

## Donald G. Fletcher, 1898-1968

E. B. Hayden



Donald Gould Fletcher, born October 4, 1898, was raised on a Minnesota farm and spent a lifetime in serving agriculture. His unusual breadth of interest, combined with exceptional qualities of leadership and personality, made him an effective spokesman for crop research and protection programs. The results of his efforts to strengthen agriculture have affected all North American grain production areas. He received his B.S. degree at the University of Minnesota in 1922, and was engaged in part-time graduate work for the next 3 years. In 1959, he was awarded an honorary D.S. degree by North Dakota State University.

Fletcher gave leadership to a visionary program started in 1922 when the Conference for the Prevention of Grain Rust was founded by Minneapolis business executives. The goal of the new organization sponsored by agricultural industries was to encourage more effective rust control through educational efforts in support of barberry eradication. Through Fletcher's efforts, state and federal support for barberry eradication was expanded and more than 600 million rust-spreading barberry bushes have been destroyed since the program began.

Yearly crop survey trips by Fletcher in grain-producing areas, from Texas northward to the Dakotas and across the Canadian Prairie Provinces, gave him a broad view of production problems. He traveled on long crop trips each summer to obtain firsthand knowledge of cereal rust development, and his reports earned a reputation for accuracy.

It was one of Fletcher's great skills that what he learned from these field trips he communicated effectively to scientists, businessmen, and legislators. His views on research needs affecting wheat, oats, barley, corn, soybeans, flax, and other northern-grown crops were widely respected, and his annual presentations to

appropriations committees of the U.S. Congress formed the basis for additional research support throughout the United States. The devastating stem rust attacks of the early 1950's resulted in expansion of the Rust Prevention Association's activities and staff. The program kept pace with Fletcher's recognition of needs, and the name was changed in 1960 to Crop Quality Council to reflect its broadened scope. Fletcher retired as its President in December, 1965.

Don Fletcher always took time to go the extra mile with all with whom he came in contact. He worked to obtain laboratories, greenhouses, and additional support for research and pest control programs in many states. Construction of the National Seed Storage Facility at Fort Collins, Colorado, received his active support; opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway prompted a continuing effort to have U.S. defenses against foreign plant diseases and insect pests strengthened; and a wide range of crop research programs benefited from his efforts. An important winter seed increase program, affecting both U.S. and Canadian grains, was established in Mexico through Fletcher's leadership in 1954.

Characteristically, he took on broader interests at retirement when he became a consultant on Rockefeller Foundation Agricultural Programs. A trip to India, Pakistan, and The Philippines early in 1968 gave him an opportunity to review food production progress in these key areas of the world.

The citation from the Elvin Charles Stakman Award (1968) acknowledged his role in encouraging efforts "that will continue to benefit mankind as long as there is the will to strive for the common good".

Other honors included the Outstanding Achievement Award from the University of Minnesota in 1966, election to the Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C., in 1962, and election as Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy in 1963.

Donald G. Fletcher died at 70 years of age on October 14, 1968. He is survived by his wife, Winifred Fox Fletcher, and their three children, Mrs. Barbara A. Davis, Mrs. Jean C. Moorhead, and Bruce W. Fletcher.