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State Agricultural Mobilization Committee meeting minutes

T. M. Patterson

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
State Agricultural Mobilization Committee
Post Office Box 1251
Jackson, Mississippi
January 15, 1952

MINUTES OF MEETING
OF
STATE AGRICULTURAL MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE

Date: January 10, 1952

Place: Offices of Mississippi Employment Security Commission
109 1/2 North State Street, Jackson, Mississippi

Members present:

C. L. Neill, Chairman, PMA, Jackson
F. J. Hurst, Farm Credit Administration, Jackson
R. L. Sullivan, Mississippi Employment Security Commission, Jackson
D. A. McCandliss, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Gulfport
T. B. Patherree, Farmers Home Administration, Jackson
Don Echols (representing Boswell Stevens), Mississippi Farm Bureau
Federation, Jackson
Dr. Clay Lyle, Division of Agriculture, State College
M. G. Field and J. T. Caldwell, Jr. (representing J. R. Owens), Fertilizer
Advisory Committee, Jackson
J. E. Weatherly (representing James Craig), State Forest Service, Jackson
J. A. Hardy, PMA State Committee, Columbus
G. A. Hopson, PMA State Committee, Michigan City
LeRoy P. Percy, PMA State Committee, Greenville
J. M. Sessions, PMA State Committee, Woodville
T. M. Patterson, Secretary, PMA, Jackson

Members absent:

W. W. Garrard, Jr., Delta Council, Indianola
J. S. Smith, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, Jackson
C. B. Anders, Soil Conservation Service, Jackson
E. R. DeSilvia, U. S. Forest Service, Jackson
W. C. Bruce, Agricultural Research Administration, Gulfport
J. A. Rogers, Mississippi Cottonseed Crushers Association, Jackson
S. R. Evans, Mississippi Seedsmen's Association, Greenwood
Charlie McNeil, Mississippi Federated Cooperatives, Jackson
H. E. Mauldin, Vocational Education, Jackson
Si Corley, State Department of Agriculture, Jackson
W. A. Martin, Rural Electrification Administration, Florida

Others present:

C. B. Cameron, Mississippi Employment Security Commission, Jackson
Lane Hart, Mississippi Employment Security Commission, Jackson
Duane Boeckkrans, Extension Service, State College
C. A. Barnett, PMA Fieldman, Starkville
J. W. Barnett, PMA Fieldman, New Albany
T. N. Barron, PMA Fieldman, Indianola
S. W. Sissell, PMA Fieldman, Jackson
W. T. Johnson, PMA Fieldman, Hattiesburg
Juanita Terry, PMA, Jackson

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J.M. Dean
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The meeting was called to order by the chairman at 10:05 a.m.

Mr. C. B. Cameron, Executive Director of the Mississippi Employment Security Commission, welcomed members of the committee and expressed appreciation of the opportunity of working with this group of agencies which are interested in agriculture. Mr. Cameron called attention to the importance of respecting the rights of states in the work of Federal-State agencies such as the Mississippi Employment Security Commission. He pointed up some of problems with which his agency is concerned, particularly migratory labor. He stressed the need for making full use of domestic labor and eliminating as nearly as possible use of Mexican labor. He paid tribute to those in the farm placement service of his organization who, through their interest in agriculture, have been responsible for the fine progress made in this field. Mr. Cameron stated that solutions of farm manpower problems could not have gotten to first base if it had not been for the help given by other agencies interested in agriculture and he said that it was this attitude of cooperation which is responsible for the progress being made in farm programs.

Mr. R. L. Sullivan, Director of the Employment Service Division of the Mississippi Employment Security Commission, presented an organizational chart of the Commission and explained it briefly. He pointed out that state offices are responsible to regional offices which in turn are responsible to Washington and that although all administrative funds come from the Federal Government, these funds are administered and expended by the states. He stated that the two main functions of the Commission are to find employment for job seekers and bring them together with employers who are seeking workers, and to make insurance payments to workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. Mr. Sullivan stated that since placement of farm workers is one of the duties of the Employment Service, his agency is anxious to cooperate with the State Agricultural Mobilization Committee in every way possible.

Farm Equipment Conservation

The chairman complimented the Extension Service, Vocational Agriculture, and everyone who has worked with farmers in the farm equipment conservation program. Although it appears that allocations of materials needed in the manufacture of farm machinery will not be too tight for the first two quarters of 1952, there are indications that the situation may be much worse in six or eight months. The State Agricultural Mobilization Committee urged the Extension Service, Vocational Agriculture, and others to continue their efforts to assist farmers in conservation of the machinery they have and in securing replacements where needed.

Insecticide Situation

Dr. Clay Lyle, Director of Division of Agriculture, State College, reported that the supply of cotton and livestock insecticides seems to be fairly adequate. Because no one knows what the demand will be, prices on insecticides have gone down 25 to 33% in the last month and it was pointed out that now is certainly the time for farmers to buy their insecticides.

Sulphur is the only material for which there probably will be a serious shortage, but since the use of sulphur in cotton insecticides is not recommended for Mississippi by the Mississippi State Experiment Station, this will not present such a great problem in Mississippi. It was pointed out that one of the reasons the demand for insecticides is very small at the present time is the fact that in many areas farmers have on hand a considerable supply left from last year. The State Agricultural Mobilization Committee requested that county mobilization committees be notified to urge farmers to purchase the insecticides they will need at an early date while the price is down.

Fertilizer Situation

Mr. J. T. Caldwell, Jr., and Mr. M. G. Field presented the storage problem facing fertilizer manufacturers. They pointed out that farmers' lack of interest in their fertilizer needs for next year has resulted in no demand for fertilizer at the present time. Consequently, fertilizer manufacturers have used all available storage space and are now faced with the possibility of having to cancel orders for basic materials because they have no place to store their product. Unless farmers begin immediately to purchase some fertilizer, it was predicted that there will be a serious shortage of mixed goods around March 1 when farmers really need it. Factors contributing to the lack of interest on the part of farmers in the immediate purchase of fertilizer are:

1. Farmers are undecided about acreage to be planted to cotton because they do not know what price they can expect to receive for the 1952 crop.
2. Cost of production of the 1951 cotton crop was so great that even though farmers received a good price for cotton, they do not have the money to buy their fertilizer for next year after all expenses of the 1951 crop have been paid.
3. Some farmers feel that the supply of fertilizer is adequate and there is no need to buy it now; they got all they wanted last year and think it can be done again this year.

Attention was called to the fact that fertilizer prices have gone up less proportionately than any other commodity farmers buy. Members of the Committee felt that this fact should be publicized. The State Agricultural Mobilization Committee requested that county mobilization committees be asked to urge farmers to buy their fertilizer as soon as possible, thus eliminating the possibility of a fertilizer shortage at planting time.

Labor Situation

Mr. Lane Hart, Chief of the Programs and Methods Section of the Employment Service Division, presented a brief analysis of the labor situation in Mississippi. He pointed out that according to figures developed in his department, 1,230,250 acres of cotton for the Delta can be chopped with the available labor supply and without importing any Mexican labor.

Establishment of a branch office in Memphis has made available to the Delta a large labor force which will offset the use of Mexican labor for this activity; last fall approximately 2000 workers were available from this area compared with about 250 the previous year. It appears, however, that this acreage of cotton cannot be picked unless labor is available from some source not now known. It is believed that 1,100,000 acres of cotton for the Delta as recommended by the State Agricultural Productive Capacity Committee can be picked with the available labor supply if mechanical pickers can be used to the same extent they were used this year; however, these pickers were used more this year than ever before. On the basis of acreage goals set for cotton by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, it is estimated Mississippi would be approximately 9,800 workers short.

One thousand mechanical pickers were used this year; of this number, 300 are now out west and it is estimated that about 125 of these will not be returned. Farmers in Mississippi were able to buy last year only slightly more than 100 mechanical pickers and dealers have been cut to about 33% of the 1951 allocation for 1952 so there probably will be not more than 30 to 40 mechanical pickers available for replacements.

Mr. Hart pointed out that increased production in the Hills this year delayed until around October 1 the availability of the labor force from that area and by that time, due to the early crop in the Delta, these workers were not needed. He emphasized the need for closer cooperation between Hill and Delta farmers so that Mississippi money now being paid to Mexican labor could be saved for Mississippi laborers. He stated that it was much more profitable to Mississippi to pay good dollars to our own workers if they are available, than to pay it to Mexican Nationals. He expressed the hope that through the help of the county people a program of closer cooperation can be developed. The chairman assured the Employment Service of the cooperation of this Committee in trying to solve farm placement problems.

Production Goals for 1952

The chairman, in accordance with authority granted him by the Committee at its December meeting, appointed the following to serve on a committee to make plans and map out procedures to be followed in carrying to farmers of Mississippi the production needs for 1952: M. S. Shaw, Extension, chairman; A. P. Fathorree, Vocational Agriculture; C. B. Anders, Soil Conservation Service; Boswell Stevens, Farm Bureau; C. W. Sullivan, Production and Marketing Administration.

There was considerable discussion of the necessity for a 16-million-bale cotton crop for 1952. Dr. Clay Lyle, Director of the Agriculture Division, Mississippi State College, insisted that the livestock-feed-pasture program should go forward uninterrupted. The following telegram from Mr. W. M. Garrard, Jr., representing Delta Council, received by the chairman during the meeting was read:

REGRET UNABLE TO ATTEND MEETING TODAY, STILL FIRMLY OPPOSED TO 16 MILLION BALE CROP AS TOO LARGE FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, EXPORT AND NORMAL CARRYOVER. SURPLUS ABOVE NORMAL CARRYOVER CAN BRING ONLY LOWER PRICES IN THE FACE OF HIGHER COST, ULTIMATELY SPELLING DISASTER FOR COTTON FARMERS. SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE HAS THE AUTHORITY TO INCREASE SUPPORT PRICES. IF HE BELIEVES THE NEED FOR 16 MILLION BALE CROP, IT IS HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT FARMERS FROM PRICE DISASTER.

It was definitely felt by members of the Committee that if cotton farmers are expected to go all-out to meet this production goal, they should be given greater protection.

The chairman reported that he had written the Cotton Branch of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and talked with the Under Secretary of Agriculture at a recent New Orleans meeting conveying the views expressed by members of the State Agricultural Mobilization Committee at their December meeting.

Mr. Don Echols of the Mississippi Farm Bureau stated that Directors of Farm Bureaus in cotton-producing states are attending a meeting called by the American Farm Bureau to consider the parity formula. He stated that he believed the Secretary of Agriculture would be asked to have hearings to see whether or not a 16-million-bale cotton crop is needed.

It was pointed out that cotton is a commodity absolutely necessary to the defense effort and if the Secretary of Agriculture so desires, he has authority to call these hearings. Members of the State Agricultural Mobilization Committee recommended that these hearings be held. Attention was again called to the fact that the cost of producing one acre of cotton is equal to the value of one acre of land, thus emphasizing the necessity for greater protection to cotton farmers who are expected to go all-out to produce a 16-million-bale crop in 1952.

The State Agricultural Mobilization Committee feels that maximum production on every acre of land in accordance with sound land-use policies should be emphasized and that county mobilization committees should be urged to encourage farmers to use better practices in order to receive maximum productivity from their efforts.

The secretary called attention to recent changes in some production goals as a result of the revision of crop acres based on the recent census bench marks.

The chairman emphasized the importance of the job assigned to the committee to formulate plans for carrying to farmers the necessity of all-out production and pledged the cooperation of all agencies represented on the Committee in this effort. The Committee requested the secretary to write county mobilization committees requesting that they urge farmers to buy their fertilizer and insecticides at an early date and that they begin immediately to make plans for getting behind this production effort.

The State Agricultural Mobilization Committee accepted the invitation of the Mississippi Farm Bureau to hold its next meeting on Thursday, February 7, in the Farm Bureau office.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

C. E. Neill, Chairman

T. H. Patterson, Secretary