

ADVERTISING NEW PLANT FOODS

War Conditions Make Evident Necessity of Forming Food Habits of People Along Right Lines—This Work Should be Especially Directed by Department of Agriculture—Incessant Hammering of Modern Advertising Has Created a Vast Market For Many Commercial Products.

DAVID FAIRCHILD

Agricultural Explorer in Charge of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

THE days of the helter-skelter of democracy are drawing rapidly to a close. "The method of leaving the development of society to the confused welter of forces which prevail within it" must give way. We have "discovered the necessity and value of a conscious direction of its activities." The war is making this great change evident to everyone. We must know what we are doing as a people, and our habits—our likes and dislikes—must form the study of our most brilliant minds. The results of these studies must be taken to all the people with the same certainty as the advertisements of the great corporations are hammered home, until they become brain patterns on the mind of every man, woman and child, patterns as clear as, or clearer, than Coca Cola, Cascara, or Quaker Oats.

FOOD HABITS OF VAST IMPORTANCE

Our food habits—why should they not form one of the very first and most important problems with which this conscious direction should concern itself? "Food will win the war" is now on every stamped envelope. If this is true, then the food habits of the people form one of the most vital problems at the present time, and are likely to do so for some years to come.

To the generation just past, paternalism was considered a great error, something that would undermine the morals of the people. My first experience in the introduction of plants into America was with this mistaken bugaboo of democracy.

I was asked, by the head of the Di-

vision of Horticulture of the Federal Department of Agriculture, to secure for a pioneer, who was trying to establish the citron industry on his place in the foothills near Los Angeles, some cuttings of the citron of Corsica. After the negotiations had proceeded so far that I was on my way to Corsica the matter came to the attention of the Secretary. "I would just as soon give a man a set of Plymouth Rock eggs as to get for him, at government expense, a lot of cuttings of the citron," was his reply. (And as a result I got the cuttings with my own money, and it was a long time before the Government ever paid me back.) This is a bit of department history that has never before been published.

Today the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction is expending a hundred thousand dollars a year in getting and handing over to just such pioneers as Smith, of Monrovia, Calif., new plant material from foreign countries.

PRODUCTS SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN

It is now twenty years since this work was begun, and we have arrived at still another step in the progress towards paternalism which it is evident to me is necessary. This step is the conscious direction of the people in acquiring new food habits.

We have been aiding the new industries to get the material with which to begin; and the pioneers have been putting their lives and their money into the growing of the trees and the plants, and the acquiring of the necessary information with regard to their cultivation and the handling of the product, and

now they are ready to put their pet products on the market. But, alas, there is no market. They have convinced themselves that the fruit or the vegetable is better in some respects than what their neighbors are growing, and that there are good reasons why it should be grown over a considerable area of land, but they have spent all the money they could spare in the growing of their product and they have never considered the selling end. They have done what the farmer has done so often, neglected the selling end of the proposition.

ADVERTISING TOO COSTLY

Now it is entirely beyond the limits of the pocketbooks of any man or small body of men to put up the money for the advertisement of a new vegetable. Advertising is expensive, and the prices paid by the big manufacturing firms would be out of the question for the producer of a new vegetable. He simply could not do it. Before one got back in sales the money which he put into advertising he would find that some one else was growing the same or a similar product and reaping the benefits.

Is this state of affairs to be always left to the helter-skelter competition of food manufacturers with secret processes, and the manufacturers of foods which are so well known that only superior quality counts anyway?

If it is important for the people that these new plants should be developed into plant industries, then it seems to me that a market for them must be created and the necessary advertising be done by the Government.

MARKET HARD TO SECURE

This doctrine is the result of experience, not merely an office view of the situation. I have had the experience of seeing farmers become interested in a new industry, of seeing them plant several acres to a new crop, and then, when the harvest time came, discover that nobody was going to help them advertise the fruit or the vegetable; and, not being men of large means, their enthusiasm has melted away and

the industry, which deserved a larger try-out and a fuller experience, has died out for lack of advertising. Had 1% of the money spent every month in the advertising of some new brand of chewing gum been available for the new and wholesome food, sales could have been made, the growers encouraged to go ahead, and a new plant industry established. In the one case a new chewing gum, made from the same ingredients as any other, has supplanted some other chewing gum with absolutely no good results as far as the public is concerned; in the other the death of an industry which would have brought new land areas under cultivation and made safer for the future our agriculture and more secure our food supplies of the future.

DISEASES MUST BE COMBATTED

For it must not be supposed by the public that there is any certainty that we shall be able always to combat the epidemic diseases of plants. Nor must it be forgotten that these may gain in virulence with the extension of the areas planted. Nature is not made in any one mold, and each case will have to be fought out singly. We have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to grow the old world grape in the Eastern States of America and have utterly failed. The history of the pioneers in the establishment of the American grape industry is illuminating in this connection. This industry deserved to have a much smoother path and to have sacrificed many less pioneers.

Under our very eyes today the same kind of a struggle is going on in the South where the delicious Scuppernong grape is being developed, and the growers are trying, without organization, and with only half-hearted government aid, in the form of advice and experimental work, to create a market for what is in reality a delicious new drink. At the same time a single concern with a mixture of California grape juices has worked up a trade in a new drink and is selling it by the carload. This new drink has been built up by concentrating capital on the simple mat-

ter of salesmanship. In the one case the growers of the Scuppernong grape cannot sell their product because they have no salesman and cannot afford to engage one. In the other, an already established industry creates a market for a new drink by skilful advertisement.

The question which I want to ask is: Why should not the Government have expert salesmen?

LARGE FIELD FOR CORN AND RICE

Had the success of the corn campaign in Europe been followed up as it should have been years ago there is little doubt but that the ignorance which has prevented the Belgians and English from eating corn cakes and other corn products would have been immensely minimized. Had salesmen been employed to teach the people how to cook rice and encouraged its consumption we would have, instead of the paltry consumption of seven pounds per capita, something approaching the amount which we ought to consume. An active rice campaign might have prevented the overbalanced sugar consumption of 90 pounds which we now have, largely as the result of the advertising placards and newspaper urgings, and the incessant hammering of thousands of salesmen along the line of natural small resistance. These chocolate and candy and ice cream and sweet drink manufacturers have had free access to the public, and have developed in the children of the coming generation a sweet tooth which will require the sugar planta-

tions of the West Indies and the East Indies as well to supply. And this, too, in the face of the fact that the sugar habit, like the alcohol habit, has objectionable features about it which the doctors have long ago pointed out.

The conscious direction of the food consumption of the people will, I conceive, bring into existence the government salesman, and with it the development of what has already come in other lines government advertising and government street car posters and fence advertisements.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PRODUCTS

The newspapers and magazines have always looked upon the stories about new foods in the light of news, and they have always been glad to spread any items of interest which would help the sale of things in which the farmer is interested. They have drawn the line when it comes to the advertising of any manufactured product—that was advertising and should pay its way.

The path of the government salesman should be made easy since he would not be working for any one small set of men, but for the development of a new plant industry which would be free for all to enter, and would support, on the land, families which would add to the building up of the country. When the industry reached a stage where it could afford to organize and engage its own salesmen then would be the time for the Government to withdraw its support.

Ohio Germination Tests Reveal Lack of Good Seed Corn.

Most of the corn harvested in Ohio in 1917 is not fit for seed, according to the Ohio Experimental Station, which has been testing nearly two thousand samples representing almost every county in the State. Crib and field lots range in germination from 1 to 40%.

Corn gathered and stored under artificial drying conditions before the freezing weather last December show 90 to 100% germination in these tests. Half of the corn kept from the crop of 1916 tests this high, and three-fourths of such samples are above 80%.

Seed corn this spring must come from three sources: A few farmers stored their corn early so that it was well dried out when cold weather came. Some corn matured comparatively early in southern counties and can be used in that part of the State. All old corn from 1916 should be held for seed and tested for germination.

Since local seed corn is always safest, from three sources: A few farmers to buy as near home as possible and to test each ear before planting.