

CLIMATOLOGY

# Drought Still Holds Empire In West, From Coast to Plains

**Rainfall Less Than 50 Per Cent. Normal in Two Areas Large as Maine; Dust Storms Breed Where Rain Failed**

**A**S THE 1935 growing season gets under way drought still holds an unshaken grip in a wide empire in the heart of the Great Plains country of the West.

Last year, for the eastern part of the United States, the drought was something in the "distant" midwest. Coming simultaneously with the Federal crop curtailment program the drought of last summer has forced into everyone's mind its significance. No one can overlook rising food costs.

And along with price rises have come the recent dust storms bringing crop damage to the more favored lands eastward and plenty of midwestern, drought-formed dust into the homes along the Atlantic seaboard. These dust storms have been the "shock troops" making sorties from the citadels of drought desolation.

Study of a special map prepared by the U. S. Weather Bureau, showing conditions as of the end of March, discloses two "provinces of death," each of them almost as large as the state of Maine, where there has been no rain worthy of the name for more than a year. One of these is eastern Colorado, overlapping into western Kansas, the other is in eastern Oregon and Washington. In both these areas, the rainfall since the first of January has been less than 50 per cent. of normal—and this in country where "normal" rainfall would itself be considered a drought in the more humid East.

## Washington to Kansas

Surrounding these driest spots on the map, and connecting them in a broad isthmus, is a far larger area in which the precipitation so far this year has been, at best, only 75 per cent. normal. This extends from western Washington and Oregon to central Nebraska and north-eastern Kansas.

A notable loss from the Drought King's domain, however, has taken place in the Northwest. Late winter and early spring snows and rains have removed most of Montana and both Dakotas from

the list of extreme drought states, at least for the time being. Though still moisture-deficient, they have as yet enough water to "get by."

One thing that makes the plight of the drought-cursed areas all the worse is the bad start they are getting for an uncertain summer. Last year there was above-normal precipitation in the West before the beginning of the growing season. The rainless summer sucked this all out of the ground, leaving the subsoil bankrupt. And this bankruptcy has continued, in constantly aggravated form, until the present time.

## Hope for Summer

One ray of hope, however, shines through the dusty murk of the western skies. This whole region is a summer-rain area; at least 80 per cent. of its rain falls during the actual growing season. So even a desperately dry winter can be followed by a reasonably good summer. The light precipitation that has partly lifted the curse in Montana and the Dakotas may just possibly be the promise of better things to come.

Drought seems to have abdicated com-

pletely to the eastward where Plains merge into Prairies and wheat gives way to corn as the dominant crop. Through the whole Corn Belt, where lack of rain caused widespread damage last summer, there was a very wet autumn and a normally snowy winter, so that the depleted subsoil is largely replenished. And the early spring rains have been all the way from normal to 25 per cent. better than normal.

In general, while western wheat still knows its withered tyrant, midwestern corn bids fair to hold its old freedom.

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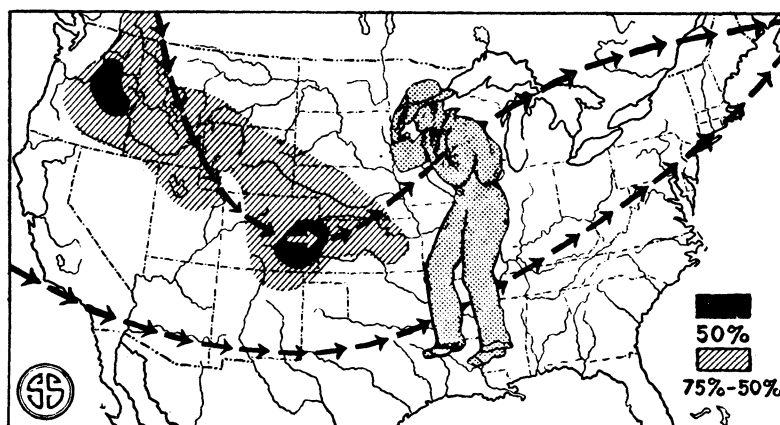
METEOROLOGY

## Drought Menaces Irrigation Areas East of Rockies

**D**ROUGHT on the irrigated lands of the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains seems in prospect for the summer of 1935, a survey by the Department of the Interior indicates. In this region the soil has been moisture-deficient for so long that any rains falling now will be needed to replenish subsoil water, and there will be that much less for reservoir storage. Water shortages are likely to occur on the Uncompahgre project in Colorado, the Belle Fourche project in South Dakota and the North Platte project in Wyoming.

Elsewhere, however, especially in the Southwest and the Pacific Coast states, irrigation water supplies promise to be fair to good. An exception is the Carlsbad project in Texas, where the supply threatens to be short.

*Science News Letter, April 6, 1935*



## DROUGHT'S EMPIRE

*As the 1935 growing season gets under way, there is a wide zone still gripped by drought, which raises little but dust storms. The black areas shown on the map have had less than half their normal rainfall so far this year; the shaded portion from 50 to 75 per cent. normal precipitation. Arrows indicate typical paths of storms, which when they cross the dry regions pick up the soil and carry it for hundreds of miles as choking dust.*