

The President of the International Association of Seed Crushers Reviews World Oil Problems

THE 39TH ANNUAL CONGRESS of the International Association of Seed Crushers was held in Stockholm on June 6 to 9, 1961. President Guy Chipperfield's address, with minor deletions, is given below.

The work of the Association remains centered largely in that of its Committees, of which our Consultative Committee met in Paris twice during the twelve months under review and dealt with a variety of subjects, some of which I will refer to. The Chairmen of our four Sub-Committees will be reporting to you this morning and, if I duplicate anything they may have to say, it will just be a question of emphasis—the object of starting with this Review being, of course, to paint some kind of background for the agenda we are to cover. First of all, a brief reference to main trends in the period under review.

At last year's Congress in London, I referred to the improvement in the supply position of copra, which resulted in a considerable lowering of prices, becoming particularly marked as we approached mid-1960. This movement continued well into 1961—indeed, at the time of writing this Review a month ago, crushers were experiencing the lowest prices of copra for some years. Palm kernels in turn were also at their lowest price levels for many years and a number of processors were happily reverting to the use of these lauric oils after having been obliged to seek alternatives during the 1958-59 era of high prices. Even so, it cannot be taken for granted that the position will revert automatically to its former normality now that the traditional raw material supplies are again on offer. We live in an age of great technical progress and, as I shall mention later, adaptability in formulation to ensure economic price levels is a factor of growing importance. The supply of soya beans to Europe throughout 1960 was at a satisfactory level and soya bean oil found increasing use, both for edible and for technical purposes. Towards the end of the year, however, when the much lower level of Chinese supplies became apparent, a major change took place due to the marked reduction in availability. By May of this year, this had reflected itself in an extremely bleak position for extraction plants in Western Europe, where the processing of soya beans—and groundnuts as well—became uneconomic. Once again crushers were having a forceful reminder of the hazards to which they are always subjected, namely, the lowest price of any substantial degree of supplies of oil from any quarter, allied to the lowest price of cake or meal from any quarter of the world determining the total proceeds that the crusher can expect to secure for the market risk he carries and the services he renders to the manufacturers of end products for the consumer.

Abnormal speculative activities may have been a factor in forcing up prices to a point where U.S. oils, particularly soya beans, became overpriced for European requirements. Undue speculative interference with normal economic trends is, of course, a disturbing factor. It may be necessary in the interests of futures market requirements for financing crops that a single parcel of grain, or indeed an imaginary one, should change hands dozens of times, but one wonders. An excess of professional gambling in commodities, or currencies, can represent a danger to stable economic conditions and thereby invite the attention of governments, because it hardly seems worthwhile for official bodies, including a growing number of Afro-Asian gatherings, to talk about any degree of stability in commodity prices when they remain so vulnerable to the whims of professional gamblers. The most they can do is to consider local marketing schemes intended over a period to keep prices at least above starvation level for the mass of farmers and peasants who, by their toil and sweat, provide the materials for such speculation. So far as the crushers are concerned, as well as the processors of end products, the erratic movements in soya bean prices have again emphasized the need

for maximum flexibility in the interchange of raw materials and in formulae variations with a view to ensuring whenever possible that gamblers get bitten. This process of interchange has been too slowly developed in many cases because of conservation but, given effective cover control and a proper system of quality supervision in the factory, there is no reason why maximum flexibility should not be achieved. Market operators will appreciate that demand for our raw materials falls into two categories: competitive supplies, where interchangeability provides some protection against market fluctuations, and non-competitive supplies, where a certain minimum requirement must be maintained for quality or other reasons. It must be our aim to cut the latter to an absolute minimum by experiment and research and, where feasible, the use of synthetics or other substitutes.

Nobody can object to a reasonable amount of speculation, but it does call to mind a matter of principle, the mere mention of which will cause a lot of people to raise their eyebrows. There still remains an undue tendency to regard profits as being more important than what one might term "people," whereas I suggest, quite seriously, that the reverse is the case. Subject to ensuring sound financial returns and proper provision for development, the basic role of trade and industry is to use their enterprise to serve the community. It is what is called nowadays "public responsibility" and with large concerns it is a matter of some importance. It follows, therefore, that subject to sound operating and constructive development, it is the job of all concerned to occupy themselves with ensuring the highest standard of goods and services for the benefit of the community; whereas it happens too often that those handling commodities think they have done their job if they get so many tons of material which will just meet contract terms. Is it not the business of all concerned—producers, handlers, processors, and consumers—to seek all the time for ways and means of increasing the value of what man gets from the earth? There is a lot of talk about helping under-developed countries, but the fact remains that a colossal amount of impoverishment arises simply from unnecessary wastage. That is a problem which I feel I should put before a meeting such as this. There are so many people who may ask themselves: "What can we do about it?" but who never bother to seek the answer.

Increased availability of olive oil in the period covered helped to supply Mediterranean demand, but the sharp fall in Chinese supplies of soft oils was a bullish factor. The unfortunate shortage in China stresses the foolishness of the earlier exaggerated reports of increased agricultural production put out for propaganda purposes. Certainly, it would be a relief and help international trade if those prone to it would try to exclude economic statistics from the realms of fancy.

Butter stocks have been rising whilst prices have fallen and there has again been an excess of dumped surpluses, not always of reliable quality. This has been disadvantageous for the natural vegetable products but, nevertheless, margarine consumption has increased, broadly speaking, at prices indicative of its special nutritional value and consumer acceptance. The dumping of surplus farm products, by reacting on the value of vegetable oils, prejudices the earning power of the producers of oilseeds and nuts, themselves farmers, whom it is the stated intention of the progressive governments to assist. Surely it does not make sense that agricultural subsidies should be doled out to such an extent as to facilitate the overproduction of surplus dairy products, which can only gain market acceptance at uneconomic prices. It means not only paying out unnecessary subsidies at the taxpayer's or housewife's expense, according to the system of subsidy employed, but, in doing so, a government may be undermining its own constructive efforts to help the under-developed countries. I shall refer later to the question of agriculture, but is it not the time that each country should make a comprehensive reappraisal of its system of agricultural subsidies as part of the new patterns of political development? Europe needs to maintain a sufficient level of agriculture to meet basic needs, but it also needs to step up industrial production of goods wanted by the emergent countries and to take their raw materials in exchange.

Our Quality Sub-Committee dealing with edible products has continued its work on devising a revised method of sampling and analyzing copra and is co-operating therein with the corresponding section of the National Institute of Oilseed Products in San Francisco. Some differences of opinion have arisen in regard to the method of separating fines to obtain more uniform sampling and the size of official samples and the object of the Committee is to discuss these and other matters affecting copra quality. One of the most urgent and important problems today is to deal with pests and diseases in coconut palms. Much is, of course, being done by government and growers' organizations and there is a general awareness of the problem. I was impressed by two N.I.O.P. papers, one by Dr. Duncan who suggested practical steps to get producers interested in quality improvement; and the other by Mr. J.H. Chaloud, of Procter & Gamble Company, who described efforts to produce a practical form of drier for general use. With due respect, I think that some of the official bodies tend to get overpopulated nowadays, with the result that there is a good deal of repetition, often for prestige reasons, at the expense of concentration on concrete measures to achieve specific results in the matter of those two essential points—fighting pests and disease, and eliminating wastage. I suggest that it would be an advantage if some of these multi-representative bodies would delegate to small committees of active and qualified experts, armed with proper authority and financial means, the job of tackling the most serious problems with the real sense of urgency that is needed.

We are not concerned so much in this context with the special interests of shippers or middlemen, whose role it is to act as intermediaries in procuring and delivering our raw materials. What is important is that, both from the standpoint of the producers and the users or processors of copra, it pays to produce good quality copra, properly dried and free of parasites and oxydization. It is wrong to assume that only the producers in areas such as Ceylon can produce copra of high quality, or that it is not worthwhile their trying to do so. It is a question of education and proper preparation and of providing a worth-while incentive to proper drying, worth-while to both producer and processor.

It is interesting to record the following. At the request of the F.A.O. Study Group on coconut and coconut products, Mr. W.R.N. Nathanael, Chemist of the Coconut Research Institute in Ceylon, carried out some tests on a laboratory scale on the economic losses to the coconut industry attributable to deterioration in under-dried copra. He found that grossly-underdried copra with 33% moisture suffered a 30% loss in the form of anhydrous copra and dust after 5 month's storage under normal conditions. Under-dried copra with 12% moisture suffered a similar loss of 15%, whilst well-dried copra with 6% moisture lost only 5%, which appears to be a minimum expectancy.

If we take Philippine copra and assume Mr. Nathanael's findings are reasonably correct it means that, with its customary 25% moisture, about 20% of the crop is wasted. With a present production of about 1½ million tons it would mean that, roughly speaking, with the same amount of coconuts cropped at present, more than 300,000 tons of copra would be available for sale if the copra were properly dried, or about 50 million dollars extra revenue a year, quite apart from the fact that the greater quantity of copra available for marketing would be of a much better quality.

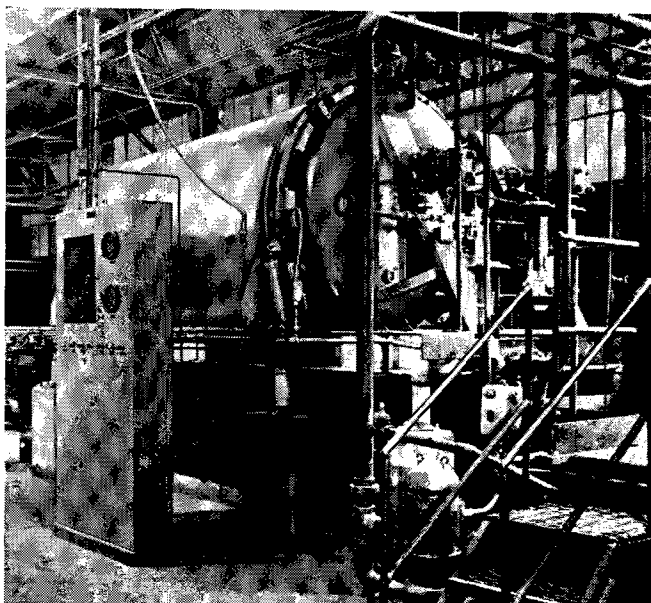
Surely a saving of this order should be sufficient incentive for producer countries to improve their drying methods and thereby produce and market more copra of a better quality with consequent savings, also in handling and processing.

Turning now to the quality of U.S. soya beans, we were a little anxious about the possibility of contamination with the seeds of *crotalaria*, which constitute a noxious substance. As you probably know, *crotalaria* is a weed which has been used as a soil-building and conserving crop in southern states where soya, maize, and sorghums are grown. We are most appreciative of the prompt steps taken by the U.S. authorities and the soya bean growers to deal with this problem. Two effective steps were the seizure by the Food

and Drugs Administration of beans contaminated with *crotalaria* and a regulation that any parcel of beans containing more than two *crotalaria* seeds per kilo is automatically relegated to sample grade, which makes it impossible to include it in shipments of No. 2 yellow. The beans seized must be properly cleaned and reinspected, and can only then be exported when a new certificate of freedom from *crotalaria* has been obtained. If, in spite of these active measures, crushers do receive beans contaminated with *crotalaria*, they should certainly be rejected or not accepted, if this is practicable, until they have been properly cleaned at seller's expense. Whilst appreciating these protective measures, however, we are still not satisfied that the quality of U.S. beans cannot be improved still more. The reduction in the permissive allowance of foreign matter from 3% to 2% was a step in the right direction, but the broadening consumption of soya products emphasizes that even this tolerance is excessive. In particular, we think it wrong that, whereas farmers and country elevators take the trouble to clean the beans, intermediary parties at the ports continue to add foreign matter such as straw, sand, and other rubbish, in order to bring them as close as possible to the 2% limit, and thereby to snatch an extra profit. We know that to reduce the standard percentage further and to bring exported beans into line with those which the U.S. processors expect to get will mean further efforts on the part of growers and elevators, but we feel nevertheless that the U.S. Department of Agriculture might consider further progress on these lines and, at any rate, take steps to stop the deliberate contamination of export beans at the ports by intermediaries, a practice which gives U.S. exports a bad name and invites comparison with the quality obtainable from other sources. These problems are to be discussed at a committee meeting during this Congress under the chairmanship of Mr. J.C.A. Faure, and I hope that crushers and others concerned with quality improvement will make a point of expressing their views. Briefly stated, we would like to see a maximum tolerance of 1% of foreign matter and we feel that this cannot only be realized, but is in the best interests of all concerned with the trade in U.S. soya beans.

Our Quality Sub-Committee which deals with technical oils has continued its efforts to find an improved method of determining foots in crude linseed oil under normal processing conditions. Whilst one appreciates the meticulous interest of the scientist in establishing precise results based on fundamental research, I sometimes think that our chemist friends may not appreciate sufficiently that what we are asking them to do just now is to find a method as quickly as possible which will be workable and commercially acceptable as an alternative to the B.S. test in defining impurities. It does not have to be perfect scientifically so long as it can be accepted provisionally as a means of avoiding the existing anomaly that solids containing as much as 99.9% of linseed oil are claimed as foots qualifying for allowance. Due to processing or climatic conditions and varying usages, it may not be possible to find one method which will be appropriate both for imported oils and for oils ex-European mills, and to some degree there must be a reasonable amount of mutual give and take between sellers and buyers according to their combined experience.

During the year further progress has been made in persuading the National Institute of Oilseed Products to bring their rules for European shipments more into line with European practice, such items as evidence of date of shipment declarations, default conditions, analysis, and so on. However, many of our members' grievances have arisen either from false bills of lading, whereby shippers make them out to suit themselves, regardless of mercantile facts, or from the scandal of the over-shipments in Philippine copra, which recently reached such a level that the official statistics of copra exports in one month amounted to no more than one quarter of the actual quantities shipped. Surely this form of currency smuggling, or dollar-salting, could hardly have reached such dimensions if really active efforts had been made by the authorities concerned to check it, and we must draw our own conclusions about the evident



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failure to do so. Correspondents of ours in the Philippines recently commented as follows:

"We are still staggering from the effects of over-shipment; however, with the recent additional phase of decontrol, the operation is fast becoming unprofitable and all indications point to all becoming honest by next month."

Apparently, honesty is all a matter of whether it pays to be honest or not!

Some further efforts were noted during the year to impose alterations in contract conditions or fresh terms of business on a unilateral basis. I would again like to emphasize the need for all our members and members of the trade to resist such attempts and to insist on the proper maintenance of conventional methods of trading and arbitration which have been tried, tested, and proved dependable over the years. We have to be particularly careful to insist on proved integrity in these days when governments perform acts of brigandage by confiscating the assets and property of other people, apparently under the odd delusion that, if a robber is a government and not an ordinary common thief, such acts of brigandage are excusable.

Mention of unilateral action reminds me that we had some discussion as to whether a new form of contract issued in Amsterdam in connection with linseed oil transactions had been introduced unilaterally and we concluded that, although some sellers had adopted an unnecessarily dictatorial attitude to some buyers, including crusher-buyers, proper regard to mutual acceptance between buyers and sellers had been paid in drawing up the form of contract. We did recommend that our Contracts Sub-Committee might be helpful in regard to conditions of contracts where crushers are largely concerned and I would like to suggest to those trade associations where international representation is not provided for that they should consult our sub-committee in such cases. It is not a question of prestige but of convenience where crusher buyers are largely concerned and the form of contract is offered for international use.

Recently, Mr. J.C.A. Faure raised the question of agreeing on some definition of rights regarding Named Steamer or Substitute, as the result of an Arbitration Award under which sellers were held to be entitled to ship by another steamer five weeks after the date on which the originally named steamer was expected to load. There appears to be a wide difference of opinion as regards interpretation of the words "or substitute" and Mr. Faure felt that they should be defined. There seems to be no reason why a definition fair to all concerned cannot be arrived at. It is a matter of reasonableness between the three parties concerned.

Our Contracts Sub-Committee has been investigating some complaints by some of our members about certain provisions in the Rules of the New York Produce Exchange relating to shipments of animal fats. Our American friends naturally want to foster their export trade in this field but they seem in some respects to work rather on a "take it or leave it" basis, so far as overseas buyers of tallow and lard are concerned. Special points are the quality of commingled parcels, the extension of shipment at shipper's option regardless of circumstances, seller's responsibility for certain discharge costs, and the basic shipping analysis final, all of which have involved buyers in costs which they feel are not their responsibility according to established conditions applicable to the trade in Europe. So far, our representations seem to have fallen on stony ground, the NYPE claiming that buyers are satisfied, which seems odd in view of the continued volume of objections on the part of European buyers, whose views do not seem properly to have been taken into account. We can only recommend, pending further representations, that our members press their objections and reduce to a workable minimum their volume of transactions under these rules as long as they fail to take account of importers' legitimate complaints.

Mention of extension of shipment reminds me that I have been told there has recently been a demand to provide for such extension in the case of vegetable oils traded

in under LOTTA Contract No. 44, possibly to suit the convenience of speculators in linseed and other vegetable oils. If there are difficulties in shipment beyond the control of shippers, no reasonable person is going to object to an extended period of shipment, but for shippers to have the option just to suit their own book and regardless of processors' responsibilities and commitments is another matter. Crushers were pushed into accepting an extension of shipment provision in the North American soya bean contract and, as a result, cases have occurred where sellers who have sold, say January shipment, have automatically booked freight for January 8th-February as a normal matter of convenience and regardless of buyers' interests.

Our Transport Sub-Committee keeps in general touch with the shipping interests and I am hoping that a senior representative of those interests will be able to present their viewpoint in a paper at our Congress at Cannes next June. Progress is being made in the development of Shippers' Councils internationally and pressure is being maintained for simplification and standardization of the numerous shipping documents in general use. I understand that a committee under the chairmanship of the Swedish Maritime Law Association is studying the present Hague Rules and it will be necessary to keep an eye on this development in order to ensure that the rights of shippers and consignees are in no way weakened. I refer, under a later heading, to discrimination in the use of ships, but I would like to mention the Bonner Bill, which empowers U.S. officials to seize the records of foreign shipping companies operating in the U.S. under their Anti-Trust Laws and disclose their private business arrangements. This looks like a disguised form of discrimination and of the sort which provokes retaliation and may cause considerable disturbance to freight markets. Measures of this kind are, in our view, inimical to orderly international trade and cannot fail to be regarded with considerable suspicion as to their real intentions. In its present form, this bill may well upset internationally organized services and, whilst as crushers we welcome economic freights and we believe that these exist at present on most of the major shipping routes, we would not welcome any move which tended to upset the regularity of sailings of the conference lines on which we have come to rely in a large measure in framing our forward contracts.

I would now like to say a few words about agriculture, because our industry is largely tied up with it and it does constitute one of the basic roots, so to speak, of our member countries; in fact, it can be said that any one of them which sought to impair the agriculture of one of its neighbors by discriminatory measures or by the dumping of surpluses would be putting self-interest before co-operation for the general good. There is, however, some danger that increases in national income will not necessarily mean increased expenditure on food and that, consequently, the home production of agricultural products might rise more sharply than consumption. Having regard to the extent to which agriculture is often subsidized (and to some extent this is, of course, inevitable) one wonders whether there should not be some cutting down in the heavy cost of subsidizing home dairy products and greater encouragement to those industries whose products can be exchanged with the oil-seeds and nuts produced in those countries which need our industrial products. In this way we can kill several birds with one stone—cut down on uneconomic subsidies, increase industrial employment and help the emergent countries. Of course, a basic development of home agriculture is essential and with that our industry is closely associated; but surely it should be determined in the light of the factors I have just mentioned and not rather on the basis of political expediency. Certainly, much can be done to increase agricultural overall productivity and in this we can play an important role through the supply of properly balanced livestock feeds. Based on Dutch standards, which are very high, there is a very considerable lack of mixed feeds consumed in other EEC countries, particularly Germany, France, and Italy; and it is evident that seed crushers in many countries might with advantage pay some attention to catering for this market, bearing in mind the considerable progress in the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, and the

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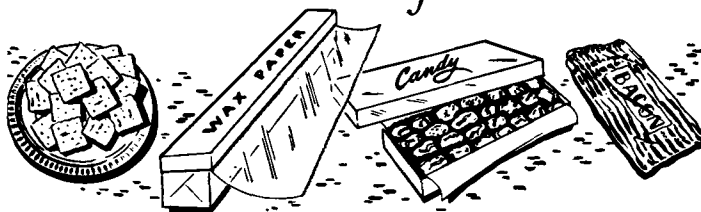
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Netherlands. For instance, it is estimated that the consumption of mixed feeds could with advantage be increased up to fivefold in both Germany and France, and tenfold in Italy.

I would just like to refer briefly to the papers being presented at this Congress. Apart from our usual Reviews of the world oils and fats situation by Mr. J.C.A. Faure; of the position in the U.S.A., presented this year by Mr. Ralph Golseth of the Lauhoff Soya Company; and of the Olive Oil situation by Director Coppola, we have several speakers dealing with specialized subjects such as Margarine, Glycerine, Freedom of Trade, the Soybean Council of America and Cultivation of Rapeseed in Sweden.

Margarine is one of the most important agricultural products in the world and one of growing importance to farmers where vegetable seed, nuts, and oils are major crops. It is also of growing importance to the housewife, who is becoming increasingly aware of its nutritional advantages as a natural product blended under conditions of maximum efficiency. The old-fashioned idea that margarine is just a substitute product dies hard, but it is, of course, complete nonsense. Taken as a whole, good quality margarine is at least as economically important, at least as hygienic, and more versatile than animal or animal-digested fats, which are often unduly subsidized and dumped on markets at prices which must represent a heavy burden to the taxpayers in the producer countries. It is satisfying to note however that in the face of dumping of this kind, margarine prices have been reasonably held, and this is justified from the point of view of value for money; whereas the quality of good margarine is guaranteed, some of the butter dumped overseas during the period under review has been of questionable quality.

To describe the activities and aims of the Soybean Council of America and especially the directions in which they run parallel with our own, we welcome its President, Mr. Howard L. Roach of Plainfield, Iowa, who has just returned from a world survey of his organization's work. It is, of course, in the general interest that they should, as far as possible, run parallel with rather than counter to the interests of processors, as both are concerned with widening consumption of soya bean products. Recently, Mr. Roach drew my attention to a series of international conferences on animal nutrition with which his organization is concerned, but about which not much is generally known over here. The first was held in Washington in May, 1959, and was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Soybean Council; the second, jointly organized by the U.S. Feed Grain and Soybean Councils and held at Madrid in October last; a third, planned for 1962, probably in Rome. The reports on these conferences, which contain papers presented by experts in each sphere of animal nutrition, provide valuable material and anybody who is interested can no doubt obtain information about these three conferences from the Soybean Council of America, Inc., Waterloo, Iowa.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on a matter of topical interest, especially to seed crushers: developments in Africa. The year under review has witnessed the sorry spectacle of what happens when enlightened administration gives way to jungle rule to satisfy the cravings of ambitious politicians. The process whereby primitive jungles have been turned into prosperous agricultural communities, enjoying increasingly those amenities which can contribute to a happy way of life, by the so-called "colonizers" has provided a glowing chapter in human history and the arrival at the stage where the so-called "colonial" peoples can govern themselves is a logical culmination of this constructive process, which contrasts strongly with the mischievous efforts of the communists to enslave peoples and to refuse them the proper human freedoms under freely-elected leaders. However, much harm can be done to humanity and the cause of democracy by precipitate action and theories. As a result, one regrets to see today an unfortunate deterioration in the world and in society of moral standards, with systems being installed which hardly measure up to the integrity built up by the form of administration they replace. It would seem almost as though man, after progressing from *homo erectus* to *homo sapiens*, is in danger of reverting to *homo horridus*!