REMARKS AND COMMENTS ON THE CORNELL SOILS TRAINING COURSE

BY Ernest G. Link

The first Advanced Basic Training Course in Soil Correlation and Classification for S.C.S. Soil Scientists was conducted at Cornell University during the period of October 31 to December 10, 1960. Participation of authorized personnel, at the expense of the government, was by provision of the Government Employees Training Act.

The primary objective of the course was to provide further training in soil correlation and applied aspects of soil science. Secondarily, it was intended to provide the knowledge of basic concepts so that further reading and study would be easier for the individual. The need for this type of training, to a large extent, is based on the increased soil survey acreage and the greater use and interpretation of soil data. Inasmuch as this type of training is expected to have a qualitative effect on the National Soil Survey Program, Dr. Kellogg has given it his vigorous support.

To initiate the course, college chemistry and math references were recommended for pre-study. Most of the participants were able to secure these texts and devote some time to study and review prior to enrollment. These texts were helpful in supplying basic fundamentals.

Five basic subjects were offered at the Cornell Training Course. They included: Soil Chemistry and Mineralogy, Soil Physics, Plant Physiology, Principles of Fertility, Geomorphology, and Logic of Soil Classification.

Each subject was divided into sections so that, in some cases, more than one professor was involved in teaching a single subject. Thus it was possible to have each section taught by the professor best qualified as well as to adjust lecture periods to accommodate the instructor's schedule. The training group made one half day field trip to observe land features discussed in the Geomorphology section.

The participants were impressed by the caliber and the qualifications of the ten professors providing the instruction. Nine were from the Agronomy Staff at Cornell University and one from the Geology Staff at Princeton University. Many of these men are leaders in their respective branches of soil science. As director of the course, Dr. L. G. Cline is to be complimented for the excellent manner in which it was planned, organized and conducted.

Thirty men from 28 states and Puerto Rico attended this first Soil Science Training Course. Assistant State Soil Scientists composed about one-third of the group. The remainder included State Soil Scientists, Specialists, GS-11 Party Chiefs, along with one Correlator. As anticipated, the participants represented a great variation in background training and experience. Several had the benefit of considerable laboratory experience so that they found the chemistry and physics sections much less difficult than the rest of us. To me, this work at Cornell has again pointed out the extreme importance of adequate academic training in these two subjects.

Actual time involved with the course consisted of 28 hours of lecture and an average of 35 hours of reference reading and study per week. Thus participants received close to one