

Toxic oil verdict angers victims

Twelve persons were ruled guilty in late May on public health, negligence and fraud charges in connection with the 1981 sale of toxic counterfeit cooking oil in Spain. Sentences ranged from six months to as high as 20 years in prison. Defendants included importers and retailers of the tainted oil. The Spanish court acquitted the defendants of manslaughter charges.

More than 700 persons are reported to have died after ingesting the oil; thousands more became ill and many still suffer from damage to lungs and nervous systems. The oil, sold as inexpensive olive oil door-to-door and in local markets, apparently was imported rapeseed oil adulterated with aniline dye which would make it suitable for inedible use only, and therefore eligible to enter Spain at reduced import duties. Once the oil was inside Spain, there apparently was an attempt to reprocess it to make it suitable for edible use.

The three judges in the trial did decide that the epidemic was caused by adulterated rapeseed oil. There were a total of 37 defendants; a 38th defendant died before the verdict was reached. The prosecutor in the trial had requested sentences of up to 60,000 years for the eight principal defendants. Twenty-five of the accused were acquitted on the grounds that they had not known the product was adulterated or were obeying their superiors' instructions.

Even though several realized the oil was poisonous, they had not intended to cause death, the court decided. This left them guilty of relatively minor offenses: fraud, "reckless professional imprudence" and public health crimes. Of the 12 given sentences ranging from six months to 20 years, only two defendants were jailed after the verdict. One, who headed the firm that imported the oil from France, was given 20 years; the second, who was the owner of the company that refined the oil, was given 12 years.

The court sentenced one defendant to 10 years, eight defendants to four years, and one to six months; they were all freed because of their time already spent in custody awaiting trial.

News reports said hundreds of courtroom visitors screamed that the sentences were not severe enough. One estimate is that health care for those affected by the oil has cost the government more than \$400 million, according to the Associated Press.

The *Guardian* noted that Madrid's High Court prosecutor was considering whether to appeal the outcome of what had become Spain's longest trial which took 15 months to complete.

Patent issued

The U.S. Patent & Trademark Office has granted a process patent to AOCS member Ralph S. Daniels for

a "fertilizer process" designed to eliminate the environmental concerns associated with acid water disposal by creating multinutrient fertilizers from the aqueous phase of soapstock acidulations.

The process involves the use of potassium hydroxide (caustic potash) as the vegetable oil refining alkali and a nitrogenous base (ammonia) for neutralizing acid water. Thirty-four claims have been allowed. Patents also have been granted in Canada and Australia and are pending worldwide.

The patent number is 4,836,843 issued June 6, 1989. For more information, contact Ralph S. Daniels, Daniels Fertilizer Co., 80 Old Faith Rd., Shrewsbury, MA 01545.

Neumunz retires

After more than 40 years of service to the vegetable oil and peanut processing industries, AOCS member George M. Neumunz, former president and principal owner of Neumunz Inc. of Leonia, New Jersey, has dissolved his company. He and his wife, Helen, have retired to "Olde Point," a golf and tennis community near Wilmington, North Carolina. However,

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FATS & OILS NEWS

he plans to keep in touch with his colleagues in the industry.

In the early 1920s, his father—Martin Neumunz—established himself as an independent representative of The French Oil Mill Machinery Co. in Piqua, Ohio, and traveled extensively by boat and train to Europe, China and South America. He soon picked up other product lines useful to the vegetable oil industry, especially those of the Bauer Brothers Co. in Springfield, Ohio. In the 1930s, he witnessed the development of peanut processing equipment which eventually set the standard for the roasting, blanching and grinding operations involved in making peanut butter and related products.

George Neumunz attended Yale University and, after graduating with an engineering degree, began his career at the General Electric Co. in Schenectady, New York. With the outbreak of World War II, he served in the U.S. Army as an officer in the Signal Corps. In 1947, he entered his father's company.

Under his direction, the process engineering operation evolved, selling many plants on a turn-key basis throughout the world including over half a dozen peanut processing plants in recent years to the People's Republic of China.

He has presented technical papers at both AOCS annual meetings and world conferences. With his retirement, the process engineering designs of equipment and plants created by the Neumunz organization have been transferred to Crown Iron Works in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The peanut division has been sold to the Ashton Food Machinery Co. Inc., 1455 McCarter Hwy., Newark, NJ 07104, and is being operated as the Neumunz Division under Peter R. Isler as vice president.

News briefs

William D. MacDowell, former president and chief executive officer of the W. Atlee Burpee Co., has been named president of **FreshWorld**, the branded produce joint venture of **DNA Plant Technology Corp.** and **Du Pont Co.**

Mettler Group of Switzerland has acquired a 51% interest in **Ohaus Corporation** of the United States. Mettler is a major producer of instrumental equipment for laboratory and industry use; Ohaus produces weighing equipment for science and industry.

Katsuhiro Utado has been named president of **Ajinomoto Corp.** and was to assume responsibilities after June 29. He succeeds **Tadasu Toba**.

The shareholders of **Novo Industri A/S** and **Nordisk Gentofte A/S** have approved the proposal to merge the two Danish companies. The new company, **Novo-Nordisk**, will be the world's largest producer of industrial enzymes.

RJR Nabisco Inc. has placed five of its major European food units on the market. **Walkers, Smiths** and **U.K. Biscuits** in the United Kingdom, the **Belin Group** in France and **Saiwa** in Italy are the units that are for sale. Last year the baking and snack food businesses had a pretax profit of \$137 million on revenues of \$1.2 billion.

The **Philippine Department of Agriculture** has submitted a feasibility study for the **Small Coconut Farmers Development Project (SCFDP)** to the National Economic and Development Authority. The project, worth about \$295 million, partially will be directed at the production of hybrid coconuts. The World Bank is reportedly willing to provide a loan for the project.

Hohnen Oil Mills Ltd. of Japan changed its name to **Hohnen Corp.** **Masaji Shima** was to become company president at the end of June.

A technical subcommittee of the **Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries** which met earlier this year is considering the use of palm oil in mayonnaise and as fuel. The group also discussed aspects of palm oil processing technology and genetic improvements for palm.

Central Soya Co. Inc.'s vegetable oil refinery in Decatur, Indiana, has been designated a "Select Supplier" by the **Campbell Soup Co.** Campbell Soup's plans are eventually to do business only with suppliers which are designated "select." The program was developed as part of a quality assurance program that guarantees quality of supplies that arrive "just-in-time."

Bengt Holmgren has been named president of **Bergvik Kemi AB**. The Swedish firm, which was recently acquired by International Paper, is a manufacturer of fractionated tall oil products.

Experts from the **Association of Official Analytical Chemists** and other groups are working on or have recently completed a number of studies involving **milk and milk products**. Some of the topics are: Antioxidants in Butter Oil; Fat Acidity in Milkfat Products and Butter, Fatty Acid Composition; Sterols; Analysis of Fat Mixtures. For information about the IDF/ISO/AOAC studies, contact the Association of Official Analytical Chemists, Suite 400, 2200 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201-3301.

Robert Dixon has been named manager of fats, oils, and animal proteins in **Ralston Purina Co.**'s Commodities and Transportation Division.

AOCS member **Bruce McDonald** has been awarded the **CSP Canola Research Award** by **CSP Foods Ltd.** He was recognized for his research on the nutritional quality of canola oil for humans.