

Sun Belt Anticipates Land Rush

THE movement of northern state residents toward the Sun Belt may turn into a new land rush, after the recent blizzard and fuel shortage.

The "New South" includes the 11 states of the Confederacy, plus Oklahoma and Kentucky. The "Sun Belt" includes these states, plus New Mexico, Arizona and California. They're booming.

The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that the nation now has a population of 214,659,000. For the first time, most of the people live in the South and West, showing 107,417,000 compared to 107,242,000 in the North and East.

Previous reports have shown that Northern and Eastern states had most of the nation's people, 53 per cent of the jobs and 55 per cent of personal income. But jobs go where people are and a lot of people are moving south.

So are industries. According to one source, of the 500 largest U.S. corporations listed by Fortune magazine, 114 now are based in

the South, compared with 79 a decade ago.

This has resulted in 76 per cent of all new manufacturing jobs materializing in the South during the past 10 years, according to the Southern Regional Council, Inc.

A business newsletter reports talks with numerous home builders at a national convention. It observed that most were doing OK, especially in the Western Sun Belt, while those from the Northeast were gloomy.

Oklahoma has shown steady growth, up 6 per cent in population in 1975 over 1970. Other Sun Belt states have grown even more, while the U.S. total went up only 4.8 per cent.

The February issue of USDA Farm Index reports on agriculture in the New South (including Oklahoma), and data compiled promise a bright future for farmers and stockmen.

These 13 states have 42 per cent of all U.S. farms and pro-

duced almost one-third of the nation's \$90 billion agricultural output in 1975. It was estimated that Southern farmers netted about \$7 billion that year. Most of the remainder of their incomes went for inputs—supplies, equipment, etc.

Agriculture always has been the South's largest industry, and it is gaining as it changes. Farmers are planting less cotton, more wheat and soybeans, and beef cattle numbers have increased one-fifth since 1970. Oklahoma may plant more cotton this year.

There is room for further growth. The South has the nation's largest reserve of potential cropland, the USDA publication reports, with an estimated additional 139 million acres that could be tilled.

More than half of what the South grows moves into export markets, but this might change if population in the region continues to grow, with more industries and more jobs.