

POLITICAL ECONOMY—AGRICULTURE

Politics In the Laboratory Use Scientific Methods

EDITOR'S NOTE: This editorial, that appeared in Scripps-Howard newspapers throughout the country under the heading "Politics in the Laboratory," is reprinted because of the allusion to the methods of scientific research that it contains. It was written by G. B. Parker, editor-in-chief, Scripps-Howard Newspapers.

ONE OF THE MOST disheartening phases of modern life has been the contrast between the progress of science and the status quo of statesmanship.

From stage coach to airplane is a long step; but from the politics of two centuries ago till now, little if any change; just the same old oratory, the same old viewing with alarm, the same old pointing with pride, the same old appeal to partisanship.

Science works in the laboratory, with no humiliation if an experiment fails. Politics works on the theory of party omniscience on the idea that the president-elect, the governor-elect, the mayor-elect, or the dog-catcher-elect shall propound his program, whatever it may be, and stay with it to the end. The thought of backing up and trying again is not in the code; once admit an error, and all the shafts of the opposition will find you and destroy you.

From such a philosophy are born policies like prohibition, policies that you ride until you drop, though your own investigators say you are wrong and all the realities cry halt.

But a new note has been struck. We read these words in President Roosevelt's message on agriculture: "I tell you frankly that it is a new and untrod path. . . . If a fair administrative trial is made and it does not produce the hoped-for results, I shall be the first to acknowledge it and advise you."

Here we have a President who admits he might be wrong, who is willing to go into the laboratory, try the experiment, find out whether it will work, and recant and try again if he is mistaken.

That is the scientific method. Let us fervently hope that among his many other accomplishments, Franklin D. Roosevelt will continue to inject that method into politics.

Science News Letter, April 1, 1933

Recent excavations at Pompeii show the humble homes and shops in the waterfront section of the city.

CHEMISTRY

Inferior Goods Camouflaged By Misuse of Chemistry

CHEMISTRY, which has contributed so essentially to America's economic progress, is in this depression helping to camouflage inferior quality merchandise.

This danger was mentioned by H. L. Derby, president of the American Cyanamid and Chemical Corporation, in an address before the American Chemical Society.

"One of the notable incidents of the present depression is the demand for low-priced merchandise, quality being one of the lesser considerations—quite the reverse of the prosperity type of demand," said Mr. Derby. "In past generations the distinctions between good and cheap merchandise were readily discernible by the most inexperienced observer. However, modern chemistry has largely eliminated the superficial differences by neatly and attractively covering up the inferior quality."

Chemistry's large contributions to America's industry and independence from foreign sources of essential materials were cited by Mr. Derby, who also predicted the future course of this science applied to industry.

"As necessity has been the mother of invention, it will be the mother of chemical application," he said. "Even today, the separation of non-ferrous metals from their ores is chiefly a chemical process. High-grade iron ore in the Lake Districts is becoming scarce and, in some operations, a crude sort of concentration process is already employed, the concentrate being mixed with high grade ore to maintain the average iron content. Chemical separation and concentration of many other minerals, such as coal, phosphate, earths, etc., is past the experimental stage. Synthetic moulding compounds, developed and produced entirely by the chemical industry, are just a few years old. Their possibilities for future utilitarian use are almost infinite.

"It seems certain that the chemist is destined to bear a heavier burden in the future advancement of housing, even beyond his present contributions of selecting, standardizing and ornamentation. The use of alloys of common and rare metals is in its infancy

and future demands for speed, lightness and durability will expand their use. The chemist, in collaboration with his fellow-scientist, the metallurgist, will be obliged, not only to perfect the structure and application of alloys, but must find a way of making available in commercial quantities what are now the rare alloy materials."

A continuance of tariffs adequate to protect the American chemical industry was urged by Mr. Derby. Cheap foreign labor and depreciated foreign currency threaten the industry, he warned.

Science News Letter, April 1, 1933

SEISMOLOGY

St. Patrick's Day Quake Near Pribilof Islands

ST. PATRICK'S DAY was marked by the occurrence of an earthquake under the Bering Sea, near the Pribilof Islands, famous fur-seal rookery. The quake began at 10:55.5 a. m., eastern standard time, and its epicenter was located in latitude 55 degrees north, longitude 169 degrees west. This determination was made by seismologists of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, on the basis of data supplied through Science Service.

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● HOW RIVERS CUT GATEWAYS THROUGH MOUNTAINS

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by

Dr. Douglas Johnson
Professor of Physiography,
Columbia University

This address will be given
Friday, April 7, at 12:45
P. M. over stations of the
Columbia Broadcasting System.
Each week at this time
a prominent scientist speaks
over the Columbia System
under the auspices of Science Service.