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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
MADISON, WISCONSIN

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
Division of Wildlife Management

424 University Farm Place
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Dr. Paul L. Errington, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa ✓
Dr. Rudolf Bennett, Wildlife Conservation Bldg., Univ. of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
Dr. Miles D. Pirnie, Kellogg Bird Sanctuary, Battle Creek, Michigan
Mr. Arthur S. Hawkins, Natural History Survey, Urbana, Illinois

Gentlemen:

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company tells me their underground cables are being damaged by gophers which chew into the insulating materials. These materials consist of jute covered with tar.

It is suspected that the gophers may gather in the jute for nests. The species involved is not yet known. The damage at present is mostly on the line from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, to St. Paul.

Since the mileage of underground cable is expected to increase rapidly, they are interested in working out preventive measures. They are thinking along lines of gopher-proof insulation rather than gopher control. They are willing to consider putting a man on the problem and appreciate that it may take a number of years to do the work. The company understands that controlled experimentation as well as field investigations will be called for.

I would appreciate your offhand personal advice in brief preliminary form on the following questions:

1. What individuals or institutions do you think of as being especially competent or especially interested?
2. Do you know of any literature which bears particularly on the problem and which I might not know about?
3. Does any theory of causation other than the nesting material theory occur to you? (I realize this question is premature until specimens of the insulation and specimens of nests can be inspected.)

Please do not go to any great amount of work in answering these preliminary questions. I am just interested to get your offhand hunches.

Sincerely yours,

Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold
Professor of Wildlife Management

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