



Never Asked for the Job

ISN'T it odd how a harmless little animal like the groundhog has to take the blame for subsequent bad weather if the sun happens to shine on the second of February!

It becomes even odder when we learn that this weather superstition originated in the Old World, and that the groundhog is strictly an American animal. The drafting of the groundhog to be the "goat" for spring weather caprices seems to have been due to the application of the superstition to the hedgehog in some parts of Europe. The hedgehog is as strictly of the Old World as the groundhog is of the New, so that when European settlers arrived in this country they had to find a substitute. The two animals don't look much alike, but both of them are small, and familiar creatures about the fields, and both of them hibernate in regions where winters are cold.

Setting Candlemas Day as the official time for the groundhog's emergence, unless the winter is to be prolonged another six weeks, is a bit severe on our little animal. That would be all right for the British Isles and other western European lands, where the modifying influence of the ocean makes for brief, mild winters; but over most of America a "continental" climate prevails, and the winters are longer and colder, so that very few hibernating animals care to emerge so early as the beginning of February. Only as far south as the Carolinas has the groundhog ever been seen during the first week in that decidedly winter month. Over most of the country it is no use looking for him until early in March.

The groundhog is an animal of many aliases. He is called groundhog mainly in the South; north of the Mason-Dixon line he is most often called woodchuck,

presumably because he likes to start his burrow under the shelter of old logs or piled-up broken branches. A closely related animal, that lives among tumbled stones in mountainous regions, is called the rock chuck. Marmot is another name for the groundhog-woodchuck.

Whatever title one prefers to give this little involuntary (and quite unreliable) weather prophet, the "hog" part of the groundhog name is quite out of character. For he is related to the swine family only insofar as he is a mammal. His real affiliations are with the rodents, that numerous and adaptable tribe which includes rats, rabbits, squirrels, beavers, and that other porcinely misnamed animal, the guinea pig.

Science News Letter, January 28, 1933

ENGINEERING

Organized Engineers Repudiate Technocracy

TECHNOCRACY was dubbed "class dictatorship" and repudiated by the organized professional engineers of the nation represented by the American Engineering Council in annual meeting in Washington.

Strong resolutions declaring that "our present economic structure contains within itself the possibilities of progressive improvement and the attainment of higher standards of living" were adopted by the engineers. They also resolved that "applied science holds the promise of better things to come in a society which fearlessly and intelligently meets its problems."

Stating that claims of the Technocracy group have received wide publicity by reason of "startling predictions which involve a complete overturn in our economic structure," the engineers called the promise of a quick solution of economic ills by the New York group "unwarranted." They further charged that the technocratic data and statistics are open to question and the method of presentation has been marked by "exaggerated, intolerant and extravagant claims."

Complete replacement of men by the machine is precluded by the law of diminishing returns, the resolutions recited. That is, the point is being reached in some industries where it is unprofitable to continue to replace men with machines.

The volume of goods produced, distributed and consumed during 1928 and 1929 was not excessive, the engineers

concluded, and they predicted that that volume may and should be surpassed upon the return of prosperity. Technical improvement was called the "only possible basis for continuing material progress."

Howard Scott and the Columbia University technocrats were called bureaucrats and repudiated by William Henry Smyth, 78 year old Berkeley, California, mechanical engineer, who in 1919 published the first article on "technocracy."

In a communication to the Engineering Council, Mr. Smyth charged that the technocrats had misappropriated his invention of the word "Technocracy" and surrounded it with false doctrine.

Mr. Smyth urges a supreme national council of scientists superior even to the U. S. Supreme Court to deal with the constructive and distributive factors, and the conventions of the nations.

Science News Letter, January 28, 1933

On The Cover

THE DARK, oblong areas pictured on the front cover are all that remain of a pre-Ice Age collision of cosmical magnitude, the smattering of a part of what is now southeastern United States with fragments of a comet. This is the belief of Profs. F. A. Melton and William Schriever of the University of Oklahoma. (*SNL, Dec. 31, '32, p. 418*) The photograph emphasizes the great area covered by these depressions, for each little dot is a tree and there are thousands of dots in some of the ovals.

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▼ The Science Service radio address next week will be on the subject

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MINERAL RESOURCES—

AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

by

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Of the Department of Geology of Princeton University

FRIDAY, FEB. 3

at 12:45 P. M., Eastern Standard Time

Over Stations of The Columbia Broadcasting System