

Looking at WASHINGTON

Farmer and Laborer Should Unite
Two members of the President's Cabinet, Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Brannan and Secretary of Labor Maurice J. Tobin, recently told a conference that governmental action to maintain high purchasing power for farmers and labor is necessary to avoid an economic depression in the United States.

It is interesting to note that the two Cabinet members, in their remarks, emphasized the dependence of agriculture and labor upon each other and insisted that existing rivalry and suspicions between the two groups be eliminated.

The general theme was that the cost of maintaining the high purchasing power of agriculture and labor would be, as Mr. Tobin asserted, "infinitely less than the cost to all of us of a depression." Moreover, the Secretary of Labor was convinced that this action will prevent depressions, build bigger markets for industrial goods, insure jobs for industrial workers and, in return, the money for the workers to buy the products of the farms.

Somewhat interesting was the comment of a number of officials of labor organizations. They pledged themselves to back a farm-price-support program and, in return, asked the help of farmers in obtaining enactment of a new Federal minimum wage law and repeal of the Taft-Hartley law.

While there has been friction between the representatives of agriculture and labor for many years, the political fact is inescapable that if these two great segments of our population get together, in wholehearted cooperation, they can probably put over any program upon which they are agreed.

A Project for Generations

The President of the United States says that, among other things, we are planning to "help the people in underdeveloped areas to learn modern industrial and agricultural methods," and that "by this means, they will be able to double and redouble their production."

Undoubtedly, there is much to be gained if the United States, in seeking to solve some of the economic problems of the world's farms. He points out that, farmers from China, to Poland, to Egypt, who plant grain by hand, cut it with sickles, irrigate with camel-hide buckets, follow other agricultural practices that are centuries old. There are other examples that could be cited to reveal the desperate need of farmers throughout the world to develop a modern know-how, including the use of machines.

Norris E. Dodd, Director-General of the U. N. Food and Agricultural Organization, recently made a local survey of the world's farms. He points out that, in some parts of India where the rice ration is only nine ounces a day, people wait for the summer floods to plant rice and harvest it by hand in January. Then, the rich land is lying unused until the following summer when the land is flooded again.

Mr. Dodd points out that a little

pump would make it possible to produce an extra crop of food and that several thousand pumps would make a tremendous difference.

The need, according to Mr. Dodd, is not a vast mechanization but practical agricultural methods, with a lot of work and a little money. He points out that the United States, during the war, increased its food production thirty per cent and says that if this increase is possible in the country with up-to-date agricultural methods, nobody can imagine the increase that can be obtained in areas where they are still plowing with a crooked stick.

It is undoubtedly true, particularly in regard to the teeming millions of the Far East, that the population develops where there is food supply to sustain life. In other places, apparently, the population dwindles through starvation. Naturally, when people face hunger as a regular occurrence in life, they are inclined to be unstable. Such a condition encourages violence and banditry, not to mention internal disorder and revolution. If the vast populations of these countries could be introduced to improved agriculture, the results would be significant.

To say this however, is not to solve the problem. It takes generations to introduce new methods. This is obvious in a country as intelligent as the United States, where many farmers, even at this time, do not utilize the best methods. It will be much harder to persuade the ignorant and superstitious planters of other areas that their way of cultivating the soil is not the best way.

Tariff Subsidy Challenges U. S. Policy

Seeking a two-year revival of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements program, the Administration wishes to eliminate the "peril point" restriction written in by the Republican-Controlled Eightieth Congress which passed a one-year extension last June.

Under the "peril point" provision the President is required to notify the Tariff Commission of proposed trade concessions. The Commission then advises the President of the point beyond which concessions cannot be made without imperiling U. S. producers. If the President does not follow the advice of the Tariff Commission, he must report his reasons to Congress.

There is no reason to have any misunderstanding as to the importance of the tariff debate in the Senate. Not only is the Reciprocal Trade Agreements program, sponsored by the former Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, under attack, but the entire conception of American cooperation with other nations faces a test. Obviously, if we are to cooperate with the outside world "there must be something effective along the lines of economic reciprocity."

The high protective policy of the United States has been involved in political contests for many years. Not until the administration of the late Franklin D. Roosevelt was there a prolonged effort to reduce the barriers which blocked the flow of trade.

Incidentally, it should not be overlooked that, with the exception of one year during the war, the Republicans in Congress have voted against the Reciprocal Trade program. There is no reason to suspect that they have changed their minds.

Under the changed financial and economic conditions that confront the United States in regard to its relations to other nations, the protective tariff is as out-of-date as the dinosaur. Long upheld as a means of fostering infant industries, the tariff has been used to mulct consumers for the benefit of the manufacturers. It was sustained by the political assertion that a high tariff was necessary to maintain the wage standards of this country.

The trouble with the tariff, of course, was that the protection necessary to keep struggling, non-efficient concerns operating, represented a subsidy of considerable magnitude to larger and more efficient plants.

There is another reason why the tariff should be progressively reduced. This involves the recognized fact that foreign nations cannot buy our surplus agricultural products unless given an opportunity to sell something in the United States to secure dollar exchange. For many decades, agriculture has been bled for the benefit of industrialists. In fact, the farm subsidy program is justified largely on the basis that the tariff subsidizes industrialists and manufacturers.

If the United States Congress wishes to maintain high protective tariff rates, the government of the United States might as well advise foreign nations that our pretended international cooperation is a sham and a delusion. There is no use in lending

billions of dollars to foreign nations, or in sending them arms and ammunition if, at the same time, we maintain a law that will do much to prevent them from living in the same economic world with the United States.

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—Landor.

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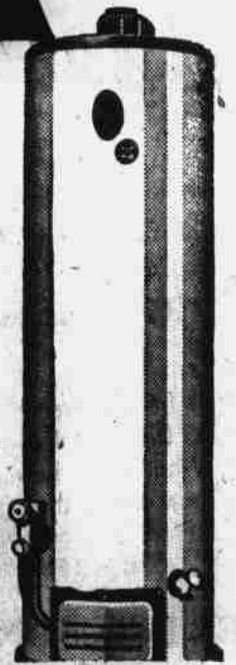
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