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Dear Ferdie:

I may seem to have been an unconscionable time going over your "There Ain't No Such Animal," but things seem to interrupt me at every turn during the past week. In any case, I have read the piece with a great deal of interest, and I can see that the organization of the Department of Agriculture now seems little short of fantastic. The problems in handling the writing of a book of this type are as follows:

1. If the account is largely descriptive and analytical, it may tend to be a little flat, and it can't avoid being heavily weighted on the critical side.
2. A narrative account of the Department, from its earliest beginnings to now, would possess great strength, for the very reason that it would be narrative, rather than descriptive or analytical. Yet, it would take an immense amount of research to handle the history, and I doubt if you could afford the time, which, for a thoroughgoing result, would require at least a year of practically nothing else but hard swatting.
3. As I suggested, when we had lunch together in Oklahoma City (for which, again, many thanks), perhaps the most satisfactory approach is through a combination of the narrative and the expository, i.e., adopt the flashback method, beginning in Chapter 1, with the status and scope of activities of the Department as of today, then switch back to the origins and development of the Department up until, say, 1900 or 1910, then tackle the real era of agricultural problems through to the opening years of the New Deal. After that, you can treat policy and plans of the New Deal to now, after which you can analyze and dissect the Department, ending on the real, practical problems with which the farming world is concerned, as distinguished from the theorists and office boys in the Department.

The more I think of it, the more I feel that perhaps the third course is the most satisfactory, although the descriptive and analytical account of the Department of Agriculture is a possibility. If you tried the latter, however, I think you would find yourself having to force good humor and sly wit at almost every turn. That's tough going, as you know. I don't think that either you or we would want to go after the Department hammer and tongs in a whole book. The problem is, rather, to know what things such a department needs to do, and answer the questions, "How well are they being done?" and, "How many are being left undone altogether?"

I am going to be in Oklahoma City on August 2, and I can look you up then, say, some time midafternoon, if that's convenient for you. My whole thought is that we would very much like to have a book of this type, and the sooner the better. I don't know anyone who is better equipped to go after it.

Cordially yours,

*Savoie*  
Savoie Lottinville

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SL:ftm

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