

Distinguished Service Award to Chester C. Davis,
Washington, D. C., January 10, 1940.

It is the custom of the American Farm Bureau Federation to present awards each year to individuals who have rendered outstanding service to agriculture. We believe it is a wholesome thing for us to call national attention to those who render great service in the farm field, for the reason that the world is inclined to overlook achievements in agriculture, while it pays generous tribute to those in other walks of life.

This year, the committee in charge of the awards agreed unanimously, after sifting out the records of all the nominees, that the awards should go to Dr. B. W. Kilgore of North Carolina and Chester C. Davis of Washington, D. C.

I am particularly happy in the awards this year, because I believe recognition in both cases have been long overdue. Dr. Kilgore received his award at our annual convention in December, but adverse flying weather delayed Chester so that he missed the convention. Therefore we are making the presentation here today.

In presenting the award to Chester C. Davis, I rightly feel that we are honoring one of our own folks, for he worked shoulder to shoulder with us for many years in our fight for an effective national policy for agriculture, and we still lean on him heavily for advice and counsel.

Chester was a member of the original Committee of 22 which did so much to call national attention to the fact that agriculture was severely out of balance with other groups in the years following World War I. His

ideas were so sound that he was called to Washington in 1924 by the late Henry C. Wallace, then Secretary of Agriculture, to work with him and with Congressional leaders and farm organizations in devising some form of legislation to restore agriculture to parity and to equality of opportunity. From that time on, he was in the thick of the battle, and the going never got too rough for him. He was always at his best when the difficulties were the worst. He was our trusted adviser in the days when we were formulating the original AAA, and his keen intellect and broad, human understanding were invaluable aids as we moved ahead toward our goal.

Before the AAA was a year old, Chester was appointed Administrator of the Act, a position he held during the policy-forming days and through the period of the Supreme Court decision and the enactment of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act. His administration of the Act was outstanding.

In 1936, he resigned to accept the high post of Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. We all appreciate the fact that the Federal Reserve Board policies have a very definite impact on the welfare of agriculture, and we are thankful that one of our own people helps to make the policies of the Board. I recall that in one of the first resolutions passed by the American Farm Bureau Federation, our organization demanded farmer representation on Federal boards and commissions. We felt that other interests were having too much to say about national

policies affecting agriculture, and we wanted that changed to give the farmers a fair break. That, I am happy to say, has been done rather generally in recent years, and at last the basic industry of agriculture is receiving the recognition properly due it in the formulation of national policies. Chester C. Davis has played a major part in bringing about that vital change, a change that was overwhelmingly in the national interest and in the strengthening of our democracy.

Because you have fought the good fight, because you have borne the heat and the burden of the day, because you have been our comrade-in-arms, in a righteous crusade, because you contributed an element of real statesmanship to our discussions and plans, because you reflect the sound and constructive thinking of agrarian America - because of all these things, Chester, it is my privilege today to present you the highest honor that organized agriculture can bestow, a slight token of our very great appreciation for what you have done for agriculture, and with it goes our admiration, our respect, our esteem, and our love.

(Remarks of Edward A. O'Neal, President, American Farm Bureau Federation)

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