

OIL & FAT INDUSTRIES

The Editor's Page

Wanted: A Way Out

THE cottonseed oil milling industry is still seeking its Moses. Almost hopelessly entangled in the wilderness of hostile farmers, unsympathetic federal and state bureaus and legislators, it cries aloud for the manna of *practical* help and for guidance through the Red Sea of depression into the promised land of profits.

All sorts of panaceas for the difficulties of the mills are being prescribed. The latest suggested remedy is contained in a report of examiners of the Interstate Commerce Commission, recommending a revision of all cottonseed and cottonseed products freight rates and a limited form of milling-in-transit rate on cottonseed.

The proposal has resulted in an immediate division of the mills into two camps. The recommendation of the Commission's examiners appears intended to benefit the railroads primarily, but the larger terminal oil mills are favorable to its adoption, as it will permit them to compete on more favorable terms with seed buyers for the smaller mills in local territory. The latter class, naturally, are opposed to the proposition, even though, in its present form, no application of the transit rate to oil and linters is contemplated, seed in, and cake meal and hulls out of the mill being the commodities affected.

Another problem being discussed by the oil millers during this Summer vacation from mill operation is that of organization for trade association. Some members of the National Cottonseed Products Association favor the abandonment of all State Association activities, while others desire to continue the state groups, either as independent organizations or as divisions of the National body.

While all these weighty matters require discussion and adjustment, the mills stand idle, as usual in this between-crop season.

Yet there are quantities of copra, sesame seed, peanuts, soybeans, sunflower seeds, etc., if not actually in the country, still readily obtainable to keep the presses and expellers turning out oil. What a reduction of overhead and fixed charge unit costs would be achieved

by every mill, large and small, if year-round operation should be provided for by operating on other oilseeds during the closed season for cottonseed.

A Whale of a Problem

THE storage tanks of Norway are overflowing with the surplus of last season's whale oil production. Practically all of the Norwegian whaling companies have agreed to suspend operations for a period of one year to enable the world demand to catch up to the supply of whale oil, and to endeavor, in the meantime, to market the huge surplus at prices which will at least pay the cost of production.

Whale oil, chiefly because of the efforts and discoveries of chemists in the field of hydrogenation, has again become a staple world commodity. Its utility is many times what it was in the old days of the New Bedford sailors, when it could be used only in lamps and for lubrication. Today, after suitable treatment and when blended properly with other fats, it is a satisfactory ingredient for soaps of the highest class. In Europe it is used extensively in margarine, and its use in such a way in this country has been approved recently by that deputy arbiter of the American margarine industry, the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Refined and hydrogenated whale oil is a clean, wholesome, sweet fat, and it is to be sincerely hoped that the real overseers of the margarine industry, our National Congress, will not hastily pass another law reversing the decision of their deputy and holding that this product of the sea may not be used in our kitchens because it comes from the wrong variety of cattle.

The hydrogenated product will also make a most satisfactory shortening product, particularly when blended with other fats. If some of our large shortening manufacturers had not spent such huge sums in past years to advertise their products as purely vegetable, many of us would be cooking with whale oil today, whether or not we were aware of the fact.

Producers, refiners and consumers of oils and fats must recognize this new important factor in their field. Whale oil apparently has come to stay, and the best reports obtainable from the Antarctic indicate that the supply can be maintained at high levels for many years. Undoubtedly, in time the market will be stabilized so that other fatty oils will not be affected so keenly in price by the whale oil run as in the past year or two, but for the present all producers and refiners of other fats and oils must exert their best efforts to maintain their markets for their own commodities.

Light on Ancient Customs

RECENTLY we had occasion to discuss some features of soap manufacture in the presence of a gentleman of learning and culture, one who had no contact, however, with chemistry or engineering.

After we had considered some of the ingredients used in soapmaking, and their various characteristics, this gentleman inquired: "What is soap, anyway?" We explained briefly the simple chemical reaction involved in the production of the sodium salts of mixed fatty acids, and the incident was closed.

Since, however, we have paused more than once to consider how little distribution there has been of the most elemental knowledge of the chemistry of soap manufacture, and how little real progress in the study of that chemistry until ten or fifteen years ago at the earliest.

This deplorable condition was due, without doubt, to the belief of many soap chemists that they possessed secrets beyond the ken of their fellows. Of how little value such secrets generally are every chemical student today is aware.

The Soap Section of the American Oil Chemists' Society, which has been an organized unit of the society for only a little over two years, is conducting cooperative work on soap analysis and glycerine analysis, which, for the enthusiasm of the members participating and for value of method comparisons, surpasses anything of the sort which we have ever before encountered.

This is only one activity of the American Oil Chemists' Society, of which every soap chemist and oil chemist in the country should be a member.

New Cuban Regulations

A decree published recently, drawn up to cover standards of purity for foods and drugs offered for sale in Cuba cancels previous decree of September 4, 1926, in which decree no difference was made between goods for immediate consumption and those for use in industries.

Article 3. For the importation of edible oils which contain impurities, or of vegetable oils of more than 3% acidity, it will be necessary to present a special permit for each shipment, in which the importer sets forth, under oath, the fact that these products are imported for purification or refining in a duly established factory, the name and exact location of which shall be stated.

Article 4. Edible vegetable oils, as well as animal fats or other food products, imported for refining or for elaboration, transformation, or addition to other food products, may not be offered for sale as long as they retain the impurities or defects which may have made them unfit for sale, or as long as the refined, elaborated or manufactured product does not conform to the standards and requirements set up by the Sanitary Ordinances, or by Special Regulations.

Article 5. In the case of foodstuffs refined, modified or transformed in Cuba, it will be required that such products when offered for sale shall set forth on the label in Spanish not only the type of product, but the name and location of the plant in which it was made. Without such a label its sale may be prohibited and the sanitary permit withdrawn from the plant.

New Plant for Panama

A report from Consul Davis, at Panama, is to the effect that an American concern which recently secured a concession from the Panama government for the exploitation of the palm nut resources of that Republic, contemplates the erection in the near future of three buildings constituting the base of the operations in Panama City.

The Government of India's final forecast of the 1930-31 peanut crop, gives the area sown as 6,240,000 acres, with an estimated yield of 2,988,000 tons of nuts in shells. This is an increase of 9 per cent in area and 12 per cent in yield over the 1929-30 crop of 5,748,000 acres.