ECONOMICS

England Short of Resources

Britain's crisis is partly due to a shortage of natural resources for manufacturing and little land to raise food. Fuel shortage is possible.

➤ ENGLAND'S present situation might be likened to that of a manufacturing city without enough raw materials on hand to keep factories going full blast to turn out consumer goods to make the purchase of raw materials possible. Add to this a possible shortage of fuel to power the factories, and little land to raise food.

England is primarily a great factory. It has a poor economic balance between industry and agriculture. It depends on the outside for most of its food. Also it is a very "short" nation in the raw materials that are the essentials in its manufacturing. England lacks domestic metals, textile fibers and wood. Much of its manufacturing depends upon these materials. It has plenty of coal, underground, but very little other fuel.

England's greatest asset in the industrial game is its coal. This makes manufacturing possible, and also transportation by railroad and ocean. Only limited hydroelectric power can be generated, and the amount of petroleum that can be mined is almost negligible. Coal in prewar days not only met domestic needs but established credits in continental Europe making it possible to get raw materials from the nations buying the coal. England has enough coal for many generations; the present difficulty is getting enough out of the ground. Sufficient coal for export would help the present situation.

But Britain needs more. A manufacturing nation without its own raw materials must have foreign markets for its manufactured articles to establish the necessary credits to enable it to purchase the materials needed. Under normal conditions, England has the facilities and human skills to produce what the world needs, and to receive manufacturing materials in their place. The movement of raw materials and finished products kept railroads and steamships busy, providing occupation for those not in factories, mining or farming.

The British Isles, excluding independent Ireland, are about the size of Oregon and have a population of some 48,000,000. England itself is Alabama's size, and had a prewar population of 39,000,000. Only one-sixth of it was rural. English farmers produced less than one-third of the food the country required.

England's iron ore supply in comparison with manufacturing needs, is very small. Although textiles are among the country's principal products, it raises no cotton and relatively little wool in comparison with the needs of its woolen and worsted industries. It has but little wood for its wood products output. The principal exports, outside textiles, are machinery, vehicles, electrical and other goods that require metals in making. British spirit may overcome present difficulties, but it will require time.

Science News Letter, August 23, 1947

HORTICULTURE

New Hybrid Onion Strain Not Very Tearful to Peel

➤ PEELING ONIONS will not be the tearful job it is now, once a new hybrid onion strain originated by Dr. Glen N. Davis of the University of California comes into more general cultivation.

Dr. Davis has eliminated a large part of the pungent, volatile compound that affects housewives' eyes even more strongly than the sobbiest scenes in "soapopry." It is impossible to eliminate all of it, for then there would be no flavor left in the onion, he says.

The new near-tearless onion has a mild sweet flavor, and is especially good for eating raw.

Science News Letter, August 23, 1947

ENGINEERING

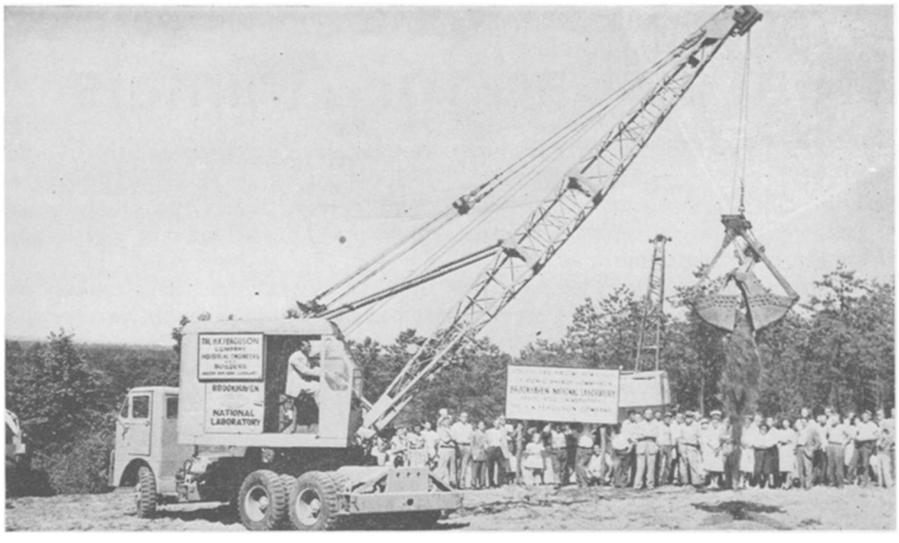
Plated Wire Made to Give Non-Flakable Covering

➤ ELECTROPLATED wire, made by a new process so that it can be bent, hammered, woven or twisted without flaking, is now in production in the new plant of Kenmore Metals Corporation. It will be appreciated particularly by the radio tube industry and by makers of electric lamps and electrical instruments, but will have many other applications.

In the process, quarter-inch rods are first electroplated continuously with great accuracy. Then they are drawn into fine wire by what is known as the cold-drawing process. This means that they are passed through a series of successive dies or holes in a metal plate, each hole being smaller than the preceding one. The quarter-inch rod can be drawn into wire as fine as 0.0038 of an inch in diameter.

Initial production includes steel wire coated with nickel, and copper wire coated with nickel or silver. The copper-coated wire will have wide usage in radio tubes and lamps and also in many household utensils.

Science News Letter, August 23, 1947



NUCLEAR SCIENTIST RUNS STEAM SHOVEL—Dr. Lyle Borst, who headed the atomic pile design group at Brookhaven National Laboratory, ceremoniously scoops up the first bit of dirt excavating for the first peacetime atomic pile on the site of wartime Camp Upton. When the pile starts operating next year this spot will be one of the "hottest" on the earth, radioactively speaking.