

C. INCREASES AND DECREASES IN NUMBER

Farm operators working off farm, 1930, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1954.—Data tabulated for the Census dates of 1930, 1940, 1945, 1950, and 1954, presented in Figure 21, show that the number of farm operators working off farm in the United States declined from 1930 to 1945, increased sharply from 1945 to 1950, and increased again from 1950 to 1954. As shown in Figure 21, the total number working off farm was about 1,900,000 in 1930, a little more than 1,500,000 in 1945, and almost 2,200,000 in 1954. The largest percentage increases in number working off farm between 1945 and 1954 occurred in the broad belt of States that runs from the Northern Plains and Lake States through to the Southeast Region. Relatively little increase occurred in the Pacific Region or in the Northeast.

In the Northeast, the total number working off farm remained remarkably steady from 1930 through 1954. The aggregate number of farms in the region continued to decline, of course, and therefore the percentage of farm operators working off farms continued to increase. Evidently, increased mechanization and improved highways and transportation facilities made it possible for more farmers to enter the nonfarm labor market; this compensated for those who were discontinuing farming or migrating out of agriculture.

The general additional inference is that in other regions the number of farm operators working off farm will reach a maximum level as the farm economies reach a certain level of development. When this level will be reached in the several regions is of course a matter of conjecture. It depends on the economies made in

the use of labor, on the pace of mechanization, and on the relative terms of trade between farm and nonfarm employment.

Farm operators working off farm 100 days or more, 1930, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1954.—Striking evidence of the impact of technology—farm and nonfarm—on the off-farm labor market is found in the Census figures. The number of farm operators who worked off farm 100 days or more has increased steadily. There were about 700,000 in 1930, a little more than 1,000,000 in 1945, and 1,334,000 in 1954. Not only has mechanization and related development paved the way for a pronounced migration out of agriculture, but in the short space of 25 years there has been almost a doubling of the number of farm operators who work off farm 100 days or more. In parts of the United States, past trends have been so strong as to suggest that this development has considerable distance yet to go. This is true particularly in the Lake States, in the Corn Belt, in the Appalachian Region, and the Southeast.

Increases in off-farm work have been general in each of the major regions with the notable exception of the Northeast. The trend has been only slight in the Mountain Region. In the Northeast the number of farm operators working off farm 100 days or more actually declined from 1945 to 1954. Table 7, however, shows that between 1949 and 1954 the number of commercial farm operators so working increased substantially and the net decline in numbers between these two dates was due entirely to the decline in the number of part-time (Class VII) and residential (Class VIII) farms. This suggests decided differences in trends among economic classes.

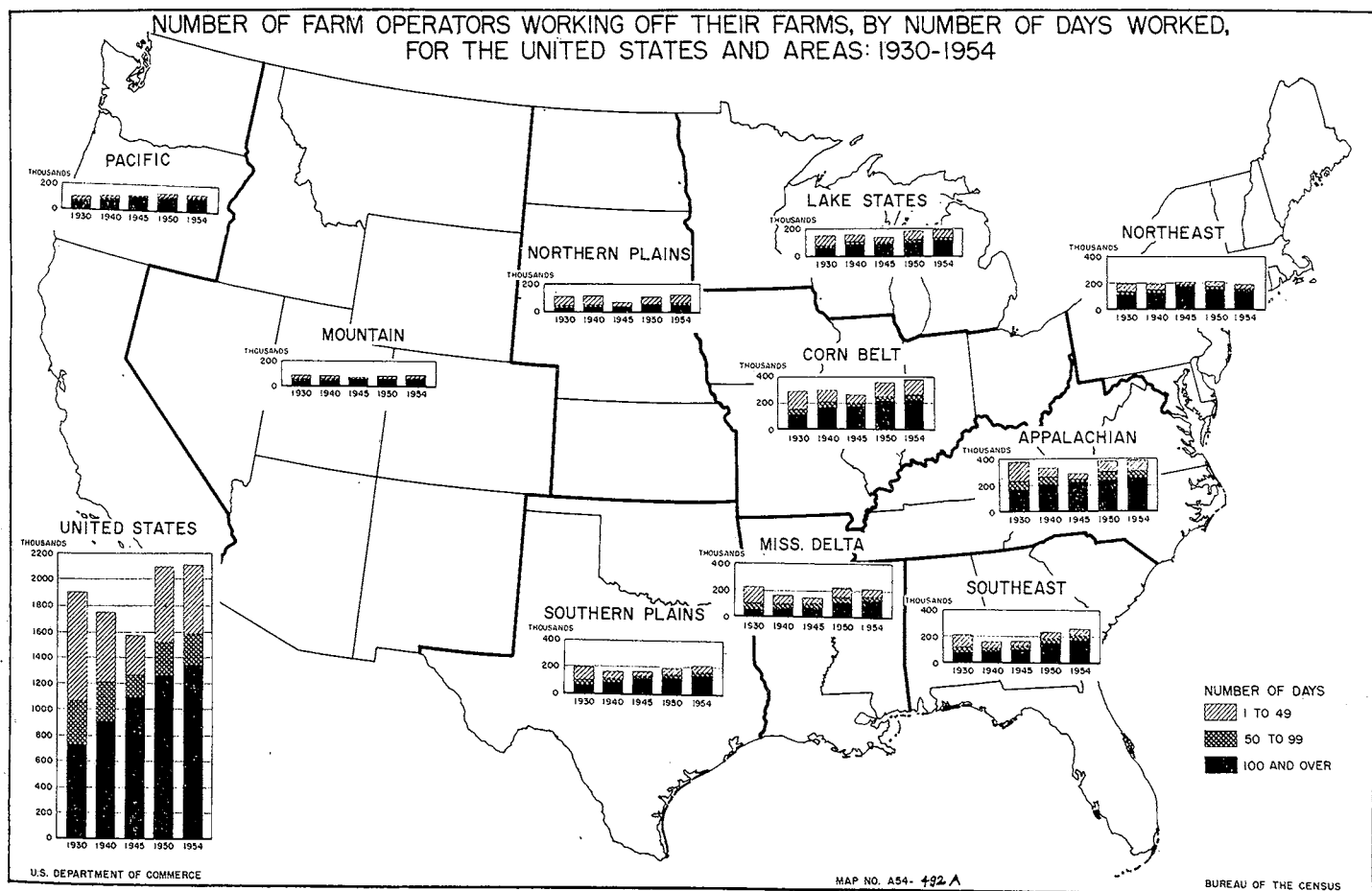


Figure 21.