

Significant Decisions

Decisions of great importance to the unemployment problem were handed down November 28, 1938 by the California Supreme Court.

The Court ruled that the underpopulated, irrigable lands within many of our irrigation districts, which absentee or other owners have allowed to remain tax delinquent longer than the three year period allowed by law for redemption, became the absolute property of the irrigation district. The districts may either resell such lands at public auction or rent them and collect the full economic rent, for the support of the community. The Court also ruled that the districts, being agencies of the State, must hold and administer the lands as a public trust, that all the functions of the districts are governmental, and that such land, when owned by the districts, is in effect land owned by the State.

By this decision, the Court has made immediately available tens of thousands of new farms and orchard homes, which lands can now be rented very reasonably by home seekers who have not a substantial amount of cash to buy the land they require, or who prefer not to sign a heavy mortgage which they may or may not ever be able to pay.

Any mortgage that stood against these lands is wiped out when the district forecloses for non-payment of taxes due it, and the indebtedness formerly against these lands has already been cut by many millions of dollars through this process. This brings the cost of the land down to homeseekers and will enable them to devote more of their earnings to better homes and improvements to their land, which improvements are not taxed by any California Irrigation District.

This decision by the Supreme Court clears the way for scores of new Garden Towns, and self-help cooperatives in California without any cost to the general taxpayer, a welcome change from the usual "relief" proposals. With reasonable direction and advice by State Authorities, here is a timely and concrete opportunity to extend an encouraging hand to thousands of families now dispossessed and homeless.

J. RUPERT MASON