REORGANIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL INVESTIGATION, EXTENSION, AND EDUCATION IN CUBA

We believe that any program looking toward agricultural development of Cuba along the lines above suggested can only prove effective if it is preceded and accompanied by a wholesale reorganization of those governmental agencies which deal with agriculture. We do not propose here to take up these matters in detail, but we propose to suggest some lines along which we believe drastic changes should be made.

The MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA should be taken out of politics, at least in so far as concerns the technical and administrative personnel. The personnel should be revamped on a basis of efficiency and assurance of continuing employment, free from political influence. At the present time the Ministerio appears to be over-burdened with inefficient employees. It lacks sufficient technicians of ability and experience. We do want to acknowledge, however, our high regard for some of the technicians with whom we have had contact. This revamping of the staff would call for a great deal more money than is covered in the scanty appropriations currently made for this important department of the government.

We feel that it would be sound to suggest that the Cuban Government request the United States Government to furnish the services of (1) an experienced man as Director (or in any other appropriate capacity) of the Extension and Education Service; (2) an experienced man to take charge of the Experiment Station and other investigational work.
work of this branch of the Ministerio; (3) a competent Soil Technologist to continue the important study of Cuban soils so soundly begun by Bennett and Allison in the '20's; and (4) an experienced hydrologist to conduct an extensive survey of available sources of water supply.

The EXTENSION AND EDUCATIONAL work, if properly organized would make possible the rapid building up of the general level of agricultural practice among the small farmers of the Island, a thing urgently needed. The machinery is already available. There are six secondary agricultural schools scattered over the Island (one in each Province) and the school for Ingenieros Agronomos y Azucareros of the University of Habana. These schools - particularly the Granjas or Provincial Agricultural Schools - need to be taken out of politics and given more support.

The work of agricultural extension could be carried on admirably through the 126 Inspectores Municipales de Agricultura, who are theoretically supposed to do this sort of work, but who, for various reasons (mainly political) are not today fulfilling their proper functions. These men are in reality the key men in the development of Cuban agriculture as a whole - comparable to our county agents in the United States. Today most of these men are doing little except to estimate data regarding agricultural production in their respective areas. They are in many cases appointed for political reasons, we believe, and they are almost wholly without funds.
funds with which to work. We have been told by several of them that they have no means of getting around their territories except those provided at their own expense. Their total salaries are at the rate of $70.75 per month. We believe this work should be overhauled; the poor men weeded out; and the good ones given facilities to do their work properly, with assurance that their tenure will not be subject to political whims.

The AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION at Santiago de las Vegas was established under the American Administration about forty years ago. For many years, now, it has drifted badly, until it has become at the present time an institution which can by no obvious results justify its continued existence. The station is spending $81,000 per annum on salaries; $15,000 per annum on labor; yet very little work is accomplished. There are a few good men on the staff; many others who are without doubt on the payroll for political reasons.

This station should play an important role in the agricultural program of the government. As a matter of fact, the functions which are planned for the Industrial Research Laboratory (for which the Cuban Economic Mission estimated an allotment of $179,000 out of the fifty million dollar loan) are in part at least those which could properly be carried out by the Experiment Station at Santiago de las Vegas, but which are not being carried out there, mainly because the station is loaded down with political appointees to the point where there are neither sufficient
sufficient good technical men to carry on the work nor funds for them to work with. In brief, too much of the funds are diverted for salaries of inefficient personnel while funds for equipment and supplies are sadly deficient.

If this institution could be overhauled and put on a good working basis it would eliminate the need for an Industrial Research Laboratory, at least in part. The Experiment Station has the advantage of excellent buildings which were either constructed or thoroughly overhauled about ten years ago, and grounds which contain a good deal of valuable plant material.

A first-class SOIL TECHNOLOGIST is perhaps the most highly desirable of all additions to the present technical staff in Cuba, since complete knowledge of soils is of basic importance in agriculture and must come first. We would like to see several other good technical men from the United States in Cuba for the next few years at least; but we realize that it may not be feasible to achieve this. It is our conviction that there are, in Cuba, plenty of intelligent and energetic young men who would, under the guidance of experienced technologists from the States, rapidly develop to the point where they could do sound work. Without this guidance and training in certain lines at least, we feel that Cuban agriculture will continue to work under a heavy handicap.