

Food Additive Legislation

THE MILLER BILL has been passed[†] by Congress and signed by the President. It represents one more step in the development of laws and regulations basically intended to protect the consuming public while at the same time allowing and encouraging the pursuit of research in the interest of valuable and constructive changes for the better. A big problem facing all those concerned with future legislation and regulations is to see that the basic intention is kept in mind. Not only must the public be protected, it deserves to have and enjoy the benefits of our scientific progress. Legislation which may hinder or discourage constructive research, even though it does so unintentionally, must be avoided.

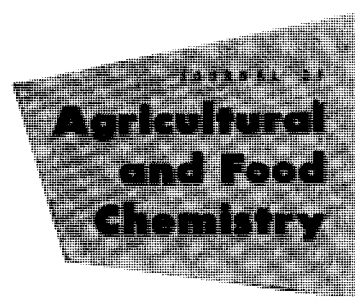
Food Additive Legislation, the latest bill being H.R. 9166, introduced by Congressman O'Hara (R., Minn.), still wallows in the hopper. No hearings are expected on the O'Hara Bill during this session of Congress.

The matter of "new chemical additives to food" is one which has suffered a considerable amount of abuse during the past few years. It has received more than a little unfavorable publicity in the lay press. Too much of that publicity appears to have been accepted in the darkness of ignorance without question as to the validity of evidence. On the other hand the public deserves careful protection against the careless or unscrupulous use of additives to foods.

The chemical industry has made many worthy contributions to food improvement and it is reasonable to expect more. The feature article in this issue (page 770) deals with the enrichment of food. That enrichment is brought about through chemical compounds. It is not reasonable to think that no more valuable additives will be found. But the research that will find them must be encouraged rather than discouraged. Proper legislation can be an important factor in progress. Such legislation needs the advice and recommendations of both the food industry and the chemical industry.

The chemical industry has a responsibility to give thought to this matter and to offer sound, sensible, reasonable suggestions in the matter of shaping legislation. It is only reasonable that the viewpoints of the food producer and the chemical manufacturer may vary, but if thoroughly satisfactory legislation is to result, both must be considered and must be effective in the final shaping of a bill. There is no visible sound reason why the proper interests of the public, the chemical industry and the food industry cannot be incorporated into a good piece of legislation.

A group of representatives of the food industry has taken active steps in developing a bill. Congressman O'Hara, who has expressed his willingness to aid in the development and movement of constructive legislation, has introduced the bill. While no action is expected in the near future, some representatives of



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the food industry have established a position and something has gone into the record expressing that position. Other representatives of the food industry do not appear to be completely in agreement with the ideas in the O'Hara Bill.

The chemical industry has taken no position. It has a responsibility to do so. Not only do the findings of that industry contribute to nutrition, but they also are important in helping food products to meet household needs and preferences so necessary in their finding markets. Some of the country's agricultural problems today depend on advances along the latter lines. Secretary of Agriculture Benson in his report for 1953 has stated,

"We need to expand research on the development of new products from agricultural raw materials, new uses for existing products, and new processes that will expand present markets. Research for new uses often requires that science find out more about the original characteristics of farm products More research is needed to determine human and household needs and preferences for agricultural products. The nearer agriculture can come to satisfying consumer needs and wants, the greater will be the opportunity to expand markets. Industry is constantly improving the quality of its products. Agriculture must do likewise. More must be learned about preserving original quality of perishable food crops in the marketing channels so that they will arrive in the consumer's kitchen with their full measure of appetite appeal."

The health and prosperity of agriculture and the food industry are interdependent and we must keep in mind the importance of the improvement of products to both. The chemical industry and the products it produces and will produce are an important factor in that interrelationship. Therefore, leaders in that part of the chemical industry serving both agriculture and food processing have a responsibility to take a conscientious interest in the shaping of legislation which encourages the search for ways to make better food products.

There is no reason to believe that they will not—they are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in research. They deeply appreciate both a responsibility and an opportunity to improve the health and wealth of the nation—a type of contribution to mankind the chemical industry has made and continues to make in cooperation with many industries besides agriculture and food processing.