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How to Track the Wily Locust to His Lair

Can't Be Done in Swivel Chairs With Red Tape



From time to time we are regaled with notices in the public press to the effect that the bureau of agriculture or the executive bureau, or both, are going to wage a "relentless, unmerciful" extermination of locusts throughout the islands. Sometimes they talk about fer-

installing an infestation after there are dozens of municipalities in many provinces already infested.

The present incumbents of the aforementioned bureaus are in no way to blame for this opera muffed conduct. They have simply inherited the old stereotypes that were prepared by their many predecessors and have now become heirlooms. These stereotypes are handed out by some white-collar clerk to cub reporters, none of whom the first thing about locusts. These notices may be great consolation to the city dweller and make fine reading for the folks at home but to the people most interested they are pure bunk.

An old saying is, "The only good indian is a dead indian." This applies with more justification to locusts. The time to kill locusts is before they have reached the flying stage and to accomplish this means a centralized supervision having the power and inclination to take drastic action against the municipal officials who allow hoppers to become fliers.

It is true that the primary breeding places are located in the grassy hills generally quite a distance from populated districts. The next breeding places are generally very close to cultivated areas. This is due to the

fact that the first fliers have descended from their mountain birthplace and sought food in the planted areas or grassy areas in the lower levels. The planters may be fortunate enough to keep the fliers on the move but as a rule they are content to stop work when the fliers are only a comparatively short distance from their fields. Here the flier will deposit their eggs and when these eggs have hatched the real trouble starts. Your office theorist then trots out his heavy artillery and maps out a campaign.

He is just sixty days late. Unfortunately our responsible officials never concern themselves about preventive measures. They wait until the locusts are crossing their lawn before they take action.

As a instance of the foregoing I would state that several years ago the office of the governor general was notified that unless action was taken immediately there would be an infestation of the provinces surrounding Manila. A few days after this information was given to the governor's aide, he was asked if the matter had been brought to attention of the governor general and his reply was that he had not brought the information to the governor general's attention because the governor was too busy on other matters of more importance.

A few weeks later fliers swarmed over Manila.

Then what happened?

Everyone woke up with a start. Something must be done.

Entomologists would brought from the four corners of the globe to discover a parasite. What was done? As soon as there were no more locusts on the city sidewalks, the whole thing was forgotten. A parasite was discovered and was reported by telegraph to Malacañan. Three weeks later a reply was received asking if the parasite was still in evidence. Weather con-

ditions had changed and the parasite could not get in its work except when too late.

It would seem that there is too much of this business of not bothering the governor general with trivial matters like locusts that annually actually destroy crops worth millions of pesos, to say nothing of the value of the labor expended in fighting them; but a poor lone Moro *jarawantao* will have all the military hardware of Malacañan rattling for months.

The responsibility for locust infestation rests with the officials of each municipality. Hold local officials from the provincial governor down the scale to the *teniente del barrio* responsible for locating and reporting locust breeding areas within his jurisdiction. Let the governor general stop listening to a lot of buck-passing when he calls for explanations as to why the hoppers were allowed to become fliers, and do a little out-of-hand firing, and we would soon see the swarms of fliers decrease.

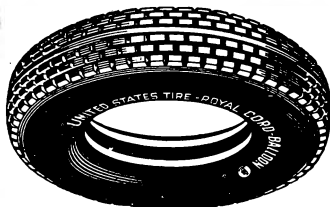
Ask any official why he did not discover the hoppers and he will immediately excuse himself by saying that the locusts came from the adjoining province or municipality.

If provincial and municipal officials understand that an infestation of locusts in their territory imperils their tenure of office, we shall soon see something real accomplished.

Let each municipality maintain patrols to visit the isolated areas where locusts are known to breed. When reports of breeding places are received then forces should be organized to exterminate the hoppers and in this way accomplish something. One hopper killed means the escape from the ravages of tens of thousands of descendants later in the season.

Government red tape hampers practical work. The governor general has it in his power to accomplish results if he is willing to take some radical action as he would in other emergencies. Let him act first and explain afterward.

—JOHN R. WILSON,
Secretary.



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