

Soil and Health Library

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Organic Campaign

By SIR ALBERT HOWARD, C.I.E.

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ALL over the world the case for action has been established; each individual can today provide for himself those practical tests which alone will carry conviction to his own mind and to the minds of those with whom he is in contact. The response of the soil to freshly prepared humus must be experienced by every active recruit who cultivates a garden, an allotment, or who controls larger areas of land. If his questions are properly posed to Mother Earth, her verdict will be swift and sure; she will give a ruling from which there can be no appeal. She will tell him what are the methods for growing our own food and that of our live stock so that health and well-being will result; she will have her own ways of indicating her displeasure at any attempt to use short cuts like chemical manures either by themselves or in partial replacement of the essential humus, first by the behavior of her unpaid labour force--microbes, moulds, and earthworms--then by the loss of the power of reproduction in plant and animal, followed by more disease. All this will be accompanied by a marked lowering in taste, quality, and nutritive value of the produce.

The creation of an army of compost-minded crusaders is certain to encounter opposition. The manufacturers and distributors of artificial manures and poison sprays, who have invested large sums in the production of various types of dope, will not remain passive spectators of a campaign which threatens their very existence. Their disciples in the administration, in the research stations and agricultural colleges, in the press, and in broadcasting, can be relied upon to pour ridicule on any audacious innovator who has the temerity to call their operations in question. The magic word Science will be freely employed to bludgeon the iconoclast. It will be dinned into our ears that the scientific foundations of chemical manuring have been well and truly laid; the Rothamsted plots will be quoted; the results of the many laboratory workers who have; grown plants in sand moistened only with a solution of appropriate chemicals will be emphasized; the need for approval by the statistician of the simplest experiment in a garden or allotment will be repeated. With these and similar weapons the vested interests will fight to preserve their profitable markets; the members of the research and teaching staffs will do all in their power to defend their threatened status; that portion of the press which depends on the sale of advertisement space will provide publicity.

How, therefore, can any ordinary mortal who cultivates a garden or runs a farm hope, with the help of his modest equipment, to accomplish anything beyond his own discomfiture? How can the man in the street cope with all this discouragement and active opposition? In a very simple way. By keeping his mind on the fact that the lawyers on either side of a contest cannot produce judgment. Not even a scientist is a judge. He may have the whole of Big Business to support him: that makes no difference. The judge is Mother Earth, who is incorruptible and unpersuadable.