusion certain to result from individual employers attempting to secure such a large number of workers from one camp without careful organization. After point the army has indicated its desire that an organized transportation program be used in order that the project be as systematically handled as possible and the work output of prisoners not be curtailed by disorganization in the transportation aspects of this project.

Mr. Meredith C. Wilson

Deputy Director of Extension

Farm Labor Program

Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Wilson:

In order that you may be fully informed of all matters pertaining to the prisoner of war problem in Aroostook County I am forwarding the enclosed materials and wish to explain a few additional details. You are aware that a request was made early last spring for 4,000 prisoners of war for the Maine potato harvest and that a total of 2700 has since been allocated. In that request it was indicated that the distribution desired in Aroostook was approximately 2500 in the Presque Isle area and 1500 at Houlton. The final decision made by the Army was to locate 700 at Presque Isle, 1700 at Houlton and, at our request, 300 at Bangor. The reason for this distribution was the Army's wish to fully utilize facilities available at their base camp at Houlton. It has also been indicated that the facilities at the airbase at Presque Isle would not accommodate more than 900. It should be explained here that the Presque Isle camp is a tent camp located at the airbase. It was necessary to accept this distribution because it is impractical to require growers to build additional camps for such a short harvest season.

On August 2 a meeting of the Aroostook County Wage Committee was held to determine the prevailing wage for Aroostook County. This wage was determined and later certified by Director Deering as 17 cents per barrel. On August 13 the State U.S.D.A. Board recommended to Colonel Buie that a harvest wage ceiling of 18 cents per barrel be established. This ceiling has been established and announced. The Aroostook Farm Bureau Labor Association, which was established in 1944 to assist farmers and the army in making prisoners available, has proceeded on the assumption that prisoners would be available at costs not exceeding those paid civilians and at least within the legal wage established. Traffic, accounting, and supervisory personnel has already been set up at Houlton and Presque Isle and approximately 80 trucks have been hired to transport these workers.

2- Meredith C. Wilson, Aug. 31, 1945

Organized transportation is essential to the success of this project largely because the Army's installations have been used as camp sites. This makes it impossible for farmers needing the workers to transport, particularly due to the distance and in part due to the confusion certain to result from individual employers attempting to secure such a large number of workers from one camp without careful organization. On this latter point the army has indicated its desire that an organized transportation program be used in order that the project be as systematically handled as possible and the work output of prisoners not be curtailed by disorganization in the transportation aspects of this project.

On August 18 I wrote Colonel Phelps certifying to the prevailing wage and suggesting a wage distribution that appeared to be practical and within the wage ceiling program. A copy of this letter is attached. In conversation with him on August 24 I explained that if transportation costs actually did not equal the 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per barrel spread suggested in my letter, the association would renegotiate the contract and transfer to the army any profits which had resulted from its transportation program. Incidentally it would seem possible that if excellent weather conditions prevail and the daily production of prisoners can be increased over that of last year the transportation spread might be reduced to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per barrel. However, the Association could not undertake this program at a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ spread without being assured of financial support in the event that rainy weather or low prisoner output were encountered.

On August 27 I was notified by Colonel Phelps that he had been informed by the First Service Command that my suggested wage distribution was not acceptable to the Army. He indicated that his information was that the Army would require the Association to pay 17¢ and would allow the standard transportation credit which, in this project, will equal about 1/2¢ per barrel. I immediately called Major Johnson, First Service Command, Boston and explained this problem to him. From his conversation it was my understanding that this matter had been referred to the office of the Provost Marshall General in Washington and that the First Service Command received its instructions from a Colonel Briller and that those were that the Association must pay the Army 17 cents.

You will note in my letter to Colonel Phelps of August 18 that the prevailing rates indicated were explained as those not requiring further expenditures on the part of the employer. In view of the fact that the Army had interpreted this as the wage to which it was entitled, Director Desiring on August 23, forwarded to the First Service Command an interpretation of the prevailing wage for workers requiring transportation (see attached copy of wire). Attached also is a copy of General Wyles' wire of August 29 in which he indicates

3- Meredith C. Wilson, Aug. 31, 1945

The Army's unwillingness to accept a prevailing wage involving transportation.

On August 29 this matter was called to the attention of the Farm Labor Association and, it is my understanding, was later referred to Senator Brewster. On that date I also discussed it with W.C. Holley, Office of Labor, and with you by phone. On August 30 the problem was discussed with the Agricultural Council in session at Orono and was presented to the meeting of potato growers at Bangor today. Mr. Fred Mitter also called Secretary Anderson's office and explained this matter to Mr. Dodd.

I believe it important that our position here be understood by all concerned. A ceiling wage of 18 cents has been legally established and I believe can be maintained although we are confronted with a serious shortage that is sufficiently serious without the further complications introduced by the Army. Our farm labor agents are attempting to meet requests for 11,500 workers with only about 6,500 laborers known to be available for placement by us. Digging is already underway in a few instances and must start on a large scale within a week. Both in 1943 and 1944 we have been confronted with a serious harvest labor situation in our potato areas. You are aware that in 1943 it was necessary to move approximately 800 troops into Croostock under orders. With these and all other sources completely exhausted thousands of barrels of potatoes were either not dug at all or froze before they could be harvested and broke down later in storage. In 1944 with drought conditions and a low yield we lost control of the program in the Central Croostock area, and wages pyramided as high as 25 cents per barrel toward the last of the season. In the Houlton area the harvest extended to November 1st when it should have terminated by October 15 but practically no food was lost.

The labor situation this fall is the worst that we have encountered and we are making every effort to bring it to a practical solution. You are aware that we are recruiting in Canada, in southern states, and in Southern Maine cities. The position taken by the Army appears ridiculous to potato growers and officials here and if not altered will certainly attract a lot of adverse public criticism. With uncontrolled farm labor the harvest wage has already increased from a prevailing wage of 9 cents without board and room in 1941 to the 1945 figure of 17 cents. During much of this time a ceiling price has existed on the potatoes which the farmer sells. Furthermore the Army has found it necessary on several occasions to requisition all available supplies in this area at these prices. Therefore, the Army's insistence on the stand that it can bid the wage up two cents above 1944 and that it need not recognize the ceiling wage established is a position that is difficult to understand.

4- Meredith C. Wilson, Aug. 31, 1945

The Army's answer to the transportation refund is that this policy has applied to the lumber industry and is equally applicable to agriculture. The point overlooked here, is the fact that pulp cutting and other industrial wages have been controlled through this war by War Labor Board ceilings while agricultural wages have not. In this instance the Army is attempting to: First, to use and further exaggerate the unreasonable position it took in 1944 regarding this wage problem. As a result that year it was necessary for the farm labor program to subsidize the transportation in order to prevent a serious wage situation from developing. Second, it is taking advantage of the 24 rise which occurred in 1944 wages largely because growers and their government could not meet the labor needs of the area and wage bidding resulted. If this program goes into effect on the basis which the Army now proposes and without government subsidy of transportation the wage in Arcoo took is certain to increase materially and may well cost growers approximately a million dollars more than is necessary.

Very truly yours,

Smith C. McIntire
State Supervisor
Emergency Farm Labor

SCM:WJ

Enclosures

The labor situation this fall is the worst that we have encountered and we are making every effort to bring it to a practical solution. You are aware that we are recruiting in Canada, in the states, and in Southern Maine cities. The position taken by the Army appears ridiculous to potato growers and officials here and it not altered will certainly attract a lot of adverse public criticism. With uncontrolled farm labor the harvest wage has already increased from a prevailing wage of 9 cents without board and room in 1941 to the 1945 figure of 17 cents. During much of this time a ceiling price has existed on the potatoes which the farmer sells. Furthermore the Army has found it necessary on several occasions to requisition all available supplies in this area at these prices. Therefore, the Army's insistence on the stand that it can bid the wage up two cents above 1944 and that it need not recognize the ceiling wage established in a position that is difficult to understand.

Penalty

Need 5,000 Men In Potato Fields

ORONO, Sept. 3 (AP)—Aroostook county, expecting its second largest potato yield in history, needs 3,000 to 5,000 more workers to harvest the crop before freezing weather, farm labor supervisor Smith C. McIntire of the Maine Agricultural Extension service said today.

The crop has been estimated at 65,000,000 bushels. Maine's all-time potato high was its 72,000,000 bushel yield of 1943.

McIntire conferred at Boston with the Massachusetts farm labor

Potato Fields—Page 2

Potato Fields

Continued from the First Page

supervisor and agricultural board officials on prospecting for recruiting workers from unemployed industrial groups.

Aroostook farmers already have placed orders with the farm labor program for 11,500 workers for the harvest period from about Sept. 10 to October 15. The Extension service has recruited as workers, about 6,000 southerners, prisoners of war, and other groups. Growers have expressed a hope that Maine residents now outside the state would return for the harvest to reinforce workers already on hand.

The harvest will require about 40,000 local and imported workers, the Extension service said.

Sept 15, 1945

The WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND

Tm. Reg. U. S. Pat.

By DREW PEARSON

(Lt. Col. Robert S. Allen Now on Active Service with Army)

Washington.—Livewire Republican Senator Ralph Brewster of Maine recently telephoned hard-working Assistant Secretary of Labor Carl Moran, also from Maine, but a Democrat.

"Portland is among the nine distress cities of the country," Senator Brewster reminded Moran. "As you know, Portland shipyard workers have been dismissed from their jobs wholesale. Meanwhile, farmers up in Aroostook County can't get anyone to bring in their potatoes. What can you do about it?"

"What are they paying for farm labor in Aroostook County," asked the Assistant Secretary of Labor; "still four cents?"

"No," replied the Senator from Maine, "there's a guaranteed wage of \$12 a day."

Assistant Secretary Moran said he would do his best to switch some workers up to the potato farms. However, he might well have replied that the Labor Department was that in name only and that it actually had almost nothing to do with labor.

For the fact is that, under Miss Perkins, the Labor Department was stripped of most of its labor duties. The War Labor Board is separate and independent, and, most important of all, the U. S. Employment Service is under the War Manpower Commission. Thus, Assistant Secretary of Labor Moran had to turn to an outside agency, the U. S. Employment Service, to try to get discharged shipyard workers to help harvest the Aroostook potato crop.

This, in turn, has brought out another difficulty affecting not merely Maine but the entire nation. Most war workers, drawing \$1 to \$2 an hour plus overtime and bonuses, don't want to go back to the farm and farm wages. The labor shortage on the farms, even after V-J Day, is acute as ever. Farm wages are higher than ever, though still a long way from shipyard and aviation factory pay. So, somehow or other, either farm wages must go up, or war workers must go back to less money on the farm. In the former case, the farmers will have to get more for their crops, which, of course, means a higher cost of living in the city.

Bangor Daily News
Sept 20, 1945

Aroostook Farmers Out On Limb Due To Shortage Of Farm Labor

Over two hundred Aroostook farmers are out on a limb and the farm labor program of the Maine Agricultural Extension service is out on the limb with them because of the failure of the Army to furnish the number of prisoners of war promised for the potato harvest, says Smith C. McIntire, Orono, supervisor of the farm labor program.

500 SHORT

Farmers requested over 4500 prisoners, and labor officials pared these requests and substituted other imported workers and set up a long waiting list of employers in an attempt to fit the 2400 prisoners of war assured Aroostook into the harvest labor puzzle. With digging under way these crews must be further reduced and some growers must go without, because the Army is 500 short of the number of prisoners of war promised.

In May McIntire had requested 4600 prisoners of war to work in Aroostook potato fields this fall, and in July, Col. G. M. Roddy, representing the First Service Command, assured him that 2,700 would be made available, 300 at Bangor for central Maine and 1700 at Houlton and 700 at Presque Isle for Aroostook.

Contracts were made with farmers on that basis. The farmers' association organized to meet Army payroll and security guarantee requirements has already obtained from growers \$36 for each prisoner expected and has made arrangements for their transportation to and from work. On September 15 McIntire was notified that only 1300 prisoners will be available at Houlton and 625 at Presque Isle. He at once took the matter up with the First Service Command headquarters officials and with Bernard Joy, chief of the recruitment and placement division, extension service, and W. C. Holley, chief of the Office of Labor, United States Department of Agriculture. They have been in consultation with the office of the provost marshal general of the U. S. Army, but as yet no definite assurance has been received in Maine that the total number of prisoners promised will be forth coming. Meantime 200 farmers and Mr. McIntire are out on the limb and the potatoes are awaiting harvest.

Seek Authority For Transfer Of 600 POW's To Potato Fields

PRESQUE ISLE, Me., Oct. 5 (AP) — U. S. Rep. Frank Fellows (R-Me.) was requested tonight by State Agriculture Commissioner A. K. Gardner to seek War Department authority for release of 600 more prisoners of war from Maine camps to "save Aroostook's potato crop, now about half dug."

70,000 ACRES

Gardner, who said approximately 70,000 acres of potatoes remained to be harvested in Aroostook before the heavy frosts, wired Fellows, who represents Maine's Third Congressional district, of which Aroostook is a large part, that the extra POW's were "urgently needed for potato picking."

Gardner said the POW's currently were cutting pulpwood at Princeton, Washington county, and Seboomook and Spencer Lake, both in Somerset county.

Governor Horace A. Hildreth was scheduled to join Fellows and U. S. Senator Owen Brewster (R-Me) Monday in Washington for a conference with the War Department to seek the services of that additional number of POW's.

Gardner said the First Service Command in Boston had advised it had no authority to transfer the POW's for agricultural work.

He said there were 1900 POW's now working in Aroostook potato fields.

"But the growers need a lot of extra pickers quickly," he said, "because they have only a short time to get out from under."

He said "quite a few" Canadian pickers had quit the fields recently, "presumably because they got sick of the work and wanted to go back home."

The ceiling pay for pickers is 18 cents a barrel, he said.

FARM WAGE STABILIZATION

Recently Donald Rush and O. K. Wheatley of the Wage Stabilization Division held four meetings in Aroostook County to discuss agricultural wage ceilings. The attendance at the meetings was small, but the points brought out by Mr. Rush and Mr. Wheatley follow the article in last June's farm Bureau News.

The present law states that any agricultural worker may be paid up to a maximum rate of \$2,400 per year. Any higher pay must be approved by the War Food Administrator. The method of computing the amount paid is to take the actual cash wage received by a worker and add to it the cash value of such privileges or bonuses as room and board, rent, fuel, milk or potatoes. The sum of these constitutes the actual wages paid.

The expression "rate of \$2,400 per year" means approximately \$200 per month, or \$46 per week, or \$7.70 per day or 85 cents per hour, or an equivalent piece rate work. For instance, if it were determined that 15 cents per barrel was the average rate, a picker who picked one hundred barrels per day could earn \$15 per day and still be within the law.

The penalty for paying wages in excess of \$2,400 per year is a \$1,000.00 fine and/or one year in jail, and the employer can not deduct such wages as are paid in excess of ceiling from his income tax returns.

This year there is no period of the year when a worker can be paid above the per day rate without violating the act unless approval from the Director of Labor, War Food Administration, Washington, D. C., is secured. Bonuses and land for potatoes, etc., should not be paid unless they have been paid previous to 1943 or until approval has been secured.

It is generally believed that many Aroostook farmers are breaking this wage ceiling requirement, and the chances are that the situation may be even worse by fall. Considerable sentiment is being expressed by farmers and others interested in the Aroostook potato industry that responsible officials should under take such action as is necessary to see that this ceiling is maintained or that a new ceiling is established and vigorously enforced. The director of the Office of Labor may issue specific wage ceiling regulations relative to the area and to particular jobs within the area. He may also establish state

(Continued on page 2)

FARM WAGE STABILIZATION

(Continued from page 1)

wage boards charged with the responsibility of recommending specific ceilings for particular operations, and with the general administration of a ceiling order.

The Maine Extension Service is not directly interested in farm wages as such, except as they affect the operation of a labor program. Unquestionably an unstable wage rate tends to reduce the efficiency of labor and results in a wasteful and excessive worker turn-over. Worker uncertainty and lack of stability tend to complicate the whole labor picture. Extension further believes that Aroostook farmers are entitled to know the arguments both for and against the establishment of a wage board empowered to administer a wage ceiling order.

Mr. Rush and Mr. Wheatley discussed the possibilities of a specific wage ceiling for picking potatoes, loading potatoes, truck driving, and other harvesting operations. They pointed out that farmers who wish to exceed the pay rate should apply to the War Food Administrator, Washington, at once.

The arguments commonly advanced in favor of wage board and enforcement of a wage order are as follows:—

1. It would reduce "pirating" of labor, spiralling of wages and inefficient utilization of labor.

2. Inasmuch as potato shippers are already subject to wage ceilings, it is only fair that farm wages are likewise placed under control. This is true, since both shippers and growers compete for the same labor force. Shippers can not legally meet farmer wage levels.

3. Potato prices are determined by floor and ceiling regulations which do not take into account a constantly increasing wage level. Consequently a potato support price which is fixed means little unless some of the production costs are also fixed.

4. The operator who has ample money can outbid the farmer who does not, and this penalizes the grower with insufficient capital.

5. It would mean that the costs of growing potatoes would be more reasonable and at the same time labor would be getting a wage which is perfectly fair and just.

6. This would tend to keep down inflation.

The arguments commonly advanced against the establishment of a wage order are as follows:—

1. The job of fairly administering such a program is a rather complicated system of check-up.

2. Determination of variation from a wage order for picking for such things as low yields and weedy fields may be complicated but is not extremely difficult.

3. A wage order even with a range would penalize growers in these areas of the potato section who normally pay wages somewhat lower than those in central Aroostook. The wages would probably rise automatically to ceiling, which would then become the floor as well as the ceiling.

4. Farmers commonly give special privileges such as bonuses or conveniences which, while not made in cash, do represent real earnings. These would further complicate wage determination.

5. The most satisfactory means of truly stabilizing wages is to have enough labor available so that the supply approximates the

Deport Canadians In Labor Piracy

PRESQUE ISLE, Sept. 14—Wallace H. Elliptt, executive officer, Maine USDA Wage Board, Presque Isle office advised today that: special agents of the United States Department of Agriculture operating in the Fort Kent area yesterday in company with officers of the U. S. Immigration Border Patrol apprehended five Canadians for violating the wage ceiling established for potato pickers.

These five men who had been imported from the Quebec province to assist in harvesting this year's potato crop had been assigned to Henry Dumais of Frenchville by the farm labor representative. Shortly after arriving at the home of Dumais the men were approached by Joseph Chasse of Fort Fairfield and were hired by him to work at Fort Fairfield for 18 cents per barrel of potatoes picked and in addition were given the offer of free board and room. The work cards of the Canadians were taken from them by officers of the Immigration Border Patrol and the men were sent back to Canada. Chasse's action for alleged pirating of this labor subjects him to possible prosecution under the wage ceiling regulation covering such infraction for which the penalty is a \$1000 fine a year in jail or both.

Camp Houlton, Maine
October, 1945

177

The Maine Disease

The reflections of a professionally and
habitually tired, almost always pessimistic
species, primarily known as PW, about his
temporarily assigned, daily duties in the
Maine potato fields.

A thousand diseases as science will tell
Have kept bothering us with pain.
But none was so horrible, tormenting like hell
As the Potato Disease of Maine

It starts very early and suddenly
Before the milkman comes round.
It grabs you in bed unerringly
With the siren' terrible sound.

You're dreaming of a moon-bathed beach down South,
Of Tangos, champagne, and silvery palms,
Of passionate words from the half open mouth
Of a hotblooded woman you hold in your arms.

Or maybe, you planned a mountain trip
In your dreams, of course, I mean
With skies, rope, and a ration kit,
And a gorgeous, curvesome Jane.

Or you just get out of a taxi car
One Forty-Second Street,
To steer yourself to the Astor Bar
And get yourself some meat.

You might stroll down the Champs Elysees,
Takin' a gander here and there.
And look at Parisian dolls by the way
To find out what makes 'em so rare.

Whatever you'll do, bud, you'll be waked
At 4 a.m. on the tick
By the frightful image, the truth the naked
Of thirty-six barrels to pick.

Instead of the maid (think she was a brunette)
Who used to prepare your bath
You now take a shower, cold and wet,
And hop in your pants in a wrath.

There is no valet to serve you the tea,
No Sports news in the Daily Sun,
No sugar to sweeten ersatz coffee.
Just a mess sarge to keep you on the run.

- 2 -

Then the sirens again. Can they never stop?
Fall in for head count, that means
You stand at attention from toe to top,
And forgotten are your dreams.

You shiver slightly as there is some rain
(You might not go out, after all!?)
You begin, just a little, to hope again
Until your number they call.

You're mounting a truck, no Buick, to be sure
And take off for the wide open road.
With many a kick in the ___ you tour.
The United States as a happy load.

The truck then stops, and so does the rain.
How else could it ever be?
The Lumber State now is lifting its vain,
And you exclaim "Oh how I love thee".

Your hands are remarkably sore, though gloved,
But you earnestly give 'em the works.
Nose down on the earth, the dearly beloved,
For: goldbricking is only for jerks.

Four basket's one barrel, a barrell two cents.
Let's go, fellas, don't sham fatigue!
You mean that show here don't never make sense.
Says I: step on it, no work, no eat.

Your back hurts, and you have liquid knees.
So what, old man, who cares?
In your bean are hundreds of bumblebees;
In broad daylight you begin to see mares.

That thingamajig that digs the crop
Is called a potato digger.
The sun comes out. You're getting hot,
And you're getting weak and weaker.

It's almost noon so let's finish that row
Of solonum tuberosum.
Once more you force yourself to a bow
And pick up the last potatum.

Then you drag yourself to the nearest ditch
With all you've got in reserve,
Enjoy a bite of Baloney sandwich,
And a home-rolled but to steady your nerve.

You throw half a glance at the farmer's pride,
A tomato of seventeen springs
But maliciously from the other side
A be-rifled MP at you grins.

- 3 -

Then you look at yourself and say heaven's sake,
I'm covered all over with mud.
And you figure what sort of appearance you'd made
At the Macombo, Ritz, or Bachelor's Club.

While your thoughts were astray, and pleasant ideas
Have helped you recover a bit
The aforesaid tomato with pops appears,
And again - you begin to dig.

Thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-five and a half,
And fin'ly you are done.
Thirty-six, the appointed quota you have.
And the time to return has come.

Truck, landscape, kicks, and the rest of it
With patience again you stand.
Some hope props up, just a little bit
That, tomorrow, rain might pour down on the land.

You're in the stockade to be counted again.
You eat supper, though don't know what.
You take a shower thinking it's rain.
And your head is terribly hot.

Then meditatively you loose yourself
In thoughts that are getting confused.
You think you might take a book from the shelf.
You might, but - hell, what's the use?

You would, maybe, like a cigarette,
But that's something you haven't got.
Should you listen to an A-B-C chansonette?
And wouldn't that be the top?!

Sure, you would if there were not that doggone pain
In the antipode of your belly,
And if your legs were not stiff as a cane,
And hurting you muchy velly.

So you just sit and gaze, and sometimes you curse
(You can because ladies are absent)
You curse some more, 'cause your back gets worse
With no trace of Park Avenue - accent.

You discuss the aspects of tomorrow's day,
And think of that farmer dolly.
Then you turn off the lights and hit the hay,
County thirty-six barrels - Oh golly !!!

Editorial**THE ARCOOSTOOK REPUBLICAN****Thursday, Oct. 25, 1945**

- - - -

A GOOD JOB WELL DONE

This week has seen the completion of most of the harvesting operations in Arcostook County.

Despite a terrific headache over labor shortages and many days of rainy weather, the job has been finished before the freeze, and the crop has been saved. The Arcostook farmer has again outwitted the elements (wind and weather), and has also solved his material problems of labor. In the absence of labor from local sources, County farmers with the aid of the Extension Service and County Farm Bureau imported huge groups of workers. The farmer used his own resourcefulness to house and feed the crews, and bent himself to accomplish the job of digging and picking with workers, some of whom had never picked a potato before. He is to be congratulated on a good job well done.

Editorial

HOULTON PIONEER TIMES

Thurs. Sept. 27, 1945

THOUGHTS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

That the farm labor office will go to almost any ends to keep potato pickers at their job was demonstrated this week when an employee spent almost a whole day finding a home for a three year old tot from down state whose mother, an adept picker, was working on a farm without accomodations for the youngster. It was a case of finding a custodian for the child if the mother was to keep on her job. The home was found, the mother is still picking and the farmer-employer is happy about the whole thing.

INTERNATIONALISM IN MAINE POTATO FIELDS

Aroostook County in Northeastern Maine is the source of potatoes for a great many people since here in this relatively small but intensively cultivated area is produced annually about one out of every ten bushels of potatoes grown in the United States. Potatoes in either fresh or dehydrated form move from Aroostook to nearly all states east of the Rockies, to all the battlefields of Europe, and to the newly freed civilians of Western and Southern Europe.

Aroostook farmers have long known how to grow bumper crops of potatoes. By the grace of an abundant rainfall and ample fertilizer applications the yield of potatoes per acre for this county leads all other producing sections. Aroostook farmers, during the past few years, like farmers the nation over, have been producing food under difficulties--fertilizer has been scarce; machinery parts and replacements difficult to locate; local labor for peak needs nonexistent. However, in 1944 the fertilizer was found and the potatoes were planted and cared for during the season. It was during the fall months of September and October that the affairs of the Aroostook farmer moved rapidly to a climax. During about a six weeks' period in late September and October the potato crop representing millions of dollars of investment, countless hours of arduous toil, and many many pounds of valuable foodstuff had to be moved from the soil and into storage for winter shipment. Freezing weather and snow coming as they do in the latter part of October constitute a complete and final deadline to the year's harvesting operations. It was labor, then, which was the determinant as to whether or not the job would be completed.

Potato harvest in Aroostook especially in war time is an effort which calls on all the labor resources of the area. Men, women and children both from the towns and from the farms take part in the harvest. It is as complete a mobilization of the population of an area as can be imagined. Schools are closed so that the children and the teachers too can work. Clerks from stores, soldiers from local air bases, carpenters, plumbers, lumbermen, and so on down through the normal population, all help. The harvest job requiring the largest amount of labor is that of picking the potatoes. All potatoes have to be picked-up from the ground by hand, placed in baskets, and then dumped in barrels. This is an operation which women and children as well as men can do successfully.

However, the 1944 harvest in spite of complete utilization of local labor could not be completed with the labor supply present within the potato area. Foreign labor had to be brought into Aroostook in order to get the crop into storage for the winter.

The Maine Extension Service, a field educational organization, which has had the confidence of Maine farmers for a good many years was the logical agency to handle the labor program in Maine. The War Food Administration, Office of Labor, was the agency designated to handle the recruiting and transportation of workers. These two organizations worked together very closely to solve the labor problem of the potato area. No solution of such

a problem can be completed effectively, but yet it is generally agreed that in 1944 the potatoes were harvested without too much trouble and with a minimum of loss.

A cosmopolitan group of workers helped harvest Maine's potato crop. Harvest hands were secured from the hill country of eastern Kentucky, from the battlefields of western Europe, from the tropical island of Jamaica, from the Canadian Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick, and from Florida. These workers were all moved to Maine at governmental expense, guaranteed (for free labor) a certain minimum number of work days, and assured (free labor only) the going rate of pay. This harvest force was a curious conglomeration of nationalities, backgrounds and interests. Yet the harvest force was reasonably efficient—it accomplished its mission.

Transplanting 1400 people (one-third of whom were girls and women) from the hills of eastern Kentucky into northern Maine even for a short period of five or six weeks creates many minor social problems which are sometimes amusing, sometimes serious but always very real to both the Kentuckian and to the Maine farmer. One preacher from the hill country came to Aroostook with his family to pick potatoes. Purely on a chance basis he was assigned to a Seven-Day Adventist. The Maine farmer worked on Sunday. The Kentuckian was violently opposed to Sunday work. This conflict between ideologies while amusing to outsiders was a critical situation as far as the individuals in the case were concerned. The Extension Service was called on to adjust hundreds of such cases, and attempted to keep both the farmer and the worker reasonably happy. The Kentuckians were housed with the Maine farmer—lived in his home, ate at his table, and in one case at least—married his daughter. These workers were transported at government expense with meals furnished en route. The worker was guaranteed prevailing wages, opportunity to work for 75 percent of the time he was in Maine, and free medical care.

In general both the Kentuckians and the Maine farmers were satisfied. The Kentuckians made good money; the farmer had his potatoes picked. Friendships were made which will continue. Kentuckians are going to be interested in getting back to Maine again; Maine farmers will want to see them.

Approximately 1,400 prisoners of war from the battlefields of Western Europe helped Aroostook farmers harvest their 1944 potato crop. These German prisoners stationed at the Houlton prison camp were daily transported from the base to the potato field and back to the base again at night. The Maine Extension Service had the job of organizing a transportation system which would place the prisoners on the farm as early as possible in the morning and get him back to the compound within a 12 hour period of time. Such a transportation system involved a great deal of organization and very close supervision.

Prisoners of war were perhaps the most satisfactory single source of imported labor used in Aroostook during the past fall. They were reliable inasmuch as they had no opportunity to wander off over night. They involved no worry or expense in housing. They picked the fields clean and they were no discipline problem for the farmer. The production per prisoner was relatively low but crews were large enough to allow the harvesting of as many potatoes per day as the farmer could handle. Inasmuch as the prisoners were transported in some cases as far as 30 to 35 miles from the camp it meant that the working day of such crews was relatively short. The success of this

program was due primarily to a very sympathetic cooperation on the part of Army officials and a highly organized transportation system.

The Dominion Government in Ottawa under negotiations with the War Food Administration in Washington released French Canadians from the Provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick for the Maine potato harvest. About 1,404 men and women came into Maine during the harvesting period. They were, almost without exception, French speaking and this language difference caused some difficulty since it is hard to reach an agreement between employer and employee when one cannot understand what the other is saying. Maine farmers greatly appreciated the willingness of Canadian officials to help meet the labor needs of the Aroostook potato area.

One group of Canadians was of special interest. A group of about 100 college men from Oka College and from the College of St. Anne were housed together in a camp in Caribou, Maine. These boys brought their own cooks with them and lived together in an armory under W.F.A. supervision. Their weekly Saturday night dances were quite an institution in Caribou. They enjoyed the experience and made a considerable contribution to the potato harvest.

Two small camps of Jamaicans were established in Aroostook for the harvest period. These able-bodied, mature men residents of the tropical island of Jamaica adapted themselves to Maine climate and Maine weather very well. Each group had the clinical services of a nurse, native Jamaican cooks, and a recreational program.

The Aroostook area having no colored population whatsoever, took a great deal of interest in these Negro men from Jamaica. The Jamaicans are hard, serious workers once they realize there is an opportunity to make money. They have been quick to grasp the value of a dollar bill and are anxious to make as much money to take home as possible.

A small group of Florida Negroes were transported to Aroostook to assist in the potato harvest. This was one of the regular migratory crews that work up along the Atlantic seaboard following the potato crop from state to state. Since this crew of 63 workers were professional potato pickers, they did a fine piece of work for those farmers for whom they worked.

Approximately 5,000 workers were made available to the farmers of the Maine potato area. These workers like any group were good, bad, or indifferent dependent upon the individuals, yet the sum of their efforts meant that millions of bushels of potatoes that would have otherwise been lost are now safe in storage for use this winter. The utilization of this mixture of different kinds of labor by Maine farmers has not only harvested an important crop but it has also broadened the horizons of the potato growers of the area. Already here is some evidence to indicate that farmers are becoming more tolerant, more broad-minded. This gain while very real and important is difficult to appraise or evaluate.

Prepared by: Winthrop C. Libby, Professor
of Agronomy and Agricultural Engineering,
University of Maine

For: "The Eleusis of Chi Omega"
February 1945 issue.

Weathering World War Dramatic Episode In Aroostook's Career



FARM LABOR LEADERS tackle Aroostook potato harvest problems. (Left to right) G. A. McLaughlin, Extension Farm Management specialist and recruitment agent in the Kentucky area; Smith C. McIntire, State supervisor of farm labor; Verne C. Beverly, Aroostook Central District County Agent; W. C. Libby, U. of M. professor of agronomy and assistant State supervisor State farm labor.

By Eleanor B. Stone

Quoting from a recent yearbook of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Richard A. Hebert, editor of the Maine Publicity Bureau's new pocket-size magazine "The Pine Cone" defines "soil" as "that thin film between earth and heaven by which men live." This apt definition is contained in a very fine article on Aroostook and the Potato Industry in which the writer points out the salient fact that from this same "thin film" up in that far northeastern outpost of the nation, potato growers for more than half a century have produced wealth greater than from any other farming county but one in the United States.

Therein lies one of the most dramatic and swift-moving chapters in the history of Maine's development—an epic chapter brought to a grand climax in the events of the past three years when the farmers of Aroostook County, faced by acute shortages in labor and farm equipment, responded to the nation's wartime need for increased food production by raising potato crops far exceeding any of a previous year.

There is some peculiar quality to the soil of Aroostook—at least the soil of all that section in the vicinity of the St. John river and its tributaries which is the nucleus of the potato-growing area—a uniform quality the potato just naturally takes to and thrives mightily on. It looks different from the soil we downstate grub about in. No streaks of dark and light—just a sort of all-over beige color, appearing of a similar consistency everywhere. Neither too sandy nor too clayey.

Over the Top
In order to get a true picture of the vastness of Maine's potato em-

pire and its unique physical characteristics take a trip from Bangor to Presque Isle via the Northeast Airline—preferably in harvest time. You take off from the Bangor airport and as you climb into the clouds Bangor sprawls below—a cluster of varicolored toy buildings and streets then vanishes behind and out of the picture as the earth recedes gradually taking on the look of a contour map in greens and browns. From your vantage point 3,000 feet sky-high you note with interest the University and campus on its tiny island, bounded on either side by the winding silver ribbon-like rivers of Sullwater and the Penobscot.

Countryside Characteristics

A stranger is always surprised at the new, up-to-date and lively aspect of the towns along the highway, especially Mars Hill with the dominant hill looming up just beyond. Its ultra wide main street and low-built business blocks. The trackside potato houses and prosperous looking farm buildings along the highway, each with its prominent barn, the queer-built potato houses and large potato fields adjacent, give ample evidence that here, indeed, is Aroostook the land of the super-potato and that there's gold in them that hills.

Anticipating an even greater expansion in Aroostook's potato output the growers are building bigger and better houses for storage on the farms, well below the frost line insulated, flanked with thick cement walls and provided with wide cement driveways, affording easy access for trucks at any time of year.

Late in the fall the writer saw one such modern storage house in process of construction just outside Caribou. Phil Jacobs, the owner, said that when finished it would have a storage capacity of 15,000 barrels. This model is a great improvement on the old-type sod-sided affairs that resembles in appearance, the cyclone cellar of the mid-west prairie farm.

While the rich and productive virgin soil of the northeast figures largely in the success of the annual potato crop there are other factors to consider. One is weather. The most weather-conscious folks in all New England live in Aroostook.

Take harvest time, for instance, which generally starts about September 15 and lasts with luck up to the middle of October—generally later. Comes a spell of rainy weather work in the field sicks up the farmer becomes nervous and jittery and the itinerant worker carelessly, sponging on edge, restless and dissatisfied. Again a severe and prolonged freeze may prove disastrous to the crop still in the ground. A nerve-racking business for everybody concerned which includes the entire population because the fortunes of a great many people depend on the outcome of The Crop.

Tomorrow the skies clear, the sun shines and everybody assumes a happy smile. Everybody talks potatoes, thinks and dreams potatoes—Green Mountains, Katahdins, Chipewas and Sebagoes. The very air is charged with harvest excitement and the Aroostook; that blue cone on the left Mt. Katahdin.

In case the plane does not stop at Houlton you arrive at the Presque Isle airport all too soon and you congratulate yourself in having been spared a several hour train ride or still longer and more tedious travel by bus. You made it by plane today in 31 minutes. Seventy-five years ago when Aroostook was a real frontier you'd have arrived at your destination only after a wearisome hazardous ten-day journey through the wilderness by stagecoach!

To get a clear-range slant on the very heart of the Aroostook potato country you can drive—now that gas again flows freely—along the U. S. Highway Route 1 which enters Maine at Kittery and takes you 564 miles in a northeasterly direction straight to Fort Kent on the St. John and the Canadian border.



THE "TRACTORETTE" did the work of a man on the farm front during the three wartime years when 23,500 boys and girls were mobilized for work in the potato-fields during planting and harvest time. Meet Glenda Akeley, age 17, driving the tractor for her father on their 275-acre farm in Chapman.

from the Province of Quebec, who cleared land enough to plant vegetables for themselves and forage for the horses of the workmen. This was during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Everywhere along the valley of the St. John, land was found to be fabulously rich and productive and most especially suited to potato-growing.

Word spread and soon English-speaking New Englanders came to seek their fortune in the Maine wilderness to clear forestland and to build settlements.

As fast as land could be cleared potatoes were planted. It was but a little more than a century ago, the year 1831 to be exact, that Houlton, Aroostook's oldest town and county seat, was incorporated. Forty-one years later the first starch factory was built in Caribou. The forest was pushed back still farther and more fields planted to potatoes. Starch factories sprang up all over the south and eastern part of the county to absorb the surplus production and use up the small potatoes and culls. At one time 40 such factories were in operation. Today 30 per cent of the potato starch on the market in this country is manufactured in Maine.

It is a significant fact that Caribou will also go down in history as the site of the first distillery in Maine and the second in the United States for the manufacture of premium grade alcohol from potatoes. This

themselves approximately one cent a barrel to provide a fund to finance the Maine Potato Marketing Program, comprising national advertising, promotion and research administered by the Maine Potato Marketing Commission. From then on Aroostook potatoes began to go places.

Came the War

The conversion of the Maine farm plant to a wartime economy began eight months before the Pearl Harbor incident, when the Federal Government, in April of that year, asked the Maine Extension Service to place before the farm people the vital need for increased food production. Within the year Claude A. Wickard, then secretary of Agriculture, was assigned to Extension the responsibility for carrying forward on the farm front the general educational work in agriculture and home economics essential to the success of our wartime job.

This war emergency program as carried on in Maine, has been directed from Extension Administration headquarters in Winslow Hall on the State University campus at Orono. By April 23, 1943 the recruitment and placing of farm laborers for the production and harvesting of agricultural crops became by Act of Congress an additional and as it proved, a tremendous task, delegated to the Extension Service with the cooperation of the Office of Labor and War Food Administration. An emergency farm labor office was opened on the third floor of Winslow Hall and Smith C. McIntire, an energetic young man with a farm background, a University degree and a thorough business training, appointed by Director Arthur L. Deering to the job of supervising the State farm labor program.

Aroostook a Major Problem

The Aroostook County potato crop presented at this crisis the major problem. Farmers, confronted with the government demand for stepped-up production, found themselves seriously handicapped by a drastic labor shortage through reduction of experienced farm hands into the armed forces and additional losses to war industries; confronted also with the ever-increasing difficulty of obtaining new farm labor in equipment or necessary replacements.

At Presque Isle, "the nerve center" of the potato-growing area, a branch farm labor office was opened with Winthrop C. Libby, professor of Agronomy and head of the Department of Agricultural Engineering, "borrowed" from the University faculty to supervise farm labor activities in cooperation with Verne C. Beverly, the Aroostook County agent at the central office. In turn, they were aided by Houlton and Ft. Kent county agents and an emergency staff of farm labor assistants to cope with the many problems submitted by farmers in the agricultural teachers of

Two years later the Potato Tax law was passed. With this bill, potato growers and shippers taxed



AROOSTOOK BEST QUALITY SPUDS ready for shipment en route to your city, the corner grocery store and family dinner table. (Interior Ft. Fairfield potato house).

Aroostook County rallied to the cause, helping Extension leaders to set up and carry out a unified program in the interests of the potato growers. The work of these teacher-specialists cannot be too highly commended. Perhaps their most valuable effort was their intensive training of youth to take the place of men in service or elsewhere employed. They also served as placement agents for imported workers during harvest time.

Farm Youth Mobilized

During these past three years approximately 23,500 Aroostook boys and girls under 18 years of age worked in the potato fields during the harvest period, that figure representing from 70 to 80 per cent of the total school population in the upper seven grades. Beside the centralized farm machinery shops set up for the benefit of the farmer at Eagle Lake, Sherman, Fort Kent, Ashland, Mapleton, Washburn and other strategic points with expert mechanics in charge, many of the high schools had repair shops of their own under the direction of the Agri teacher. There the boys of high and junior high school age were taught to repair farm equipment. Girls, armed with the boys, were taught the fundamentals of potato raising, also roguing (weeding out diseased from healthy plants) and tuber-unit planting. Hundreds learned to run tractors and did an excellent job at it.

From 35,000 to 40,000 workers are required to harvest the potato crop which in normal times has averaged between 41 and 42 million bushels. The fall of 1943 found every member of the farm family who could drive or load a tractor or pack potatoes, out in the field from early morning until day's end—from Granddad to ten-year-old Johnny and Jane. Some of those smart Aroostook youngsters can do a swell job at picking too. Fifty barrels a day is not an uncommon

feat for a ten-year-old. Forty barrels for a ten-hour day is considered a good average for the adult worker. The average requirement for POW pickers was 36 barrels.

Record-smashing Crop of '43

To fill the demand for outside labor in 1943—year of the bumper crop—1650 workers were brought in from Kentucky, West Virginia, Arkansas and Oklahoma. A group of 620 Boy Scouts and their leaders from southern New England, also 330 Jamaicans and 91 Canadian students, helped harvest the all-time record crop of 73,000,000 bushels. With still-increasing shortage of farm labor a correspondingly greater number of outside workers were necessary to harvest the 1944 crop even though the output fell considerably short of the previous year's figures.

The year 1945 brought to the farmer still more serious problems including ever-increasing shortage of labor. To meet this situation over 6,000 outside workers were recruited through the office of farm labor. Canadians to the number of 4,055, Kentuckians, 1516, recruits from south and central Maine, 797 and 2,000 prisoners of war—most of whom, incidentally—and ironically enough—former fighting men of Rommel's once powerful army.

The securing and placement of these thousands of men and women, most of them new at the job, was a colossal undertaking and achievement on the part of farm labor officials. Except for the POWs, who were transported daily by truck to the fields from the Houlton and Presque Isle compounds, workers were hired on a live-in basis. To help solve the problem of housing the numerous French-Canadians, some building on the farm was furnished and made livable wherever possible, where groups could live independently and board themselves. With at least one English-speaking representative to a group, this device worked out well.

Advance planning, large-scale recruitment in Kentucky and Canada, the development of clearance procedures, policies of government agencies affecting the demand or supply of farm workers, last minute replacements, transportation and health supervision were some of the problems involved in this farm labor job. McIntire and his appointees working at all times in close cooperation with the men on the farms.

Ability to Work Together

The enterprising and progressive character of the people of Aroostook is manifest in their ability to work together as demonstrated by such mutually advantageous cooperative organizations as the Maine Potato Growers Inc., an association which last year did a \$10,000,000 gross business, the State Road Feeder Farm Association which is a neighborhood cooperative organized by 30 State Road potato growers last Spring for the purpose of raising their own foundation seed, the Katahdin Valley Seed Improvement Association, a larger group of southern Aroostook potato growers with a similar objective but different set-up, also the Aroostook Farm Bureau Federation which has the largest membership of any county bureau in the State and is one of the most powerful.

Meantime, in the interests of better Maine potatoes, intensive research goes on continuously at the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station near Presque Isle. In a relentless effort to eradicate insect pests and tuber infections and to develop disease-resistant varieties. Nowhere has the potato come to better quality or greater production per acre than in Aroostook County. The new year must inevitably bring about many radical changes that will affect the potato industry of the future. That future, however, Aroostook farmers, at the moment, face with characteristic courage and spirit of high optimism.



MRS. ALICE DAVIS, 71 year young Kentuckian, worked for two successive seasons in the Aroostook potato fields at harvest time. Mrs. Davis, on the return trip stops off with train-load of fellow workers, to visit the Nation's capital—presents Judge Marvin Jones, former FDA Administrator a 50-pound sack of Maine's choicest potatoes with the compliments of Governor Sewall (1943). Left to right: Senator Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky; Mrs. Davis; Judge Jones; Senators Wallace H. White and Owen Brewster of Maine.



THIS AROOSTOOK FARM and thousands of others produced in 1943 a record potato crop estimated at approximately 73,000,000 bushels. Farm in center of aerial view, owned and operated by Milton E. Smith, one of Maine's outstanding potato growers, is located in the "State Road" area which lies within the towns of Mapleton and Castle Hill.



ROAD TO THE STARCH FACTORY—Thousands of barrels of smaller and lower grade spuds—"culls" are utilized in the manufacture of starch: An important by-product of the potato industry in Maine.