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FOR DECEMBER 21, 1945

Book on USDA

USDA, Manager of American Agriculture, a book by Ferdie Deering of the Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman, has just appeared from the University of Oklahoma Press. It runs something over 200 pages, with tables, graphs, and illustrations. It pretty thoroughly mulls over the USDA.

To be specific, the author thinks that the Department is a useful institution which has long been bogged down in malorganization. While his main conclusions were obviously drawn during the latter WFA-USDA days, he is not sure that even our scientific bureaus are properly arranged and their work integrated one with another. And he is positive that at the grass-roots, or county level, duplication of effort, overlapping, and multiplicity of offices lead to confusion and inefficiency.

Specifically, Deering thinks the USDA performs functions of only three kinds: (1) Administration of personnel, services, and regulatory laws; (2) research, including all types now carried on; (3) education and information, including extension work. He would therefore dissolve all the bureaus and agencies and completely reorganize along these three major lines. This proposal, however, appears to overlook various laws.

For, as you can see from USDA's mimeographed Abridged List of Federal Laws Applicable to Agriculture (No. 8), many of our activities and agencies have a legal status that cannot be tampered with by the Executive branch of the Government. We are doing what the legislative branch ordained that we do. Congress cannot and should not be ignored. The Department simply cannot be melted down and run into new molds to make it tidy. Moreover, many things can be charted on paper which simply cannot be performed in practice.

However, this is not to argue that you should omit Deering's book from your reading list. You should not. It is an intelligent job, given his standpoint, it is readable, and—more wonderful still—it is remarkably accurate in its details and factual statements. By all means get hold of it. It appears mostly to have been written before the August reorganization of the Department, though the author inserted material regarding this change.

Scientific personnel

AT THE recommendation of the Council of Personnel Administration, an inter-departmental Advisory Committee on Scientific Personnel has recently been organized. Dr. S. B. Fracker, Research Coordinator of the Agricultural Research Administration, is the USDA representative on the committee.

The committee advises regarding methods and means of facilitating the selection, training, advancement, retention, and recognition of performance of superior scientific and technical personnel in the physical and biological scientific work of the Federal Government.

At the instance of P. V. Cardon, Research Administrator, USDA inter-bureau advisory group has been set up to bring together the suggestions and advice of scientific officers and employees in the Department. The chiefs of the following agencies have designated representatives: Agricultural Research Administration, Bureau of Dairy Industry, Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry, Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine; Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering; Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, Office of Experiment Stations, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Office of Personnel, Library, and Graduate School.

U. S. farm future

IN AN ADDRESS entitled "Agriculture Looks to the Future," Under Secretary Hutson gave the Indiana Farm Bureau an excellent exposition of factors prominent in the farm's second postwar adjustment period in a little more than 25 years. The talk was delivered November 15. ~~For complete text see release 3113-45 from Press Service (phone 8114).~~

The discussion centered on the present productive capacity of the farm plant and the probable size and kind of market for which it will now produce. Despite individual decreases, the total production of cash crops in 1944 and 1945 averaged 15 to 20 percent above prewar levels. It seems safe to count on an over-all farm productive capacity at least one-fourth greater than at the beginning of the war, even when allowance is made for unfavorable weather. To maintain farm production at that level, we must have high domestic consumption and a healthy export trade.

Current domestic consumption per capita is estimated at 8 percent above prewar, and it could have risen to 10, if demand could have been met in full under wartime stresses. Can such a rise be maintained at peace? That depends on full employment and consumer education and on improved diets, with resultant greater use of highly nutritive foods. It would also involve assurance of adequate diets to low-income groups, and a liberal unemployment compensation policy. The alternative would be a system of production and marketing controls that might eventually extend over a major segment of our agricultural economy. Mr. Hutson also said:

Even with a high domestic consumption level and substantial exports, it will still be necessary for this country to adjust the production of some individual commodities. . . . American farmers like to produce. Prices of most products are protected at 90 percent of parity. Our own people and people in other parts of the world need their products. It is simple common sense for us to take all reasonable measures to plan for full production and distribution in 1946.

Food from wood: Dr. Friedrich Bergius, Nobel Prize winner, recently told one of our agricultural attachés in Austria about two factories which produced 440 short tons of protein from wood monthly, to help feed the German army. Concentrated hydrochloric acid was added to wood or to vegetable residues—including cellulose—to form wood sugar, upon which a fast-growing yeast was cultured. This yeast contained 50 percent of protein similar to, and as easily digested as, animal protein. About 2 pounds of it equalled 5½ pounds of meat in this respect.