

NUTRITION

Mountains of Cabbage Dried For Lend-Lease Shipping

A HUNDRED tons of cabbage a day, with similar mountainous quantities of onions, garlic and other vegetables, are being reduced to the bulk-saving, weight-saving dehydrated form in California processing plants formerly devoted to drying fruits. E. M. Chace of the U. S. Department of Agriculture told the Institute of Food Technologists.

When the procurement officers for American armed services and purchasers for the lend-lease program made known their huge-scale requirements for dehydrated vegetables, the first response was the conversion of the large fruit-drying plants. Some new establishments have also been set up.

Mr. Chace, and also Prof. S. C. Prescott of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who spoke on the same program, warned against an over-enthusiastic rush to get into the food-dehydrating business, however. Several limiting factors impose themselves. Food dehydration is not the simplest job in the world, they agreed in declaring, and the number of men with adequate technical training is relatively small. Equipment also is a problem, because a certain amount of critical metal is needed for construction of a plant, as well as cutting and other processing machinery which may be difficult to obtain. Finally, despite the gargantuan requirements of Army, Navy and Lend-Lease, their buyers are not rushing into the market to grab up dehydrated foods no matter by whom offered.

Science News Letter, July 11, 1942

Recapped passenger tires lasting 10,000 miles and giving two years' service under wartime driving restrictions, are the aim of the Government's most recent tire conservation program.



Fifth Columnists

RECENTLY a clever columnist, pouring indignant ridicule on government publications unrelated to the war effort, and hence (in his opinion) deserving of suppression, singled out one issued by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, entitled *The House Rat*. A worse example for the support of his argument could hardly have been chosen.

If we had a band of fifth columnists in this country who succeeded in destroying a 10,000-ton cruiser every year, we'd call it a pretty serious loss. Rat destruction of property in American cities of 100,000 population and over is estimated at \$20,000,000 annually by Henderson and Craig, in their book, *Economic Mammalogy*. That is approximately the pre-war cost of a heavy cruiser. Rat damage in Washington, D. C., alone is estimated at nearly \$200,000 a year by the same authorities. That would just about pay for a Flying Fortress.

These figures are very conservative, in the estimation of other zoologists. And, of course, they do not take into consideration the immense destruction by rats in smaller places, and the even

more important havoc wrought by these pests on farms, in grain elevators, on shipboard, and in Army and Navy storage warehouses. The Fish and Wildlife Service accepts a figure of \$189,000,000 a year as probably a fair estimation of the rat damage to property in the United States. If we could only prevent that loss, we could keep ourselves very comfortably in new aircraft carriers without extra cost to American taxpayers.

Rats are targets of choice for a not inconsiderable professional group in this country, the vermin exterminators. These modern Pied Pipers welcome any scientific hints they can get that will help them in their business. It is a safe guess that the pamphlet in question will be well received by them.

Even more important than their destructiveness to property is the menace of rats to public health. The role of rat fleas as carriers of bubonic plague is well known. A recent article on Jungle Warfare, in the *Infantry Journal*, states that they also transmit several varieties of typhus fever and a tropical plague called *fièvre nautique*. These are things with which our troops now readying themselves for reconquest of the Indies will have to contend. It would seem, therefore, that any publication that will give information on how to combat rats is hardly one to "pick on" in war time.

Science News Letter, July 11, 1942

A sunken cargo of fighting *tanks*, recently hauled up from the ocean floor, is as good as new in spite of its salt-water dousing.

Tear gas, for testing gas masks, now is packaged in gelatine capsules similar to the ones that hold America's daily vitamins.

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