

05

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN.

Friday, December 27, 1929.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Every other Friday, our old friend Ob. Server has been chatting with us about his chats with the officials at the United States Weather Bureau. A couple of weeks ago, he told us something about how the nations of the world work together on the weather. Today he is going to tell us something more about that work.-----Well, Mr. Ob Server?

A few months ago, when the "Graff Zeppelin" flew around the world, her weather expert had to carry 28 different code books so he could translate the weather reports from the different nations. Even then, he wasn't fully equipped. He would have had to have 35 different weather codes in his airship library to have received all the weather reports available. And while he was trying to figure out the strange weather language his airship might have been steadily nosing her way into trouble without his knowing it.

Of course, airships don't fly around the world every day. But every day the men "who go down to the sea in ships" face that same problem. If they pick up weather reports from other nations than their own, they often find the vital facts about some approaching storm concealed in a strange code.

This coming year, however, that kind of thing is going to be done away with. The babble of unknown weather tongues is soon to cease. Mr. E. B. Calvert, chief of the forecast division of the United States Weather Bureau and representative of this country at the recent meeting of the International Meteorological Organization at Copenhagen, says that next year every national weather service in the world will use the same weather code, giving the same information in the same form understandable to all alike. This will be a big boom to ships on all the seven seas, and is among the very important results of the close cooperation among the world's weather services.

Nations have to agree on the weather. Weather does not confine itself within national boundaries. Few countries of the world could operate an effective weather forecasting service, Mr. Calvert tells me, by depending entirely on reports from their own territory.

In that respect, the United States is more favorably situated than any other; but we would have a hard time getting satisfactory weather service with only the observations we could get within our own boundaries.

In weather forecasting, we need accurate reports of conditions over wide areas, especially to the westward. With our country extending east and west about 3,000 miles and north and south about 1,200 miles, our Weather Bureau might be able to make forecasts of a sort for the central and eastern half of the country. But even so, our forecasters would be tremendously

handicapped without observations from Canada and from the islands belonging to other nations located in the southern part of the Atlantic and in the Caribbean Sea. The weather reports from the West Indies are especially important in giving warning of hurricanes.

And, of course, we can all readily see the fix Europe would be in - without international cooperation in weather reporting - when we compare the small areas of many of the European countries with the rapidity of movement of high and low pressure areas which accompany variations in the weather. A storm in Europe may affect several nations within a few hours. So it is highly important that each nation get reports of what is coming before it strikes the borders. But as soon as you get to exchanging reports between different nations, you run into questions of how the reports are to be made; the kind of information needed, uniformity in reports, fixing schedules so all can get the reports with the least delay and confusion, and the like.

Well, the world's leading weather experts recognized the difficulties years ago. Back in 1878, the International Meteorological Organization, made up of directors of the leading national meteorological services of the world, was formed to take care of such obstacles. Those directors met every six years to discuss the problems and work out ways of being helpful one to the other.

There was no force of government authority behind the findings of the Organization. Membership was purely voluntary and designed to advance science and the service of meteorology. None of the cooperating nations were bound to observe any of the regulations made or adopt any of the conclusions reached at these conferences. The conclusions were "gentlemen's agreements" by which all abided as far as was practical.

Well, that Organization working on the principle of helping each other has now lasted for more than fifty years. But instead of the few nations in at the beginning, there are now about forty of them. Meeting once every six years, the Organization could not keep pace with the changes of codes, and the new results of investigations, and other developments. So a number of commissions were formed to keep track of various phases of weather work and to recommend action when action was needed. And an executive committee was selected from the directors of the most active of the world's weather services to pass upon the recommendations from the various commissions and to look after the details of getting cooperation between the different nations during the intervals between the meeting of the main Organization.

Ordinarily, this International Meteorological Committee meets every three years. It met once in Washington and once in Toronto, Canada, but as a rule it meets in Europe. In the meantime, however, the sub-commissions of the main International Meteorological meet as often as need be, usually every one or two years. There are now ten of those commissions. One keeps up with the developments in magnetism and atmospheric electricity. Another takes care of the developments in solar radiation study as they affect weather work. A third commission concerns itself with the international exploration of our upper air. A fourth devotes itself to marine meteorology.

R-C.W.M. 12/27

A fifth to the coordination of weather observations and codes. A sixth deals with the publication of data about the world's climates and keeps an eye on the study of polar meteorology as it affects the whole world. Agricultural meteorology is under still another commission. Aviation weather problems is followed by another commission, while the tenth commission concerns itself with clouds and other phenomena.

In other words, the International Meteorological Organization is so built that international cooperation on any phase of weather work can be secured promptly.

At the last meeting at Copenhagen, there were ninety meteorologists representing thirty-three national meteorological services. One of the epoch-making things they did was to agree on a common code and a uniform method of reporting the weather throughout the world. That new system starts this coming year.

ANNOUNCEMENT: You have just heard old Ob Server tell about the International Meteorological Organization. This talk is one of a series of Chats by the Weather Man presented by this Station_____ in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture every other Friday. This series of observations about the weather will be continued into the New Year.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

ERRATA NOTICE

One or more conditions of the original document may affect the quality of the image, such as:

Discolored pages

Faded or light ink

Binding intrudes into the text

This has been a co-operative project between the NOAA Central Library and the Climate Database Modernization Program, National Climate Data Center (NCDC). To view the original document, please contact the NOAA Central Library in Silver Spring, MD at (301) 713-2607 x124 or Library.Reference@noaa.gov

HOV Services
Imaging Contractor
12200 Kiln Court
Beltsville, MD 20704-1387
July 23, 2010