Getting Down to Skim Milk

Geology—Economics

GEORGE OTIS SMITH, Director of the U. S. Geological Survey, before the Mineral Law Section of the American Bar Association:

In recent years the mineral industry seems to have grown too fast. The American habit of "stepping on the gas" has brought the mineral industry close to the danger line.

We must not make the mistake of interpreting the speeding up of the mines, quarries and wells as a special phenomenon caused by the war demand, for, in the mineral industry as a whole, the postwar growth has been equal to the growth for a similar period of war and prewar years. So long as the supply permits, the consumption of mineral raw materials increases in response to civilization's demands. Agriculture grows only about as fast as population, because the per capita demand for foodstuffs changes in variety only—not in quantity. Mining grows at a far different rate and a rate independent of population, for the demands by civilization for mineral products change in both variety and quantity with every discovery and invention.

In a large way, however, wise public policy has a real concern in the supply of mineral raw materials. This is true not only because the products of the mines are the stuff that civilization feeds on, but also because mining is a process of continuous depletion, whereas agriculture harvests annual crops, and even forestry harvests periodic crops. A Harvard economist has stated the contrast, "Mining typically lives upon its capital; agriculture upon its income." This increasing draft upon irreplaceable mineral deposits, this depletion of fixed reserves, makes a job for the mining engineer, but more than that, it presents a problem to the intelligence of the nation. Minerals are essential assets because they constitute a country's guaranty of future prosperity.

American industry has all the energy of youth, yet with a background of three centuries of colonial and national life we Americans are now mature enough to begin to think in terms of time as well as of space. A nation's greatness can be gaged by duration as well as by area, and a nation's wealth can be measured by its power to last. Prosperity to continue through the centuries is what we must plan for.

The Old World idea of an entailed estate might well be brought over into our thinking of the public interest in natural resources. The vital question for America today is not how many acres of oil fields or square miles of coal beds or million tons of copper ore are there for us to exploit, but rather how long can the present order of things be continued so as to benefit other generations of Americans. Prosperity should fail to satisfy the patriotic citizen unless it is backed up with some guaranty of permanence. To regard ourselves as trustees, possessing the uncounted wealth of America only to be passed on to our successors in interest without unnecessary depletion, is adopting the Golden Rule in perpetuity. Stewardship of that type means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time, and that is practical conservation.

As seen by the engineers, the issue of the control of production is truly a national one, not simply the problem of their employers, the mining companies.

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Poisons Mosquitoes—*Con'd*

water is very quickly fatal to "wigglers." The borax seems to hold its larva-killing properties for a long time; one experiment ran from July 25 to September 7 of last year without any signs of weakening at the end.

The two entomologists add, however, that borax should be used only where its possible effects on other animals and on plant life will be of no consequence.

In the course of their experiments they raised large numbers of mosquito larvæ, which had to be fed artificially. They state that they found common compressed yeast, such as goes into the collegiate "double malted," very good wiggler food.

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All the important varieties of wheat now cultivated can be traced back to the wild wheat that still grows on Mount Hermon.

Next to the United States, the country with the most automobiles per inhabitant is Hawaii, with eight people to each car.

Long Light Waves—*Cont'd*

both the amber and blue filters was much less than under the whole of sunlight except in the cases where cod-liver oil was fed. This small amount of cod-liver oil is apparently able to induce normal growth and development irrespective of the presence or absence of any portion of either ultra-violet or visible solar energy.

Without cod-liver oil and on a standard ration, experiments showed that normal growth did not take place unless both the ultra-violet and visible rays of sunlight were admitted.

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When African Bushmen hunted ostriches they would hide behind an ostrich skin and hold the head up on a stick, so as to come near the birds without alarming them.

The United States has found the production of iodine too expensive, though it is estimated that almost five times our consumption of 3,000,000 pounds could be obtained from the kelp along the Pacific Coast.

Flowers—*Continued*

exposed to the proper environment. Mr. Gericke predicts that in the future at least part of the production of flowers for markets and for the home will be in water media.

For the use of home flower growers, tablets or food pills, similar to those now used as a soil fertilizer, could be compounded. These would contain the same elements used for various flowers in the vats and would need only to be dissolved in the proper amount of water.

Generally speaking, this is what flowers are made of: potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur, boron, manganese and zinc, absorbed in solution through the roots; and carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, supplied by the air and water.

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Scientists excavating at the ruins of an ancient town in Iraq have unearthed peas, date stones, nuts similar to pistachios, and wheat, all carbonized by fire, but showing the sort of things eaten in the east 3,000 years ago.

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