

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Food standards and pesticides legislation discussed at canners meeting

THE future of mandatory food standards and the effects of the Hale bill for the regulation of pesticides on the canning industry were discussed at the recent meeting of the National Canners Association.

The 3-day meeting was held in Atlantic City, Jan. 23 to 26. Secretary Hobby of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare addressed the association on the relationship between the canning industry and the Food and Drug Administration.

He told the canners that the department of HE&W is heartily in favor of the Hale bill, which is designed to simplify the procedure for establishing foods standards.

Pesticide Legislation

The canning industry is inescapably concerned with any legislation affecting the use of pesticides on food crops, according to J. H. Covington of the Counselor's office of the National Canners Association. Mr. Covington reviewed the current status of pesticide legislation as it may affect the canning industry.

He reviewed Congressional action on the two Miller bills; H.R. 4277 dealing with pesticides, and H.R. 4901 for the regulation of chemical additives to foods. Mr. Covington believes there is a good chance that the revised Miller bill on pesticides may become law during this session of Congress.

The Miller pesticide bill provides laws to control the establishment of tolerances on pesticide residues on fresh foods. The Canners Association approved the Miller bill with a recommendation that standards apply to raw agricultural commodities only.

Although the Miller bill would, in effect, establish standards for the residues in the canner's raw materials, it would have no effect on establishing standards or tolerances for the processed food. Unless parallel legislation can be enacted establishing tolerances for processed foods the canners will be placed in a difficult position. Although certain levels of pesticides may be approved for fresh produce, these same levels in canned foods would perhaps open the question of adulteration.

As for practical results of the proposed legislation, Mr. Covington says that after the effective date of the bill, no pesticide which leaves a residue will be

used unless a tolerance has first been established.

Thus until laws establishing processed food tolerances are enacted the food processor is going to be caught between federal tolerances on chemicals in his raw materials and no tolerances on his product. Mr. Covington summed up this situation as follows: "No one has suggested that the human body can distinguish between the organic pesticide on a fruit or vegetable straight from the orchard or truck farm and that which may spend some time in a metal can."

Food Standards Legislation

"Unless adequate federal budget funds are forthcoming, any future report on the development of standards of identity . . . may well be an unmelodic requiem," said H. T. Austern, Chief Counsel for the National Canners, in his discussion of the future of mandatory food standards.

Mr. Austern pointed out that under the reduced appropriations for the fiscal year ending June 1954, FDA has already seriously curtailed work on food standards. There is now only one full-time hearing officer to deal with the food standard problem in the FDA. Mr. Austern emphasized that he was not criticizing the FDA for this situation, which has been forced on them by the serious budget cuts. They have concentrated their limited funds on enforcement programs affecting public health.

Many food standards are now in process and both the FDA and the canning industry have invested large amounts of money in developing them. Now the immediate future of these standards is indefinite. They are in danger of becoming obsolete before completion.

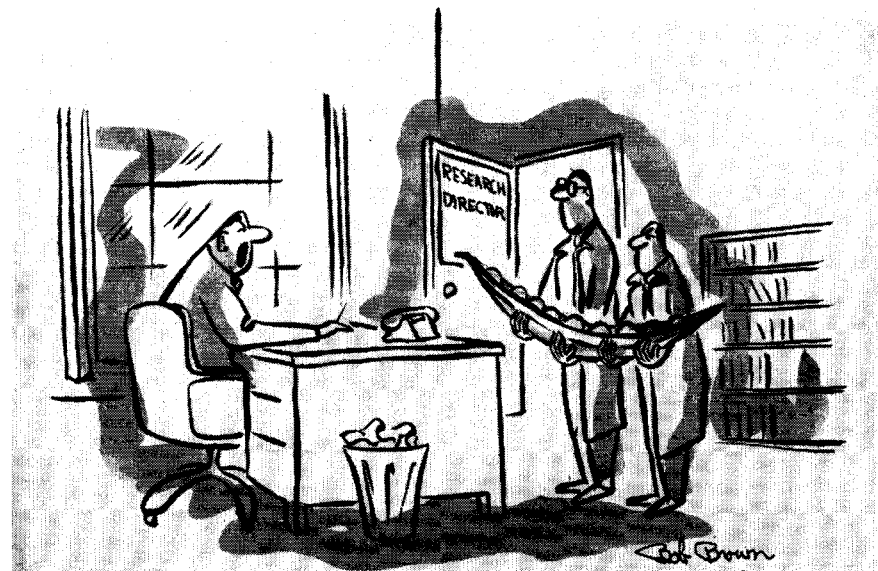
Also, FDA and industry experience has shown that it is important to have efficient procedures for the amendment of existing food standards. Such amendment is necessary to keep the consumer product abreast of technological developments.

Mr. Austern does not see much hope for the immediate future of food standards. For the current fiscal year Congress gave the FDA \$5.2 million for its entire enforcement program. The proposed federal budget for the next fiscal year recommends the same amount. There are two avenues open for food standards, said Austern, under this limited budget.

The FDA has provided regulations for experimental shipment of foods which do not conform to existing standards. These experimental permits allow the shipment of new types of food packs and modifications of existing packs with the approval of the FDA.

Mr. Austern also regards the Hale bill as an avenue of relief. This bill would streamline the administrative procedure for establishment of food standards.

Although the Hale bill would affect economies in the food standards procedures of the FDA, Austern warned that the FDA budget for this work cannot be allowed to shrink to a level which would prohibit effective effort. "Nor will any Congress properly advised and cognizant of the need permit it to do so," he said.



O. K. Morely, now let's try some fertilizer