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Tenancy as it Affects the Negro Farmer in Brazos County, Texas

Calvin B. Jefferson

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TENANCY AS IT AFFECTS THE NEGRO FARMER
IN BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

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Calvin B. Jefferson

A Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment
For The Degree
Of
Master Of Science
In The
Graduate Division
Of

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College
Prairie View, Texas
August, 1956

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Approved by:

[Redacted Signature]

In charge of major work

August 1956

DEDICATIONS

Head of Major Department

Dedicated to my wife and children whose unshakened confidence in me has always served as a motivative influence.

Graduate Dean

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College
Prairie View, Texas
August, 1956

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The writer is deeply concerned about the existing condition of the Negro farmer of Brazos County, Texas. This interest, on the part of the reporter, caused him to make this study. In this study the writer found, along with many other factors which might be responsible, that tenancy's playing its part in the big recession of the Negro farmer. It is well not to put the blame on tenancy, but the way it has been done. Tenancy being one of the stepping stones to ownership of land, must have due recognition. Tenancy is the use of land for which one pays rent to the owner.

In this report the writer wishes to point up the actual value of tenancy. Every person is entitled to a portion of the God given heritage in proportion as he demands it. Of course, this means he must have a desire for the land and the ability to pay the price for it.

It is hoped that through this report the Negro farmer can see his condition, find some suggested means which will help him come back to the joys of farm life that he once knew.

The office of the County Agricultural Extension

Importance of The Study

This study reveals some conditions existing among rural people that are very interesting. One of the most interesting things is, that those who are living in the rurals and driving some ten or more miles to work every day, seem to be perfectly satisfied. Most of these jobbers do not even have a garden.

It is also found that this type of living soon separates the parents and the children because there is no employment for them as they grow up. Naturally, the children will be inclined to follow city life because of what he calls better living. This decision, in the greater number of cases, is the result of having spent twelve years in the city schools.

Scope

Sample communities were selected which the writer thought would give a fair picture of the county situation. These communities are located; one ten miles north of the county seat, one eight miles east, one thirteen miles south east, one fourteen miles south, one nine miles west, and one seven miles north west.

The office of the County Agricultural Extension

Agent, Office of The Home Demonstration Agent, and other interested persons were consulted in the study.

Method of Procedure

The material and data for this thesis will be developed from information secured from farmers and non-farmers of the sample communities, County Agricultural Agent, Home Demonstration Agent, books, publications, periodicals and other data will be used as references. Analysis and tabulation of questionnaires will be used to determine the value of each problem.

PART I

TERMINOLOGY ON TENANCY IN BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

The writer found, as the result of his survey of the six sample communities in Brazos County, Texas, that tenancy as a part of the agricultural program is similar to that found in other parts of Texas, especially in those areas with the same type of soil and the same kind of crops grown.

The writer, at this time, wishes to further discuss tenancy as to its meaning. The use of capital (land) for which one compensates the owner of the land for its use, is tenancy. In the area studied, tenancy so far as the Negro is concerned, has a much less meaning now than it had up to World War II. Coming up to this period tenancy was a general practice among Negro farmers, however, most of the operation was done under the supervision of the landlord. In many cases this type of operation was not desirable but in some cases it was highly appreciated. Much of the kind of renting done at that time worked out to be an accumulation of wealth for the landlord and just a place to stay for renter. Opportunities were greater where a Negro rented from another Negro. He could progress at his own rate of speed in both his economic and social endeavors. But in the case of

the Negro landlord, capital (land) with which to support himself and his renter was relatively small. The writer is assuming that the above situation is the case with the average Negro farmer who starts off trying to farm with little or nothing. On the average, the Negro land-owner is located in areas where land is rather poor and most cases in undesirable locations. It is true, that, every thing suffers where land is poor. This does not mean that all Negro farmers are in the suffering group. One of the farms the writer surveyed consisted of 1,000 acres of black prairie land which is very productive and as a result he assists his renters.

As a verification of the statements made, the writer wishes to quote B. H. Hibbard's "Terminology on Tenancy" which reads as follows:

"In the north we speak mainly of two classes of tenants, cash and share. The same words are in use in the south, but "cash" is meant not alone money payments, but any forms of fixed payments. For example, cash rent in the cotton district ordinarily means delivering a specified quantity at the end of the season. Hence, if the landlord receives 50 lbs. or 100 lbs. of cotton for each acre as payment he is secure so far as returns in cotton is concerned, though he runs a risk as to what the crop will be worth per pound. The tenants view the payment as cash in the same sense that it is a stipulated fixed payment, beyond which the whole remaining portion of the crop is his. Another form of cash rent is found where a stipulated amount of labor is to be performed by the tenant under the direction of the landlord as agreed upon. These cash tenants, whether paying in money, in products or in labor,

are known as renters or standing renters, in distinction from cropper halvers. Share tenants fall principally into two classes: (1) those who furnish little or nothing in the way of equipment and who get a proportional smaller share of the crop usually half and (2) those who furnish a considerable part of the equipment, usually include one or two mules, and who therefore receive a larger share of the crop up to two thirds or one fourth. A well defined cast system exists among the tenants. The lowest class consists of those who furnish little equipment and receive half of the crop or less, next comes the group where independence is measured by his possession of a mule and a plow and a means of subsistence till harvest time; the highest class comprises those who can be trusted to deliver a certain quantity of crop or possibly a sum of money and who is largely emancipated by that fact from the direct authority of the landlord."¹

Now, that you know what tenancy is and how it functions in the section mentioned above, the writer is better able to bring home to you just what tenancy is in Brazos County, Texas.

Through the study of the many farm homes visited, the writer found that tenancy is on the decline. This means nearly a death blow to the young man who wishes to become established in farming and to a good many adults who have the know how but no capital. For the young man as well as the adult farmer who are desirous of becoming a farm owner and making a livelihood in farming. The writer would suggest the first step in becoming a farm owner. He is

¹
Benjamin H. Hibbard, Agricultural Economics, "Tenancy In The South," Chapter 10, p. 229, New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1948.

thinking in terms of the average Negro who lives in the rurals as being in the very low income bracket.

The writer is assuming that this group of people, who still living in the rurals, love country life and would farm if opportunities came their way. With this in view, it is suggested that an allocation of income be so done that there will be an accumulation of money which may be used to get started as a renter in one of the classes mentioned above.

When we think of tenancy let us think of the various ways one who is not able to own a farm and is desirous to farm can do so. He may work as a day hand; he may work as a cropper or he may rent or lease the land and for its use pay a part of the crop, cash or what ever the agreement might be.

From this, it is found that tenancy is definitely a part of tenure. However, the sections surveyed by the writer, was found to be on the decline so far as tenancy is concerned. When we speak of farm ownership, the writer speaks of it as being the goal of all prospective farmers, and that he should work toward that end. But, by no means does the writer hope to discourage tenancy because croppers, day laborers, and renters are but stepping stones to farm ownership, unless there is the case of inheritance or capital from some other source.

Lippert Ellis says:

"During recent years, however, the public has greatly realized that tenancy is

PART II

TENANCY AS A PART OF THE LAND TENURE PATTERN IN BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

From some statistics of the county obtained from the County Agricultural Agent and County Home Demonstration Agent of Brazos County, Texas, the writer found that there are 1811 farm families in the county and of this number 586 are Negro farmers. About one fourth of the above mentioned farm families own their farms, one half are share croppers and the one fourth includes tenants and day laborers.

From this, it is found that tenancy is definitely a part of tenure. However, the sections surveyed by the writer, was found to be on the decline so far as tenancy is concerned. When we speak of farm ownership, the writer speaks of it as being the goal of all prospective farmers, and that he should work toward that end. But, by no means does the writer hope to discourage tenancy because croppers, day laborers, and renters are but stepping stones to farm ownership, unless there is the case of inheritance or capital from some other source.

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"During recent years, however, the public has greatly realized that tenancy is

a more or less permanent status for many operators. Also a great deal of land, to its type of ownership, may be destined to be operated by tenants for a long period rather than being abnormal, a certain amount of tenancy is to be reckoned with and encouraged under satisfactory leasing arrangement. To a greater degree than ever, it is felt that tenancy, if it can be had with favorable leasing arrangements, is not necessarily less desirable than ownership.

Since leasing is basically a contractual arrangement, sanctioned and modified by law, most of the less desirable qualities of tenancy are associated with the provision of the contract. Vague, oral, one-year leases predominate. Perhaps one of the most crucial matters in renting is how and when the lease terminates. Upon the provisions that end a lease depend much of the security enjoyed by the landowners and tenants. As a rule, little or no notice of the termination of the contract is required by either of the parties under most state statutes. Neither knows with any certainty whether the other person wishes to continue his relationship any longer than the current production period." 2

If there is not any means to secure a farm by making a down payment and then from the production of the farm, meet the yearly installments as they come due, then work as a day hand, cropper, or a share renter. By this means an interested young man can soon work his way into ownership.

Noble Clark says: " It has become progressively more difficult to acquire the ownership of farms especially for tenants to do so. No longer to be had by homesteading, farms are valuable properties which must be paid for. Also, they have become

larger and fewer. The development of more farm equipment, enables one man to farm more land, means that a larger investment per farm in machinery and equipment, as well as in land, is now necessary. It also means that one who desires to buy a farm must work more years to earn the money with which to pay for equipment and make the down payment on the farm. Even in normal times the demand for land, especially for land adjacent to large cities, where there are many potential purchasers, is such that land prices rise above actual value based on long time productive capacity of land thus making it still more difficult for a man to acquire ownership when he must pay for the land out of its earnings.

It is not hard to pay for farm land out of farm earning so long as prices of farm products are rising, but it is very difficult to do so when they are falling. During periods of falling prices many capable owner-operators will lose their farms unless more enlightened tenure policies are developed and widely applied.

The area of farm land in this region being practically fixed or declining, (the four midwestern states have less farm land than 1880), the only way in which the number of farms can be maintained - provided that they are desirable to be maintained - is through the subdivision of some of the existing farms or the reclamation of new land. Such additions could be made in this way and would not, however, provide farms for all those who might wish to buy them for their own operation. The demand for farms comes first of all, from those already on the land. It results partly from the fact that there is no adequate outlet in the city for the surplus young people from the farms and not enough new farm employment to absorb them. The increasingly frequent purchase of farms by city people has also made it more difficult for the farm operator to become an owner - both individuals and corporations compete with farmers for land. Delay in settling estates is another factor that holds land off the market, as is also the tendency for owners who have inherited land to hold even they do not operate it personally."

The foregoing quotation from Clark, very clearly sets up the meaning and purpose of tenancy. To the Negro farmers of Brazos County, Texas; the question is, what has happened to us? We once lived on farms with plenty to eat, plenty to wear and many other things we enjoyed as farmers; now we are scattered, so far as living as farmers; some have left the County, some moved to the city; and some still live in the country but not farming. The writer found only a very few who were actually farming and most of them were farming on a very small scale. In all the communities surveyed most of the land was lying out, that is turned into pasture either for their own livestock or leased to some one else for pasture. Only small children are left on the farm along with the few aged adults who are supported by old age assistance. Adults who are eligible for such assistance are transferred to other jobs.

From the study of the part on "Tenancy As A Part Of Land Tenure," these questions as well as the period of recession through which the Negro farmers are going, well set forth valuable material for thought.

With such problems as those mentioned above, and the size of the farm, crop organization, capital invested, livestock on the farm, farm equipment, income, croppers in the States, Bulletin 483, October, 1948.

farm organization, and level of living will, after considered respectively, serve well in the turning light on how the Negro is affected by tenancy conditions which in has greatly abrupted the land tenure so far as he is concerned.

Table 1 page 11 will show the approximate number farm operators, farms where children have left the farm, farms lying idle because of limited finance, and lack of labor.

For some verifications the writer will refer to a part of the report as the result of a committee which studied "Land Tenure In The Southwestern States with C. O. Brannon as chairman. The writer wishes to place special emphases on the part of the report, entitled "Tenure Factors Related To Farm Family Performance."³

Several observations are made in respond to the first of three questions, "what difference in the social and economic performance of farm families are incident to their tenure status.

The Size Of The Farm

For all six measures of size used that is, acreage, impasture, acres, rented out, and the number of families living in the farms but working on jobs, by the family.

³ C. O. Brannon, Land Tenure In The Southwestern States, Bulletin 482, October, 1948.

| Number of Families | Acres Owned | Acres in Crops | Acres in Pasture | Rented Out | Living in rurals but on jobs |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | $6\frac{1}{2}$ | 4 | $2\frac{1}{2}$ | | |
| 1 | $43\frac{1}{3}$ | 6 | $37\frac{1}{3}$ | | |
| 1 | $17\frac{1}{2}$ | 10 | $7\frac{1}{2}$ | | |
| 1 | 31 | | 31 | | |
| 1 | 126 | 27 | 99 | | |
| 1 | 1,000 | 600 | 320 | 80 | |
| 1 | 35 | 20 | 10 | | |
| 1 | 60 | 30 | 30 | | |
| 1 | 50 | 25 | 25 | | |
| 30 | 1-25 Acres | | | | 30 |

Table I. Shows the acres owned, acres in crop, acres in pasture, acres, rented out, and the number of families living in the rurals but working on jobs, by the family.

labor requirements, total acres, acres in crop land, acres in some major crops, amount of live-stock and capital invested in farm business - the average size of farms was greater among those operated by part owners than for other tenure groups for each area and for each race, accepting for the Negroes in the Mississippi coastal plaines showed a consistent pattern by all size measures from largest to smallest as follow: Part owners, share renters. This general pattern obtained in the other areas although it was less consistent.

Crop Organization

Tenure differences in crop organization, excepting for croppers, do not appear to be strikingly significant. Cotton, as the major crop, accounted for approximately the same percentage of crop land on the farm operated by whites and Negroes and by owners, part owners, share renters, and share cash renters in all sample areas. As measured in terms of total average of cotton tended to vary directly with the size of farm irrespective of tenure classification.

Capital Invested

On an average, in all areas owners and part owners operated with larger capital investments than renters. The relative proportion of total farm investments which were real estate, equipment, and livestock were not, however, significantly different. In Oklahoma and Texas sample areas where the total farm investment was considerably greater than in Mississippi, the proportion in equipment was somewhat greater and livestock somewhat less than in the other two areas but the differences among tenure groups within the same area were not significant.

Livestock On Farms

Owners and part owners had more livestock than renters. Although much of the difference disappeared when farms were grouped according to size, the gen-

eral trend remained the same. Furthermore, in none of the areas studied were there any owners with no livestock and few cases with less than one animal unit. The number of renters in these categories was much higher.

Grouped By Size

Among the whites in the Mississippi coastal plain, full owners had the most livestock. There are also tenure differences with respect to breeding stock; owners, for example, more often possess bulls than renters, and white operators more often possess such stock than colored operators. On small farms part owners in the rolling plains and black land samples had more livestock than owners, but on medium sized farms share cash tenants in both Arkansas coastal plain and Oklahoma rolling plain samples had the largest number of livestock. On large farms share cash tenants had the largest number of livestock per 100 acres of crop land in most areas.

Another very important factor in stimulating the fall off in tenancy was the induction of young men into military services of the United States. This, of course, caused a shortage of farm help. The more able farmers shifted to mechanized equipment which gave rise to day labor. The writer cannot say that the fore going statements are responsible for the present situation of the Negro farmer, because it has been the experience of many that, unless the farm organization is an ideal one, the young man who leaves the farm and experiences a constant flow of income which eliminates the possible risk which is included in the farm business, very seldom returns.

In viewing the farm situation among Negroes in the area surveyed, the future looks very dark. In connection with the factors mentioned above, nature has and is playing a very important role in helping the Negro farmer to come to his fate as a farmer.

In each community surveyed, the writer found that the greater portion of the persons living on farms were getting their support from other sources. The writer assumes that these persons are lovers of the farm and just as soon as enough surplus capital has been accumulated they will return to the farm and resume their duties as farmers. In this light, the city of Bryan, College Station, and The Bryan Air Force Base are termed as contributing agencies to the person who is working only to secure means by which he can continue his farm program. These agencies will also serve as sources of income for the part-time farmer.

This type of thing mentioned above may be slightly dangerous in that it may influence the farmer to remain on the job because of a steady income of possibly \$1,500. upwards of \$2,400 per year as compared to less than \$1,000

plus the many risks he must take per year on the farm.

Another factor which the writer thinks to be very significant is the moving of schools from the rural communities. For better learning facilities in every way, it was a progressive move. But on the other hand it takes the children from their own community environments for at least 175 days per year for 12 years plus the possible 4 years he might spend in college, it is obvious that the child will never live on the farm there after. Allow yourself to be as the child who lives on a farm with plenty of farm work every afternoon, Saturdays and all other off days from school with little or no compensation for his service, so far as he is able to see; then think in terms of this child being associated with the city child who has, as it appears, better living conditions in every way, now with a college education he is prepared to do other and easier jobs. What would you do? The writer will admit that this puts the child in a position of choice making. With these apparent satisfactions to the child, it is true that the child would not return to the farm unless he has a deep interest in farm life and prepare himself for farming regardless to

circumstances, or the farm on which he lives is an ideal organization.

The writer assume that the factors mentioned above are responsible for practically all of the tenants and some land owners buying small homes from 1 to 25 acres all in one colony. Many of them cut these plots into lots about 60 by 100 feet and resell them. This group is desirous of living in the rurals but is making its livelyhood else where. For further explanation see Table 2 Page 21.

The writer also thinks that our tenure problems have resulted from being too dependent rather than having the knowledge of interdependence.

Again the writer quotes Mr. Brannon on "Land Tenure Research" which states:

"It is not enough to discuss problems and the interdependence of various parts of economy, and make recommendations for better tenure, Positive action is needed through educational programs, legislative enactment, and policies of administrative agencies of federal and state governments. Research in tenure relationships and the impact of these relationships upon the use of land resources is of increasing importance.

Research and education in tenancy must be in unison. The farmers, the legislators and the program ad-

ministrator must have the best available information regarding those human relationships that arise in connection with land and its use by program people. Educational agencies, including State Extension Services, Vocational Agricultural Education and the action programs must be conscious of their responsibility, to aid in solution of the human problem in agriculture. Surely, these problems are as closely related to the well being of the farmer and his family as are improvements in the growing of livestock. Only by giving tenure problems special attention can they be dealt with adequately.

There is no thought that new organizations must be created for this purpose. The suggested committee to review, classify, and define tenure policies would conflict with representatives from existing agencies. It would be sufficient if these agencies recognized their opportunities, responsibilities, and obligations. Research, education, legislation, and credit extension are all functions that may be carried out through existing institutions. Therefore, answers to many of these problems will be slow in coming. The same can be said in regard to recommended legal measures, for legislation, too, will develop slowly. Even then the mere "passing of a law" will not necessarily solve a particular problem. Research and education must have their place and can, in fact substitute for legislation in many cases.

Table 2. Crops grown in communities visited, number of acres, yield per acre, total yield, price per unit and family use.

This Group of Farmers is
Still Living On The Farm

| Crops | Acres | Yield Per Acre | Total | Price | Family Use Value |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Cotton | 107 | $\frac{1}{2}$ Bale | Bales 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ | \$.31 lb. | - |
| Corn | 70 | 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 1470 bu. | 1.10 bu. | \$1617.00 |
| Oats | 33 | 30 | 990 | 75 bu. | 742.50 |
| Peas | 25 $\frac{5}{16}$ | 30 | 1608 | 10 lb. | 160.80 |
| Sorghum | 42 | 15 B. | 630 B. | 1.00 P.B. | 630.00 |
| Sweet Potatoes | 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ | 60 b. | 75 | 1.50 P.B. | 102.50 |
| Potatoes | 2 | 21 bu. | 42 | 4.00 cu. | 168.00 |
| Water Melons | 2 | Not Available | | | |
| Tomatoes | 2 $\frac{1}{5}$ | 80 bu. | 176 | 4.00 bu. | 610.00 |
| Peanuts | 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ | | | | |

Table 2. Crops grown in communities visited, number of acres, yield per acre, total yield; price per unit and family use.

These tenure factors mentioned above and others studied by the committee of which Mr. Brannon was chairman, reveal the actual existing conditions as found through the study of sample areas of Brazos County, Texas and will give clues to the solution of the problems found among the Negroes. It is clearly seen, that tenure status of any farming section is based on the social and economic performance of farm families. The writer found in the sample communities surveyed, that the size of farms had much to do with the unrest of the Negro farmer. Most of the farms visited were too small to give employment to able workers of the family, hence, there was a migration to industrial areas. It was reported by members of some of the communities that, several farms were sold because of non-agreement and no ready cash on the part of the members of the family who would maintain the farm.

Crop organization in all of the communities visited, was strikingly significant. In previous years cotton was the major crop in most areas. Cotton being a cash crop and used as collateral for securing money to operate on, the Negro farmer wore his land out trying to grow cotton. In many cases this type of farming was due to a must,

rather than the lack of knowledge; however, many of the Negro farmers show less interest in scientific farming.

The writer found that all the persons who were doing any farming at all, were financing their own farm program. As a general rule the average Negro farmer is in the low income bracket of less than \$1,000 per year of the income received and the amount of capital left that could be invested in his farming program, would be very inadequate.

The writer assumes that the conditions found in the Texas black land area studied by Mr. Brannon's committee, is similar to the black land area of Brazos County, Texas where large farms are the case, power driven equipment is used, cotton yields high, operating expenses high, but acreage has been recently curtailed and total production has been reduced. Farm family incomes are high but operation expenses are also high. Alternative employment opportunities are available in near-by cities.

The above quotation is identical to the tenure pattern in the communities surveyed by the writer, especially along the Brazos river where the farms are large and as of now tenancy is just about at its end so far as the Negro farmer is concerned. These farms are

operated by tenants who are in position to farm on a large scale with mechanized equipments. These renters, by chance, happen to be all white.

Through out this report many suggestions may be found for improving tenure arrangements that can be put into practice at once (at least so far as plans are concerned). The following are some suggestions for improving tenure arrangements. This is a continuation of the preceeding quotation.

1. Strive to obtain farm units large enough for adequate income and management opportunity.
2. In high income periods, invest in farm improvement and living facilities. Avoid incurring heavy indebtness for land prices are too high. Insist on agricultural adaptation.
3. Seek information relative to land values based on earning capacity.
4. Use improved lease contract forms, include conservation and improvement provisions in lease agreements, and give adequate notice of termination. Arbitrate a difficulty.
5. Call upon County Extension or State Agricultural Colleges for answers to tenure questions.

Finally, recommendations for tenure improvement must have an informed support and interest among farm

population. It is here that the immediate responsibility lies in how to hold and use the land. Because of this responsibility, farm people must realize their obligation to society. On the other hand, to aid in the development of a tenure consciousness among rural groups is an ever growing challenge to public and private organizations dealing with rural life and its problems.

As has been said small capital (land) where any of the basic crops are used will not pay off. In the area studied by the writer it was found that most of the farms owned by Negroes could not decently qualify for support prices offered through the various agricultural programs. That is, to comply with the program, worked havoc either way, if he reduced his acreage it would lower his production to where it would hardly justify his staying on the farm even after receiving his price support check.

Thinking in terms of benefits through various loans and support programs for the farmers, there are certain requirements or standards which must be met. In trying to secure a loan, the farmer with a small acreage will neither have sufficient collateral to put up as security nor will the farm produce enough to take care of the yearly payments on his note, and support his

family.

In support programs usually allotments of certain crops are made based on production covering certain previous periods. This goes without saying, that both the support program and the type of loan the small farmer participates in serves more as a squeeze for him than an aid. If this type of management is kept up he will eventually come up working on some other job in order to support himself and his family.

In this part, the writer has tried to set forth the tenancy situation in the county. In conclusion to the problem, "Tenancy As A Part Of Land Tenure Pattern," it is found that there is very little of such farming going on in the area studied by the writer which means that tenancy is on its way out of the county. In this part, the relationship between tenancy and tenure, part three will deal with the continuity of the Negro farmer in the area studied by the writer.

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PART II

FARM TENURE OF THE NEGRO FARMER IN

BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

The various committees headed by L. S. Ellis, adviser to Southwestern Land Tenure Research Committee; Joe Mortherial, Economist in Rural Life Problems, Division of Farm and Ranch Economics, in his bulletin on "Recent Trends In Land Tenure In Texas"; C. O. Brannon, Chairman of Southwestern Land Tenure Research Committee, whose committee drew up a bulletin on "Land Tenure In The Southwestern States" and the "Improving of Farm Tenure In The Midwest" by Noble Clark, reveal similar situations throughout the southwest. The writer, from the quotations of the various reports made by the above committees, wishes to give you an idea of what tenure is, its importance, and its improvement. In the mean time, the writer will point up the findings of his report as related to tenure. May we reflect just a little to see just what our status really is? Man was not made for the land but the land was made for man. This takes us back to the creation where the creator, after creating all else, with land as a base, made man to keep and dress all that was made. Land became man's perpetual home. This can be further supported

by L. S. Ellis' Introduction to "Tenancy Improvement For A Better Southwest Agriculture," which reads as follows:

The right of people to use land is the lifeblood of agriculture. Deprive the farmer of access to the soil and he must find other means to care for his family's welfare. The right of the land owner to use and dispose of his acreage is practically unlimited. Through legally established means sanctioned by society, he may share his rights in land with others with a creditor through mortgage arrangements; with the public through land use regulations; or, through a contract, with a farm operator who becomes a tenant.

If a farmer does not own land, he must seek the right to use another's land through contractual agreement, in any event those who use land and those who own but do not use it, in some manner must have legally established rights in acquisition of that land, to the sharing of it with others, to its transfer, and to holding it. These constitute the principal rights encompassed by the term land tenure.

Out of these relationships, and within the legal framework outlined in laws and court decisions, arise the problems of land tenure.

Development of farm resources and technological progress have occurred because of the freedom of landholding. Yet, the unlimited right of use and disposal without proportionate individual responsibility to social needs has led to serious abuses, hence to the rise of many problems associated with land tenure.

While it is recognized that progress is being made in solving some tenure problems, it is the purpose of this report to consider some of the major difficulties of present day tenure, and to suggest certain lines of action for improvement.

It has been necessary to consider only those groups having a proprietary or

semiproprietary interest in land. Laborer's status, while often included in tenure studies, usually denotes no proprietary interest in land. Therefore, problems associated with farm laborers, while extremely important in certain sections of the region, are not considered in this report. Croppers, although legally considered laborers, often are thought of as tenants and are included in this statement.

As the writer mentioned in a statement above, tenancy is definitely a part of land tenure. This goes with the fact that one who has a proprietary interest in land will by some means come in possession of some of it. This type of person will think of his land as his home and will put all he has into it so as to keep it so. A good tenancy set-up will cause more people to go back into farming than any other one thing. There will be a great improvement in tenure.

An impoverished soil and an impoverished people will result from a continuation of the present unstable condition in the matter of tenancy. There is no doubt, counteracting forces, a slackening in the advance in land values will make for stability in ownership and a better ownership class.

Education concerning the nature of soil and crops will improve the tenant as well as other farmers. Better organizations through which to effect the marketing of farm products will encourage farmers, including tenants.

A better system of farm credit will make the acquisition of land easier than seems to be the effect in Europe, not with standing the tendency of better credit to raise land prices. Better schools and better roads, in fact, better rural conditions of every sort, will stimulate the desire to own land and keep farm people on the farms. The need for a plan by which the young farmer can become a landowner and also a plan under which a tenant system can be made tolerable are beyond doubt among the greatest needs of American agriculture, especially in the south. No ready made program suggests itself; the remedy will undoubtedly be one of many ingredients. Thus far we are just beginning to gain sufficient knowledge of the case to admit an intelligent diagnosis.⁴

⁴L. S. Ellis, Ibid.

PART IV

THE NEGRO TENANT IN THE
WHITE DISTRICT

The Negro farmer has been greatly affected by the technique used in considering him as a business man. The writer assumes that he is inferior in his actions as a result of his social contact with other groups who have been in authority through the years. Naturally, as a rule, the less learned of the Negro farming group, still cherish those impressions of the trainer who thought little of his pupil. Even now, some of the groups allow themselves to be used as capital.

Upon questioning persons surveyed, as has been said, most of the families moved from the farms into small homesteads. The writer also found that many of the white farmers had sold their farms or leased them to some one who does what we call big farming. Many farms have been converted into cattle ranches. So, the problem of the Negro tenant in the White district had to be based on information gathered at random from the past. The greater per cent of the Negroes lived along the Brazos River bottom where they worked as croppers and day

Cotton Belt

In the leading cotton states Negroes have been losing out as tenant farmers. This

hands. This type of tenancy worked fairly well on the part of both the landowner or farm manager and the hand until the farm support programs were enacted back in the 30's then most Negroes were used as day laborers. The second World War came taking all able man power and the big farmer had to restrict his farming to mechanized farming. This worked well and an improvement of this mechanized farming began on an upward march which caused the all Negro families to move to town or else where to find a home. The Negro farmer is on the outward go rather than becoming established in farming. Those left in white communities include the intelligent landowner and some few as servants. The Negro farmer is no longer desirable. Where this sort of thing exists religion, education and social activities are becoming problems. Proposals have been made for the removal of churches and in many cases church buildings have been demolished. The experiences mentioned above are, to be large measure, responsible for the present condition of the Negro farmer.

Again B. H. Hibbard states that which is identical to what is and has existed in the past.

Whites And Colored In The Cotton Belt

In the leading cotton states Negroes have been losing out as tenant farmers. This

is due mainly to their weak hold on the land and to their large numbers with respect to what need there is for their work on the land. It is perfectly evident that the colored people have to an appreciable degree lost their hold on the land. Table 3 shows that tenants in general are growing fewer, but the colored tenants are decreasing faster than whites. In Oklahoma and Texas croppers fared badly, losing out their hold on the land 77.9 and 59.0 per cent respectively, of the case involved. In other states they stayed rather oftener than the colored tenants, Apparently there were some very important differences in treatment given different types of tenants.

The Negroes lost their hold on the farm during the thirties. The effect may be temporary. For example, Georgia where white tenants are more numerous than Negro, the farmer went down nearly 19,000 of 99,000, 18.2% 1930 to 1940 while the Negroes lost out by 26,000 out of 76,000 or 32.2%. In Alabama white tenants lost by 11.2% of their holding, while colored people lost by 26% of theirs. In Mississippi there was little difference. In Oklahoma white tenants lost out by 19%, while Negroes lost by 50%. Texas white tenants lost by 27.1%, colored by 49%. All this means that the Negro was pushed out of tenancy in pretty large numbers and put on a wage basis.⁵

⁵Hibbard, op. cit. p. 235.

PART V

LIVING CONDITIONS, INCOME SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITIES

AS RELATED TO TENANCY IN BRASSOS COUNTY, TEXAS

| | <u>White Tenants</u> | | <u>Colored Tenants</u> | |
|-------------|----------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| | Number | % | Number | % |
| Georgia | 18,000 | 18.2 | 16,000 | 35.2 |
| Alabama | 10,000 | 11.3 | 20,000 | 26.0 |
| Mississippi | 7,000 | 13.3 | 24,000 | 15.0 |
| Oklahoma | 21,000 | 19.0 | 7,000 | 50.0 |
| Texas | 31,000 | 20.0 | 12,000 | 60.0 |

In simple terms the standard of living means all those things which one insists upon having. It is not merely a collective name for the commodities at a given time but those which are so related to each other and so important to the consumer, that if any one of them are lacking, efforts to restore them are immediately put into action.

Table 3. Shows the decrease of tenants in four States of the cotton belt during the 30's and up to 1944.

PART V

LIVING CONDITIONS, INCOME SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITIES
AS RELATED TO TENANCY IN BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

The farm family entitled to the same standard of living as any other family. This statement is rather broad, but if the farmer does his work on the farm equal to the capital put into other enterprises, the returns from his farm will be of such that his living conditions will come up to that of any other group.

The writer found that the living conditions were poor in the communities surveyed. That is, taking the situation as a whole. Where most of the families were living on small areas with crops some did not have gardens, no cows for milk, no hogs for meat and very few chickens. This means that every thing had to be bought and some things must go lacking.

In simple terms the standard of living means all those things which one insists upon having. It is not merely a collective name for the commodities at a given time but those which are so related to each other and so important to the consumer, that if any one of them are lacking, forces to restore them are immediately put into action.

All of our economy is based on wealth whether money or any other capital. So, the living standard depends largely on the income of the family. A Yale University Instructor said "A man and his wife must live with extreme frugality even when the income is \$2,500 and at \$3,000 they will have to live on a very simple plan. With \$4,000 income a family with children must live with the extreme economy in the obtainable apartment and with \$5,000 nothing better than hand to mouth living and at \$6,000 the family with young children can barely break even."

From this quotation one can clearly see that the family with children having an income of less than \$3,000 per year is hardly getting his hand to his mouth, much less it being a hand to mouth situation.

It was very amusing to note that the greater portion of the families visited failed to give their financial income or standing. So, there was very little that the writer could obtain.

With the exception of those persons living in the Brushy community who have resorted to mercantile and filling station business; those of the Fairview community who have and are operating their family farms; those of the Mt. Zion community who own better than 1,000 acres and the

Rhoan Chapel community who own and are maintaining the old family farm, there is no security other than their insurance.

For the people in all communities opportunities are great for one to go into farming. Never before has the Negro been able to secure good jobs that are paying well. But, if the pattern is continued as he is following at present, he will be pushed clear out of the farming picture.

Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 will bring out the accumulated wealth of the families surveyed. Table 4, Machinery and Equipment, Table 5, Livestock and Livestock Products, Table 6, Shows Home Conveniences and Table 7, Shows The Educational Training Of The Families Of The Area Studied.

| | | | |
|---|-------------|----------|----------|
| 2 | Tractors | 2400 | 2400 |
| 1 | Sprayers | 150 | 150 |
| 4 | Trucks | 2500 | 2500 |
| 5 | Automobiles | 4500 | 4500 |
| | Total | \$10,150 | \$10,150 |

Table 4

MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT

| No. | Item | Value at Beginning Year | Total Value to Date |
|-----|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 5 | Wagon | \$125 | \$125 |
| 5 | Planter | 98 | 98 |
| 1 | Harrow | 10 | 10 |
| 6 | Cultivator | 150 | 150 |
| 1 | Rollers | 50 | 50 |
| 2 | Stalk Cutter | 50 | 50 |
| 1 | Mowers | 40 | 40 |
| 2 | Tractors | 2400 | 2400 |
| 1 | Sprayers | 150 | 150 |
| 4 | Trucks | 2500 | 2500 |
| 5 | Automobiles | 4600 | 4600 |
| | Total | \$10,183 | \$10,183 |

Table 4

LIVESTOCK AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS

| Items | Units | Price Per Unit | Total Price | Value of item used at home |
|--------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Hogs | 47 | av. 18 ⁸ / ₉ ¢ | \$ 655 | \$650.00 |
| Cows | 107 | 72 | 10,627 | |
| Sheep | | | | |
| Goats | | | | |
| Horses | 5 | av. 46 | 380 | 380.00 |
| Mules | 6 | av. 34 ¹ / ₆ | 265 | 265.00 |
| Butter | 27 lbs.wk. | 65 | 17.45 | 17.45 |
| Milk | 224 qts.wk. | 20 | 44.80 | 44.80 |
| Eggs | 3 ¹ / ₂ p. wk. | 35 | 1.23 | 1133.00 |

Table 5. Shows the number and value of livestock and livestock products with value to farmer.

Home Conveniences And Amusements

| Grades | Fathers Completed | Mothers Completed | Children Completed | Phone | T.V. | Radio | Gas | Electricity | Running Water | Bath tub | Toilet indoor |
|--------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------|------|-------|-----|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Homes | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| Homes | | 14 | | | | | | | | | |
| Homes | | | 24 | | | | | | | | |
| Homes | | | | 10 | | | | | | | |
| Homes | | | | | | | | 23 | | | |
| Homes | | | | | | | | | 2 | | |
| Homes | | | | | | | | | | 2 | |
| Homes | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |

Table 6. This table shows the number of homes with the items across the top.

Table 7. Shows the number of members of the families who completed grades from 1 through 12 and added training.

| Grades | Fathers Completing | Mothers Completing | Children Completing |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| One | 1 | | 1 |
| Two | | | 2 |
| Three | | | 3 |
| Four | 1 | | 3 |
| Five | | 2 | 3 |
| Six | | | 1 |
| Seven | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Eight | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| Nine | 1 | | 1 |
| Ten | | 1 | 4 |
| Eleven | | | 3 |
| Twelve | 1 | 1 | 14 |
| Jr. College | | | 2 |
| Sr. College | 1 | 1 | 7 |

Table 7. Shows the number of members of the families who completed grades from 1 through 12 and added training.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In studying the tenancy problems as they exist throughout the country, the writer found that the Negro is losing ground rapidly when it comes to agriculture.

This report is being prepared with the hope of informing the rural people of Brazos County, Texas, of the existing danger and what might befall them in the future. The writer is hoping to show the similarity of the agricultural situation nationally to that of Brazos County. However, there are some differences where certain laws, climate, and markets have much to do with influencing the methods of farming.

The writer began this discussion by defining tenancy as being the use of land owned by some one other than the user where the user in return pays the owner for its use. The Terminology On Tenancy--This meaning is well suited to the type of operation of farms found as a result of the survey, made of twenty four families, in the County mentioned above.

The writer found that, the greater number of operators were tenants. In this report permit the reporter to class all Negro land users as tenants, how-

ever, as we know, half hands and croppers are not classed as tenants. But, the writer chose to use this term for convenience.

The object of this study is to try to find the basis of this condition which is existing among the Negro farmers. The writer became concerned about the problem after working with the people, as instructor in one of the rural schools. He observed that the average daily attendance was low in the beginning of school and just before school closed and that the parents, in many cases, both father and mother, were on jobs which kept them away from home for the most part. The reporter began to inquire among the children as to the occupation of their families. The reply was in most cases, working on a job in town, College Station or The Air Base. Another question was asked. Where do you live? Most replies were that we bought a home on the highway.

Inquiring revealed that all families who bought homes (1 acre or less and up to 25 acres) once farmed as tenants.

The main purpose of this study, then, is to find the cause of the off the farm migration and suggest some ways to reverse the trend.

This report is made from the study of six communities of the county.

The tenancy problem as a part of land tenure is definite. It is almost impossible for a good tenure program to exist without a sound working tenancy program.

In order to have a good working tenure program set up, the tenant must be satisfied, including all agreements which are involved in rental contracts.

The Second World War. Mechanized farms, good paying jobs and elementary and high school education away from the farm, low production where renting was done on a small scale, support programs by the government, all played their part in assisting the Negro from the farm.

It was found in each community that some of the Negroes are still holding on to their land. In the Well-born Community three farmers, (aged, however,) were trying to carry on in a small way. One farmer of this three who is cultivating 25 acres of his 80 acre farm, stated that he would remain there until his death. In the Rhoan Chapel Community, there were five families maintaining their farms with improvements. In the Bushy Community most of the sixty families reported to the writer were wage earners. However, some operated filling stations, some grocery stores and the like. One

farm was visited where about one half of the 116 acres owned was in cultivation.

The Mt. Zion Community has one farmer who owns 1,000 acres of land, one a dairy farmer and another owns 200 acres. All are utilizing their land in crop production, livestock and pasture. The John M. Moore Community was one of those communities where the one time renter found it no longer desirable, to farm. So, nine families bought small homes and moved near their church and school.

Like the John M. Moore Community, the Fairview Community with few exceptions, did the same thing. The land owners with good sized farms are not in position to operate because of needed farm help or they are too old to successfully do much farming.

Most of the Negro farmers are very close neighbors to white farmers. In many cases, because the average Negro farm is less than employment size, so far as the family is concerned find work with his white neighbor which, in many instances, results in the Negro farm lying out or leased to the same man for whom he works. He in turn works his land for another. An offer is made which is under its value, but it is being done just to help you. The picture looks good and he, the less in-

formed Negro, sells his land, Well, the question might arise as to why does he not save until he gets enough money to buy more land to add to that he already has? In many and practically all cases, white districts restrict homesteading only to members of their race. The Negro, if he is not an old time, intelligent land owner, in a white district, who has through the years made for himself a reputation as a business man, and so respected, will be forced by some means to have him move. So, one can clearly see that another reason for the Negro getting himself a home such as he is able to pay for and to move into locations where he can feel comfortable and secure.

The living conditions of the Negro is a slight contributing factor when it comes to close association with other groups. The writer found in all communities visited, that the living conditions varied. Many had deep wells, radios, T. V., bath tubs, in-door toilets and all other modern conveniences of a home. Others were on the "making out list." It is in some cases, poor management, low income, and limited opportunities which keep families from enjoying the rich blessing of life. The reporter regrets very much that only farmers and those who lived in the rural, but worked on jobs, with an income of around

\$2,000 would give an estimate of their financial returns. However, the farmers visited, all do their farming business on a cash bases. This was rather amusing as each farmer would readily say, I pay as I go, however, for he goes, but on the other hand when the question was asked as to his income, the reply, if any at all, was so conflicting that the writer was not able to comprehend.

The opportunities of the Negro farmer are many and varied. If there has been any thing, in the past, to cause or influence him to have a love for farming, he can easily become one by beginning as a renter. Capital was one of the chief factors which was responsible for his condition. This being true, the opportunity of securing from the good paying jobs a reasonable income, he can save enough money to purchase the needed equipments and from his savings support his family until harvest.

Throughout this report, persons who are interested in becoming established in farming and maintaining their farming status, will find many suggestions for improving tenure arrangements that can be put into practice. Some of them are:

1. Strive to obtain farm units large enough for adequate income and management opportunity.

2. In high income periods, invest in farm improvement and living facilities, avoid incurring heavy indebtedness for land priced too high. Insist on mortgage credit adapted to agricultural needs.
3. Seek information relative to land values based on earning capacity.
4. Use improved lease contract farms. Include conservation and improvement provisions in lease agreements, and give adequate notice of termination. Arbitrate any difficulties.
5. Call upon County Extension Agents or State Agricultural Colleges for answers to tenure questions.

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College Station, Texas.

Survey Form

Dear Sir:

I am a student at Prairie View A. & M. College and am writing a thesis entitled " Tenancy As It Affects the Negro Farmer in Brazos County".

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated in helping me make this study by filling in each blank. The information given will be handled so as to not reveal your name and farm.

Very truly yours,

C. P. Jefferson

CEJ/ W

QUESTIONNAIRE

TENANCY AS IT AFFECTS THE NEGRO FARMER
OF BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS

FARM SURVEY FORM

THE FAMILY

1. Number in family _____ men _____ women _____ boys _____ girls _____
2. List the number in your family, including you and wife, who completed
the: --- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.
father _____ mother _____ boys _____ girls _____
3. List other training _____

THE HOME

Number of rooms _____. Is home painted? _____. Are doors screened?
_____. Do you have . glass paned windows? _____ Number of Chairs _____.

Do you have any of the following? Piano _____ Radio _____

Telephone _____ Ice box _____ Book Case _____ Bathtub _____

In-door toilet _____ woodstove _____ Gas Range _____ Out-door
toilet _____ Running water _____ Gas _____ Electricity _____.

Check the source of water supply: Well(Pump) _____

Open well _____ cistern _____ tank _____ creek _____

Others _____

What is the distance of the source of water supply from your home

Check one: --- (Give in yards) _____

THE FARM

1. Distance in miles, from the County Seat _____
2. Type of roads: __ Dirt _____ Gravel _____ Unimproved _____
_____ Hard surface _____.
3. What is your farming status? Owner _____ Renter _____
Part-Owner _____ Share cropper _____ Cash renter _____
Buying _____
4. How many years have you farmed? _____ On this farm _____
5. What do you consider your major income? _____

6. What kind of lease and/or rental agreement do you make?

7. What do you consider as being advantageous in the kind of agreement
made between you and the landlord? _____

Others _____

- Do you have a garden? _____ Do you grow enough to supply the
family needs? _____ Do you can your surplus? _____
About how many quarts? _____
8. How do you finance your farm business? _____
By cash _____ Credit _____ Work on other jobs _____
Check source of credit: _____ Bank _____ Merchant _____

Loan agency _____

Individual _____ Others _____

9. How many days did you work on jobs other than your farm? _____

_____ Estimated income \$ _____ Number days on the
farm _____.

10. Do you buy anything cooperatively with your neighbors?

List _____

11. Are you a member of a cooperative Association? _____

Name _____

Location _____

12. Acres Owned _____ Acres in crop _____ Acres in woodland _____

Permanent pasture _____ Tillable pasture _____ Acres operated
_____ acres rented _____.

13. What is the soil type? Sand _____ Clay _____ (bland or red)

Medium _____ Prairie _____.

14. Cash income from all sources \$ _____ Total debts \$ _____

At what interest are you charged for the use of the money you borrowed?

Livestock and livestock products

| Items | Units | Price Per Unit | Total Price | Value of item used at home |
|--------|-------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| HOGS | | | | |
| COWS | | | | |
| SHEEP | | | | |
| GOATS | | | | |
| HORSES | | | | |
| MULES | | | | |
| BUTTER | | | | |
| MILK | | | | |
| EGGS | | | | |

MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT

| No. | Item | Value at Beginning Year | Value of Purchase During Year | Total Value to Date |
|-----|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Wagon | | | |
| | Planter | | | |
| | Harrow | | | |
| | Cultivator | | | |
| | Rollers | | | |
| | Stalk Cutter | | | |
| | Mowers | | | |
| | Tractors | | | |
| | Sprayers | | | |
| | Trucks | | | |
| | Automobiles | | | |
| | Total | | | |

C R O P S

| Acres | Yield Per Acre | Total | Operator's Price Value | Landlord Sale | Family Use Value |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Cotton | | | | | |
| Corn for grain | | | | | |
| Corn for fodder | | | | | |
| Oats | | | | | |
| Clover | | | | | |
| Alfalfa | | | | | |
| Pens | | | | | |
| Peanuts | | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | |
| Sugar cane | | | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | |
| Sweet Potatoes | | | | | |
| Potatoes | | | | | |
| Melons | | | | | |
| Tomatoes | | | | | |
| Onions | | | | | |
| Cabbage | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | |