

Most farmers, we believe, are fully aware of the fact that it is not the function of a County Inspector, a State Agent, or a paid poisoner of the Biological Survey to attack marketing problems; but it is not surprising, in the face of present conditions that a constantly growing demand is heard on every hand for the complete overhauling and reorganization of all State and Federal agricultural agencies and the reforming of all in such a manner as to make them sufficiently flexible to allow a massed attack on the real problems of the California farmers.

One example of the effect of misapplied zeal, and we will close.

A few years ago a great hue and cry went up in the interior valleys of this State over the reported great destruction of fruit buds by bird pests. Poisoning and shooting were resorted to. Bounties were paid (unofficially) according to press reports on over 300,000 birds. The success of the venture exceeded the fondest expectations of the promoters and full vindication of the wisdom of the plan came when the State Crop Reporting Service announced that some *ninety thousand tons* of peaches, alone, matured—then fell to the ground and rotted because there was no market for them!

These are trying times for our farmers. Thousands of them have lost not only their ranches but their homes as well. Other thousands are facing the same tragedy unless relief comes quickly. In the face of such conditions it is not an inspiring sight to witness great expenditures of money and man power along lines which have only the most remote connection with the solution of agriculture's major problems. Suggestions regarding moratoria seem to be coming from various sources regarding numerous issues, and there are many farmers who believe it is high time to call an immediate moratorium on the present overworked practice of expending funds on unnecessary measures—most of which had better be deferred, according to current belief, until our farmers have become financially able to carry such burdens.—JOHN G. TYLER, *Fresno, California, September 1, 1931.*

"MORE GAME BIRDS IN AMERICA, INC."

The Western Bird-banding Association has lately received the rather extensive

syllabus which outlines the program of "More Game Birds in America, Inc." for the inauguration of the shooter's Utopia into which the United States and Canada are to be transformed. Of the organization in question the present document tells us nothing, but we understand that it consists of a heavily-backed, largely eastern, group who are prepared to launch, and indeed have launched, a large-scale campaign of education, research and propaganda leading to the end which their vision depicts.

It goes almost without saying that increased *protection* is to have no part in the matter, which is to be removed entirely from the inadequate hands of Mother Nature. *Propagation*, rather, is the word to conjure with, and it is probably a fact that game bird propagation in its scientific and commercial aspects has advanced farther and perceived a rosier future in America in the brief span of life of this organization than it might otherwise have done in half a century. Nine booklets on Game Propagation, Gun-club management, etc., have already been issued, and research stations are maintained.

The Foundation harmonizes with the suggestions made by Aldo Leopold in his recent *Game Survey of the North Central States*, made for the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute, in the proposal that propagation shall ultimately be handed over, in well-tested and practical form, to the farmer, who is to keep his own lands stocked and garner a fat profit from the cash value of the shooting, which is to develop into a "huge industry." The Government's end is to be financed by special selective taxation on shotgun shells, which will eventually create an annual fund of seven and a half millions to be specifically apportioned by Federal law to the use of the Biological Survey, to be applied to the program. State game programs are to be run on similar lines and to be paid for by "sufficient" (which we may safely read as "*increased*") fees for state licenses.

On the face of it, ornithologists enjoy game birds more than hunters do, stand to profit by their increase, and are anxious to see farmers respect and even develop the cover on their waste land. Also many projects and policies of the Foundation are altogether admirable, such as the principle of the defeated Hawes

bill to coordinate the various departments which affect game birds; the setting aside and protection of breeding areas for wild-fowl; the prevention of oil-dumping at sea. All these in themselves are good,—so good, indeed, and the Foundation so powerful and so skillful in the art of promotion, that we bitterly regret the deflection of so much power for good into so narrow and distorted a field. For unhappily these are details, and the whole is a frame-work of pernicious doctrines, too often speciously glossed over.

First and worst is the fact that, whether inevitably or not, such a program involves the implication that hunting (in the American meaning of the word) is a rich man's game. This was inevitable under certain conditions,—notably in small countries of intensive agriculture, high land-values, and a semi-feudal system of land tenure. Must it be so in the Americas? To be sure, it is pointed out that the tax on shells and the increased licenses are negligible to a man who buys guns, cases of shells, paraphernalia, dogs, boats, guiding, etc. etc. etc. Quite so! That sort of man, in the writer's experience, doesn't want to hunt anyway. He wants to play with expensive guns, shells, paraphernalia, etc.,—that is the chief part of the sport. But are not the majority of our six or eight million sportsmen still of the sort that sneaks down the creaking farmhouse stairs at dawn, in terror of waking the wife and babes, fumbles with numb fingers behind overcoats and gum-boots for the velvet barrels of the respectable hammer-gun his father swapped a spavined mule for back in '96, takes a short handful of pocket-worn shells from behind the clock, and starts, as a matter of course, for his neighbor's wood-lot, sniffing the frost? To him, the extra dollar or two makes all the difference, while shooting-rent or a club membership would put him as far from his own local birds as from the grouse of Balmoral. "The Foundation believes that no true sportsman has the right to go on the land of another in search of game without the owner's written consent, . . ." and, it will be observed, there is next to no mention of public lands in the whole program. It is on administration, research on propagation, distribution to the states for propagation, etc., not on stocking public lands, that the seven and a half millions of tax money is to go. The spectre of the legalized

private preserve sneaks continually between the lines.

On two technical points we are in direct opposition. First, as to the introduction of alien game birds. Once more, the naturalist is as anxious as the shooter to see "More Game Birds in America," but he has learned to accept such plausible propositions with large provisos. The slogan is a fine, red-blooded, Rotarian one. Amend it to "More American Game Birds in America," let the Foundation put itself squarely behind a kind of ornithological Dillingham bill, with no quota basis,—let it take its stand between what is left of the native upland game birds and extermination with replacement by squalid hand-bred old-world species, and it will remove a chief objection of the naturalist. The one or two watery lines devoted to the subject indicate the very opposite. Examples at home are too trite and too common for citation, but the writer recently drove down through a part of southern British Columbia, which we are prone to think of as representing the United States of our grandfather's time, with still a chance of salvation in these respects, and was astounded to find, even here, the superb native Blue and Willow grouse to all practical purposes extinct, while the road literally swarmed with the long-necked, half-grown pheasants and coveys of whirring Hungarian Partridges which have replaced them. These, ponderous gentlemen in tweeds go forth solemnly to pot, in the name of sport and conservation.

On the question of "vermin", too, the Foundation is far from being clear or sound. (Has the word then really entered the American vocabulary, or is it merely a Neo-Brittanic effort on the part of our brethren of Long Island *et al.*?) We have progressed a long stride from the old-time keeper's rule that "what is not game must be vermin" (to be shot on sight, or snared), or, more correctly, we never quite occupied that level of degradation. Are we about to achieve it? Judging from the following we are, with a vengeance. "The Foundation advocates intelligent vermin control. By this it means *necessary control of all animals which are detrimental to game birds* on areas devoted to this purpose." This, whether interpreted by single-eyed "sportsmen" or by "the lout with a gun who is only too anxious to have an excuse to destroy any form of wild life", can per-

haps be trusted to leave out a few rodents and smaller passerine birds, but other branches of the Government will take these as injurious to agriculture, so that a thorough job will ultimately be made of it. The last line of this section, "It would be unwise . . . to exterminate any species of predatory birds or mammals", is an entirely inadequate sop to Cerberus. The deep-seated killing complex, with its blind hatred of any animal against which an imaginary "economic" case can be trumped up, is closely allied to, and inflamed by, the sport-complex, which demands a monopoly of killing.

The last consideration which disinclines the writer to sympathize with this doubtless perfectly sincere and highly constructive program is the disappearance which it spells of American "hunting" beneath the new vogue of old-world "shooting." The word *shooter* was not used above without intent, for essentially the two things are as different as daylight and darkness. According to the tradition of the former the knowledge of the country and the problem of finding the game are the chief sources of satisfaction; in the latter case, the game, albeit composed of flesh, bone, and nerves, and animate with life, is merely a difficult and spectacular target, and the single factor of importance is marksmanship, which is developed far beyond anything which wild game shooting has produced in this country. There is no essential difference between shooting over butts in England and the abominable *tire aux pigeons* at Monte Carlo and elsewhere, except that the former is the hardest shooting on earth and superbly dramatic, while the latter is as easy as it is beastly.

The writer, since the days when he was slightly longer than the average pair of gun-barrels, has indulged in a good many forms of sport in a good many climes and seasons, and perhaps his blood is too deeply imbued for him to be safely considered a reformed character. But at least when it comes to backing a great movement to set up as our chief national ornithological ideal the covering of the face of this country with game birds, largely alien in species, like a Scotch grouse moor, to the exclusion of a considerable share of the natural fauna of each region, the best he can say is "not interested." In broadest economic analysis, also, these proposals are an offer, or fore-

shadow an offer, from a small group who can afford it, to the nation for its game birds. In all justice let it be said, they will pay liberally,—far more than the birds are worth otherwise in cold cash. Probably, in the natural sequence of social and economic development, just this must come to pass. Yet the writer dares hope that for the moment, for our time, the Government will have the character to write "Not for Sale" across the face of the proposal.

As we go to press the Foundation has issued further literature which will not exalt its standing among naturalists and conservationists: viz., a powerful and elaborate circularized plea, based on immediate, as opposed to far-sighted, economic grounds, to reduce wild fowl shooting to three days a week throughout the usual season, instead of reducing the season to one month, as has been done. In our opinion the former, even more than the latter, would amount to a mere gesture, and reduce actual shooting imperceptibly. Few wild-fowlers shoot more than three days a week in any season.—T. T. MCCABE, *Berkeley, California, September 1, 1931.*

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

AUGUST.—The August meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Thursday evening, August 27, 1931, at 8:00 p. m., in Room 2003, Life Sciences Building, Berkeley, California, with fifty-five members and guests present. In the absence of the regular officers Mr. Brighton C. Cain occupied the Chair. Minutes of the Northern Division for July were read and approved. Minutes of the Southern Division for July were read. Mr. E. L. Sumner, Sr., through the Western Birdbanding Association, proposed for membership: Lyndon L. Hargrave, Assistant Director, Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff, Arizona; Mr. E. E. Horn, 332 Giannini Hall, Berkeley, California; and Mrs. Susan E. Van Zandt, Box 435, Golf Tract, San Rafael, California.

At the request of Mr. C. B. Lastreto, who was unavoidably absent, Dr. Barton W. Evermann introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption.

"WHEREAS, in addition to the serious decrease in numbers of wild fowl of the