

# OIL & FAT INDUSTRIES

## The Editor's Page

### Declining Exports

**E**LSEWHERE in this issue we present a summary of the figures of the Foodstuffs Division of the Department of Commerce covering United States exports of oils and fats (vegetable and animal) and allied products for the calendar year 1928, with comparative figures for 1927. Examination, however casual, of these figures, must bring us to only one conclusion, which is that, whatever may be the cause, the export trade of this country in oils and fats is declining rapidly.

Whether this may be due solely to increased demand at home, with consequent reduction in the available surplus for export, we will not undertake to decide. It does seem advisable that those who are advocating greatly advanced import tariffs should ponder the possibility that these advanced rates may accelerate the slump in their own export trade in these commodities. The Germans, for example, are a most adaptable race, ready to seize any opportunity for substitution of cheaper raw materials which may present itself. Close American markets to soya bean oil, palm kernel oil, and whale oil, and they *may* possibly supplant American lard in the German market at a lower price.

Chemical development toward the interchange of inedible and edible oils *may* have progressed farther in Europe than in this country, and there is scarcely any doubt that the European taste is a little less fastidious than American, thus permitting more latitude to the European oil refiner in the matter of substitution of such oils as hydrogenated fish oil, whale oil, or soya bean oil in lard compounds or margarines. These conditions can hardly fail to cause appreciable decreases in American exports of lard and competing oils and fats. African and Chinese peanut oils, likewise, may supplant what American cottonseed and corn oils now find their way into the salad and cooking oil markets of Southern Europe.

In the Cuban and South American markets the American oil refiner may meet twofold competition. The cheaper raw materials available to European refiners because of the United

States tariff may be reflected in more aggressive competition from these European refiners in our Latin American markets, and the local refining industries of the Latin American countries may be stimulated, likewise, by the lack of American competition in the purchase of their raw materials.

The question really resolves itself into two queries, first: Will America consume all the edible oils and fats produced or capable of production within her borders; second: Can America produce her full requirements in edible oils and fats. It may be that the most desirable situation for our oil producers and refiners will be that of self-contained industry, supplying only the needs of the home markets for edible oils and fats and providing fully for the required technical and soap oils with the surplus which would otherwise be exported. Under such conditions, the producers and refiners of our high-class cottonseed, peanut and corn oils would have to be satisfied with soapmakers' prices, or the soapmakers would have to pay edible prices for their stocks. In the latter case, the cost of soap to the consumer would increase rapidly, but it is also within the realm of possibilities that the synthetic methods of the organic chemist will produce from coal or other cheap product, such fats or fat-like substances as will meet entirely the needs of the soapmaker.

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### Careless Storing of Oils

Refiners of edible and fine technical oils often expend thousands of dollars for refining equipment and processes, having in mind the production of the very highest quality products in their line, and then revert to the methods of forty years ago for the storage of these valuable products, often losing thereby all that has been gained by the use of modern refining methods.

It is recognized by all who have studied the matter closely that fatty oils deteriorate rapidly in contact with light and air, that small per-