

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
January 23, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed January 16, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talmen,
Authority on Meteorology.

WILKINS

One of the worst droughts in the history of South Australia, lasting nearly four years, prevailed while Hubert Wilkins was living there as a boy. His own family and many others were financially ruined by it, and the distressing experience made an indelible impression on his mind. In his new book "Under the North Pole," after telling the story of this drought, Sir Hubert says:

"It occurred to me, as it must have to others, that while it might not be possible for man, with his limitations, to control the weather, it might be possible to learn something of its laws and movements. With foreknowledge and forethought, one might then be able to save the dumb animals from suffering and the pioneering families from destitution. Thus began my interest in the study of the movements of the world atmosphere. For I realized eventually that it would not be enough to study meteorology from the standpoint of Australia alone. The mechanism of the atmosphere must be observed at all points, including the polar areas. For hundreds of years meteorologists have contemplated seasonal forecasting. There was no doubt in many minds that records from the polar regions were needed."

Wilkins' subsequent career as a polar explorer has been dominated by this idea of seeking weather information in the polar areas as a basis of seasonal forecasting. Elsewhere in the book above mentioned he outlines his ambitious plans for locating a dozen permanent weather stations in the Antarctic, all reporting by radio, together with a system of weekly reports of ice conditions from airplanes. The expense, estimated at a million dollars a year, was to be divided between countries of the southern hemisphere that would be expected to benefit by the resulting long-range weather forecasts. This magnificent plan is still a dream.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE

21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D. C.