IRRIGATION - Newell:

I had a very interesting interview with Mr. Newell on his experience in the '80s. He is a great admirer of Powell, whom he says had great vision. He attributes the opening of the arid regions to the fact that Powell saw the possibilities and was able to gradually convert members of congress. He, himself, is modest about his work He says that the irrigation people are good enough to call him "Father of Irrigation." The initial contribution, at least, was hydrographic, showing how the waters could be controlled, proving that you could impound enough in any given period. He lived in the West through this time and evidently knows it thoroughly. He says that Newland in Nevada had nothing to do in Congress but was ambitious and wanted

so he would come down and talk over every now and then

They were side tracked regularly but he kept on and gradually began to get a hearing. As the demand for irrigation become louder it was Newland, in 1889, they put at the head of a committee to make a personal investigation of the arid regions. This committee started out in (see congressional reports). Evidently Newells work was very largely directed by Newland. As time went on it become more and more obvious that it was only large scale development of water reservoirs that would really solve the problem. It was Roosevelt that was most sympathetic to this undertaking. His idea was that the Government should advance the money to complete the project, the settlers that used the water and electricity paying a tax which would gradually pay the government its initial sum, without interest. This is not working out this way for after the payments were completed western politicians, wanting to make themselves solid with their constituents, started agitation against paying the Government. Their argument was that the United States owed the pioneers something. They had ~~pioneered~~ paved the way, endored the hardships. Make the whole country that was profiting by the growth of wealth ~~could~~ give them the water, not make them pay for it. It was a form of populism or socialism which has always had more or less strength among the farmers, particularly in periods of pressure. This, however, seems beyond my particular period, for the big attempts were started only after 1900.

Newell emphasises that the failure of the early cooperative schemes is largly due to the inefficiency, the incompetency, of local management. A section would

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form an irrigation cooperative, some men, whom they all liked, probably with a glib tongue, would be put in as President, a man who had little or no managerial experience then some fellow who had little or no money of his own, would be put in as treasurer. Stock selling would give them so large a sum of money that they, in their inexperience would spend it without care or foresight, wih the result that bankruptcy followed, not from dishonesty but from incompetency andfrom lack of

Newell is interesting as a type of service which as trained scientific men was beginning to enter the industry at this period. The business man at this time had not a very high idea, as many of them have not today, of the possibility of the contribution which the trained scientist could make. They pooh-poohed this idea of studying the volumn of water, the control ofit and it was only after years of experimentation and demonstration so clear that it could not be overlooked by even the most ignorant, that the business man began to recognize the scientific help. This same thing happened in mining. The way to find precious metals, coals, iron ore, was for a man with a pick to go out into thewilds and dig. If he made a strick, alright. If he died from exposure and starvation, again alright. His bones would be found someday The west was full of these prospectors. The extraardinary strikes that they now and then made were enough to keep their ranks full. A type of them that has recently been in the public eye is Doheny (See Scale of Life) There were others besided the Doheney's at work. We first began to educate mining engineers in (See Story of Hulst) Newell Irrigation Work was an excellent example of the contribution of the schooled geologist He is interestingon Mexico. I say that in this oil matter my sympathy is with the Mexicans. I feel they have a right to say what shall be done with natural resources. He says that what they have awakened to within the last few years is the fact that outside countries are the only ones who are profiting from their vast min eral stores, The great quantities of oilhave been taken out of Mexico but Mexico has received little benefit or profit. Great amounts of precious ore have been taken out, not to the benefit of Mexico. This must stop. They have decided that the natural resources belong to a country as a whole, that they should not belong in the hands of private individuals. He knows a great deal of oil and is sore at the way that oil has been

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wasted, taken out in an unregulated way as it has been, with the result of enormous waste. He will send me Powells early report, also his own of 1890 on Irrigation, after he gets back to Washington.

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