6. THE POPULAR PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS
OF AGRONOMIC RESEARCH

J. F. Cox

Previous to the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, establishing the county agricultural agent and inaugurating the present extension system, a strong proponent of this measure made the widely quoted observation that "the agricultural colleges and experiment stations had a sufficiency of facts and information concerning agriculture, held in cold storage, to revolutionize American farming methods if put into general use."

Colleges were pictured as repositories of knowledge rather than flowing wells of information, and agricultural experiment stations as cold institutions where strange individuals did unusual things which they termed agricultural research, far removed from general farm practice and of doubtful practical value in the minds of uninformed farmers.

In 1914, in a lecture to the class in agronomy at the Ohio State University, Director C. E. Thorne presented from his long experience the thought that it takes about a generation to bring a new crop or new agricultural practice into common usage.

Fifteen years has brought about a vast change in the rapidity and effectiveness of the popular reception of the results of agronomic research. Agricultural colleges and experiment stations were really as warmly interested in the farmer then as at the present time, and research workers as earnest and efficient, but the facilities for presenting new facts to the farmer were vastly inadequate as compared to agronomic extension methods of the present day. As recently as 15 years ago, the horse and buggy were the common means of conveyance, bad roads were frequent in rural districts, farmers' cooperative organizations were just beginning to develop, and county agents were few in number. While newspapers were available, trained agricultural publicity directors who could aid in presenting scientific facts to the press in a popular way were hardly known. The home use of the radio was undreamed of and moving pictures were still in the "custard-pie throwing" stage.

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Head of the Department of Farm Crops, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Mich.

The late B. F. Harris of Champaign, Illinois, Chairman of the American Banker's Association Committee on Agriculture.