DUTIES OF INSPECTORS


Besides the inspection of the field work and the correlation of the soils, there are other duties of equal importance connected with the field work of the inspector which I will briefly mention.

It is the duty of the inspector to visit the college, experiment station, or other agency with which the Bureau of Soils is cooperating. Usually the state cooperator wishes to visit the areas with the inspector. In cases where this is not possible, it is the duty of the inspector to report to the representative of the state the general progress of the work, and discuss any problems that arise in the course of the soil survey.

The inspector should be a carrier of information. Nearly all of our soil surveyors are in the field the entire year. They get out of touch, or feel that they are out of touch with what other field men are doing, with what the laboratory men are doing, and with what is being written on soils and related subjects. It should be the duty of the inspector to carry to the field men the results of research in every branch of soil science. The soil survey is itself a branch of true scientific research, and is in a way a graduate school, the members of which should be advancing in knowledge. The inspector should therefore bring new facts to the attention of the field men, and should show them the application of new ideas to their own problems wherever such application can be made. Every field man with such information will feel that he is more in touch with the great body of soil scientists and will be encouraged to observe soils more closely, and to study more carefully the problems with which he is confronted.

An important duty of the inspector is to keep up esprit de corps of the field force. The field man no matter how cheerful, or how willing he may be, who does hard physical labor day after day, and month after month, often alone, is liable to develop a feeling of discontent. From my own experience I know that this feeling is greatly intensified if no one visits him from the office, and no one seems to pay any particular attention to the work. He naturally feels that he is neglected and that it is a matter of indifference whether he does good work or not. This feeling of loneliness and discouragement may seem foolish and temperamental to one who has never done lonely, monotonous field work, but it is quite natural and has a marked affect in many cases upon the progress of the work.

More serious and disagreeable however, are other troubles with which the inspector has to deal; the differences that arise between the field man and the office, and the enmities that arise among the members of a party. Now the inspector can ignore these troubles—often it is a part of wisdom to do so—but if it is in his power to harmonize differences and decrease friction, the inspector is not doing his duty, and is not loyal to his position if he does not attempt to do this.