

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

ALONZO ENGLEBERT TAYLOR (d. 1949)

Alonzo Englebert Taylor died on May 20, 1949, at the age of 78 years. His was a life of extraordinary activity and enthusiasm. Change, movement, variety and the unknown fascinated him. He sought his education not only in Iowa, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, but also in Germany. Trained as a Doctor of Medicine, (M. D., University of Pennsylvania, 1894) he never practiced. From 1899 to 1910 he taught pathology and physiological chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania. The first world war drew him from teaching. His services were early drafted for a series of missions in Europe, where he became a member of the Inter-Allied Maritime Council. When he could be spared from duties at home, as a member of the War Trade Board and as Special Advisor to the Food Administrator, Mr. Hoover, he spent his time until 1920 in Europe, where he traveled widely. His earlier interest in biological and chemical aspects of food in human nutrition expanded to compass the economic and social aspects of food supplies. No doubt this wartime experience, at home and abroad, aroused his interest in the establishment of the Food Research Institute here at Stanford, of which he became a director in 1921. Here he remained until his retirement in 1936, though with numerous interruptions exemplified by official participation in the International Economic Conference at Geneva in 1927 and the International Wheat Conference at London in 1931. And after retirement from academic life, he served until a few years ago as special advisor on science and economics to a great four-milling company in Minneapolis. Less than a month before his death, he was eager to revisit Europe and see with his own eyes the changes brought by the second great war.

A man so enthusiastically interested in change and in the unknown was naturally inclined toward a career of research, and of writing, which accompanies it. Taylor was a prolific writer, where of scientific treatises or of occasional articles in popular journals. He wrote books or monographs, to mention only a few, successively On Fermentation, on Digestion and Metabolism, on The Food Problem, on War Bread, on The Fats and Oils, on Rye in Its Relation to Wheat, on The Place of Wheat in the Diet, on the Corn and Hog Surplus of the Corn Belt, on British Preference for Empire Wheat, on International Wheat Policy and Planning on The New Deal and Foreign Trade. In these titles is a suggestion, at least, of the wide scope of his interests, of his rare ability to compass and to weave together research activity in the natural sciences and in the social sciences, of his concern with international affairs, and of his capacity to single out problems of currently unfolding importance and to marshal his resources in discussion of them.

Those resources were impressive. Taylor was a voracious reader. He selected solid materials, alike in the natural and the social sciences; and his personal contacts on his wide travels were with knowledgeable men. His memory was extraordinary, his mind lucid and critical. What he learned from much informed writing and conversation, he could remember. It buttressed his judgment. With all his interest in new things and

ideas, he was skeptical of social forecasting and of engagement in it. Although his reading was solid, he was not a bookish man, and his writing and conversation were far from heavy. His memory served well in anecdote, of which he was very fond. Dullness left the room when Taylor entered. His acquaintances learned to expect daily a new point, a fresh approach, a well-told yarn, a probing or skeptical comment.

And because of this, his voluminous writings may well represent the lesser part of his contribution to the store of intellectual accomplishment. He never wrote about the necessity for the research worker to state his problem with precision, but there are not a few who somehow absorbed that axiom from him. Although he was a man of the greatest kindness, he did not wear his heart on his sleeve. And so he could never be persuaded to write down his heartfelt convictions, expressed to a small group only on the occasion of his retirement, about the function of scientific research in society. The burden was that men, if they make progress at all, must expect to build the structure of secure knowledge, of mastery over their environment and themselves, only slowly and brick by brick; and a single brick might represent a life well spent. No one of the few who heard that unpublished speech could ever forget it, or could have missed its stimulus. How much he stimulated others in research leading to the production of synthetic vitamins is not apparent in Taylor's writings. Full as he was of sharp-minded vigor and enthusiasm, the stimulation of other minds through contact and conversation was in fact a major fruit of his life.

Possibly a generation younger than his own feels this most keenly. For Taylor sought their company. Perhaps he found their zest congenial; and no doubt he observed in them one facet of the change and the development of human affairs which so intrigued his mind.

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