

Liberty

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESS

FOR RELEASE IN MORNING PAPERS
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Secretary Harold L. Ickes today announced plans for the establishment of a subsistence homestead community in Monmouth County, New Jersey, under the direction of the Subsistence Homesteads Division of the Department of the Interior.

The project will be a demonstration in decentralized industry and subsistence farming, involving needle workers in the clothing trades. Homesteads will be provided for 200 families, including approximately 1,000 people. The cost of each homestead will be about \$3,000.

Practically all of the homesteaders will be selected from among Jewish needle workers in the congested clothing manufacturing area of New York City, with a few from Jersey City, Newark and Philadelphia.

A loan of \$500,000 will be made by the Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation through which the Division functions, to a local corporation to be organized within a few days which will assume responsibility for development of the project.

A factory building to be financed entirely by private funds will be erected in the community, near the post-office of Hightstown, New Jersey. The factory building will cost from \$12,000 to \$15,000, with the cost of equipment bringing the total investment in it from \$30,000 to \$35,000.

The factory will have private support to the extent where the homesteaders will be assured of a definite cash income and will operate under provisions of the N.R.A. code. The occupants of the homesteads will follow their ordinary occupations. The factory will maintain contact with the New York market for its supply of unfinished goods and for disposal of its finished product.

For years the congestion of the needle trade has been regarded as unhealthy both socially and industrially. Members of the Jewish race represent the biggest single group among needle workers. They have greatly suffered from insufficiency of light, ventilation and other unsatisfactory working conditions.

The Monmouth factory will be erected with a view of serving as a model in design, in providing workers with the most satisfactory physical conditions, and will be organized so as to adapt itself to full cooperative ownership eventually. The cooperation of needle trade labor organizations has been obtained and their sympathetic interest in the demonstration assured.

Each homestead ill have an acre or more for a vegetable garden, fruit trees, and a lawn. Options have been obtained on 1,253 acres of land, representing eight farms which have been under intensive cultivation. The richest 200 acres will be used as homestead sites. The remainder will be organized into a cooperative farm which will have a dairy herd, a hennery, and facilities for providing other food wants of the community.

Members of the community will contribute labor to the farm which will not engage in production for sale outside of the community.

A school capable of housing 300 pupils and a community center will also be erected.

Each purchaser of a homestead will be required to make a down payment of \$500, with a purchase contract calling for amortized payments of the balance owing over a period of 20 years.

The New Jersey College of Agriculture has been asked to cooperate in development of the project.

The Board of Directors will include a representative of the Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation. Five other Directors will be:

Benjamin Brown, New York City, one of the originators of the project, and for years the New York representative of the Utah and Idaho Poultry Co-operative Associations, and President of the Producers Distributing Agency, New York, a cooperative service agency.

Alfred Wallerstein, retired manufacturer.

Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, widely known leader in Jewish Divinity and social activities.

Elias Lieberman, Vice President of the Workman's Circle, a Jewish Fraternal Order with 88,000 members.

Numerous Jewish, social, industrial, labor, cooperative and fraternal organizations are assisting in the development of the project, which is one of a series of varied demonstration projects in subsistence farming being sponsored by the Subsistence Homesteads Division. Representatives of a group of these will meet Saturday night and Sunday at the Hotel Pennsylvania, New York. M. L. Wilson, Director of the Subsistence Homesteads Division, will address the group Sunday.

Respecting the project, he said today:

"The Monmouth County demonstration project represents a combination of many of the best things in our industrial life in the past coupled with the possibilities of planning for the future. For generations the needle trade has been one of the most suggested industries in New York. It operates at high speed during the portion of the year, then closes down almost completely.

"The workers labor under unsatisfactory conditions at small pay for the most part. Then when the season is ended, time hangs heavily on their hands and they do not have the opportunity of converting this time into the most useful purposes for themselves.

"It is possible that a demonstration in decentralization of this industry will show the way towards better things for the industry and the workers. Members of the Jewish race who will join in this demonstration have, while it is generally unrecognized, a long background of agricultural life. There is a demand among them for greater contact with the soil.

"There is no reason to believe that selected occupants of homesteads from among them cannot become readily adapted to the new pattern of life involving

dependence on both agriculture and industry without complete dependence on either."