OPPORTUNITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AGRONOMISTS: INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS

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LARGER responsibilities in world affairs confront agronomists today than ever before in the history of their profession. The magnitude of these responsibilities is as yet undetermined; nor can their full weight be assumed so early in the wake of the war. We can, however, be certain at this time of a worldwide awakening to the paramount importance of food in the lives of all people, and to the hope for continued peace that lies in the assurance of adequate food supplies. We have recently witnessed also the launching of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations upon which rests the burden of providing light and guidance to a hungry world groping to achieve freedom from want.

Such freedom is never to be attained solely by increasing food production in this and other exporting countries and attempting through normal channels to distribute that increase equitably. Improved world trade in food products will, of course, have its place. But it will not adequately meet the pressing need for more and better food supplies in those countries which have little or nothing to offer in exchange. Their hope lies not in trade but in the soil they till. From their own labor on the land must come the higher living levels they seek and deserve. To those nations it is for the agriculturally more advanced sister nations to extend the helping hand — a hand bearing principles whereby soil resources can be better utilized in the long fight against hunger and malnutrition.

This is a tremendous task. Whether and how well it will be accomplished remain for history to record. But the will to accomplish it is now unmistakable.

The job must be tackled by all governments working together. But governments, as such, will be helpless unless unified support flows freely from all groups of society. There must be mobilization for peace, as there was for war.

In war, science played a huge role. In peace, science has an opportunity to bring about revolutionary changes in an orderly way. Unless science takes advantage of that opportunity civilization may suffer a series of catastrophes, with consequences beyond the imagination.

But the part to be played by science in world betterment, great as that part may be, can be only one part of many to be played. Techniques of increasing the quantity of food available to all people and of improving the nutritional quality of food are basic to the whole job; but the will of governments and the desire of people generally to adopt those techniques, and to insure their full functioning, must be dauntless, continuing, and impelling.

It would be folly for us here to assume that we, as agronomists, alone can solve the world’s food problem. Rather, it is for us to de-