

CHAPTER XV

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

1. Agriculture and Industry

Writing about the United States tropics during the 1930's one traveler found that the Everglades are now somewhat better understood ". . . [though] there are still large portions of them that remain unexplored, virgin territory-- America's last frontier."¹ Another traveler observed "a new race of pioneers . . . creating a fertile agricultural region in the heavy soil of the Everglades," where the real story of this "American Valley of the Nile" did not start until 1929.²

Prior to 1939 seventy-five percent of the farms in the lake region of the upper Everglades were operated on a tenant basis.³ An economic study made in 1928 on Florida's chances to recover from the 1926 land boom collapse stated that

. . . except for speculative farming the Everglades is to a large extent an experiment. . . . Thus far, most of the Everglades farming has been done by speculative operators who hope to combat the winter frost successfully and bring

1 John E. Jennings, Jr., Our American Tropics, 51.

2 Jane D. Floyd, "Magic Farms of the Everglades," Travel, LXVIII (January, 1937), 25. An example of the fertility of the 'Glades and consequent growth of vegetation has given the following story to the local folklore. "Two Negro boys were planting corn and found it was sprouting as fast as they dropped their seed. One boy called to the other to sit on the row, so that it wouldn't grow to fodder before they finished planting. The next day the sitter dropped down a note reading: Passed through heaven yesterday at 12:15 sellin' roastin' ears to the angels." Theodore Pratt; "Land of the Jook," Saturday Evening Post, CCXIII (April 16, 1941), 21.

3 L. LeMar Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," Economic Geography, XX (April, 1944), 84.

their crops to market at the height of the winter, when other sections of continental United States are not producing. 4

Illustrative of this speculation is the comment that the Everglades growers were not farmers but

. . . soil miners gambling with nature in a speculation usually financed by northern commission houses, which furnish seed and capital, if need be, and take their profit in the handling of the crop. Not many of the growers own their lands; they lease it for one year, usually shifting to another tract the next year. They are, therefore, tenant farmers. They prefer to lease because their gamble is less and because taxes are high--as many as four drainage taxes on each acre at some points. 5

These migrant agrarians, newcomers to the region, were often called "suit case farmers" since many of them entered the section, leased land, and lived out of a suit case until their crops were made and sold in sixty days, more or less. 6 The hazards of the Okeelanta, island, and lake shore pioneers were overcome to some extent through trial and error, the information from the state experiment station, and better water control.

4 M. S. Rukeyser; "Is Florida Coming Back?" World's Work, LV (March, 1928); 478.

5 Theodore Pratt, "Land of the Jook," Saturday Evening Post, CCXIII (April 26, 1941), 21. In the winter of 1935 one farmer made \$150,000 on 150 acres of cabbage, bringing his cabbages to harvesting point after all others had been rained out. "The land was with him and God watched his water table." See also J. D. Floyd, "Magic Farms of the Everglades," loc. cit., 49. Another grower made \$40,000 on beans when crops in Florida and other states were generally frozen. Ibid., 27.

6 L. E. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," loc. cit., 83.

Autumn rainstorms accompanied by high winds in 1929 produced flood conditions throughout the Everglades. On September 28 the winds reached a velocity of forty miles an hour at Belle Glade and sixty miles an hour at Miami, resulting in a hurricane scare.⁷ On September 27 the big lake stood at an elevation of 13.7 feet, and on October 5 the level read 14.6, with rainfall during that period varying from 5.2 inches west of Deerfield to 13 inches west of Miami. The heavy rains beat down seed beds throughout the area and damaged 12,000 acres of sugar cane.⁸ On October 23 a joint meeting of the commissioners of the drainage and flood control districts was held at Miami to see what could be done to relieve the flooded lands in the southern 'Glades. The two boards decided to make \$50,000 available for emergency relief in the area west of Miami, \$15,000 for the area west of Ft. Lauderdale, and \$5,000 for the Snake Creek Canal section.⁹

The gradual installation of pumping units by sub-drainage districts or private owners has clearly demonstrated

⁷ University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1930, 114. The storms of the fall kept the water levels too high, but the worst conditions were due to the out of season rains in April which backed a two foot head of water in the Hillsboro Canal against the station. Ibid., 114-116. See also F. C. Elliot, "Effects of Recent Storm in Everglades Section," Florida Engineer and Contractor, V (October, 1929), 156.

⁸ F. C. Elliot; "Effects of Recent Storm in Everglades Section," loc. cit., 156;

⁹ E. D. D. "Minutes," VII, October 23, 1929.

the inability of the earlier agricultural efforts to drain the lands by gravity toward the arterial canals. Electric or fuel oil driven turbine-type pumps have been satisfactory for water control on sections from a few hundred to a thousand acres, while heavy-duty Diesels drive wood-screw pumps to control the water levels on areas up to 10,000 acres.¹⁰

The seven principal Sub-Drainage districts adjacent to Lake Okeechobee, extending from Moore Haven to Canal Point, are political subdivisions of the State of Florida, and have been created under General or Special Acts of Legislature as integral units of the Everglades Drainage District. They embrace a reclaimed area of some 95,400 acres, have 19 pumping units, employing engines totalling 5,000 horsepower and having a combined capacity for handling approximately 1,780,000 gallons of water per minute.¹¹

In 1929 acreage in crops in the Everglades reached a total of 42,400 with 17,150 in vegetables and 25,250 in sugar cane.¹² Packing methods began a shift from the field

¹⁰ B. S. Clayton, "Peat Soil Problems in the Everglades," Florida Grower, XLIII (September, 1935), 10.

¹¹ H. A. Bestor, "Reclamation Problems of Sub-Drainage Districts Adjacent to Lake Okeechobee," loc. cit., 160. "We have been requested to start the pumps in practically all the units immediately after the recent rains: To us, this proves that we have been able to maintain a fair water table through syphoning during the recent dry season. This, of course, is what we are attempting to do for our taxpayers." Statement of J. F. Scullen, Manager of the South Florida Conservancy District, Belle Glade Herald, November 1, 1940.

¹² E. D. D. "Minutes," January 2, 1930. The 1930 census counted 9,054 people in the Upper 'Glades as follows: Canal Point, 2,475; Pahokee, 2,735; Chosen, 700; Belle Glade, 1,043; South Bay, 756; and Ritta, 345. The Pahokee area numbered 187 farms, Canal Point 108, Belle Glade 29, South Bay 17, and Ritta 21. Everglades News, June 20, 1930. Clewiston and Moore Haven were not considered in this tabulation published by Howard Sharp.

to the packing house in 1930 with the first installation of a bean grading machine on the L. L. Stuckey property at Canal Point.¹³ Another event of the 1929-1930 season was the establishment of the State Sub-Tropical Experiment Station at Miami to work on the introduction, propagation, and culture problems of trees, shrubs, and fruits adaptable to South Florida.¹⁴

Three discoveries in the late 1920's "made it possible to develop thousands of acres of otherwise useless land."¹⁵ Copper sulphate to cure "muck sickness" or the toxic acids which caused the "reclaiming disease" of the crops of the early settlers, manganese for the prevention of yellowing and failure of snap beans, and zinc spraying to supply deficiencies of this element were the open sesame to truly productive farming in the Everglades.

By 1939, Palm Beach County was producing approximately thirty percent of Florida's vegetables, and was said by 1945 to produce more vegetables than any other county in the

¹³ Everglades News, January 11, 1930.

¹⁴ University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1930, 136-137. It was reported that the Brown Company spent more money on Everglades research and experimentation in 1927 than did the State of Florida. E. H. Taylor, "Florida's Question Marks," loc. cit., 21.

¹⁵ Harold Severson; "Her 1,000 Acre Salad Bowl," Nation's Business, XXXIII (March, 1945), 88-90. The 1937-1938 season witnessed 7,000 carloads of vegetables passing through Canal Point alone. Everglades News, May 6, 1938.

16

United States. A seasonal breakdown showed the muck lands lying fallow in the summer months until August when fall plowing begins, with planting of beans, potatoes, and celery in the weeks from the middle of September to Christmas. The winter months were the heavy producers of celery, cabbage, and sweet peas, while the spring months brought a second peak of beans, tomatoes, and more celery. From a test planting in 1930, Palm Beach County had become the second county in Florida in celery production by 1945.

17

Since 1930 the shift has been from tenancy to farm ownership in the Upper 'Glades. Land cultivation in Palm Beach County increased 132% in the decade from 1930 to 1940, while in the same period farm ownership increased 241%.

18

Since 1940 the shift in land utility has been from tenancy to a cash basis and outright ownership with settlement

16 L. L. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," loc. cit.; 79; Harold Severson, "Her 1,000 Acre Salad Bowl," loc. cit., 88. Palm Beach county moved 13,400 carloads of vegetables in 1940-41; almost a third of the crop moved by truck. L. L. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," loc. cit.; 79.

17 Harold Severson, "Her 1,000 Acre Salad Bowl," loc. cit., 90; University of Florida Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1939, 149. The first commercial celery production was in 1934, and by 1939 there were 800 acres in the stalk.

18 L. L. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," loc. cit., 84. Of 110,000 acres in production in 1943, 75,000 were in vegetables, 30,000 in sugar cane, and 5,000 in pastures, citrus, and other usage. Joseph T. Elvove, "The Florida Everglades--A Region of New Settlement," Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics, XIX (November, 1943), 468.

encouraged by the levee construction along the lake shore. The overall size of holdings has increased, but there are many farms of ten to forty acres in profitable cultivation; nonetheless, the area lends itself to industrialization on a mechanized plane to the extent that Palm Beach County has been said to lead the nation in this respect.¹⁹

The ideal size for a farm in the Everglades, according to economists who have studied the area, is 640 acres. The average cost for raw land is figured at \$30 an acre, with preparation, ditching, and pumping equipment averaging \$45 an acre, plus \$35,000 for equipment, housing, and miscellaneous machinery.²⁰ Total production costs for cash rental farming have been figured at \$100 an acre broken down as follows: rent, \$10-\$15; fertilizers, \$5-\$6; preparation of soil, \$5; planting, \$18; harvest, \$32; packing, \$30. The average snap bean farm has been 280 acres, with receipts of \$19,584, expenses of \$14,747, and a return of \$4,837 for an August-May operation.²¹

The trend in 1945 was toward diversification on the

¹⁹ Harold Severson, "Her 1,000 Acre Salad Bowl," *loc. cit.*, 88. Fifteen growers farmed from one to three thousand acres apiece in 1945 in Palm Beach County.

²⁰ L. L. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," *loc. cit.*, 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 97. The 4,000 acres planted to celery from 1936 to 1940 reflected the following net average returns to each celery grower: in 1936-1937, \$6,500; 1938-1939, \$12,500; 1939-1940, \$20,000.

large holdings, illustrated by Mrs. Ruth Wedgworth of Belle Glade who planted 400 acres in Irish potatoes, 175 acres in celery, and 425 acres in peas, cabbage, sugar cane, corn, escarole, and pasturage for finishing steers.

. . . in addition to growing carloads of vegetables she packs and markets her neighbors' crops: She has her own fertilizer and mixing plant, a packing house covering 48,000 square feet, and a precooling plant. More than 1,500 carloads of vegetables were shipped from her plant in 1943.

The trend toward diversification has been brought about by the desire to stabilize financial returns, provide for soil conservation, find summer use for the lands, encourage year-round labor demand, and process local produce. Four items hold out promise for staple crops: sugar, starch, stock finishing, and fiber.

Sugar has been established; starch from sweet potatoes is in the experimental stage; and ramie for fiber production is still presenting problems of harvesting and decortication. Stock finishing offers a good profit in beef production with the introduction of Brahma cattle, a species which can cope

22 Harold Severson, "Her 1,000 Acre Salad Bowl," loc. cit., 88. Another diversified crop in the vegetable line was found in the shipment of 140 carloads of radishes in 1940, harvested 22 days after being planted. Theodore Pratt, "Land of the Jook," loc. cit., 21.

23 Harold Severson, "Her 1,000 Acre Salad Bowl," loc. cit., 90.

24 L. L. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," loc. cit., 101. In 1942 a \$100,000 cannery began operation in Belle Glade contracting for 2,500 acres of beans, tomatoes, celery, spinach, beets, and small potatoes to pack up to 750,000 cases of vegetables. Ibid., 100.

25 Ibid., 90.

with the vagaries of a wet sub-tropical climate and the pests common to it, as well as thrive on Fara, Napier, Bahia, Dallis, and other grasses used for pastures.²⁶ The United States Sugar Corporation has encouraged the use of its molasses by-product mixed with orange pulp from the citrus canneries of central Florida for cattle finishing or fattening.²⁷ Many Everglades farmers purchase steers from Florida ranchers to fatten on the Everglades grasses, especially during the dry winter months when pastures further north are dormant.²⁸

The Everglades problems of drainage, crops, fertilizers, and subsidence have been conquered to some extent though they are far from solved. The day of speculative farming has largely passed; though an occasional farmer may make an amazing profit, as many or more may lose everything. "The more able (or luckier) of the early speculators have become large-scale growers. Newcomers have appeared with adequate capital to finance large operations."²⁹

²⁶ L. L. Stephan, "Vegetable Production in the Northern Everglades," loc. cit., 90-91; J. T. Elvove, "The Florida Everglades: A Region of New Settlement," loc. cit., 467; University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Reports, 1932, 164-212; 1936, 115-140; 1939, 149; 1940, 167.

²⁷ United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 12.

²⁸ Orlando Morning Sentinel, April 2, 1941; May 19, 1946. "While on most unimproved Florida pasture it takes 10 acres to care for one cow in the Everglades two cows not only are able to survive on one acre, but they can also be fattened..." Al Cody, "Florida Cattle."

²⁹ Joan Pascal and Harold Tipton, "Vegetable Production in the Everglades," 1942 Migration Hearings, 12952. This article, exhibit number thirteen of the hearings, is by far the best material available on Everglades farming in the 1940's. Ibid., 12888-12955.

One large grower told the committee investigating national defense migration in South Florida in 1942 that it was his

. . . studied opinion, after watching in the aggregate over 100,000 acres of vegetable farming, that the same amount of intelligence, effort, and capital put into farming ventures in the Everglades as in other business will provide a greater profit. 30

The sugar operations of the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company on the muck lands of the Pelican Lake drainage district, and in the mill which was erected at Canal Point, were suspended in 1925 on account of the flooding of the fields and the consequent destruction of the cane crops. 31

At that time no one connected with the enterprise or in the Everglades generally appreciated fully the necessity for adequate water control and the Canal Point operation was virtually abandoned by 1925 when B. J. Dahlberg, then and now head of the Celotex Co., of Chicago, was induced to survey the Everglades section with a view to growing cane as a source of additional bagasse for Celotex. 32

As a result of the inspection the Dahlberg-Celotex interests purchased outright or on option some 100,000 acres along the lakeshore, including the fields and mill of the Florida Sugar and Food Products Company. 33 Local flood

30 J. Pascal and H. Tipton, "Vegetable Production in the Everglades," loc cit., 12953.

31 House of Representatives Documents, Number 215, 70 Congress, 1 Session, 38.

32 Statement of J. E. Beardsley, 1942 Migration Hearings, 12564.

33 Ibid., 12564; Charles W. Wood, "The Florida Town that Sugar Built," Forbes, XXII (July 15, 1928), 22. The reasons advanced for the 1925 sugar cane development in the Everglades included a chance to beat the world sugar market, to make America self-sufficient, and the urge of Florida investments to make good. Ibid., 21.

control and drainage work was carried on for two years before the land was planted to cane in the 1927-1928 season. Organizing an auxiliary company under the name of the Southern Sugar Company the Dahlberg interests purchased the Hialeah mill of the Pennsylvania Sugar Company and combined it with the Canal Point mill at Clewiston.³⁴

Along with the wallboard and sugar companies the Clewiston Sales Company was organized to plan and build a residential and resort city near the site of the transplanted sugar mill at Clewiston. By 1928 the townsite boasted two modern hotels,³⁵ a half dozen stores, a newspaper, and a garage. Tractors and special machinery for planting, cultivating, and hauling cane to the loading platforms were used to place the field operations on a mechanized basis. Cane grinding began in the Clewiston mill on January 14, 1929; and 12,969 tons of cane produced 745 tons of ninety-six percent sugar; in 1929-1930, 202,011 tons of cane produced 14,468 tons of sugar; and in 1930-1931, 351,051 tons of cane produced 26,465 tons of sugar.³⁶

34 F. P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," Exhibit Number 14, 1942 Migration Hearings, 12957-12958. This article, done in conjunction with the hearings is an excellent survey of the Everglades sugar operations. Ibid.; 12955-12976. See also Everglades News, July 15, December 30, 1927.

35 C. W. Wood, "The Florida Town that Sugar Built," loc. cit., 22; Everglades News, July 15, 1927.

36 F. P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12958; Everglades News, August 1, 1930.

The Clewiston mill was originally constructed to grind 1,500 tons of cane per day, and was increased to 4,000 tons per day in 1930.³⁷ In July, 1930, however, the Southern Sugar Company was thrown into receivership because of the collapse of the stock market, decline in sugar price, and the high stages of water which flooded some of the cane fields.³⁸

The collapse of the several efforts to produce sugar profitably can be attributed to the trial and error method of the early corporate enterprises in dealing with drainage, storms, fertilization, propagation, and the search for high sugar content and disease resisting plants.

The general sugar situation did not create a favorable milieu for Florida's infant industry. During the twenties when governments throughout the world were subsidizing beet-sugar production, and technological improvements as well as intensive industrialization increased the output of raw cane sugar, excessive supplies accumulated and prices of sugar dropped steadily. The depression of 1929 completely overturned a number of sugar enterprises which were already tottering. 39

The Southern Sugar Company continued in receivership until December 7, 1931, when Charles Stewart Mott and

37 "Country's Largest Sugar Mill Completed in Florida Everglades," Manufacturer's Record, XCVII (February 6, 1930), 69.

38 Everglades News, July 4, 1930. Assets were listed at \$20,000,000 and debts at \$4,500,000. "The Dahlberg enterprise was predicated upon the sale of additional stock for increase in capital and, following the 1929 crash it was impossible to continue the sale of stock so the company . . . was thrown into bankruptcy." 1942 Migration Hearings, 12564.

39 F. F. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12957-12958. See also J. E. Dalton, Sugar: A Case Study of Government Control, 42-52.

Clarence Bitting bought the property at a court insolvency sale and reorganized as the United States Sugar Corporation.⁴⁰ The corporation had 12,000 acres in cane in 1932 and planned for 16,000 acres in 1933.⁴¹ This corporation accounts for some ninety-five percent of Florida's sugar production. The following table records its progress since the first harvest.

Harvest:	Tons of cane	Tons of 96% raw sugar	Yield percent sugar in cane	Tons of cane per acre	Tons of 96% raw sugar per acre	
1931-1932	292,228	23,913	8.11	22.53	1.83	
1932-1933	410,882	36,501	8.89	34.31	3.04	
1933-1934	452,797	40,184	8.91	34.90	3.05	
1934-1935	350,742	25,791	7.35	29.02	2.14	
1935-1936	451,369	39,268	8.72	35.55	3.09	
1936-1937	529,156	48,736	9.21	35.29	3.24	
1937-1938	582,834	53,246	9.13	35.02	3.09	
1938-1939	805,455	85,663	10.66	38.56	4.11	
1939-1940	663,232	65,101	9.32	37.90	3.72	
1940-1941	873,809	91,767	10.50	33.73	3.54	42

⁴⁰ Everglades News, September 11, 18; November 5; December 4, 11; 1931. Mott, a former vice-president of General Motors, had been the largest stockholder of the Southern Sugar Company. Ibid., November 5, 1931.

⁴¹ Everglades News, March 25, 1932. Experiments in rodent control brought to light estimated losses of \$250,000 for the 1930-1931 sugarcane season. University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1931, 161-162.

⁴² F. P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12962. The decline of the percent of raw sugar per acre for the last two years noted was attributed to the fact that the company was experimenting with new types of cane in order to lengthen the harvest. Ibid., 12961. The decline in tonnage ground in 1935 was caused by a severe cold wave which froze thousands of acres of cane and made many crops a total loss. The temperature fell to 13° F. in the 'Glades on December 10, 1934. University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1935, 110-112.

The success of this [corporation] together with that of experiments made by the Department of Agriculture in the growing of cane, prove that sugar can be raised, ground, and delivered to the refinery at a lower cost per pound in Florida than any other part of the United States or her possessions. 43

Sugar legislation has hampered the expansion of Florida sugar lands and production has been stymied by various federal laws. Under the several clauses of the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934 sugar producers in the continental cane and beet areas received benefit payments from processing taxes based on marketing quotas. In 1936 in the Hoosac Mills Case the Supreme Court declared the tax-benefit sections of the act unconstitutional, but some form of restrictive legislation existed until after Pearl Harbor. 44

Writing in 1937, a former chief of the Sugar Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and professor in the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration found that there was

. . . no better example in the contemporary economic and political scene of the close relationship between government and business than that found in the case of the Florida raw cane sugar industry. Since its inception in

43 J. E. Jennings, Jr., Our American Tropics, 56. As one writer put it, "Cane and Everglades are mates. . . ." Robert McCormick, "Lavish Land," Collier's, CX (August 8, 1942), 65. "The 10,000 acres of reclaimed land now in cane make a mere dot on the map of the total area that may eventually be devoted to cane culture. . . ." "Everglades Sugar," Business Week, (February 13, 1937), 35.

44 J. E. Dalton, Sugar: A Case Study of Government Control, 97-98, 138-140, 143-144, 187, 300.

1929 it has spent three years under a tariff system, two years under a quota system with benefit payments, and one year under a quota system with Soil Conservation payments. Its future will be uncertain until some permanent sugar policy is adopted by Congress. But with its low cost, the Florida industry is in as favorable a position as any sugar industry, continental or insular, to operate successfully under a policy of unlimited production without direct benefit payments. 45

As early as 1937 Clarence Bitting, president of the United States Sugar Corporation, was pointing out the fact that the army and navy listed sugar as a critical war time material and that the nation was then dependent on "offshore areas for three-quarters of this vital necessity of life."⁴⁶

Florida, paying higher wages than any other area supplying the American [sugar] market can produce sugar at lower costs than any other area under the American flag and can match costs with Cuba. Florida the highest wage area is also the lowest cost area. 47

It was not until after the United States had been at war some months that the Florida Everglades cane growers were allowed to grow beyond the quota set for the state, and by that time the necessary labor and essential grinding and refining machinery were impossible to obtain. The sugar

45 J. E. Dalton, Sugar: A Case Study of Government Control, 187.

46 Clarence R. Bitting, "What Sugar Means to Florida," Southern Banker, LXX (May, 1938), 14. The sugar executive asked that Florida be allowed to supply 10% of the U. S. supply and predicted that if this were done 500,000 more people could live in comfort in South Florida.

47 Ibid., 13.

profit in Florida reached almost eleven percent on the net worth of the United States Sugar Corporation in 1939.⁴⁸

From the beginning of the restrictive legislation in 1934 attempts have been made by Florida's governors, congressmen, legislatures, and private individuals to defeat any quota system, but the forces of other producers have been too strong for the infant industry of Florida to buck.⁴⁹

Speaking before a special sub-committee of the Agriculture Committee of the federal House of Representatives in March, 1937, the president of the United States Sugar Corporation recommended a three point plan for sugar legislation. It is as follows: (1) there should be no restriction on continental production of a vital food of which 75% was imported; (2) there should be no tax imposed on a vital food necessity of the people; and (3) benefit payments should be reduced and should be made to operators of family sized farms.⁵⁰

In 1941 the sugar market of the United States was

⁴⁸ Palm Beach Post, December 30, 1939. In the same year the Clewiston corporation received benefit payments from the federal government of \$470,007, which represented the second largest payment made that year.

⁴⁹ Everglades News, February 16, 23, 1934, March 5, 26, 1937, June 30, December 1, 29, 1939.

⁵⁰ United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 53-54. Writing in 1941 in his column "The Washington Treadmill," Frank A. Kennedy reported on April 13 that "the western beet-sugar bloc, which always has been strong enough to quell the rebel tendencies of the Florida Congressional delegation, seems to be playing its same old game." Orlando Morning Sentinel, April 13, 1941.

divided according to production areas:

Philippines	15.41%	plus 100%	home market	
Cuba	28.60%	"	"	"
Hawaii	14.04%	"	"	"
Porto Rico	11.94%	"	"	"
U.S. Beet Sugar	23.19%			
Louisiana Cane Sugar	5.25%			
Florida	"	"	less than 1%	51

The 1939 session of the Florida legislature submitted a memorial, approved by the governor on April 17, 1939, to the President and Congress petitioning an increase in the sugar quota allotment for Florida, citing the fact that the Cuban share of the United States market was twenty-eight percent to Florida's less than one percent share.⁵²

The United States Sugar Corporation purchased about ten percent of its cane from independent growers in 1941 and previous years. The cane was contracted for under a cooperative agreement at a price averaging \$3 a ton, depending upon the sucrose content and the price of raw sugar on the New York markets.⁵³ The independent growers participated in the profits and benefits of the sugar house and its research program without providing any capital for such privileges. According to the reports of the Clewiston corporation, several hundred

51 United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 55. "We pass laws to keep aliens from our shores, and then pass other laws guaranteeing our market to exploiters of foreign peon labor." Orlando (Florida) Reporter-Star, October 30, 1940.

52 Laws of Florida, 1939, 1669-1670.

53 United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 31-33; F. P. Manuel, "Sugar Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12963.

other 'Glades farmers wanted to supply the mill with cane but were unable to do so under the sugar quota system.⁵⁴

Many of the farmers in the Belle Glade Pahokee area, now limited to the production of winter vegetables in competition with peonage production in foreign countries, are desirous of an opportunity to diversify their production and at the same time obtain an assured cash crop. In an attempt to improve their own situation through their own efforts, many such farmers joined in the organization of the Florida Cooperative Sugar Association for the purpose of erecting a sugar house to grind their own sugar cane and to further such purpose pledged over 12,000 acres to cane production [in 1938]. Unfortunately the Federal Government has, so far, denied these American farmers the right to supply the non-surplus needs of their fellow Americans. 55

Senator Claude Pepper of Florida and other members of the Florida delegation at Washington worked toward the establishment of an independent sugar house in the form of a cooperative in 1941 and 1942, but it has appeared that their efforts have come to naught.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 32.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁵⁶ Orlando Morning Sentinel, March 9, 1941; February 2, March 22, April 19, 1942. During the 1945-1946 grinding season the Clewiston sugar house announced a record 1,020,000 gross tons of cane processed, producing 190,000,000 pounds of sugar. ". . . approximately 30,000 acres of cane were cut and handled with more than 400 freight car loads of cane moving in daily from the company's 12 plantations extending some 50 miles through the Everglades." Orlando Morning Sentinel, May 5, 1946. See also Ibid., May 19, 1946.

2. The Conservation Movement

With the development of the Dahlberg-Celotex and Southern Sugar interests around the shore of Lake Okeechobee from Canal Point to Clewiston the future looked bright for Miami to capitalize on the hinterland as a purchasing area.⁵⁷ Agitation for a barge or truck line from the lake section to Miami to haul proposed sugar tonnage resulted in surveys of the North New River Canal by the government engineers. These surveys were unfavorable. Failure to receive federal support on canal improvement through the lower Everglades caused the advocates of better transportation facilities to turn to highway construction. On May 24, 1929,

Dr. Thomas E. Will appeared before the Trustees and requested that the remainder of the land which the Trustees had set aside for Palm Beach County, being approximately 1,500 acres, be converted into cash and the amount realized from said sale be applied on the construction of a road along the North Canal and on necessary work in the canal. 58

Will continued to work on getting a highway built along the banks of the Lauderdale Canal through the Everglades wilderness to the metropolitan area of the lower east coast.⁵⁹ On July 3, 1935, Will wrote the Everglades News that the Florida

⁵⁷ Miami News, June 10, 1928.

⁵⁸ I. I. B. Minutes, XVIII, 111. Acting on Will's request the Trustees instructed the chief drainage engineer to make a report as to cost, with further action deferred until adjournment of the legislature.

⁵⁹ Everglades News, July 27, 1934.

State Road Department had allotted \$450,000 to be spent on the Okeechobee-Miami highway, state route number twenty-six, and that he understood a bridge would be built across the Bolles Canal, "right by my door in Okeelanta where I'm staying much of the time, staging a comeback."⁶⁰ In the fall of 1935 the Everglades Drainage District deeded a strip one hundred feet wide along the canal bank to the Florida State Road Department and a year later the Internal Improvement Fund Trustees granted a right of way through their lands for the same purpose.⁶¹

On February 12, 1937, Will wrote a long letter to the Everglades News on the progress of the highway being constructed through Okeelanta to Miami.⁶² Almost a month later death brought a close to the career of Thomas Elmer Will, of whom it was said: ". . . the Everglades lost not only one of its oldest settlers and pioneer developers, but an ardent champion for all worthwhile improvements, and a recognized authority on Everglades affairs."⁶³

⁶⁰ Everglades News, July 5, 1935. Under the Federal Works Program \$145,000 was appropriated for bridge building on road 26. Miami Herald, July 2, 1935.

⁶¹ Everglades News, September 27, 1935; I.I.B. Minutes, XXI, 16-19. In March of 1936 the Florida State Road Department allotted \$662,000 to the construction of road 26. Everglades News, March 27, 1936.

⁶² Everglades News; February 12, 1937.

⁶³ Ibid., March 12, 1937. "Whereas, during his lifetime the late Honorable Thomas E. Will gave unstintingly of his time and means in the promotion of the building of a road from Lake Okeechobee area to the East Coast of Florida, and "Whereas, as a result of his untiring efforts State Road No. 26 is now in process of construction, and will soon be open to traffic, and

The Thomas E. Will Memorial Highway built at a cost of \$1,500,000 was opened on April 11, 1941, thus providing growers of the area around Lake Okeechobee a direct route through the Everglades to the ports of the southeast Florida coast.⁶⁴

The growth of the Everglades development is indicated by its largest county whose

. . . population . . . in 1920 was only 18,600 persons. One-quarter of a century later the population [was] 112,300. In 1920 the value of all vegetables produced in the State was less than \$16,000,000.00. Today Palm Beach County produces annually vegetables valued at \$30,000,000.00, in addition to an estimated sugar crop value of \$8,000,000.00. 65

From the status of a village Belle Glade grew in eight years, 1929 to 1937, to a town with paved streets, a \$37,000 high school, \$87,000 water plant, cold storage plant, modern

"Whereas, the public is desirous of expressing its gratitude for the services rendered in this connection by the Honorable Thomas E. Will, Therefore, be it resolved that State Road No. 26 from South Bay to Ft. Lauderdale and Miami be designated and known as the Thomas E. Will Memorial Highway." House Concurrent Resolution Number 17, Laws of Florida, 1937.

64 Palm Beach Post, April 12, 1941; Orlando Morning Sentinel, April 11, 1941; Orlando Reporter-Star, April 12, 1941.

65 The Water Control Committee of Palm Beach County Resources Development Board, Report on Water Control for Palm Beach County, 1945-1946, 3. Hereinafter cited as Palm Beach Water Control Report. In 1943 there were 17,000 year-round residents in Moore Haven, Clewiston, South Bay, Belle Glade, Pahokee, and Canal Point and 90,000 to 100,000 acres were under agricultural control, though more than 80% was never in cultivation at one time. John H. Davis, Jr., The Natural Features of Southern Florida, Especially the Vegetation, and the Everglades, 286.

airport, and "handsome churches of all denominations." ⁶⁶545

One of the last frontiers of the United States to be opened and exploited, the Everglades had presented the typical sociological picture in its development from the pioneer stage of "get-rich-quick" schemes to a region of substantial industry. The big demand for seasonal labor in the harvesting, packing, and milling of the winter vegetable and sugar cane crops has been accompanied by several unpleasant corollaries. ⁶⁷ Since the season lasts less than six months, most of the field and packing house work has ⁶⁸ been done by migratory labor.

Within the last decade the labor situation in the area has been the subject of publicity because of the squalid living conditions of many of the laborers and their families. In 1942 the House of Representatives Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration sent members of its field staff to Florida, authorizing them to take testimony

⁶⁶ J. D. Floyd, "Magic Farms of the Everglades," loc. cit., 27. The neighboring settlement of Pahokee was described as a "boom town" in 1938. Don Waters, Outboard Cruising, 42.

⁶⁷ J. Pascal and H. G. Tipton, "Vegetable Production in Florida," loc. cit., 12940-12943. Attention is again called to the authoritative research and writing of this survey, especially the testimony and statistics on the labor situation.

⁶⁸ "The frontierlike violence of the region is a produce of the most outrageous kind of farming practiced in America, which draws thousands of migrant workers, large numbers of whom live in the most abject poverty." Theodore Pratt, "Land of the Jook," loc. cit., 20-21.

on the large volume of migration to the South Florida vegetable and sugar cane areas.⁶⁹ The reports and exhibits of these hearings bear out the opinions that the Everglades have produced some of America's worst rural slums. Apologists for these conditions believed that many of the migrants lived in the same squalor in their home states, but that when so many of them congregated in the Everglades it was more noticeable.⁷⁰

Estimates of the number of migrant laborers into South Florida varied from 15,000 to 25,000 in the 1941-1942 winter season, with 20,000 being the most frequently mentioned number.⁷¹ The poor housing supplied the migrants has been the cause of deep concern and sharp criticism of "outsiders."

⁶⁹ 1942 Migration Hearings, 12535. The testimony taken in South Florida, as well as several supplementary exhibits and three reports prepared by the committee's research staff, appear in the published hearings. Ibid., 12535-12976.

⁷⁰ "In the Florida legend is a chapter which is not set forth on the glossy pages of tourist circulars but goes by word of mouth from cabin to cabin across Georgia cotton fields, out to the Carolina sea islands, north into caves of the Alabama and Tennessee hills, and is wonderfully received by the poor folk there, west even to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas, where the tractors are moving in the wide river plains amongst the shacks of the share-croppers. And these obscure, these disheartened, and landless people, white and black, learn that there is a golden Florida made ready for them too, where the same warm sun that shines on the Palm Beach millionaire will shine down on them the long winter through, and the same tall palms will shade them. And money is to be made there in the beans, the tomatoes, the celery, and the sugar-cane big money." Senate hearings, part 2, May 15, 1940, 337 quoted in ibid., 12927.

⁷¹ Ibid., 12927-12928.

Undoubtedly the fact that in past years many of the growers were working leased land had a great deal to do with the little thought given to the living conditions of field hands and packing house employees. Other contributing factors to the poor housing conditions were the fatalistic feelings surviving from the tragedy of the 1928 hurricane, the uncertainty attendant on the weather and relative crop successes, and the lack of attachment and sentiment for the region by the immigrants.

The federal government, through the Farm Security Administration, has built five camps for migrant labor and many of the planter-operators have constructed houses or barracks for their individual workers. The United States Sugar Corporation has built a number of plantation villages to care for both field and sugar house employees and also furnishes medical care, schools, commissaries, and organized recreation for its white and colored employees.

72 Elaine Klepper, "Glades Migrant Workers," Orlando Morning Sentinel, April 28, 1940. This investigator found the majority of the migrants came from Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Ohio, Arkansas, Missouri, the Southwest, and California, but that almost half of them were from Florida. "The jooks are always going, but when the sugar-cane workers are paid off and when good vegetable crops are in they operate full blast until everybody's money is spent. Some of them haven't had their doors closed for five years; several haven't any doors; but merely doorways." Theodore Pratt, "Land of the Jook," loc. cit., 40.

73 Theodore Pratt, "Land of the Jook," loc. cit., 40. A Georgia woman told a newspaper reporter that she was in her first home in twenty years when she was located in one of the houses of the Osceola Camp of the Farm Security Administration at Belle Glade. Her last home in Moultrie, Georgia, had burned in 1920. Orlando Reporter-Star, May 1, 1940.

In a talk before one of a series of meetings held in Montgomery, Alabama in August, 1940, discussing the interstate migration of destitute citizens Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt "praised the work of the operators of sugar plantations in the Everglades" toward the amelioration of migrant labor problems in Florida.

74

In closing my statement I cannot resist the temptation to direct attention to a most glaring, unjust and unfair accusation made against the South. For years the South has borne the cost of educating her youth, only upon maturity to find them grabbed by the industrial, commercial and financial North and East. This condition has placed an unfair educational burden upon most Southern states; in addition it has prevented the South's utilizing the genius, ability, and capability which she cradled and fostered. The South has the most abundant supply of two of the three essentials for plant life--rainfall and sunshine; she has an adequacy of the third essential--soil. Every agency but nature has apparently combined to stifle the resources and capabilities of the South; we in the Everglades have shown that the highest standards of living in agriculture can be maintained in the South; we are sure this same condition can be proved in industry; we are satisfied that once equality with the rest of the nation can be obtained, the South will forge rapidly to the lead. Most emphatically the South is not a problem, economic or otherwise to the nation, unless such problem be to find ways and means of continuing her subjection. 75

In the Everglades settlements of Canal Point, Pahokee, Belle Glade, Clewiston, Moore Haven and others, life is much the same as elsewhere in the United States; schools, churches,

74 United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 59.

75 Statement of Clarence Bitting; United States Sugar Corporation, Sugar and the Everglades, 66-67.

service clubs, modern stores, and recreational features are found here similar to those in any small American city. Throughout the area an atmosphere of optimism prevails. No one wants to remember the tragedies of 1926 and 1928, and few can recall the trials and hardships of the pioneers of forty years ago, for as always the second and third generations reap the benefits of the pioneer effort.

The general land policy of the several governors and officials of Florida since the inception of the Internal Improvement Fund in 1855 has ever been to dispose of the public domain of the peninsula in large blocks, such as the Disston, Wade, Bolles, and other sales, and to suggest the subdivision of these big parcels of acreage through private channels. ⁷⁶ Broward prophesied the settling of millions of people in the Everglades, but it was during his administration and that of Gilchrist, his successor, that a large part of the Everglades passed into corporate ownership.

76 F. P. Manuel, "Land Development in the Everglades," loc. cit., 12883-12885. Manuel cites the following passage from the document of the Okeechobee Flood Control District's appeal for federal aid in 1929: ". . . only large scale and well-financed corporations could have demonstrated the possibilities of sugar culture, peanut growing, and the various other specialties which have been or will be promoted. These corporations by demonstrating the agricultural and industrial possibilities of a territory which in its natural state would be a watery wilderness, have contributed to the actual and potential wealth of the Nation." Senate Documents, Number 225, 71 Congress, 3 Session, 74. See also E. R. Lloyd, "Agricultural Possibilities of the Florida Everglades," Senate Documents, Number 85, 71 Congress, 2 Session, 14.

As early as 1912, Mead, Metcalf, and Hazen bluntly informed the Everglades Land Sales Company that only by progressive drainage of small areas could the Everglades successfully be made habitable without the serious consequences of excessive costs, too rapid development for land utility, and subsidence.⁷⁷

The adaptability of the level lands south of Lake Okeechobee to large-scale operations requiring adequate credit and financing has given rise to a serious conflict of land policy; the small farm plant versus plantation size holdings. A study of the 1912 and 1926 land booms shows that Florida ". . . suffered immeasurable harm at the hands of the ten acres and freedom heresy. . . . The lure of the small acreage of high priced crops has wrecked too many careers."⁷⁸ And yet throughout the years from 1924 through 1930 Howard Sharp, editor of the Everglades News, held that the organic soils of Palm Beach County should be settled in five and ten acre tracts. Said he: "There can be 10,000 homes in localities where there isn't a house now-- 50,000 population, and ten million dollars wealth where now the land is assessed at under \$5 an acre."⁷⁹ Along with the

⁷⁷ "Ill-advised attempts at too rapid development, while possibly profitable to the few, must result in great loss to the many. . . . real progress, and the greatest good to the State itself, will come from slow, substantial, progressive development which is the most certain, the safest, and ultimately the best for all concerned." Mead, Metcalf, and Hazen, 1912 Report on the Drainage of the Everglades of Florida, 33.

⁷⁸ John R. McMahon, "All Over the Map," Country Gentleman, LXXXV (September 11, 1920), 7.

⁷⁹ Everglades News, December 19, 1924, July 25, 1930. Sharp attacked the Southern Sugar Company for "driving" the farmers around the lake shore off the custard apple lands and supplanting independent white farmers with Negro field hands. Ibid., July 25, 1930.

obvious trend toward large-sized and mechanized plantings there has been a contrasting movement toward subsistence homesteads. ⁸⁰ The combination of good soil, equable climate, and high pressure salesmanship by real estate agents makes it easy to "produce a fairly convincing picture of a life of ease in a land of perpetual sunshine, with Dame ⁸¹ Nature doing all the work."

Take a fellow who's fed up on cities, who isn't afraid of work, and who has a good cash reserve after his place is bought, developed and paid for. . . That fellow will fall in love with this place overnight. But he must be prepared to take the good breaks along with the bad ones, "cause hell son there just ain't no paradise." ⁸²

The work of T. E. Will, covering the years from 1910 through 1937, is perhaps the best illustration of the almost futile efforts of the individual of moderate means to bring order out of chaos in the confused Everglades reclamation

⁸⁰ Fort Lauderdale Daily News, March 6, 1935. William G. Ward of Miami is reputed to have started the idea which gave source to the news that "the government plans to set up subsistence homesteads for 100,000 families in Florida. The proposal that the Federal Government resume the unreclaimed Everglades land still held by Florida and put over reclamation, following this with settlement and development is easily one of the greatest things ever brought before South Florida." Another advantage of such a movement would be the addition of voters in sufficient strength to help South Florida overcome its political subjugation by north and west Florida, thus equalizing the "conquered province" vote. Ibid.

⁸¹ Steve Trumbull, "There Ain't No Paradise," Country Gentleman, CVI (December, 1936), 7. "Be Independent and free from worry on a 10 acre Florida truck farm. Good land as low as \$15 per acre. \$5 down. Adv." Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 66. In 1942 the Farm Security Administration approved a loan of \$1,345,314 to establish 150 low income farm families on 6,200 acres, 5,000 of which was saw grass muck, to develop production of truck crops, raw milk, and fattening of beef cattle. 1942 Migration Hearings, 12854-12855.

project. There can be no doubt that this pioneer was sincere, though visionary, when he wrote:

This country has a tremendous future once the cloud lifts. I figured it all out in 1909, with maps before me. I saw the Panama Canal-- Theodore Roosevelt was fighting for it then-- the Gulf, and our position in the Western World. . . . Since then Miami has become a big aeroplane headquarters; and South America is just at our door. I watch with deep interest such things as the coming Buenos Aires round-up; initiated I think by President Roosevelt. Out of it may come a sure-enough combination for the Western World. Then, when poor Europe and Asia have had their last round, with modern killing machinery, maybe they can pattern after us. I'm all the time after a better world, a decent place in which to raise children.

.
As to my holding on. Well, a man usually has to die to get understood, I'm a sentimental sort of creature; and my parents always taught me to be square with people and I've tried to be just that. With everything down here SHOT, I've never felt that I would be justified in running off and leaving everybody in the lurch. This has cost me a professional career, and every cent of such money I had; and has meant 27 years of hard work and fierce fighting; but IF ONLY we can get out, and I can say with a clear conscience, "The Glades area is at least ready to occupy and use," I'll feel amply repaid. 83

83 T. E. Will to W. L. Alexander, September 24, 1936, Will Collection. Correspondence in the Will Collection mutely testifies to this pioneer's long fight for the reclamation and settlement of Okeelanta and other sections in the saw grass muck back from the short of Lake Okeechobee. In 1931 he wrote: "Old buyers have been hit, hard, but few as hard as I. Most waited for 'George to do it,' and I was George." Fort Lauderdale Daily News, April 1, 1931. Will's work earned him the title of "John, the Baptist, of the Everglades." Fort Lauderdale Call, June 12, 1926.

Contrasting with this "testament of faith," written just under six months before his death in 1936, is the article Will wrote for the Review of Reviews in 1912. That article was an enthusiastic condensation of his work with Senator D. U. Fletcher on Senate Document Number 89. At that time Will was non-committal on Broward's plans to drain the Everglades by the "cut and ⁸⁴dry method."

John R. McMahon was serious in his survey of agricultural production in the Everglades in 1920 when he observed that "the farm problem" of the Everglades revolved around the answer to the question of whether the soil would float away in times of heavy precipitation or burn up and be blown away by the winds ⁸⁵ in the very dry season.

There will be revelation for the North in the Everglades' conflagration, for millions regard these as but an immense swamp and how could a swamp burn? Facetiously they may remark that the Everglades need irrigation rather than drainage. ⁸⁶

Usually low rainfall and consequent low water levels in Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades in 1931 and 1932 found many grass and muck fires throughout the whole region. The big lake fell below twelve feet and many fires which had begun in the spring of 1931 continued to burn into the summer of

84 F. E. Will, "Everglades of Florida," loc. cit., 451-456.

85 J. R. McMahon, "Poco Moonshine," loc. cit., 4.

86 John K. Small, "The Everglades," Scientific Monthly, XXVIII (January, 1929), 87.

1932.⁸⁷ The legislature set up a fair system of fire control in 1925 by creating an Everglades Board, but in 1929 it emasculated the previous act by repealing certain sections and abolishing the control board.⁸⁸ By a concurrent resolution the 1931 legislature appropriated an emergency relief fund of \$50,000, but many of the fires were out of control and it took the rains of the summer and fall of 1932 to extinguish them.

In February, 1932, G. P. Allison of South Bay wrote T. E. Will, who was then in the national capital, that great fires were raging over nearly all the Everglades which at night could be seen for fifty miles; the fires produced such dense smoke that an automobile headlight was visible for only a few feet in the forenoon hours.⁸⁹ In answering Allison's letter Will stated that he had been to see the federal Forest Service and had seen Representative Ruth Bryan Owen, who had appraised Secretary Ray Lyman Wilbur of the Interior Depart-

⁸⁷ University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1932, 165-166. Pahokee farmers attempted to overcome the drought in January, 1932, by cultivating the bottom of old Pelican Bay and extending their operations far beyond that on the moist lake bottom. On January 15, 1932, the lake level stood at 12.8 feet; by May the level had fallen to 11.8. Everglades News, January 15, May 6, 1932. Howard Sharp told his subscribers that the 1932 fires were not all the responsibility of the state or the Drainage Board, and that both individuals and communities could do more toward fire protection. Ibid., February 12, 1932.

⁸⁸ Chapters 13634, 14508, Laws of Florida, 1929.

⁸⁹ G. P. Allison to T. E. Will, February 23, 1932, Will Collection.

ment of the situation.

Secretary Wilbur had told Mrs. Owen there was no hope. The government deals with FEDERAL affairs; and our's is a STATE affair.

In Senator Fletcher's office I talked with his Secretary, Mr. Hill. He's willing and anxious to help; but could not see how to jump above the hurdles. . . .

Remember, I'm on the job all the time, seeking our Glades salvation. 90

In the annual report of the Everglades Experiment Station at Belle Glade, submitted in June, 1932, Dr. R. V. Allison, the Director, called attention to the problems arising from the low water levels then prevalent. He pointed out that the problem in the Everglades theretofore had been one of the disposition of excess waters, but that with the abnormally low rainfall there had arisen the problems of irrigation and fire control.⁹¹ The Director of the Experiment Station suggested that the spill of Lake Okeechobee might be diverted through the long diagonal canals onto the uncultivated 'Glades south of the lake shore to prevent fire, conserve the soil, and ameliorate the winter temperatures. The Director further advocated the adoption of a program of soil conservation in the Everglades that had been lacking heretofore because of the inadequate facilities for handling

90 F. E. Will to G. P. Allison, February 25, 1932, Will Collection.

91 University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1932, 165-166.

the water, a solution made possible through federal aid in
 constructing lake dikes and control canals.⁹²

The low waters continued through most of the 1930's and into the 1940's. In 1935 the state legislature recreated an Everglades Fire Control District and appropriated \$50,000 to fight the muck fires.⁹³ The 1939 legislature reaffirmed the 1935 law and appropriated \$75,000 annually to fight Everglades fires, passing the law over the veto of Governor Fred P. Cone.⁹⁴ In addition the 1939 legislature memorialized President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Congress

. . . to cause an Everglades Drainage District survey for supplying information as to the best ways, methods, or plans to be adopted for permanent protection of the lands in the Everglades Drainage District. . . .⁹⁵

Fires blazed in the Everglades in 1939, 1941, and 1943, while freezes occurred in 1935 and 1939; nonetheless heavy rains caused much damage in 1940.⁹⁶ The dry years of the

⁹² University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Report, 1932, 165-166.. J. K. Small wrote that careless hunters and motorists received most of the blame for starting Everglades fires, but that he was in disagreement. "No! the crazy drainage schemes are responsible. Nature's building of ages has been utterly destroyed in a decade." J. K. Small, "The Everglades," loc. cit., 87.

⁹³ Chapter 16994, Laws of Florida, 1935; Everglades News, June 14, 28, 1935.

⁹⁴ Chapter 19274, Law of Florida, 1939.

⁹⁵ House Memorial Number 7, Ibid., 1674-1675.

⁹⁶ University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Annual Reports, 1935-1941; United States Sugar Corporation, The United States Sugar Corporation and the Development of the Sugar Industry in the Florida Everglades, 6; Orlando Morning Sentinel, September 13, 1940, May 30, 1941.

1930's proved a source of concern to the cities of the lower east coast whose water systems were endangered by salt water infiltration caused in part by the lowering of the Everglades water table.

Scientists, naturalists, and engineers realized from time to time that uncontrolled or haphazard reclamation in the Kissimmee-Okeechobee watershed would finally result in unpredictable confusion in the balance of life established by nature. Arthur E. Morgan and others had pointed this out in the congressional hearings in Washington in 1912. Mead, Metcalf, and Hazen had been most emphatic in their report published in the fall of the same year. The Isham Randolph Commission had stressed the desirability of progressive drainage in their report to the Board of Everglades Drainage Commissioners in 1913, yet Randolph and his associates had submitted plans for the drainage of the entire area south of Lake Okeechobee. Again in 1927 the Everglades Engineering Board of Review had made positive suggestions that the organic soils be reclaimed progressively by unit areas. The question arises, then, why wasn't the advice of these authorities followed? An excellent answer to this query may be found in the words of W. Turner Wallis, engineer and general manager of the

97 Orlando Morning Sentinel, March 9, 1941. For an excellent survey of fire fighting in the area, see Guy J. Bender, "The Everglades Fire Control District," The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, V-A (1943), 149-151.

Everglades Drainage District. In May, 1942, he wrote:

The extent of partial reclamation of lands throughout the entire area, far beyond any present or probable future need for these lands as homesteads or food producers, is beyond question the biggest single factor involved in a solution of most of the existing problems.

Senate Document No. 89, 62nd Congress, 1st Session, relating to the Everglades, furnishes fifteen thousand reasons for this condition by the single statement that sales of Everglades lands by the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund and other owners had increased the number of individual owners of lands in the Everglades from about a dozen owners in 1909 to upward of 15,000 on July 1, 1911.

Doubtless each of the 15,000 owners, all of whom paid far more for their land in advance of any reclamation than most of it is worth today, believed in principle that the only sound policy was one of progressive drainage, provided, however, his land was to be among the first to be drained. 98

The policy of selling land on the alternate section plan, begun almost with the first work under Broward, has been a bar of no mean weight to any plan of progressive

98 W. Turner Wallis, "The Interrelationship of Physical and Economic Factors in Everglades Reclamation," The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, IV-A (1942), 114. A somewhat extreme but nonetheless relevant point of view was expressed by one of the buyers referred to by Wallis. "I stopped paying taxes because I was finally convinced I was being robbed," wrote G. O. Banky, of Washington, D. C., who had paid the assessments for years though not the least attempt was made to drain his land. Banky stated that he had paid \$70 an acre for his land, yet the Drainage Commissioners were offering 20,000 acres in the same district for \$1-\$5 and acre. "I felt and still feel that I was dealing with dishonest people and that the only safe thing to do was to break off all connections with them." G. O. Banky to T. E. Will, February 4, 1931, Will Collection.

drainage.

The best promise for a solution of this problem would be the adoption by the State of a policy under which the owners of lands located in a deferred area could trade for State lands within areas to be next in line for reclamation and successful use.⁹⁹

The completion of the flood control works in the Calco-satchee-Ckeechobee drainage area and the consequent removal of the threat of serious flooding has solved that trouble so prevalent in the decade from 1920 to 1930. From 1930 to 1945 importance has been attached to soil subsidence and destruction by combustion in the muck soils of the Everglades. In 1932 Howard Sharp took up the cause of internal water control and bitterly denounced various State and drainage district officials whom he charged with seeking to promote problems rather than solve them in order that they might continue to draw large salaries.¹⁰⁰

In an editorial, entitled "Record of Futility," Sharp recalled that R. V. Allison had pointed out as early as 1928, in an address before the Florida State Horticultural Society, that over drainage was a greater menace than under drainage, and that there would be no muck fires if water were stored on

⁹⁹ W. T. Wallis, "The Interrelationship of Physical and Economic Factors in Everglades Reclamation," loc. cit., 115.

¹⁰⁰ Everglades News, July 22, 1932. Sharp noted that W. I. Evans drew \$12,000 yearly as counsel for the Everglades Drainage and Ckeechobee Flood Control Districts, and that A. W. Young drew \$8,500 yearly as general manager of the bankrupt drainage district; and he declared that George B. Hills and F. C. Elliot, engineers, were more interested in their salaries ~~rather~~ than in conservation. Ibid., September 30, 1932.

the undrained areas of the Everglades rather than drained
 101
 off to the seas. A Miamian had predicted in 1927 that

Ultimately a large area of the Everglades
 will be converted into impounding reservoirs to
 conserve the water during the dry season, and
 especially during years of minimum rainfall. 102

In 1936 Representative Mark Wilcox of Miami, with the
 assistance of R. V. Allison of Belle Glade, began a campaign
 to interest the United States Department of Agriculture in
 the problem of conservation in the Everglades. 103 By 1940
 sufficient ground work had been laid, including an act of
 Congress authorizing the expenditure of federal funds, for
 the United States Soil Conservation Service to make relatively
 complete surveys of the Everglades. 104 The entrance of the
 Soil Conservation Service into the picture has brought other
 agencies into action, and the spadework of the second genera-
 tion of Everglades pioneers has begun to bear fruit. C. Kay

101 Everglades News, September 30, 1932.

102 A. W. Munn, "Drainage of the Everglades," The Miamian, VIII (June, 1927), 31: "According to Trele in his work on agricultural economics, reclamation projects are instigated by promoters and politicians regardless of the interest of the farmers;" Robert T. Morris, letters to the editor, New York Times, October 14, 1928.

103 T. E. Will to W. L. Alexander, September 24, 1936, Will Collection. Will pointed also to the "wonderful things being done on the land of the" sugar company "where sufficient funds and a good engineer were proving things" the state never tried to do.

104 C. Kay Davis, "The Plan and Progress of Soil and Water Conservation Studies in the Everglades," The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, IV-A (1942), 86-89; C. Kay Davis, "Summary of Three Years of Conservation Work in the Everglades and Plans For the Future," The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, V-A (1943), 116-117; E.D.D. "Minutes," VII, 205.

Davis, engineer and project manager of the Conservation Service, has devoted his efforts, according to one writer, to "undoing the seventy million dollars worth of damage done the Glades in the last thirty or forty years."¹⁰⁵

We know now, of course, that those expansive plans of the early days, by whomever developed or promoted at the time, were then and are now entirely impractical from the economic standpoint due to the great variability of the soil and the absolute unfitness of great sections of the Everglades for agricultural development, to say nothing of the paramount importance of developing it by economic units, as needed. These physical relationships are only now in process of systematic study by the modern survey that is under way. . . a study that is certain to have a profound influence on the plans for the areas that are developed in the future--that is, if proper use is made of this information. ¹⁰⁶

The greatest problem facing the Everglades is that of subsidence. "About one-half inch loss in elevation each year can be expected under the most favorable water table compatible with crop yields."¹⁰⁷ The town of Belle Glade has settled six feet in its elevation in the last twenty-five years, and it is a common practice for residents on the muck soils to add a new doorstep to their houses every two to three years. ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Robert McCormick, "Lavish Land," Collier's, CX (August 8, 1942), 66.

¹⁰⁶ R. V. Allison, Editorial Note, The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, IV-A (1942), 157.

¹⁰⁷ C. K. Davis, "The Plan and Progress of Soil and Water Conservation Studies in the Everglades," loc. cit., 86.

¹⁰⁸ Robert McCormick, "Lavish Land," loc. cit., 66. "The Everglades, if not used wisely, will be a memory in 75 years at the rate of their present subsidence."

Since only 500,000 of the 4,500,000 acres of Everglades land are overlain with muck of five foot depth or over, it has been urged that at least 3,000,000 acres in the drainage district be set aside for water and wildlife reservations, and that the remainder of the acreage be used for cattle grazing or left in its natural state.¹⁰⁹

Public symposiums of the Soil Science Society of Florida held in West Palm Beach on April 21, 1942, and in Belle Glade on March 17, 1943, at which a number of papers were read on Everglades problems resulted in much discussion of the Everglades throughout the State. This discussion focused attention on the glaring need for the development of future policies and plans for the reclamation and conservation of the Florida 'Glades.¹¹⁰

In 1939 the Florida State Planning Board, with the help and cooperation of the National Resources Planning Board and local Florida interests of both public and private nature,

. . . brought together various groups of technical men to study and analyze this area of Florida and to offer certain recommendations, based on conclusions derived from facts, for the further developments and adjustments of the

109 Robert McCormick, "Lavish Land," loc. cit., 65-66.
 110 Everglades Drainage District, Report by Advisory Committee on the Present Drainage System in Relation to Water Control Requirements of Everglades Drainage District, vii.
 Hereinafter cited as 1944 Water Control Report of E. D. D.

land and water resources. The combined effort has been designated the Southeastern Florida Joint Resources Investigation. 111

Actual field work in connection with the investigation began in October, 1939, with funds coming from local and state agencies. Federal interests matched these funds in 1939 and 1940 to the extent of \$79,000, and for the year closing June 30, 1941, the federal agencies made \$120,000 available on condition that it be matched by Florida appropriations. 112

At the symposium held in Belle Glade in mid-March of 1943 one of the more outstanding statements made was that concerning the inevitable loss of the organic soils. B. S. Clayton, of the United States Department of Agriculture and resident drainage engineer in the Everglades, declared that

111 Stanley H. Wright, Conserving Land and Water Resources: Brief Description of the Purpose and Organization of the Southeastern Florida Joint Resources Investigation, 3. Hereinafter cited as Conserving Land and Water Resources. Federal agencies participating in the investigation included the Soil Conservation Service, Bureaus of Agricultural Economics, Weather, Entomology, Plant Industry, and Agricultural Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture; Geological Survey, Ground Water Division, Surface Water Division, Biological Survey, National Park Service, and Indian Office of the Department of Interior; and the District Engineer of the War Department. State agencies participating included the Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Experiment Station, Geological Survey, and Internal Improvement Fund. Local agencies participating included the Everglades Drainage District, Everglades Fire Control Commission, Dade County, and the cities of Miami, Coral Gables, and Miami Beach. Ibid., 4-10.

112 Ibid., 9.

All peat land will continue to subside as long as drained and the time will arrive when either the peat is consumed or cultivation shall have to be discontinued on account of the shallow depth of the soil. However, we still have a good depth of soil in most of the agricultural area of the Northern Everglades and with proper attention to the water table the productive life of the land can be substantially extended. 113

As a result of a resolution passed at the Belle Glade meeting, requesting the Everglades Drainage District to assume the responsibility for the development of an over-all policy and plan for the conservation and development of the Everglades, and to serve as the central authority to coordinate the activities of all government and private agencies in the execution of such a plan, a public meeting was held in the offices of the Drainage Board on March 26, 114 1943. At that meeting arrangements were made for a joint meeting of the Drainage Commissioners, the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, various other state officials, and

113 B. S. Clayton and J. R. Neller, "Nature and Extent of the Surface Subsidence of the Organic Soils of the Everglades," The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, V-A (1943), 120. "I would suggest, and I am making it in the order of a motion, that we have a joint meeting of the Everglades Drainage Board, the Okeechobee Flood Control Board, the Fire Control Board, the National Park Service and other organizations and individuals interested in the work with the Internal Improvement Board at the earliest possible date and also have at this meeting these scientists, both State and Federal. . . . The soil is sinking every year, more and more, and each year more and more of it is burning up. We've got an asset here in the Glades that we must pay attention to. It is too valuable." Nathan Mayo, Commissioner of Agriculture of Florida, ibid., 131.

114 1944 Report on Water Control of E. D. D., vii.

representatives of other agencies engaged or interested in the reclamation of lands in South Florida. The joint meeting was held in April, 1943, at Tallahassee and as a consequence, by general agreement, the Board of Commissioners of the Everglades Drainage District was selected to serve as the authority in the preparation and execution of a comprehensive plan "to prevent or retard the wastage of the resources of the area. . ."

The Drainage Board then set up an advisory committee which presented a report on the whole subject and set down basic facts and recommendations for the district. On May 1, 1944, the Board submitted the report of the advisory committee to the landowners of the district for study, consideration, and discussion, ". . . in order that the Board might have the counsel and advice gained through the experience of the thousands of tax payers." In its letter transmitting the 1944 report to the landowners the Drainage Board stated that it had planned to take action on the recommendations of the report when "reactions and wishes" of the taxpayers had been ascertained.

115 1944 Report on Water Control of E. D. D., viii.

116 Ibid., v. This report is a thorough study of the facts gained from forty years of drainage and investigation in the Everglades and draws particularly on the results of the scientific field and laboratory research of federal, state, and local agencies which have been collecting physical and economic evidence within the last ten years.

117 Ibid., vi.

In view of the inadequacy of the present drainage system and the urgent need to prevent excessive waste of the resources of the Everglades, the adoption of a practical plan of improvement of the drainage system is immediately necessary. First consideration should be given those improvements that promote conservation of resources and increase the efficiency of the present system. 118

3. The Everglades National Park

John K. Small, Charles T. Simpson, Ernest F. Coe, D. Graham Copeland, Mark Wilcox, and many other native and adopted sons of Florida had long advocated a refuge and retreat for the sub-marginal lands of the southern Everglades and Gulf coasts. 119 In 1929 Ernest F. Coe, David G. Fairchild, and others aided the park cause in the organization of the Tropical Everglades Park Association. In the same year Senator Duncan U. Fletcher introduced the first bill for this proposed national park in congress. 120

. . . the Everglades National Park will preserve for posterity the only true tropical region in the continental United States. 121

Obviously, there are no rocks standing on end, no canyons, glaciers or snow capped ranges as found in the west; but here in the proposed part area are found forests of tropical plants and the largest mangrove trees in the world . . . tremendous expenses of level marsh and prairie . . . broad marine scenes and unlimited networks of intimate lagoons . . . nesting and feeding grounds for

118 1944 Report on Water Control of E. D. D., 40.

119 John K. Small, From Eden to Sahara, 7; et passim; "The Everglades," loc. cit., 87; C. T. Simpson, Florida Wild Life, 89, 191-193; W. S. Blatchley, In Days Agone, 270.

120 J. E. Jennings, Jr., Our American Tropics, 65;

F. P. Stockbridge and F. H. Perry, So This is Florida, 142-147.

121 J. E. Jennings, Jr., Our American Tropics, 66.

millions of birds . . . and above all a weird enchantment that only an unspoiled tropical wilderness possesses.

These are not to be found in any other national park. They are but a few of the natural resources of the area which qualify it for national park status. 122

The establishment of Royal Palm State Park around Paradise Key, southwest of Miami near the eastern edge of the Everglades, by the legislature of Florida at the request of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, was the first step toward the future national park in the southern end of Florida. Legislative action, beginning in 1929 by the state legislature and continuing at practically every session since that date, has been directed toward the consumation of the projected park.¹²³ Opposition to the park in the form of organized groups of amateur sportsmen has delayed the efforts of public and private interests to secure roughly 1,300,000 acres of land for the planned park area. In addition, the bringing in of oil wells for commercial production in south Florida has further delayed the project approved by Congress in 1934.¹²⁴

122 Miami Herald, April 8, 1945.

123 Chapter 13887, Laws of Florida 1929; Chapter 14745, 1931; Chapter 16995, 1935; Chapter 16996, 1935; Chapter 17903, 1937; and Chapter 19319, 1939. Laws of Florida, 1929, 1931, 1935, 1937, 1939.

124 Florida Research Bureau, Florida and Its Money, 39-40, 106-107. Orlando Morning Sentinel, April 7, 1941; Orlando Reporter-Star, April 10, 1941. In 1941 the national park service stated that it was unable to act further on account of the delay of the state of Florida to tender acreage in fee simple.

The discovery of oil and gas in a well 11,626 feet deep, near Sunniland in Collier County in 1943 had much to do with the reluctance of state and private parties to deliver up lands for a public recreation area and game reservation. But

More progress has been made in the past two years toward final establishment of the park than was made in the preceding eight or ten years. Lands in the area have been released from the bonded indebtedness of the Everglades Drainage District, legislation has been enacted to facilitate the acquisition of lands by the State and the conveyance of a park area to the Federal Government; the problem of oil and gas exploration has been brought to a reasonable conclusion, and the program for the area has reached a point where the important phases of land acquisition are now in progress. 126

Pending the final acquisition of the State lands for a national park, an agreement has been worked out whereby parts of the area may be conveyed to the United States for the purpose of protecting the scenic beauty, wildlife, and other

125 J. H. Davis, Jr., The Natural Features of Southern Florida, 301. For the pros and cons of possible damages and dangers of oil wells to the Everglades wilderness see Kenneth D. Morrison, "Oil in the Everglades," Natural History, LIII (June; 1944), 282-283 and "Letters," ibid., LIII (September, 1944), 292, 294.

126 C. Roy Vinten, "The National Park Service," The Soil Science Society of Florida, Proceedings, V-A (1943), 153; see also John H. Baker, "Wildlife Preservation in the Glades," ibid., 11-15.

natural features.

The state already owns about two-thirds of the [area] . . . which the government has determined as the minimum area on which it will establish the park. Florida has until 1954 . . . to acquire the remaining acreage, all privately owned, and transfer it to the federal government for park purposes. 128

It is believed that the people of Florida, in general, and the legislature, in particular, will make a concerted drive to add this unique tropical area to the national park system. Florida has been ever mindful of its profit in providing attractions for the tourist trade. An Everglades National Park would be an asset whose attractiveness, to both native and traveler, would improve with the passage of years.

127 House of Representatives Documents, Report Number 1842, 78 Congress, 2 Session, 1-2. See also Executive Order Number 6883, F. D. Roosevelt, October 22, 1934.
128 Miami Herald, April 26, 1946.