

SCIENCE

VOL. LIX

FEBRUARY 15, 1924

No. 1520

A PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT¹

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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

Lancaster, Pa.

Garrison, N. Y.

New York City: Grand Central Terminal.

Annual Subscription, \$6.00. Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary, in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

Entered as second-class matter July 18, 1923, at the Post Office at Lancaster, Pa., under the Act of March 8, 1879.

I AM quite conscious that the announcement of the topic for this address may lead to a feeling that it is one which has already been overdiscussed. As Mark Twain said about the weather, "Everybody talks about it, but nobody seems to do anything about it." The choice of a topic for such an address as this is not an easy task. But since the annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Science has come to be a sort of milestone to mark the contributions of science to the general public welfare, it seems to me that it would be appropriate to discuss briefly some of the contributions which economic science is making to the problems of agriculture in its relation to public welfare in these days when so much public attention is being given to these matters.

In this country, where public policies are so largely dependent upon and determined by public opinion, a wise program for the development of agriculture as a most important element in the public welfare of the country is most desirable under all conditions, and in periods of depression and economic stress, it is of greatest importance that there be such a wise program, because at such times many irrational or unwise proposals for the amelioration of agricultural conditions are made. These latter may be either based upon an inadequate knowledge of the real needs of agriculture or of the economic laws which govern the development of any industry, or they may be prompted by selfish desires to take personal or political advantage of the unrest and discontent caused by the temporary adverse conditions.

Such a program must be based upon a recognition of the interrelations and interdependence of agriculture and industry. Industry has more to gain and more to lose from a successful or an unsuccessful agriculture than do the farmers themselves in all those states where industry and agriculture are competing for labor and for food and raw products. Director Haskell, in his presidential address before the American Society of Agronomy² in Chicago last month, pointed out that through the introduction of improved methods of operation, during the two decades from

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section O—Agriculture—American Association for the Advancement of Science, Cincinnati, December, 1923.

² *Jour. Am. Soc. Agron.*, Vol. 15, No. 12, pp. 473-481. (December, 1923).

Science

59 (1520)

Science **59** (1520), x-172.

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