

profile...

"Government agencies exist for service to the people; officials exist to see they get this service"

DESPITE some opinions to the contrary, there are many government workers who believe that their function is to serve the people. Such a man is Allen B. Lemmon, chief of the Division of Plant Industry, California State Department of Agriculture.

Lemmon's credo:

- Let the people know that government exists for them.
- Keep governmental agencies cooperating to give maximum service to the people.

This credo is much more than just a group of words to Lemmon. It permeates everything he has done in a 25-year career with state government. It is transmitted to his subordinates, who, like Lemmon, are never too busy to answer an inquiry made of them.

A Hoover's Influence

Lemmon was born in Sacramento, Calif., March 31, 1908, graduated from Stanford University with an A.B. in engineering in 1930. He received a Degree of Engineering in civil engineering (specialty: structural engineering) in October 1932, also from Stanford.

Obviously, structural engineering is a far cry from any state department of agriculture. Lemmon in a sense backed into his career, forced by the particularly low demand for structural engineers in 1932—the depth of the depression.

He heard that Alvin J. Cox, then head of the California Bureau of Chemistry, was looking for inspectors to check compliance with state insecticide residue laws. In July 1933, he took on a two-month assignment as an inspector—sampling shipments of apples and pears, sending the samples to bureau chemists for residue analyses.

The two months stretched out—and Lemmon reaches his 25th anniversary this year. He moved 11 times that first year, and "really got to see California, you might say."

In 1934 he passed a civil service examination, and was appointed to a permanent position as an "Inspector of Economic Poisons and Fertilizers."

In 1937 he was elevated to be aide to Cox, still chief of the Bureau of Chemistry, and moved to Sacramento where he has been since.

Cox retired in 1945 and Lemmon took over the Bureau of Chemistry as acting in charge. He was appointed chief several months later after passing first on a civil service examination. The bureau is responsible for enforcement of state laws pertaining to fertilizers and pesticides, spray residue tolerances, and application of all types of chemicals, including application by aircraft.

As bureau chief with all this experience, then, Lemmon was the natural choice for head of the Division of Plant Industry, in which are centered all these functions plus those pertaining to plant quarantine, entomology, plant pathology, rodent and weed control, seed inspection, and field crops. Hence, when the position became vacant in September 1956, Lemmon got it.

During his career, Lemmon has been heavily influenced by words of advice given him back at Stanford. Theodore Hoover, Herbert's brother, was at that time dean of the engineering school. Hoover pounded home this point to Lemmon: Understanding the governmental functions of engineering and knowing how to communicate would be two of the major needs of the future.

Lemmon soon became convinced of these needs from his own experience. Thus, his credo developed. He was so vocal, through personal contact and correspondence, that when the Association of American Fertilizer Control Officials was formed in 1946, he was selected as its first vice president, even though he had never been east of the Rockies.

The following year, he was elected president of AAFCO, whose objectives were so close to his own:

- Promote better cooperation and understanding among the states.
- Get uniform interpretation and enforcement of fertilizer legislation in all of North America.

Lemmon held offices in this group for many years. Now that he is division chief, however, he has passed



Allen B. Lemmon

Born March 31, 1908, Sacramento, Calif. Stanford Univ., A.B. in Engineering, 1930; Degree in Engineering, 1932. Temporary field inspector, Bureau of Chemistry, Calif. Dept. of Agriculture, 1933-34; permanent inspector, 1934-37; Asst. to Chief, Bureau of Chemistry, 1937-45; Chief, Bureau of Chemistry, 1945-56; Chief, Division of Plant Industry, 1956-present. Member and past president of AAFCO and AAPCO; Member, Entomological Society of America.

most active participation along to the new bureau chief, Robert Z. Rollins.

He was also an important cog in the Association of American Pesticide Control Officials; he helped to organize it and was president in 1950-51. This group has goals similar to those of AAFCO, but in the field of pesticides.

The North Sacramento Volunteer Fire Department has been another longtime beneficiary of Lemmon's public spirit. For 14 years, five as captain, he averaged 12 hours a month firefighting, including drills. In some years, he was in on half the fires in North Sacramento, a high percentage even for fulltime firemen.

Married and the father of three children, Lemmon is a firm believer in the family. When his summer cottage near Lake Tahoe was stove in under six feet of ice in 1952, he and his family rebuilt it all. As Lemmon puts it, "My daughter (now 21) and I put up the shell in nine days. Across the way, it took a crew of five carpenters 14 days to do the same on the house they were building."

To do all these things, Lemmon has overcome a great personal handicap. In early childhood, he was stricken with polio, left with a damaged right arm and hand. Despite this, Lemmon is graphic proof of the value of a devoted public servant, who believes that his every duty should be discharged to the benefit of the people.