

n. y. Herald Trib - 1940 May 7.

1940

# Borsodi Insists His Homestead Plan Is Sound

## Despite Reorganization of Projects, He Says Return to Land Is Necessary

Ralph Borsodi, whose blueprint for a decentralized society is being tried experimentally at four suburban projects in the metropolitan area, appeared undismayed yesterday at the impending financial reorganization of his homestead scheme. Although he has relinquished control of Independence Foundation, Inc., and outside financial institutions are preparing to rescue the projects, he still believes in the soundness of his plan for attracting city folk from crowded apartments and transplanting them to rural plots.

"Our industrial civilization is dying," Mr. Borsodi said in a brief interview at the Hotel Irving in Gramercy Park. "Only by bringing people back to the land and giving them an opportunity to supplement their earnings by a resourceful subsistence economy can we build a better and more independent society."

Suffering from low blood pressure and nervous exhaustion, Mr. Borsodi has been in a New Jersey sanatorium since he resigned as president of Independence Foundation last February. He stopped in New York for luncheon on his way to the home of friends in Old Lyme, Conn., where he will rest and relax for several weeks before returning to Suffern, N. Y., to resume work as head of the School of Living, an educational research project closely related to the homestead plan.

### Discusses His Theories

A slender, dark man, middle-aged and wearing spectacles with thick lenses, Mr. Borsodi appeared more interested in discussing his basic theories about the evils of distribution costs and the need for greater production in the home than in the financial problems at Van Houten Fields, near Nyack, N. Y., and Stillwater, near Ossining, N. Y. The development of homesteads on those two projects has been retarded, it is said, because of Mr. Borsodi's failure to work out practical financial arrangements. The first project, Bayard Lane, two miles outside Suffern, is now virtually complete, with

seventeen houses built and occupied on the forty-acre tract. Another project is at Ringwood, N. J.

Independence Foundation derived its chief financial support from Chauncey D. Stillman, grandson of the late James Stillman, who is said to have invested about \$300,000 in its certificates. This was ample to develop the forty-acre tract at Bayard Lane and to acquire the 106-acre site at Van Houten Fields, both of which attracted an enthusiastic group of homesteaders. But when Mr. Borsodi bought the 250-acre property at Stillwater, in Westchester County, the expansion proved too rapid for the foundation's resources.

Under a financial plan now being worked out by George Moesel, an attorney and president of the Ten Park Avenue Corporation, who succeeded Mr. Borsodi as president of Independence Foundation, it is expected that the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will take a mortgage on the Bayard Lane property and that a Nyack bank and another housing finance company will advance loans against Van Houten Fields sufficient to complete the development of that tract.

### Some Land May Be Sold

Part of the Stillwater tract may be sold to private interests, although at least sixty acres of the property will be developed under the foundation's plan.

Although he had hoped to carry out the extension of the homestead housing scheme through the sale of Independence Foundation certificates, Mr. Borsodi appeared reconciled to accepting outside support. He was mainly interested in seeing the small homes of fieldstone and solid frame construction occupied by families that will plant gardens, keep a few chickens, a cow or a small flock of goats, and perhaps install electric mills to grind their own flour.

"Just as an example of what you can do for yourself," he said yesterday, "I recently talked to the head of a family who gets a bare living as janitor of a small flat, but who was spending about \$3 a week on cigarettes. I asked him why he didn't make his own cigarettes, and showed him how it could be done for about 75 cents a week."

If middle-class America would learn to "roll their own" in vegetables and other food, as well as cigarettes, Mr. Borsodi estimated that about \$1,250,000,000 a year could be saved. And if the home grinding of wheat for flour put the big milling companies out of business, think of the men, Mr. Borsodi said, who would be employed manufacturing and servicing the small electric grinding mills.

ekonomika