

OIL & FAT INDUSTRIES

The Editor's Page

Tomorrow's Oil Mill

REPRESENTATIVES of the cottonseed crushing industry assembled at the convention of the National Cottonseed Products Association, at New Orleans during the latter part of last month, listened to several addresses relative to the recently completed economic survey of their industry.

The survey proved conclusively, on paper at least, that the crushing of cottonseed for oil, as conducted at present in the South, is not a profitable business. The plain facts, as expressed by the composite figures from some six hundred mills (covering three years of operation), revealed that the crushers are in the manufacturing business for the benefit of the cotton farmers, who receive the bulk of the mills' earnings in the form of payment for the cottonseed. The best that the mill owners seem to have gained is a fair wage for management efforts.

Various remedies for the situation have been proposed. One which seems to have met with no little favor is that the existing larger and financially stronger mills should buy and scrap the numerous small unprofitable mills. Such a move would, of course, be of little benefit. As soon as the industry as a whole again showed respectable profits, new capital would be attracted, new projects would be initiated and in a short while the same condition on excess milling capacity would reappear.

Earnest efforts are under way, with the able co-operation of the Department of Agriculture, to stabilize a method of grading seed, so that the farmer who delivers poor quality seed will be paid only a percentage of the basic price, thus enabling the crusher to calculate a profit from his operations, even when the yield of oil and ammonia in the form of products is reduced. This step should help the mills appreciably, but as long as the potential seed-crushing capacity of the mills as a whole remains considerably greater than the seed yield of the cotton crop, the old competition for the purchase of

seed will persist, with the result that allowances for quality will be remitted and all other considerations of profitable operation may be neglected in the scramble to *get the seed*.

The forward-looking crushers will prepare to keep their mills in operation by adapting them for handling other oil-bearing materials than cottonseed. The development of soy beans in the middle west in the past few years has been remarkable. This crop, as well as peanuts and several other vegetable sources of oil, is well suited to much southern land available for cultivation. Certain imported raw materials, also, can be handled in the cottonseed mills.

The successful mill of the future will be an oil mill, not a cottonseed mill, operating at least three hundred days a year, on a variety of oil-bearing material.

Progress in Oil Chemistry

THE American Oil Chemists' Society has just brought to a close a most successful year. The period was marked by an awakening of interest in one of the most involved problems of research in the chemistry of fats; the nature, cause and control of rancidity.

Rancidity and consequent spoilage of edible fats and bakery products is responsible for the loss of millions of dollars annually in this country alone. For many years chemists and bacteriologists have considered the subject only in a desultory manner, usually arriving at the point of admitting that the cause or causes were just beyond detection.

Now, however, with the advent of new apparatus of various types for the measurement of the progress of oxidation and rancidification, investigators are viewing the problem with renewed hope of success.

At the Fall Meeting of the Oil Chemists' Society which was held in Chicago in November last, several valuable contributions to the subject of rancidity and instability of fats, particularly of fats intended