

Food Surpluses and Energy Shortages

MORDECAI EZEKIEL is a name well known to the farmers of two decades ago. He helped develop the original Agricultural Adjustment Act. His name recently appeared again, tied to an agricultural adjustment scheme. As one of the top officials of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, he has suggested the use of U. S. food surpluses to feed men and elephants to be devoted to a timber exploitation scheme on the Andaman Islands.

The mention of elephants may have been an unfortunate choice, leaving the scheme eligible for the name "Ezekiel's circus," which some of Dr. Ezekiel's traditional critics may suggest is characteristic. But the basic idea is thought-stimulating.

On one hand we have surplus agricultural products, or energy in the form of food; on the other a shortage of energy and a need for productivity and development. If the two could be brought into equilibrium, benefits could accrue to both sides.

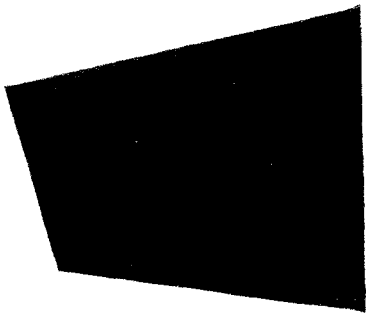
Our surpluses might be used to provide energy for men and animals in countries where hand and animal labor on a large scale is not unsatisfactorily inefficient within the framework of the economy. If used not as a replacement, but as a supply to make possible projects or works nonexistent before, this could add to a country's or area's productivity and help to create wealth and markets to raise the standard of living, providing the incentive exists. Under such circumstances the agricultural products could not be considered dumped on a country whose own producers need its markets. On the contrary, it would help build purchasing power to stimulate those markets. In fact, some increase of trade among countries might result. For, while we are inclined to think that only the U. S. has surpluses, there are others with such burdens: wheat in Canada and Australia, rice in Italy, dairy products in Holland, cotton in Egypt, and sugar in Cuba and France.

These matters are of more than a little significance in international politics as made clear by Russia's promises to buy from a number of countries.

Within 20 years it is conceivable, even probable, that the situation might change remarkably if we let our present farm problem slow our technical progress in agriculture. The world's greatest area of high natural fertility still in low production lies within the Soviet Union. The Soviets' frantic drive for technical advancement is well known. We are turning our backs if we do not admit the possibilities of great advancement in their agriculture within the next 20 years.

On the other hand, U. S. population and demand for goods and services are increasing so rapidly that by 1976 demand will be double what it is today, according to Du Pont's *Better Living* magazine. The work force will be only 20 to 30% larger. First-quality agricultural land is being taken up by urban development.

Thus, it is possible that if we relax our drive for greater agricultural productivity, we could be in a weaker position than our Soviet competitor. In the interim, other countries of the world may develop



greater food deficiencies. The international political results of such a position are not hard to envision.

If a practicable way can be found to use our surplus food energy as foreign aid to develop productivity in underdeveloped areas, it could relieve a part of our surplus support expense as well as direct financial foreign aid, while not competing with the production of other countries. At the same time an important factor of discouragement would be lifted from our drive for more productive agriculture.

WALTER J. MURPHY, Editorial Director

Food Additives Legislation

HEARINGS ON FOOD ADDITIVES legislation are beginning again. It is clear that the Food and Drug Administration continues to prefer the administrative approach; also proof that an additive of any toxicity is safe and required along with proof of utility whether or not toxic. The injunctive approach is still favored by many as it gives only police powers to FDA with court injunction as an enforcement weapon. A new approach has been brought in this year in the declaratory judgment. This calls for presentation of the evidence pro and con before the court which would hand down a declaratory judgment to stand as a guide to action.

The latest bill in the hopper is that of Representative Miller which takes the administrative approach but applies only to additives deliberately intended to affect quality or properties of food. This bill omits the term "general" from the usual definition of a new food additive as one "generally recognized" by experts qualified by training or experience.

It appears that the main subject of contention in the coming year will be whether FDA should make the decisions over adequacy of testing or over the safety of the material. There is some indication there will be strong government arguments to maintain section 406A of the present act which prohibits any trace of a poison or adulterant regardless of its hazard to health.

Another subject of argument probably will be the grandfather clause. Absence of such a clause can work unjust hardships on accepted products. Practical use of a product over an extended period of time without absence of injury should give evidence of its safety.

The major objective should be to provide for the continued improvement of our food and nutrition without danger to public health. Such goals cannot be achieved if legislation is not designed to base action on scientific evidence and good logic.