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Farmer Scrap That Plough!

(continued from previous page)

1. Ploughing, because of the special shape of the mouldboard, produces a shearing action in three directions on the thick layer of soil that is lifted and turned. As a result, the turned soil layer is pulverised, and thus a more satisfactory seed bed is possible than with an implement that turns shallow layers.

2. Ploughing also helps to improve and rejuvenate soils by bringing the deeper layers from time to time near the surface, where the desirable processes of aeration, oxidation and alternate freezing and thawing are more active.

3. And by ploughing under organic matter it is possible to maintain an active soil layer deep enough to provide satisfactory conditions for crop plants.

"Of course you will say the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Do field tests actually show ploughing to be superior to other methods of cultivation? Experiments conducted by the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station, in which surface tillage was

compared with ploughing, gave the following results: on a heavy soil, wheat yielded 32 per cent more with ploughing than with surface tillage; and similarly, on a light soil, the yield of corn was 16 per cent greater. Results of other experiments showing the superiority of ploughing could be cited. In his so-called research Faulkner did not compare the two tillage operations; he simply grew crops with surface tillage and then concluded that his method was better than ploughing. For the most part, he does not even tell us the yields he obtained.

Nature's Cropping Scheme

"The author of *Plowman's Folly* made an error when he connected Nature's bountiful yields and towering trees with his no-fertiliser theory. In Nature's cropping scheme there is no removal of plant growth with accompanying soil elements, as there is in man's programme of food production. Man harvests and carries away the corn and wheat, rich in fertility elements; but Nature's crops are left to die, rot, and add to the fertility of the soil. This cycle is repeated year by year, and gradually insoluble soil minerals are changed over to more soluble or usable products.

"If Nature's soil could, by itself, nurture a nation of 130,000,000, all soil and crop specialists would be without jobs, for all the farmers would have to do would be to sow and reap. However, the constant harvesting of crops gives to us as food the nutrients which Nature would normally return to the soil. Therefore we cultivate the land and give back in the form of fertiliser the nutrients we have removed in crop form.

"Farmers now know that land which is in pasture continuously, and is never ploughed, gradually deteriorates in fertility. Like all harvesting, the pasturing of cattle removes nutrients from the soil. It is not ploughing, but the removal of vegetation, that causes depletion; if no vegetation is removed, the soil retains its fertility. That is the A B C of agriculture.

Egyptians and Chinese

"Another point which Faulkner uses in haphazard connection with his no-fertiliser theory is the Egyptians cultivation by hoe of the Nile Valley. The Egyptians harvest good yields, and Faulkner reasons that inasmuch as they neither plough nor add fertiliser to the Nile loam, their abundant crops are proof of his contentions. Of course the Egyptians don't use the mouldboard plough. Each year the Nile overflows and deposits a layer of rich silt on their bottom land, supplying all the necessary mineral nutrients but no nitrogen fertiliser, which, contrary to Faulkner's beliefs, is applied annually in the form of Chilean nitrate. The cheap labour makes possible hand-hoeing of the crops, and not a weed survives. Because of the lack of rain, and the type of

(continued on next page)



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