

Roger Babson Discusses the Effect of Weather on Business and Investments

BAISON PARK, Mass. (Special)—A conference of weather experts has been held at the Babson Institute with special reference to long distance weather forecasting. This conference brought out some very interesting facts which Mr. Babson summarizes as follows:

Daily Weather Forecasts.

"One of the chief items of interest in every daily paper is the weather forecast. This usually is on the first page and very often in the upper corner, thus giving it a prominent position. The daily forecasting of the weather has been in existence many years. In the early days the weather man was a job and the weather forecast served to advise people as to how the future might be. Gradually this service improved, and today it is fairly reliable. Of course, the most widespread use is in connection with pleasure, travel, etc. If we are invited to a picnic, have an appointment for playing golf, or are interested in some outdoor feat we invariably study the weather forecast. Also, this forecast is used by shippers of certain merchandise, by farmers, by builders, and in other commercial and industrial ways. Every year improvements are being made and the Weather Bureau at Washington, with its various ramifications, is striving to increase the accuracy of the good work done."

"In the late fall these daily forecasts are watched keenly by investors, and especially by those who buy or sell grain. Often the corn crop is made or lost by a day or two delay in harvesting, and the Weather Bureau has performed a similar function for investors in this connection. Fruit growers have been saved hundreds of millions of dollars by these daily forecasts which have enabled them to prepare against frosts and similar catastrophes. The uses, however, of the daily forecasts are rather limited, and have no such opportunity for service to business men and investors as have weekly and long distance forecasts."

Weekly and Monthly Forecasts.

"It was only a few years ago that scientists claimed weekly weather forecasts to be an impossibility; but today the Weather Bureau at Washington is putting out an estimate of what the weather will be for the next seven days, basing the forecast on the usual course when storms and other weather movements usually take. Such work, however, is still in its infancy and has not yet been satisfactory. While our government is doing some excellent work in this direction, Argentina, under the direction of Huxmark, its official forecaster, leads in long-range weather forecasting. In our own country numerous experts are making extended investigations. H. H. Clayton of Canton, Massachusetts; Charles F. Brooks of Clark University; C. G. Abbott of the Smithsonian Astrophysical observatory

Dr. George F. McEwen of San Francisco and other prominent men are giving very careful study to weekly and monthly forecasts. Dr. Abbott's theory is based on the variations in the amount of heat radiated directly from the sun onto the earth, which is measured by his staff. It is also believed that these changes in the dieted. Dr. Brooks approaches the problem primarily from a study of the temperature of ocean currents, the effect which these have on air currents and consequently on local temperatures and rainfall. Dr. McEwen was one of the first to forecast California weather by ocean temperature.

"The up-to-date retailers of the country are watching these experiments with the greatest interest. Weather forecasts of a week or ten days in advance would be of great value to department stores and other retailers in planning sales, releasing advertising copy and arranging for clerks. The retail trade has two great handicaps today. One is that women simply will not shop in the morning but all crowd into a few hours in the afternoon; and the other is that clerks must be hired today irrespective of weather conditions. When weather can be forecast a week or ten days in advance, the entire routine of a big department store including advertising and selling, can be reorganized to the great benefit of the stores, employees and the customer."

Long Distance Forecasting.

"The most interesting new development in weather forecasting is in connection with long distance predictions. That is, forecasting for periods of three months to three years. This does not mean that we shall ever be able to forecast what the weather will be a year from today, but it seems entirely possible as to what the weather will be next summer; that is, warmer or colder than this summer. The men mentioned above, together with others, are working on this problem, although the greatest interest has been aroused by Herbert Janvin Brown, a former newspaper man in Washington, who is serving as sort of clearing-house for all the studies along these lines. This theory is based on the effect which these changes in solar heat have on ocean temperatures, basing these changes in the ocean currents and finally interpreting their effect on inland weather through their influence on moisture-bearing winds toward the land. The fact that ocean water temperatures are slower than those of the land to respond to a change in solar radiation is taken into account. Thus, if measurements show that heat given off from the sun has been below normal for two or three years, owing to sun spots or other things, then Mr. Brown believes the ocean currents gradually must become correspondingly cooler, affecting evaporation and wind currents and producing certain weather changes on the land."

"The difficulty with this long distance forecasting is that up to the present time it is largely a theory without supporting data. Nansen, the famous explorer, had this theory some years ago and attempted to collect data which had been gathered to a limited extent at various points, but very little of a scientific nature is in existence today. Moreover, it will take a great many years and a great deal of money to collect sufficient data on ocean temperatures to enable such a system to be built up. It is the consensus of opinion of most of the experts, however, that the governments of the world could not appropriate money with any better object in view than in collecting this data on ocean temperatures."

West Coast of South America.

"Reference has been made in the past from time to time on the great changes that have taken place on the west coast of South America, which for the past fifty years has been dry and barren. During the past year Ecuador, Peru and Chile have had a rainfall of over 100 inches, and the coast resembled like a rose. This is due to the fact that the famous Humboldt current, which normally flows north along the west coast of South and Central America, has moved from its accustomed route. This stream of cool water from the Antarctic has been responsible for an almost total absence of rain in some sections of the western coast of South

America, and for clear skies and generally dry weather as far north as California. It was Hollywood's unbroken days of sunshine and cloudless skies that made it particularly adapted to the shooting of motion pictures and gave it that pre-eminence which it has held so long. But during the past six months the Humboldt current has been pushed out of its regular course by a warm water current from the north. The result was a total reversal of conditions off the western coast of South America, with torrents of rain in places where no rain fell in 50 years and great losses to the grain deposits of Chile, which depend on dry weather for their value. The changed conditions have affected even the California coast where more rain is said to have fallen during the past few weeks than ever before in a like period."

Profits and Losses.

"One probably thinks that this is looked upon as a great blessing by the people living on the west coast of South America, but such is not the case. One of the principal industries is the guano industry, which consists of deposits from birds, and which depends on a dry climate and the absence of rain. The recent great rains washed away these deposits, and if continued will cause great harm to the industry. The greatest possible rainfall does not do any harm to a place like Venice, where people build their houses on piles and live on the water, but on the west coast of South America people have been building their houses of solid masonry in the very beds of rivers which have been dry for many years. The supposition was that dry weather would continue. It is estimated that one hundred thousand of these houses have been washed away by the rains. It is not so important what kind of weather is experienced just as it is that the same kind of weather continues. A community can prosper from dry weather and industries will develop based on dry weather; or communities can thrive on wet weather and industries will develop based on wet conditions. As long as the same conditions continue, the industries and communities prosper. Losses come through a change. What has happened to the Pacific coast of South America could easily happen to California, New Mexico and Arizona, Texas, or any other part of the country. A slight shifting of the Gulf Stream could make a winter resort out of New England and a summer resort out of Florida."

"The older farmers of the central west will remember the great failures of the 90s when all of the crops of an entire state, like Kansas were wiped out. In those days the crop reports were of great speculative value and were watched by investors most keenly. Today there is not much interest in these crop reports, as there are not such drastic crop failures. The farmers of the west attribute this to their ability in diversifying their crops and using modern methods in agriculture. It, however, is a great question whether the improved conditions of today are due to diversification and better agriculture, or whether they are due to weather changes. If the latter conditions of today are due to better weather, there is a very good possibility that we may again come to a period when the crops of the entire central west are wiped out as was the case a generation ago. When the Bakofas were settled, this was good agricultural land, but during the past ten years the Bakofas have suffered terribly from weather conditions. It was the weather that was responsible for the Farmers' labor party and the radicalism of the Dakotas. Now this weather is changing for the better and the radicalism is dying out accordingly. It makes one almost shudder to think how very dependent we are on weather conditions which we take for granted and which all any time may be taken away."

Lessons Gained.

"These facts are of special importance at the present time when stock market prices are high and such optimism exists in financial and certain business circles. As long as nothing happens, business can continue good, as along the normal line as it now is, the half-percent registering 1 per cent above normal. However, there is no reason why catastrophes cannot happen to the future as they have in the past, and this especially applies to great fundamental changes



MOST REMARKABLE PIECE OF ENGINEERING among the many that have made the desert to flower in the west, Shoshone Dam on the Yellowstone River in the national park. Each year thousands of tourists pass through the park, and nearly all of them visit this dam. The walkway along the top of the dam makes an ideal promenade for visitors.

Divergent Views Held On Irish Car Traffic

DUBLIN, (AP)—At the Rotary Club in Dublin complaint was made that the tourist traffic, particularly from America, had not reached expectations this year. One member who had returned from America said that he was disappointed there by the questions asked regarding as to whether the country was safe for travelers, and by the "expression of civilization," with pigs in the drawing room."

P. J. O'Brien, secretary of the Irish Tourist Development Association, answering these statements said that while there had not been anything in the nature of an American invasion, the arrival at Cork totaled more than 1,000 a week, and the traffic between Ireland and England on

one of the most important services was practically double what it was last year.

The transportation companies concerned were satisfied with both results and prospects. In Ulster the tourist traffic is reported to be at a level of previous years and in several districts has reached the pre-war standard.

Violent Patient Dies

Salem, Ore.—Alfred M. Woods, negro, who ran amuck at the Oregon state hospital Sunday last, after was subdued through the efforts of half a dozen attendants, died.

Dr. H. E. Lee Steiner, superintendent of the hospital, said he had requested the coroner and district attorney to investigate the death to determine whether it was the result of injuries suffered in the fight with attendants or from natural causes. Woods was committed to the institution from Multnomah county last July.

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