

# Pangs of hunger end for 1800 <sup>1936</sup>

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NIPOMO, March 11.—(U.P.)—An encampment of working class "pariahs"—1800 itinerant pea harvesters stranded and starving in prosperous Cuyama River valley, as a result of a crop blight—today received their first square meals in six weeks, on federal charity.

The ragged band of nomadic harvest workers have huddled for more than a month in their squalid tent camp, pitched on a hump of land overlooking this quiet village. They were without food and money, and had been denied aid from county welfare agencies who "wanted them to move along," when federal relief officials were informed of their plight.

Early today they lined up at a big, abandoned freight shed, where emergency food distributors handed out packages of beans, flour and rolled oats.

Families that had sold extra clothes, auto tires and even bedding for money to buy food, crowded on the warehouse platform to get their first doles of solid food since the rainy season ravaged the pea crop with "rust" blight, leaving the imported pea pickers without jobs and without money to buy enough gasoline to move their shabby belongings into another crop area.

Four hundred appeared the first hour yesterday. Half were family heads, or older children representing the family. Almost all had no food at home. They have been subsisting on stolen vegetables, raked from nearby farms at night, and a few birds killed by children.

Six camps sprawl over the slope behind the town. About 800 in the camps are Americans, the rest Mexicans.

This year's plight was an accidental freak of hard luck, Field Boss J. W. Carpenter explained. Crops are planted in rotation for big packers, and the army of harvesters take them in a continuous swing over a 1500-mile arc from the Mexican border to Idaho.

But rains blighted the winter crop here.

A few had enough money to move on. The rest were trapped, unable to move, and facing a threat of starving if they stayed. Farmers in prosperous San Luis Obispo county did not want them to stay, and all relief was clamped down.

There has been no violence. The stranded harvesters settled stolidly in their ragged tents, grubbing a bare existence until the next crop should ripen.

*Wm. H. Hays*