

TELLING the FARMER WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

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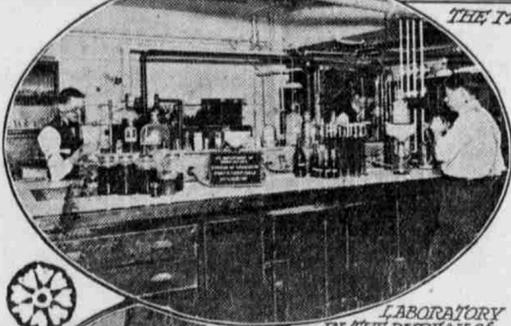
CARL VROOMAN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE



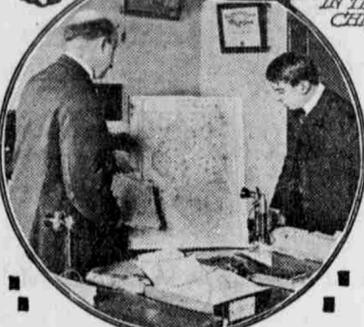
DAVID HOUSTON SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE



THE MIMEOGRAPH ROOM



LABORATORY IN THE BUREAU OF CHEMISTRY



WATCHING FOOT AND MOUTH CONDITIONS

WASHINGTON.—For nearly two years there has been an attempt on the part of the agricultural department to spread useful agricultural and household information among the people through the medium of the press of the country. The attempt has been highly successful, as perhaps the readers of newspapers do not need to be told, for the interesting and at times compelling writings of the service men have been before them from day to day.

In the department of agriculture there is an office of information which was created in June, 1913. Before its establishment there had been no active effort to give directly to the people the results of the department's work. Walter H. Page, at present the American ambassador to Great Britain, said on this subject of getting agricultural information to the people that the department "Had been reserving an enormous mass of information collected with the people's money and which the people were entitled to get."

In the past there were issued at frequent intervals publications largely in bulletin form, but with the exception of more or less perfunctory notices of their appearances comparatively little was done to make the public aware that they were at its disposal. One of the first things that the office of information did, therefore, was to develop a system by which absolutely accurate newspaper stories based on the material contained in these bulletins could be sent out to such newspaper, which it seemed reasonable to expect from the nature of the various subjects, would be interested in publishing them for the sake of their readers. This work still forms a large part of the activities of the office.

Some time ago there was a criticism of what were called the publicity efforts of the department of agriculture. The critics did not understand at all the nature of the work which was being done. They seemed to think that a press agency had been established simply for the purpose of booming the activities of the agricultural department with a view, perhaps, as some of the critics may have thought, of saying something kindly occasionally about the officials of government concerned in the work. Criticism passed quickly, for congress was told in a letter to Speaker Champ Clark of the house of representatives of just what the information work of the department consisted, and a sharp line was drawn between the nature of the information which was being sent out and the usual stuff which is turned out by a publicity bureau which is not at all necessarily an information bureau.

In the letter to the speaker of the house the secretary of agriculture said this:

"The nation is spending through the department many millions of dollars in acquiring agricultural information. It would be little short of criminal to spend millions of dollars to acquire information and not to use every possible efficient agency available for placing it at the disposal of the people as promptly as possible. It is the purpose of the office [the office of information], with as little delay as possible, through every proper medium, to give the knowledge which the department possesses as the result of investigations and field work to all the people who desire it or should have it. The office undertakes to deal solely with facts, with suggestions of remedies, and of methods of applying them in every field of agriculture."

Prior to the time that the office of information was created nearly all the printed matter conveying information was in the form of bulletins and circulars and the issues were not very voluminous. Frequently a great deal of time was required finally to prepare the bulletins, to print it and to distribute it. It was inevitable for many reasons that these bulletins could not reach the great mass of the people who would be interested in them. Many farmers did not know that the service was at their disposal. They knew nothing about the bulletins or which ones of them would be helpful to them, nor did they know how to secure them. Moreover, the publications largely were technical, were difficult to interpret, to understand and to apply.

One of the particular duties of the department's office of information is to put the matter which comes from the different bureaus in technical or scientific form into language which lay readers can understand. It seemed easier and better to the department officials that the office of information should choose the matter of special value to particular districts or sections of the Union and to have it distributed to such sections quickly. It had been found that delay in issuing the official printed bulletins and in mailing them often defeated the ends of real service. In case of the appearance in some district of an insect plague or of a disease that menaced the stock, quick action, of course, it was realized, was necessary to accomplish results.

The inauguration of the service of information as it is at present carried out necessitated a most efficient mailing system which would enable the office to circulate its material among those classes of publications and in those sections of the country which could derive benefit from it, and at the same time avoid a distribution that would be expensive to the government and useless to the newspapers and, if they should publish it, to their readers.

Now there is a mailing system installed and under operation by the division of publication and by means of it the publications of the country are classified geographically and by their character. Now it is possible to transmit a story to all the newspapers in the United States, to all the newspapers in any city or group of cities, to all the farm publications in the country or in any state, omitting the general newspapers, to the trade papers of any one or all of the states, to daily newspapers in big cities alone, or to those in small county seats alone—in short, practically any desired combination of publication is possible.

From this it will be seen that each story, with its fund of human interest and useful information combined, reaches a different circulation, "the distribution being governed entirely by the range of applicability of the information it contains."

It is the desire of the office of information to prepare these stories so that they may be printed without editing or revision. It is in this that lies one of the strengths of the agricultural department information service, for it means that scientific terms and phraseology are eliminated wherever possible, that the significance to the people of the bulletin on which the story is based is emphasized, and that specific, but easy, instructions are given to enable the people to do that which the bulletin recommends. The stories, therefore, can be called "constructive news." They tell the people what they can do and how to do it.

The department of agriculture takes great care to make its stories accurate. Everything that is put out by the office of information is submitted for approval, first, to the author; second, to the chief of the office or bureau which has charge of the subjects with which the story is concerned; third, to a second chief of bureau in order that he may check up any undue emphasis on one particular aspect of a given problem, and, fourth, to the secretary or assistant secretary of agriculture for final approval.

It would seem that with these safeguards nothing can be sent out which will be misleading to the people. It can be said that since the office of information was created it has been a rigid rule to avoid any appearance of personal publicity. In the information stories which are sent out neither the names of individuals nor even the names of the different offices and bureaus in the department are printed unless they are absolutely essential to the story. Every statement that is made is given upon the authority of the department and not upon that of a part of it.

No stories are sent out from the office of information about what the department of agriculture intends to do or hopes to do. Neither is anything said in praise of the department's work. Plain statements are given of what has been done and recommended. This is all. It can be said that seemingly this policy has brought about a very appreciable change in the way in which the newspapers regard agricultural news. Once the daily press was inclined to consider that the only interesting stories were those which were personal in character, were sensational or what might be called freakish. Now it is believed that the newspapers are much more disposed to measure the value of a story as news by the value of the information it conveys.

The office of information does not measure the worth of newspaper circulation by numerical standards, but rather by the appropriateness of each story that it sends out to the necessities of the readers. So it can be said that the farm papers are regarded as a much more valuable medium than the daily press for purely agricultural stories, and the papers circulating in rural districts as much more valuable for the same kind of reading matter.

No absolutely accurate information can be had as to the extent of the circulation given to information stories by the agricultural department service. It is said that clippings are received

from only one clipping bureau and that these afford only a rough kind of indication of the extent of the use of the material. Calculations, however, have been made and it is perhaps likely that they are under rather than over the mark. It is believed that just before the outbreak of the European war the material furnished by the information office appeared each month on approximately 300,000,000 printed pages. At the close of the last fiscal year, just about twelve months after the information service had been established, the division of publications made a report to the effect that the demand for Farmers' Bulletins was 44 per cent greater than during the previous fiscal year. Of course a certain proportion of this percentage must be laid to the increased number of publications and to the increased population, but making all allowances it seems to be plain that the public was much better informed about the existence of the bulletins and much more interested in them than ever it had been before.

While the department extends the usefulness of the Farmers' Bulletins among the people by familiarizing them with the publications' contents and value, it also sees to it that stories are prepared for publication that are much more strictly news from the point of view of the newspaper editors. These stories are usually warnings of frauds or of pestilence, or decisions and announcements connected with the enforcement of the meat inspection law and food and drugs act and other statutes of regulation which are administered by the department of agriculture.

In the days before the creation of the office of information the only organized method of spreading news of this character, which is almost always of considerable and even great commercial importance, was to send it out through the mails in the form of circulars. The delay frequently was costly to the people and the interests concerned and it was necessarily unsatisfactory.

Under the present system information is sent out at once from the department's office by telephone or messenger to the press associations and to representatives of newspapers which are likely to be interested in the matter and who are within reach.

The usefulness of this work is shown in the prompt publication of every quarantine order affecting the foot-and-mouth disease. This subject, however, had attained such proportions that it is likely the newspapers themselves would have secured the information through their own representatives, but there are other cases and many of them, where the stories could not be covered because if the department did not give out the information voluntarily nothing would be known of it. A case in point which may be cited was an elaborate attempt to palm off on the farmers in the corn belt region a preparation alleged to cure hog cholera. The sellers pretended that the preparation was recommended by the department of agriculture. This fraud was suppressed when through the office of information the newspapers in the territory concerned received a full statement of the facts in the case.

Many of the department's activities, moreover, have to do, not with the farmer, but with those who manufacture farm products into food or handle, store, or market them. The department's specialists are constantly making discoveries for preventing losses, devising methods for manufacturing new products or improved methods for handling or manufacturing old products. Heretofore it frequently happened that one progressive manufacturer would learn of these things and thus gain an advantage over others in the same trade who had no knowledge that the information was available. Under the present system the office of information quickly communicates the details of these discoveries or improvements to all trade papers in the class affected and to all important dailies in the territories where such manufacture is a prominent industry.

The office of information in addition to the service of the character outlined prepares a "Weekly News Letter" to crop correspondents which has taken the place of the "Crop Reporter." This "Weekly News Letter" is sent to all the voluntary crop correspondents serving the department, to inspectors, agricultural colleges, correspondents, and to other persons in a position to make use of the material. It has a circulation approximately of 103,000 weekly.

In all the work of the office of information the effort is simply to place at the disposal of the people the information which the department of agriculture primarily was organized to obtain for their benefit. In none of the material is there any attempt to gain prominence for any individual or branch of government, or to praise or to criticize anyone or in any way to influence legislation.

LEGISLATURE ENDS

THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION ENDED TUESDAY, APRIL 13.

TOTAL OF 308 BILLS PASSED

Appropriations for National Guard Amounts to \$67,500 for the Biennium.

Lincoln.—Gavels of the speaker and the lieutenant governor whacking on the stands at each end of the second floor of the state capitol Tuesday brought the thirty-fourth session of the state legislature to a close at 3:30 p. m. The ceremony was witnessed by more members than usually remain to the end. The last bill acted upon was the mammoth maintenance appropriation measure. The conference committee's report was adopted without a fight on any of the items. The total carried by this measure was \$2,769,820, as against the \$2,656,910 carried by the bill when it left the house and \$2,806,720 when it left the senate. In the conference the house was raised \$112,910. This was a decrease of only \$17,500 over the sums attached by the upper chamber. The voice of Secretary of War Garrison crying out in the east for the solons to increase the appropriation for the national guard over the pittance allowed by the house, was heard in the capitol. The appropriation was boosted from the \$37,500 allowed by the house to \$67,500, or a restoration of what the guard was given by the 1913 legislature. In conference the live stock sanitary board was allowed \$31,500. The irrigation board and the state engineer were treated to a conference raise amounting to nearly \$18,000 over the house figures. The state superintendent was cut down to \$25,000. Figures on the appropriations of the present session show that the total will be between \$600,000 and a million dollars lower than 1913. That too, in spite of the fact that state institutions required more money than they did then and in spite of the fact the educational interests of the state had to have at least a part of the increase. Last season the legislature passed 269 bills. Outside of the Greater Omaha act, probably the legislation along good road lines and the Falbey automobile act, may be considered to be among the leading legislative acts. Among the concluding acts of the lower house was the adoption of a resolution endorsing the administration of President Wilson and his cabinet.

Seven Food Bills Passed.

The food commissioner's department fared very well at the hands of the 1915 legislature. Of the seven bills in which Food Commissioner Harman was interested, not one fell by the wayside. One of the measures passed makes it a felony to sell diseased meat. The dairy bill provides for dairy inspection from May 1 to October 1, under the former law it was only for the three summer months. It also authorizes the department to put the buying or selling of cream on a quality basis. The weights and measures amendment provides for three inspectors instead of two. The stock foods law requires the filing of the name of each ingredient with the food commissioner, an analysis and a \$5 fee from the manufacturer for each brand. The concentrated feeding stuffs law requires the branding of mixed feeds or parts of whole feeds with a fat, protein or fibre analysis.

Adds a Judge to the Ninth.

The Nichols bill, adding another judge to the Ninth judicial district and putting two more counties in that district, was signed by the governor, despite the fact that the legislature did not see fit to provide for an extra judge for Lancaster county in that district. The governor asked for the latter, but the senate did not agree with him.

More Escort Wagons Arrive.

A carload of escort wagons has been received by Adjutant General Hall of the National Guard in Nebraska. The wagons are furnished by the federal War department.

Gibson for Kearney Normal.

The state normal board has elected H. H. Gibson of Cornell university, head of the department of biology and agriculture at the Kearney normal school.

Jury Commissioner for Douglas.

Governor Morehead signed the jury commissioner bill for Douglas county and the loan shark bill.

Dorchester Has Plea.

Citizens of Dorchester have put in their case before the Railway commission for additional passenger service from the Burlington. The Saline county towns want trains Nos. 2 and 3 to stop.

Property at Full Value.

Advocates of taxation reform won their only victory of the session when the house passed the Saunders bill, Senate File No. 161, providing that all property shall be listed by the assessor at its full value.

CONDENSED NEWS

OF INTEREST TO ALL.

Fremont fire loss for year is \$118,000.

The Randolph Commercial club has been organized.

Fairbury Presbyterians dedicate a \$15,000 church.

F. J. Kovar won the postoffice primary at Schuyler.

The Boy Scout movement is being pushed at Louisville.

Pierce went dry by thirty votes. Mayor Duff was re-elected.

The thirty-fourth session of the state legislature is ended.

City Clerk Bratton of Hastings is serving his sixteenth year term.

George Bantel dropped dead while plowing in his field near Kearney.

Seward bonds for new high school building carry. Ninety women voted.

The Missouri Pacific railway is contemplating a new yard in Omaha.

The first grand jury investigation ever held in Hastings will open May 10.

R. S. Brauner, a farmer living four miles north of Stanton, committed suicide.

Sentiment toward paving some of the principal streets in Stromsburg is growing.

Fire destroyed the residence of S. A. Milgrim at Hooper, causing a loss of \$1,200.

Will Rinderspacher, Hastings butcher is circulating a petition to be appointed dog catcher.

The oil tractor meet to be held at Hastings this year has been postponed till next year.

Victor Snyder has purchased the elevators formerly owned by W. H. Lewis, at Alma and Everson.

Nebraska soil conditions are ideal, says Secretary Mellor of the state agricultural board in a bulletin.

Adam McMullen, elected mayor of Wymore, orders all card tables out of the cigar stores and pool halls.

State Engineer Johnson has advertised for bids on the Platte river bridge at North Platte, to cost \$43,975.

Charles W. Bryan, brother of W. J. Bryan, was nominated city commissioner in the primary election at Lincoln.

The Hastings schools will hold a May fete at Chautauqua park May 6 and 7, with Miss Katherine Kohl as May queen.

Ben Deeder, Holt county, was killed by falling from a windmill tower.

Chadron expects free mail delivery after July 1.

The Kearney district of the Catholic church will be honored shortly by the establishment of a parochial school in that city.

A petition has been issued at Hastings asking that Amy Robinson, the only woman physician there, be appointed city physician.

Elbert Moren, living near Johnson, suffered a broken arm and internal injuries when two teams and a wagon load of oats ran over him.

Farmers' Business association gets the Bell Elevator and a company of farmers and business men buy the Trans-Mississippi elevator at Shelby.

Nebraska is to be represented by 1,500 feet of moving picture reels in the series of reels along the Lincoln highway that are to be shown at the San Francisco exposition.

The Spanish war veterans of Nebraska will hold their eighth annual encampment in Omaha April 27 and 28. Governor Morehead and ex-Senator Thurston will be speakers.

A continuing search is being kept up for the bodels of Mrs. Archie Ferguson and her two little daughters, who it is believed leaped from the steel bridge into the Platte river at North Bend.

Deputy game wardens over the state are warning people not to take stock in rumors that a new law passed allows people to fish and hunt in their own counties without a license. Such a bill passed the house but did not get through the senate.

Nebraska's winter wheat crop is estimated at from 101 to 104 per cent of normal by the Burlington crop experts in the first weekly report on conditions, by the road. The ten-year average of conditions at this season is taken as the normal. Condition in the Omaha, Lincoln and southeastern Nebraska districts was reported 101 per cent and in the southwestern part of the state at 104 per cent.

The new city council of Grand Island has been organized with the election of August Meyer as president. Committees have been appointed to work on the new sewer proposition recently passed by a popular vote.

Suit has been filed in the federal court by Frank R. McCormick, receiver of the First National bank of Sutton against the Luebben Baler company asking for funds alleged to have been lost just before the failure of the bank. The amount sued for is \$21,691.58.

Manager Matney of the Kearney State league baseball team, stated that he has forty men signed for the season.

The Nebraska State Pharmaceutical association will hold its annual convention in Omaha, June 7 to 10. Headquarters will be at the Hotel Fontenelle.

Since the suit of William B. Lucas and others against the Ashland Light, Mill and Power company, was begun in the Saunders county district court in 1907, at Ashland, nine persons identified in the case, have died.