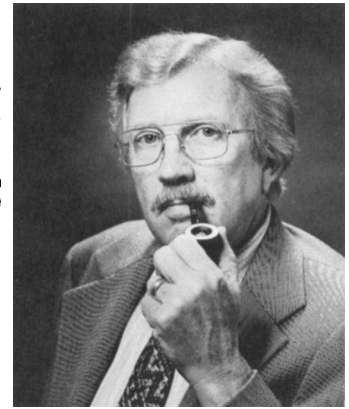


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Proposition 13: The Aftermath

California's recent enactment of Proposition 13, the property tax relief initiative, has created a tidal wave of sympathetic support across the nation. The understandable disillusionment with rapidly rising taxes and the public's disaffection with many aspects of publically supported programs of all kinds may well result in substantial curtailment in programs designed to enable people to obtain more for less. Specifically I refer to research and extension programs in the agricultural sciences.

Already our beleaguered California county governments, in revising their budgets downward, have had to reduce their support of Cooperative Extension programs. It is too early to determine precisely how our Cooperative Extension programs will be altered, but any reduction will unquestionably limit our ability to respond in a timely fashion to thousands of inquiries for assistance, and to address many of the problems which have traditionally been brought to our county offices.

The State budget-cutting rampage has also caught research in the net, and with it a well-planned program to augment and coordinate a University of California systemwide effort in integrated pest management.

Because the results of research are unpredictable and may take years to introduce into practice, the more immediate and urgent programs easily displace the longer-term programs. In a period of rapid rise in social action programs at both federal and state levels with their insatiable appetites for money, research has definitely not fared well in competing for the limited budget support.

With so many pressing agricultural problems around us, it is necessary to ask in a loud and clear voice: How much longer can we afford to postpone or curtail our research? How much longer can we afford to wait for a serious and comprehensive research program to develop effective integrated pest management systems for California's numerous important

crops? How much longer can we wait to develop alternatives to fossil fuels for our agricultural energy needs? How much longer can we wait for information on crop plant response to conservative use of water? How long do we have to find ways to utilize agricultural wastes constructively? How long will it be before our irrigated acreages in California begin to lose their productivity because of salt accumulations in the soil? How much longer can the small farmer maintain his operation in the face of rising costs for all his production needs and a highly competitive market place? How much farm land and farm employment can California economically support? How much longer can we afford not to know what effects the many items we classify as foods and nutrients have on human health and disease?

There are a host of other questions—involving our forests, range and wild lands, our oceans, lakes and fresh water streams and rivers, our animal industry, and our youth—facing us. In total, the list serves to illustrate the comprehensiveness of research in the University of California's Division of Agricultural Sciences. But while inflation erodes the research support base, and research budgets remain unchanged except for faculty and staff salaries, our ability to sustain this comprehensiveness and answer the questions I have raised is in serious jeopardy. Human nature seems to favor immediate actions over future expectation, experience over inconvenience, and certainty over the unknown. Research, thus, is often sacrificed.

Our best hope for a secure future and an ability to achieve more satisfaction for less effort lies in research into the problems we face as a society and country. There is never enough research. The only issue is how firm is our commitment to research and how much can we afford to invest in it. Let's not be hasty in withdrawing public support in an investment in our future. Our ancestors who faced a more harsh environment than we know today certainly saw the value in this kind of investment. Can we afford to do less?