

These data were carefully checked and wherever possible were verified by the agents of the commission. Wages were checked against the going rates for the locality. Contract-labor rates per acre and the prices of beet seed per pound were the actual figures stated in the contracts made by growers with the laborers and the factories. All of the data obtained from the growers on the amounts and value of perquisites supplied to contract laborers and the extra wages paid to them were checked against the local community rates for such items, and some of them were confirmed by the laborers themselves. Prices of horse feeds were checked against quoted market prices and prices of local dealers; taxes paid, against the tax records in the county courthouse; irrigation costs, against the books of the irrigation company and the assessment records in the county courthouse. Land values and annual land rentals and the values of implements and work horses were compared with the averages for the community as estimated by prominent and well-informed local men other than farmers—i. e., bankers, realtors, land appraisers for the Federal land banks, economists, farm-management experts and agronomists of the State agricultural colleges, the local county agricultural agents, and the farm-implement dealers. Interest rates were checked against rates given by the local bankers; the prices received for sugar beets, against the prices paid the individual farmer as taken from the books of the sugar-manufacturing companies; the acreage and yield of beets per acre, against the records of the factory with which the farmer contracted. Every schedule was carefully scrutinized by a competent agricultural cost accountant other than the one taking the record from the farmer, both for the general reasonableness of the record and for accuracy as to quantity and value of the specific cost items.

Calculations of costs for 1921 and 1923.—The details of the 1921 and 1923 costs were not obtained directly from growers but were determined by applying to the quantities of labor, horse hours, seed, and other material employed in the production of an acre of sugar beets in 1922, the respective 1921 and 1923 costs per unit of each quantity. This method has been used by the United States Department of Agriculture and by a large number of agricultural cost accountants, and is based upon the fact that the acre is the unit employed by farmers in their calculations, and that the hours of labor per acre, pounds of seed planted per acre, manure applied per acre, and other basic unit requirements in cost vary but little from year to year⁸ unless there is a radical change in farm practice. For factors exhibiting variations from year to year, such as yields per acre, wages, contract labor rates, prices of horse feeds, prices of seed, prices of commercial fertilizer, and land charges, due allowance was made.

Illustrations of individual calculations may help to make the method clear to the reader.

Wages for 1923 had been obtained on the schedules by the agents of the commission while they were collecting the 1922 data. Wages for 1921 were derived by adjusting the 1922 wages, as found in the investigation, by the percentage of change in monthly wages (without board) paid farm laborers. According to the available wage

⁸ Comparison of the commission's data with similar data obtained by the Department of Agriculture in investigations made for other years shows a close agreement in these basic units of cost.