

FORM 100

INTERVIEWS: SM

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acd - Inter-American
Inst. of Agricultural
Sciences

Wednesday, November 9, 1938

acd
Secretary Wallace

I called upon Secretary Wallace at his request and found that he wished to discuss with me two things only one of which related to potential Foundation program.

Because I had in the past had some interest in and had done some work that related in some ways to the present agricultural program of dual prices in the domestic market as a means of providing relief and of avoiding the ordinary program of foreign dumping, he wished to discuss this with me and to have me follow up the question in discussions with his Consumers' Counsel, Donald Montgomery. I saw Montgomery later in the morning and talked with him for a while and also agreed to have further discussions at some later date.

The other matter related to possible Foundation program for Latin America. Secretary Wallace began by saying that in his opinion the preservation of democracy in the Western Hemisphere was by no means to be taken for granted and would require positive and intelligent effort. He thought that, particularly after the Munich agreements, there was need for us to consider in very practical terms the economic relationships of Western Hemisphere countries and that something should be done to stimulate trade between the American republics that was mutually advantageous and which might replace to a degree the competitive economic activities through which all of us were scrambling for the same markets in an east-west rather than a north-south direction. Hence he placed great weight upon the development of the tropical agriculture resources of the Latin Americas which could supply the United States with a variety of essential materials that we could not produce for ourselves.

Secretary Wallace said that his Department had made a beginning toward studying the potentialities of this field and helping Latin American countries to study them under an authorization passed by the last Congress to allow United States governmental agencies to furnish technical staff for advisory purposes upon request from Western Hemisphere republics. Much more elaborate plans have been formulated and a memorandum has been prepared for the President (it will be released to the press within a few days and a copy will be sent to us) asking for an appropriation of, I believe, something like \$350,000 for really developing this field. The Secretary said that he was not overly optimistic that a major part of the appropriation would be furnished but hoped at least that under whatever appropriations were granted certain important parts of the work could be implemented. He is thinking of the eventual establishment (perhaps in Panama) of an institute of tropical agriculture.

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We discussed the question at some length and I explained that we were merely in the position of being receptive to suggestions of important work that might be done in Latin America without adopting a positive program beyond our general work in international health. Secretary Wallace asked me to talk to the man who has really been formulating the program, Mr. Brestman, who is on assignment as special technical assistant to the Secretary.

I talked to Mr. Brestman and through this conversation it became evident that there will be no pressure upon us for immediate decision. Brestman told me that if the President accepts their memorandum and decides to support their plan they should know somewhere around the first of March what their chances are of obtaining appropriations. By that time some action may have been taken under an interim deficiency appropriation, but, in any event, they should be able to estimate at least the prospects of action under the regular budget.

Brestman's thoughts ran in terms of reasonably modest beginnings rather than any dramatic action such as setting up immediately an institute of tropical agriculture. He felt that there were at least two men, Mr. Lee of their own Department and Popenoe of the United Fruit Company, who really knew the field of tropical agriculture in terms of the Latin American setting, and he felt that a program would have to be built slowly through the advice of such men as these two. If they did not succeed in getting any substantial part of their appropriation, he felt that a number of basic surveys that are outlined in the memorandum that will be sent to us should be made and hoped that the Foundation might be in a position to provide for their being carried out. If they did get a substantial part of their funds, they would probably still seek some Foundation aid for things that cannot be accommodated with governmental funds, such as procuring foreign experts or attaching Latin Americans to studies that were going forward. Mr. Brestman would like to keep in touch with us and let us know how their plan progresses.

Stacy May

SM:LMG
11/14/38

Henry Agard Wallace