



PUBLIC HEALTH—ECONOMICS

North China Faces Century's Worst Famine

NORTH CHINA, under Japanese domination, is reported threatened this spring by one of the worst famines of this century. Ironically the world's wheat bins are overflowing with more than a billion bushels of surplus grain.

Little hope of transferring appreciable quantities of surplus wheat to the stricken region is seen by government and relief offices in the United States. The United States' carry-over of wheat amounts to about 600 million bushels, which is twice the amount we consume in a year. But selling wheat to Chinese in this area is scarcely practicable, with Japan in control, peasant poverty at a serious level, and prices inflated.

Extension of \$20,000,000 credit to China, made possible by act of Congress, will not help the North China provinces, whose people number almost as many as the population of the United States. The United States loan would be destined for trade purposes with the part of China under Chinese republic control.

Surplus American wheat is not available for relief abroad now, as it was a year ago, the American Red Cross states. Wheat now would cost about 94 cents a bushel, and the Red Cross is finding it more satisfactory to send Chinese relief mainly in the form of money, for relief committees in China to expend.

In North China itself, the winter

wheat crop in Shantung province in 1939 was less than half the prewar crop, says a report on the famine from Norman D. Hanwell in Peiping to the American Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations. Last year the war, drought, insect pests, and floods reduced large numbers of people in North China to eating bark of trees and compounds of the earth, he states. Unable to do flood prevention work in warlike conditions, the people of Hopei and Honan provinces found crops inundated by unusually destructive flood waters. Shanghai province suffered worse from drought. Only one major crop in Shantung showed a rise—the sweet potato.

Japan, with the best wheat crop of her history, expected to assist North China, but her own rice shortage and domestic trade problems drove Japan to restrict imports of flour to North China.

Now, says Mr. Hanwell's report, to which Kurt Bloch of New York has supplemented material, "with the gap between the present and the harvest of June, 1940, apparently hopelessly wide and deep," the food situation in China is most serious, and the background one of "internal disruption, starvation, and near-anarchy."

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Methane gas from the Piacenza lowlands is being used as a gasoline substitute in Italy.

ETHNOLOGY

Gold Rush Indians Now Dying Out in Poverty

CALIFORNIA's Hok Indians, whose fathers lived in the midst of the Gold Rush and rubbed elbows with the land baron John A. Sutter, are dying out in poverty.

Hunted out by Dr. John P. Harrington of the Smithsonian Institution, these Indians now number about 100, and are widely scattered. Dr. Harrington, just returned from their region, managed to find an 80-year-old woman and a few other elderly Indians who could recall some words of the Hok tribe's distinctive dialect.

Excavating a mound which the Indians had occupied before Sutter drove them off and put up a boiler plate wall on top, Dr. Harrington unearthed many aboriginal relics. The Hoks apparently remained fairly friendly neighbors of Sutter's, Dr. Harrington explains. Forty Hawaiians whom Sutter brought in to work his farm, intermarried with the Hoks and to this day tribal survivors show racial evidence of the mixture.

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HORTICULTURE

Miniature Hothouses Make Spring Vegetables Grow

A TRANSPARENT "hotcap" for the protection of tender young vegetable plants in northern latitudes has been developed by Prof. Albert E. Wilkinson, extension specialist in vegetable and landscape gardening at the University of Connecticut. He tried them experimentally in his own garden last year and now is urging their use by commercial and home gardeners.

The miniature hothouses are made from cellulose acetate sheeting which can be purchased commercially. It is also the material from which the base of amateur moving picture film is made.

A triangular piece of the material is fashioned into a simple cone. The apex of the cone is snipped off to provide ventilation. A piece of wire bent into a hook is then thrust into the ground through this aperture and holds the cone in place. The hotcaps can be made at home with no tools but shears, wire, wire cutters and paper clips to hold the edges of the material together in the cone shape. The edges can be cemented together with liquid cellulose acetate.

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