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Wisconsin's senior agronomist is one of the nation's staunchest fertilizer supporters; he shows how to get results

AMONG THE NICKNAMES given to Clinton J. Chapman are "the soil-saving circuit rider" and "John the Baptist of fertilizers." And the titles are appropriate enough. For over 40 years, this University of Wisconsin soils professor and extension soils specialist has been spreading the gospel of soil improvement through proper liming and fertilization. Not in vain, either, considering his state's comparatively high usage of fertilizer and lime.

Chapman admits to two obsessions during his career. First was limestone. During his years as a high school agriculture and science teacher, then as agronomist and field representative for American Agricultural Chemical Co., and finally during the early part of his university tenure, Chapman became convinced that Wisconsin's acid soils needed lime. He started lecturing and demonstrating all over the state, urging the application of lime. He thus gained his reputation as a crusading evangelist in behalf of "sick soils and lost souls."

During the depression years, Chapman suggested and initiated Wisconsin's lime and marl production project. The program provided work for hundreds of the state's unemployed, while yielding immense benefits to the state's agriculture.

In 1933, Wisconsin enacted a law which authorized county boards to handle lime production projects. At first, says Chapman, the Civil Works Administration cooperated in the project. Then the lime program was tied in with drought relief and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. And in 1935, the Federal Government, through WPA, approved lime grinding and marl digging among projects to which local communities could assign relief clients. Until 1941, the lime program was one of Wisconsin's major work relief projects.

Chapman feels that the huge liming program was extremely important from the farmer's point of view. The large quantities of liming materials—over 36 million tons since 1930—applied to Wisconsin's acid soils have been an important factor in making it the nation's top state in alfalfa acreage. And

alfalfa, he notes, gives the farmer a low cost, home grown protein feed for his dairy herd and other livestock.

Chapman's current obsession is nitrogen; he calls it the key element to "food unlimited." A lack of nitrogen, he insists, is responsible for more poor crops all over the world than is any other single cause. "Nitrogen," says Chapman, "affords one of the opportunities still left for low unit cost production of food, feed, and fiber." But he feels the surface has not yet been scratched in nitrogen's potential use. In the not too distant future he sees a nitrogen market five times its present size. Chapman has been closely associated with the development of nitrogen use in Wisconsin and neighboring states.

Make the Farmer "Want to Do"

How can a farmer be stirred to action on soil improvement practices? The most important way is to stimulate a desire to "want to do," says Chapman. "Sow the seed of desire in a man's heart, and the job is as good as done. But if the fertilization or other improvement practice you are urging isn't simple, doesn't fill a vital need on the farm, or is not economically sound, you can talk until doomsday and farmers will not accept it."

Chapman instills a "want to do" attitude into farmers by showing them. And he has been showing them how for 43 years.

Early in his work as a soil specialist, Chapman started a program of large scale demonstrations on acre or larger plots. The demonstrations began while he was working for AAC in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Minnesota. Some of these plots ranged up to 3 acres. Chapman has continued large scale demonstrations throughout his career with the university. In the opinion of many, these demonstrations—thousands of them—have done more to stimulate interest in the use of fertilizers and lime than all the rest of the work of the state experiment stations.

In addition to demonstrations, Chapman hammers home soil fertility via



Clinton J. Chapman

Born Sept. 11, 1890, Darlington, Wis. Attended Darlington public schools and Univ. of Wis. (B.S.A. 1914). High school & ag. teacher, Mazomanie, Wis., 1914-16. Field rep. & agronomist, American Agricultural Chemical Co., 1916-21 (parts of 1918 and 1919 in U. S. Navy). Asst. Prof. & Supervisor, State Soils Laboratory, Univ. of Wis., 1921-30. Prof. and Extension Soils Specialist, 1930 to date.

the farm press, radio, television, and platform speaking. He has appeared on radio and TV programs all over the Midwest. A prolific writer, he is author of several hundred articles dealing with lime, fertilizers, and soil management practices.

This energetic agronomist has still another way of demonstrating results that can be obtained with the use of fertilizers. He takes large, color photographs of his test plots, and sells his color photo brochures at cost to fertilizer salesmen and dealers who in turn use them as "very persuasive" sales arguments in talks with customers.

The elder of two famous agronomy brothers (the other is H. D. Chapman, chairman of the University of California's soils and plant nutrition department), Chapman holds many honors and professional memberships. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, and was made a life member of the Great Plains Agricultural Ammonia Association and the Agricultural Ammonia Institute. He is a member of the Soil Science Society of America, the Joint Committee on Grassland Farming, and Epsilon Sigma Phi. In 1949, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation honored him with a special recognition award for his service to agriculture as an educator in agronomy and soil science.