

The Secretary Believes in Research

IN THIS ISSUE, Secretary of Agriculture Benson gives us his views on matters related to research in agriculture. Research, he says, is the most basic of all fundamental investments in any sound farm program.

This nation was founded on an agricultural economy. Today, although the U. S. has become known as an industrial nation, our entire system remains most sensitive to fluctuations in the agricultural economy. Agriculture, still the nation's biggest business, more and more is being operated as an industry. As the Secretary has pointed out, the nature of the duties of the Department of Agriculture has changed greatly since establishment by Abraham Lincoln: agriculture has become progressively less isolated from manufacturing industry and its activities and trends; foreign markets have become an important factor. Add the omnipresent influences of weather and human nature and it is clearly seen that the Secretary of Agriculture has a big, tough job.

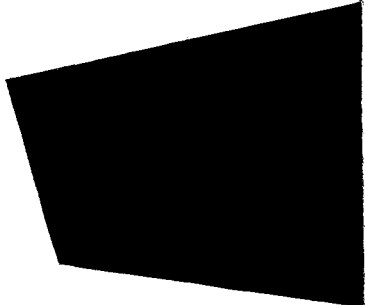
In our interview, some of the problems and approaches to change are discussed. Mr. Benson points out that the maintenance of a balance between supply and demand always will be a problem—but the more serious end of that problem, which lies ahead, is that of producing enough. Research and technology have a big responsibility for the future.

We are not isolated from the world and its effects; therefore we must keep in mind a need for the spread of the means of defeating hunger. Technical aid to agriculture in underdeveloped foreign countries, says the Secretary, is favorable, not unfavorable to our economy; the per capita purchase in 1951 of \$18.49 worth of goods from the U. S. by people in the developed areas of the world compares convincingly with \$4.89 per capita in the undeveloped areas.

Secretary Benson reiterates his declaration that he favors more research cooperation between industry and government. He points out that much progress has been made, but indicates a great deal more is possible. Further cooperation in the study of agricultural needs and raw materials can yield benefits to industry as well as to the farm. We infer that he is a man who believes that there is value in learning why potatoes turn brown when fried.

This is a matter to be taken seriously by industry. The potential use for industry's products in improving farming are repeatedly mentioned in speeches and in print, as are the low yields and losses which could be remedied or avoided through the application of knowledge gained through research. The prospective gains would be mutual. Already Mr. Benson has called on men from industry to act on his advisory committees. The brightness of the future for both agriculture and the manufacturing industries can be influenced greatly by research. Industry already has seen strong evidence of the value of teamwork in research. Is full advantage being taken of the Secretary's invitation?

This question is particularly pertinent to the chemical industry using this term in its broadest sense to include, for example, the fertilizer and pesticide fields, and others. For years the term "mechanization of agriculture" has focused attention on the contributions of the farm machin-



ery industry. Now we are hearing more and more about the "chemicalization of agriculture" and correctly so. Now is the time for the chemical industry to indicate a strong desire to cooperate.

The Secretary has made clear his belief that agriculture cannot afford to stand still. New ideas and new approaches must be adopted to keep in step with the increasing rate of change by the rest of society. We believe Mr. Benson understands and appreciates the value of scientific research and technological development. We intend to support his implementation of this belief and to urge others to support it.

WALTER J. MURPHY, Editor

From Seed to Plate in Chicago

Scientists and technologists interested in agricultural and food chemistry will find hearty fare at the 124th National Meeting of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY, to be held in Chicago Sept. 6 to 11 (see page 685).

In both number and variety of papers the Division of Agricultural and Food Chemistry offers the most extensive program in our area of science. Fats will be treated in symposia on developments in the chemistry of fats and oils and on problems of deterioration in food fats. A subject of interest to the entire food industry, as well as plastics technologists, will be treated in a full day's program with a symposium on the technology of food packaging materials.

In the fermentation subdivision, the very timely subject of nontherapeutic uses for antibiotics will be the subject of an extensive program, while biochemical engineering will enter into the special slate of papers devoted to fermentation process control.

Rodenticides will get special attention from the pesticides subdivision on Tuesday. All groups will offer programs of general papers.

The Division of Carbohydrate Chemistry will treat a variety of aspects of the chemistry of dextran and will feature two days of papers on analytical methods and instrumentation.

Symposia on fertilizer technology and on soil chemistry combined with general papers will fill the program of the Division of Fertilizer and Soil Chemistry from Wednesday noon until Friday.

Frontiers in enzymology, metabolism of one-carbon compounds, amino acids, proteins, microbiology, sterols, and lipids will be treated from the chemical point of view by the Division of Biological Chemistry.

From one end of the agricultural and food spectrum to the other, the meeting will offer new knowledge and ideas to nonmembers as well as members of the ACS.