

# OIL & FAT INDUSTRIES

## The Editor's Page

### Dairy Interests Shoot Again

THE publicity broadcast by the Dairy Interests' lobby in Washington has recently given great prominence to a masterpiece of proposed legislation which, although favorably reported by the House Committee on Agriculture, failed of action in the Seventieth Congress. This proposed act was known as H. R. 10958, and provided an amendment to the definition of oleomargarine in the law imposing a tax on butter substitutes.

Greatly chagrined at the failure of Congress to enact the proposal into law at its last session, its proponents have inaugurated a drive to enforce its passage at the coming extra session, and are flooding the newspapers of the nation with carefully biased "news," which is so prepared as to make it apparent that the manufacturers of cooking compounds composed of well-refined, clean wholesome vegetable oils are guilty of all the crimes possible under the Pure Food Laws. Judging from the wording of this propaganda, the Congressmen from dairying regions are treading on each other's feet in a wild rush to be first to re-introduce this measure. In one day's release the champion of the desired enactment is Representative Selvig, (Rep.), of Crookston, Minn., who is quoted at length in the usual style of the dairy interests and reduces all opponents to pulp with an avalanche of "merely" and "simply."

We give here a few excerpts from Mr. Selvig's tirade:— "This proposal *merely* extends the definition of oleomargarine. It *simply* brings in under the scope of the Oleomargarine Act passed 43 years ago products colored in the semblance of butter. It *merely* includes such new products which scientific knowledge has invented which have been introduced into the markets of the country since the original oleomargarine law was passed." . . . "The deceptiveness of the product is obvious to all. This deceptiveness is such that even an expert can not determine from appearance, taste or odor the difference between butter, oleomargarine and the product under discussion". . . "The dairy industry of the United States must be safeguarded". . . "The welfare of our Nation depends upon safeguarding the dairy industry". . . "This bill will aid our

farmers. No one who has given it thought and study can deny that fact". . . etc., etc.

On another day Representative Haugen, (Rep.), of Northwood, Iowa, Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, and Co-author of the famous McNary-Haugen equalization fee, is represented as the sponsor of the bill. Mr. Haugen is quoted somewhat along the same lines as Mr. Selvig, with the exception of some very interesting statements as to the composition of butter, for example. . . . "These so-called cooking compounds are made by mixing these fats together in water or some other liquid, so they form an emulsion very nearly identical in its form to the emulsion of butter fat and water, which is butter." Mr. Haugen's statement is published elsewhere in this issue in full.

*The Facts* are as follows:— manufacturers of shortening have discovered that a product of superior quality and properties can be produced by mixing certain vegetable oils and a small percentage of water, and that the product so prepared can be satisfactorily distributed in one-pound cartons, similar to the one-pound carton of lard.

Their temerity in daring to sell their product in the shape of a print of butter has brought down upon their heads the wrath of the mighty dairy interests, whose evident intention and purpose is that no fat shall be sold in the United States except that produced from the lacteal fluid of the cow. No reasonable person would attempt to claim that a mixture of vegetable oils and water can by any stretch of the imagination be said to look, taste or smell like butter, and we assure the Honorable Messrs. Selvig and Haugen that any ten-year old farmer's boy or girl would be able to distinguish between these products and butter at the first taste, but. . . . "The welfare of our Nation depends upon safeguarding the Dairy Industry." It is to laugh.

### Oil Chemists' Twentieth Anniversary

THE Annual Convention of the American Oil Chemists' Society, to be held at The Hotel Roosevelt in New Orleans, May 13 and 14, marks the rounding out of the first twenty years of the Society's existence. In retrospect,

the members of the Society can look back with pride upon the progress and accomplishments of these twenty years. The knowledge of the technique of oil production and refining and soap manufacture, as well as the manufacture of the many developed products of oils and fats has advanced and developed to an astounding degree since that time, twenty years ago, when a little group of less than twenty chemists met to launch this association. The Society has grown with the industries of which it is a part. The membership today is over three hundred, including every chemist of prominence in fatty oil and soap work, as well as many of the younger generation who are contributing their part to the furtherance of technical knowledge and skill in the industry.

Our understanding of the composition of fats and their products is unfolding rapidly, and our ability to produce new products from them, by new methods, is growing almost as rapidly. In all of this The American Oil Chemists' Society has played a leading part, and will undoubtedly continue to do so in the future in even larger measure. We stand on the threshold of even greater progress in the knowledge and understanding of synthetic chemistry during the coming decade than the world has ever imagined in the past, and it is only reasonable to expect that this progress will be as great in the field of oils, fats and soaps as in any branch of chemical technology. For this reason, if for no other, every chemist who is engaged in work involving the technology or analysis of oils, fats, or soaps should be a member of The American Oil Chemists' Society, in order that he may avail himself of the opportunities the Society affords for the exchange and dissemination of useful knowledge in relation to his profession and its progress.

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### Synthetic Fats

**T**HE greatest stimulus to increased production of any product is a continued high market price for that product. The surest way to encourage competition from new sources is to put the price of a product high enough so that it becomes attractive to the new competition. Likewise, new chemical developments are spurred forward when the market price of the product or products is high. Chemical research in the field of high priced products is always carried on with greater enthusiasm and the hope of larger eventual profits.

Sooner or later, synthetic oils and fats are going to be a commercial reality in the United States. Glycerides will be built up eventually

on a commercial scale from mineral hydrocarbons, or from coal and hydrogen. The advances in synthetic chemistry throughout the world during the past five years have been the handwriting on the wall. Take the cases of synthetic acetic acid, wood alcohol or methanol, motor fuels, and last, ethylene glycol. The extremely high prices for glycerin some three years ago were unquestionably a stimulus to greater sale and expanded production of synthetic glycol. This product is now a keen competitor of glycerin. Were it permitted, synthetic methanol could wipe out the natural methanol industry to-morrow.

If a sharply higher tariff on oils and fats increases the domestic prices of these products correspondingly, and it probably will as this is the chief reason for its consideration, the development of synthetic glycerides in the United States will be given a marked stimulus. The margin between cost of production and selling price will be widened and lend just that much added attractiveness to industrial projects aiming to synthesize oils and fats. Synthetic processes which might not be a competitive proposition with a natural fatty oil at nine cents, might be able to operate effectively in getting under way with the same oil at thirteen cents.

There are numerous instances where prices of manufactured commodities have been held at low levels purposely so as to discourage new people entering the field. There are an equal number of cases where high prices have brought wider and keener competition. This is an aspect of the present oil and fat situation which American producers must take into consideration. They must not forget that if they disturb the present world-wide balance in oil and fat production and consumption, it may react to their detriment in the long run. Unquestionably, the greatest potential competitors of the producer of oils and fats to-day are the products of synthetic chemistry. If producers are enabled to put the price of fats up unduly, then consumers will employ every means in their power to avoid using them. Substitutes will be sought out. Experience proves this to be the inevitable consequence of market disturbances.

Once again, we urge that every angle of the proposed 45 per cent tariff on oils and fats be studied deliberately and carefully before anything is done. Is it really what the American producer of oils wants? Is it going to be a boomerang in the end? Do not forget that synthetic fats are far more than a remote possibility. They are worthy of serious consideration.