

PROGRAM.....(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)..... RELEASE.....

ANNOUNCEMENT: Everybody talks about the weather, said Mark Twain, but nobody seems to do anything about it. That's an old joke now, but it comes in handy even now, once in a while. But we were just going to say that there's SOMEONE who does something about the weather. THE UNITED STATES WEATHER BUREAU. And this year we're going to tell you how---in a series of Chats by the Weather Man which will be released by the United States Department of Agriculture every other Wednesday through Station _____. Stand by for Chat Number One.

--ooOoo--

Everybody's still talking about this year's terrible and destructive Mississippi River flood.

Everybody's wondering if there's any way to control that great Father of Waters and all his river Children that add to his currents that flow to the sea.

As the newspaper men say, there's a good story in Flood Control just now. There'll be a good story in that for some time to come. And if it's a good story for the papers, it ought to make a good radio chat for you.

At least that's what I thought as I climbed the steps leading to the office of the Weather Man who has made a special study of river stages, floods, and especially the Mississippi which is a study all by itself.

I found the Weather Man busy at his desk.

"Good morning", said I. "We're still interested in the Mississippi flood".

"You had a radio talk on that the middle of last February", said the Weather Man.

"I know it", I smiled, "but a lot has happened since then. And, while I know that the Weather Bureau can't very well go down there and build levees to keep back the water, I do know that you weather observers can tell about when a flood's going to break. That's a mighty big help to people living along the rivers, seems to me. I am told that the money value of property saved as a result of Weather Bureau flood warnings amounted to 37 million dollars in the last Mississippi River flood along. Is that correct?"

"That's the figure we carefully deduced from our reports", the Weather Man assured me.

"Have you any idea what the total flood losses are?" I asked, knowing that

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most folks are interested in total losses almost as much as in total gains.

"When I refer to these total losses, I refer only to this year's Mississippi River flood", cautioned the Weather Man. "These figures are not the losses resulting from all river floods in the history of the United States, mind you. This year's Mississippi River flood---which includes floods along its tributary rivers, as well---was certainly the most disastrous in our history. Now, about the losses. This flood causes miscellaneous losses of 97 million dollars---losses to crops of 93 million dollars---livestock losses amounting to 23 million dollars---'protection' costs, 30 million dollars---losses due to suspension of business amounting to 46 million dollars. This makes a total of 290 million dollars, approximately. Now, since all these estimates are very conservative, and without doubt too low, if you add twenty five per cent to the total loss you will get a more likely total loss due to the Mississippi flood amounting to 363 million dollars."

"That's difficult to believe", I said doubtfully.

"It is until you know that more than 18 million acres of land were flooded by the high water. That's 28 thousand square miles. More than 4 million acres of cultivated land were flooded. Over 600 thousand people were left homeless. That's more people than there are in the city of Washington. Can you believe it now?"

"I can", I declared with assurance. "By the way, is there any way to find out how many people lost their lives in this flood?"

"Yes", the Weather Man said. "We have accurate reports that 313 human lives were lost in the Mississippi flood. There would have been more had it not been for the fact that people are paying more attention to flood and weather forecasts and warnings."

"Say", I gasped, "how long did this flood last?"

"About seven months", the Weather Man told me. "High water on some of the Ohio River tributaries began to be felt about the latter part of December, 1926. And it was the last of July before the last river station reported that the flood waters had gone down. Even as late as last August, there were between 25,000 and 30,000 acres of land still under water in Louisiana. And to make it worse, the water carried sand over some land and it will be a long time before they farm that land again".

"It looks like the Weather Bureau river and flood service has just about a year-'round job", said I.

"Just about". The Weather Man turned to a map on the wall of his office. I noticed that there were more than a thousand pins with colored heads stuck into the map at various spots. Most of the pins seemed to be along the Mississippi River---east of the Mississippi River---and along the valleys of the Arkansas and Colorado rivers.

"What do those pins mean?" I asked.

"Those pins show the location and extent of the Weather Bureau's flood, snowfall, and ice service measuring stations", he told me.

"Notice the sweep of the pins east of the Mississippi River? That indicates the flood areas. We divide the United States into 66 districts. There are about 1,000 stations scattered over the Nation. We have meteorologists at each district station, and there are observers of one kind or another at all the stations. The districts covering the Ohio, Cumberland, and Tennessee rivers--- and the Mississippi River---are among the most important. Now let's take a particular case.

"You'll remember the flood at the lower end of the Mississippi about February 1st, no doubt. Well, Weather Bureau men were able to forecast that flood from 10 days to 3 or 4 weeks ahead of time. They were able to forecast the time of the flood, and the extent of it as well.

"Let's trace that flood down. Of course, up in the smaller streams and rivers---in the more hilly country where the water flows faster and where numbers of small streams contribute to the quantity of water in the main stream---we can't predict so far ahead. There was a damaging flood last December along the Tennessee and Cumberland river. Perhaps you remember it. That same flood was passing Vicksburg, Mississippi, January 29. We predicted it many days ahead. As the rising waters go along down the river, it becomes possible for us to predict the coming flood farther and farther ahead and with more and more accuracy. It is an ordinary occurrence to forecast high water from 2 to 4 weeks ahead at New Orleans. You see, the rising waters pass on down the river, and as they move along, our observers measure and observe the movement and telegraph ahead."

The Weather Man paused a moment and looked out of the window. "Down South", he continued, "thousands of cattle are pastured in the swamp lands where they can feed throughout the year unless they're driven out by floods. Floods in that section are rather frequent. So we issue flood warnings often. The warnings enable the farmer to drive his cattle to higher ground and to provide food for them while the high water covers the pastures. Some years ago, before we organized the flood service, a great many cattle were drowned every year. Now losses of this kind are rare and very small. Frequently in the late Summer or early Fall, some crops are left standing in the low lands. Flood warnings, issued some days ahead, send the farmers to the fields to harvest their endangered crops."

"Not to mention the lives these warnings save", I added.

The Weather Man was modest about his reply to this. "Well, we do the best we can", he said. "We're public servants and try to use our ability and resources to the best advantage".

"None of us can do more than that", I said. "And by the way, I hear that if the whole cost of the Weather Bureau's work in a year were distributed equally among the people of the United States, it would cost each person only the price of a two-cent postage stamp".

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"That's about right", the Weather Man said as he started to open an official-looking letter. "Not very much under the circumstances, is it?"

"It's my opinion that two cents couldn't buy more", said I as I said good-bye and left him busy at work.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Later on in the year, Uncle Sam's Weather Men are going to tell you more about their work. Frost warnings, aviation weather service, how to forecast the weather, weather signs, are only a few of the things these men will describe for you. Remember, the Weather Chats will come every other Wednesday at this hour, broadcast by Station _____.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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