

# AMERICAN AGRICULTURE NOT DECLINING SAYS D. F. HOUSTON

## LABOR AND CAPITAL SHORTAGE FELT

Study should be Made of Possibilities to Develop and Utilize Lands—Settlers and Systematic Guidance on New Soils.

In an address last Tuesday before the National association of commissioners of Agriculture at Chicago, David F. Houston, secretary of Agriculture, dealt with what he called the fallacious notions that "in point of productivity American agriculture is on the decline and that we are in sight of the limit of production, that we need an unlimited number of farmers, that agriculture is not a business which requires expenditure of capital and labor and must show a profit, that the remedy for an assumed shortage of production is a back-to-the-land movement, that the American farmer has been ignored by the Government, or that it can solve all the problems of production and distribution."

**Crops Improve.**  
"In view of the fact, it is singular," said the Secretary, "that the notion should still be disseminated that American agriculture has been deteriorating and that there is ground for pessimism about the future. It is true that the production of some of the staple commodities has not kept pace with population, but this in itself may be of little significance. The advance in agriculture has revealed itself not so much in the expansion of the staple commodities as in a greater diversity of product, in the appearance of new crops, in the rise of minor crops to large proportions, and the availability of supplies throughout the year. But even in reference to the staple products as measured by one important test, there has been a very marked upward movement. The yield per acre of crop production in the United States has gradually increased. The average rate of this increase for the past twenty-five years has been small, it is true, being only one-half of one per cent a year, but the aggregate results have been enormous. This upward trend is not readily observed in yields from one year to another, owing to the wide yearly variations caused by the differences in seasons. But when averages are obtained for a series of years, it is readily observed. During the seventies and eighties, when there was a vast expansion in farm area in the West and crops were grown on a more extensive scale, the tendency of yields was downward. Since the early nineties, however, it has been upward. For the ten years ending with 1899, the average yield per acre of wheat in the United States was 11.8 bushels; for the ten years ending in 1918, the average yield was 14.8 bushels, or an increase of 25 per cent. In the first period the average yield of corn was 23.4 bushels; in the second 25.3, or an increase of 10 per cent; of oats 25.9 in the first period, in the second of 32.2, an increase of 24 per cent; of potatoes 72.9 bushels for the first

period, and 96.8 for the second, an increase of nearly 33 1-3 per cent. All other field crops have likewise improved in yield, the average for the ten years ending in 1918 being 16 per cent greater than that for the period ending in 1899. This tendency is general throughout the Union. It is not due to the shifting of production.  
"The Nation," said the secretary, "does not need and cannot have an unlimited number of farmers unless it is to return to the old basis when the farm was self-sufficient and produced little or no surplus. It should have, and in the long run will have, just as many farmers as will produce what the world will take at a profitable price. Farming must pay and rural life must be made attractive and healthful, schools with their instruction properly related to rural life must exist, good roads be provided, and adequate medical, hospital, and sanitary arrangements be developed. When these conditions are met the problem will have been solved and the Nation need not worry about the number of its farmers or the requisite supply of materials for food and clothing."

**Labor-Capital Limited.**  
"In considering the rate of extension of the idea in farms, it is important to recognize that the expansion of the Nation's agriculture is limited by the supply of labor and capital available for use, in agriculture as distinguished from other uses, rather than by the scarcity of undeveloped lands. It is true that in general the best land is in cultivation, but without question much of the remainder can be tilled when the Nation reaches the economic stage which would justify the utilization. It probably would be unwise to stimulate a large increase in the acreage of farm land at the present time, especially as such an increase would be made available at a heavy outlay of capital for drainage, irrigation or clearing. Apparently, therefore, American agriculture should consolidate the gains already made, prepare for the period of principally by increasing through sound and economical methods the productivity of lands already under cultivation, and utilize the services of the most experienced and judicious agricultural leaders in determining where, when and how to bring into cultivation and develop public and private unused land."

**Study Possibilities.**  
"The best experts of the Federal Department and of the agricultural colleges should make a careful study of the possibilities of utilizing land, cutover land, 60,000,000 acres of now devoted to agriculture. In respect to the 200,000,000 acres of land needing drainage, and 20,000,000 acres which might be irrigated, there is great variation from district to district as to the possibility of economic use. Distinctive regions should be fully studied with a view to assemble all existing data on productivity, the cost of making the land available, present tenure and prices, the type of agriculture best adapted to the conditions, the possible returns, the minimum size of farms capable of supporting families in rea-

# ROAD ROLLER CHARGE FAIR SAYS EASTES

## HOURLY BASIS IS AID TO CONTRACTOR

### CITY TO COOPERATE

Should Work With County, is Mayor's Belief—Judge Barnes Renews Offer to Give Bend Use of Roller Free.

Under existing conditions, the charges made by the Deschutes county court for the road roller which is being rented to contractor Joe Rock, are entirely fair, was the declaration of Mayor J. A. Eastes Thursday, after a tour of inspection of city street improvement jobs, made in company with J. C. Rhodes, chairman of the streets committee of the Bend council. Mr. Eastes found that the roller, for which the contractor is obligated to pay \$2 an hour, has been idle the greater part of the time, being used from two to four hours a day, and being held from road work outside the city because of this. "I don't blame the county court a bit," Mayor Eastes said.

**Facts Not Formerly Given.**  
Mr. Eastes explained that when the matter of the county agreement came up at a recent council meeting, he had objected to the rate charged because he had understood that the roller was to be used daily for a full eight hours. Now that all the facts are at his disposal, he sees only one objection remaining in the agreement between the city and county regarding the roller, and that lies in the clause which would make Bend guarantee the contractor's obligation. "The city recorder and I will be glad to look after the county's interests and see that collections are made, but I do not consider that the city should be quite so closely bound," the mayor said.

He emphatically declared that he is anxious for a policy of the most thorough cooperation between city and county, and had no intention of creating any feeling of antagonism. He will ask the court, he says, that the roller be used on county roads until enough work has accumulated in Bend for several full days thus, eliminating part time work on the city streets.

**Court Explains Rate.**  
County Judge W. D. Barnes and Commissioner C. H. Miller, in commenting on the arrangement made with the contractor, showed that county roads are waiting on the contractor's pleasure, and city streets are being given all the advantage. "As a matter of fact, if the city itself were doing the work, the roller would be turned over to Bend with no charges whatever for rent," Judge Barnes said. "That is the way it has been handled in the past, and the offer still holds good." Rent charged by the company selling the roller, when one of the machines was shipped from Portland to Camp Lewis for a lengthy job, he quoted as \$250 a month, charges being assessed from the time the machine was shipped to the date on which it was again in the hands of the agents.

Commissioner Miller mentioned work done last summer on Wall street, when he personally operated the roller for two days. No charge was made even for his own services. While the roller is now being tied up by part time work in Bend, roads near the city, including one mile just east of Bend, and three miles in the Grange Hall district, are badly in need of rolling.

sonable comfort, the minimum equipment needed in the beginning of settlement, sources of credit, and marketing and transportation facilities.

"It would be desirable if Governmental agencies, by systematic aid, should furnish reliable information to those seeking farms, should take particular pains, through their agricultural machinery, to give new settlers very special assistance and guidance, and where conditions are favorable, should aid in the development of well-considered settlement plans.

**Standardization Needed.**  
"There is no question that everything which can legitimately be done to eliminate waste in marketing and to promote orderly distribution should be done. Certainly we can proceed further by State, Federal and individual action in standardizing the production, the handling, and



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the packing of farm products, and in promoting the use of standard containers and proper storage on farms, in transit, and at the market centers.

"Particularly must the Federal and State agencies omit nothing to promote helpful farmers' cooperative associations. Already within a generation many such bodies have developed and expanded rapidly. It is estimated that such associations in this country now market annually approximately a billion five hundred million dollars' worth of commodities. The indications are that with the continued success of these enterprises and with the proper educational effort and direction, they will develop even more rapidly in the future."

After referring briefly to existing

machinery for aiding the farmers in solving their marketing problems, the Secretary says, "the rational program would seem to be to expand activities which have clearly demonstrated their value, to follow the agent, as it were, and to further develop the machinery through which increased assistance may be furnished. There should be in every State one or more trained market specialists of the Department of Agriculture, working in cooperation with the proper State authority, to stimulate cooperative enterprises and to aid farmers in their marketing work by helpful suggestions as to plans and methods. The department is requesting increased funds to make this extension possible and will take the necessary action promptly if the appropriations are made. Both the

colleges of agriculture and the State departments have large duties in this direction and an immense opportunity. The field is broad enough not only for both of them, but also for the Federal Department and for farmers and farm organizations."

Denying that the American farmer has been ignored either in legislation or in machinery for furnishing him practical assistance, Secretary Houston said: "This Nation has more beneficent legislation for agriculture than any other country, and agencies actively assisting the farmer which in point of personnel, support, and range of activities exceed those of any other three nations of the world combined."

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