

## Mark Sullivan Says New Deal Exaggerates Picture of Drought

(Mr. Sullivan Writes Three Weekly)

BY MARK SULLIVAN  
WASHINGTON, Aug. 31.—News-papers charge that some widely published photographs, alleged to have been put out by New Deal official government agencies to show drought conditions in the West, were made with the use of a portable, "property" skull of a dead steer, or are otherwise "phony."

Assuming the charge is well-founded, doubtless the public reaction to the exposure will be to assume that the whole picture of Western conditions has been overdrawn for propaganda purposes. That assumption will be correct, provided it does not go too far. There has been serious drought in some parts of the West. There are, in some sections, hard conditions which call for emergency aid. But to assume that large parts of the West must be permanently abandoned, and that considerable numbers of farmers must be "resettled" elsewhere by the government, is quite fantastic.

For North Dakota this is a dry year and therefore a poor year. Yet the Fargo Forum prints a map of the Red River area, a section about four counties wide and eight counties long, which this year has produced close to a \$100,000,000 of wealth from the farms.

### No Denial Forthcoming

Doubtless the middle-ground truth about this year's conditions in the West will emerge in due course. But the incident ought not to pass without public attention to the use of propaganda by the New Deal Administration. As to the present charge, I have no direct information, and it is to be assumed that if the charge is not well-founded the appropriate officials will make reply or explanation.

Time was when, in every office of every newspaper and periodical, a "government photograph" had a special standing. They were taken by bureaus of the Army, Navy, Agriculture, Interior and other departments. They were taken by the government, but they were not put out by the government. The government took no interest in having them published. They were there, and publishing houses could get them for a small fee. They were absolutely to be relied upon. The word "official" attached to a photograph had the same meaning as certified for accuracy.

The same was true of official statements put out by government departments. The Department of Agriculture statements about the conditions of crops, for example, had the disinterested and authoritative status of a decision of a Supreme Court. So far as I know this is still true of this class of statements. But in the Department of Agriculture as a whole, and in other departments, especially the newly created New Deal ones, there is an army of publicity men, most of whom regard

themselves as propagandists for the purposes of the New Deal.

I ought to add that in my own experience I have found the Department of Agriculture publicity men freely willing to let any facts asked for, to take pains in getting the facts, and to give them with accuracy. This has been true in cases in which the publicity men must have known the facts would be used in arguments detrimental to the New Deal.

This illustrates the difference between the former condition and the present one. Formerly, the government gave out facts, figures and photographs to those who asked for them. In the new conception, the army of publicity men now employed consider it their function to get things published, to flood the press, the radio and the motion pictures with material furthering the purposes of the New Deal.

The volume and momentum of the New Deal propaganda, the numbers of those engaged in putting it out, is such that not all the resources of non-government agencies of publicity can offset it. Most of the facts and statistics about the New Deal are in possession of government offices. Even with officials willing to give the facts upon request, the work of assembling and interpreting them is too formidable.

For example, for adequate public information about the New Deal's agricultural policies, and fair judgment upon them after three and a half years, it would be desirable to have a summary of certain figures. We should have a careful compilation of the quantities of food which the New Deal has destroyed, or has paid farmers not to plant. Then there should be a statement of the quantity of food destruction wrought by drought. This would show whether drought or the New Deal has been the major destroyer. Then there should be an accurate statement of the startlingly large quantities of food

we have been obliged to import from abroad to take the place of that which might have been raised on the American acres which the New Deal kept idle.

These figures, brought together and properly interpreted, would compose a judgment of the New Deal's agricultural policies. But the New Deal is not likely to put it out. And any one attempting it from the outside would need to be an expert and need much time to do the work. Meanwhile, apparently, the New Deal puts out photographs of which the accuracy is questioned, photographs which over-emphasize drought as an agency of scarcity.

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