

Letter from Edwin Locke to Depression-Era Photographer Arthur Rothstein, July 14, 1936

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Dear Arthur,

Your decision to go into the drought area is the best news I have heard in a long time. The latest of Paul Carter's work has not yet arrived, so I do not know exactly what he has. Anyway, he is moving on into Montana.

I suppose that from your travels through this region you are well acquainted with the type of material we wish. However, I would like to add the following brief shooting script. Be on the look-out for these pictures (1) Livestock — animals needing water, pasture, and so forth. Contrast — the R.A.'s work in the area, if any, pictures of forage and feed being shipped in. (2) Needy families — people evacuating, migrants on the road. (3) Pictures of children. (4) Pictures of crops — stunted, burned up. (5) Farms closed down. (6) Crowd going to or coming from church.

A big "if any" is understood with all this wishful thinking. I believe, from news stories that you are coming into this area after the climax of desolation has been reached. Still according to the newspapers, the relief agencies should be active in the field and conditions under way to improvement. Paul told me that the cattle in that area wintered well and that there are no ribs sticking out or no tongues parched and protruding. That doesn't surprise me, since it seems we always get an exaggerated idea of things back here.

Good luck, and we will all be looking forward to seeing your pictures.

Sincerely yours,

Ed Locke