AGRICULTURE

Food Surplus Running Out

➤ AT THE PRESENT rate of reproduction another billion people will be added to the earth's population in 15 years, four fifths of them in countries already suffering serious food shortages. Even the "have" nations will have to cut down on their exports to undeveloped countries.

A Department of Agriculture economist, expressing concern about the "race between food and people," said "the stork is outrunning the plough," and added that as of late 1966 there are no food surpluses of any kind.

Speaking at an international symposium on world health at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Dr. Lester R. Brown said the safety valves that once eased food-population imbalances are gone. Unlimited emigration, frontiers, and a technological lead over the rest of the world no longer exist for any country.

Countries that were once leading exporters now must import large quantities of food to maintain their populations, he said. A generation ago, for example, eastern Europe and Russia exported five million tons of grain each year. Today, they must import 14 million tons annually to feed their own people.

Much of the burden of feeding the world's people has fallen on the United States. A generation ago it exported five million tons of grain annually—the same as Russia and eastern Europe. Today, it must export 60 million tons a year to partially meet the demands for food abroad.

To avoid another major crisis like the Bengal famine of 1943, the U.S. sends massive food shipments overseas. One fourth of last year's entire U.S. wheat production is going to India on a concession basis.

This is the largest shipment in our history and it promises to be just the beginning, the economist warned, if something is not done about the food-population imbalance.

People who point to our idled crop land and full refrigerators to minimize the importance of immediate action are misled, Dr. Brown implied. He emphasized that our two protections against a crisis are either gone (food surpluses) or going (crop land), and we tend to confuse the potential for expanding food production with the prospects.

The potential may be there, he said, in technical knowledge and physical materials.

But economic, social, and political problems make the prospects less bright.

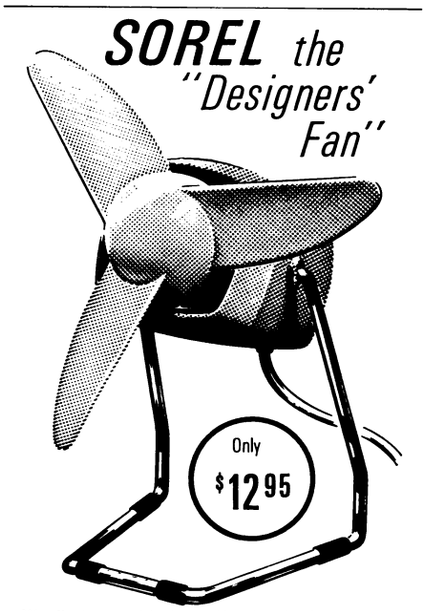
Dr. Brown's solution involves adoption by the developing countries of three major policies: Orientation of food prices to the producer instead of the consumer, so that he will use modern and more expensive techniques to increase his food production; creation of a climate that will bring in investments needed for use of such technology; support of a national policy to control family planning "on a crash basis," not in some vague future, but immediately.

Asked whether food aid to the needy countries does not have an adverse effect on incentive to practice contraception, Dr. Brown replied that indeed it did.

He said there is an emphasis on self-help in proposed U.S. legislation which would require a family wanting U.S. food aid to demonstrate that they are doing all they can to limit their families and to produce the most possible food for themselves.

Dr. Brown is one of 10 men who recently received the Arthur Fleming Award for outstanding young men in Federal service.

The symposium was presented as part of a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health.



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ZOOLOGY

'Extinct' Pigmy Possum Found Live in Australia

See Front Cover

➤ A PIGMY POSSUM, the first of its species in the world to be seen alive, has been discovered in a ski hut in the Victorian Alps.

Victorian naturalists said the discovery of the possum is as exciting as that of the supposedly extinct coelacanth fish in South Africa in 1938.

The Burramys possum was also thought to be extinct. It was known only from fossil remains of skull and jawbones found in two places—Wombeyan Caves, north of Goulburn, New South Wales, and Buchan Caves in Gippsland, Victoria. The fossil remains came from the Pleistocene Age, dating back almost one million years.

The possum shown on the cover is just over 10 inches long, including a six-inch tail. Dr. K. D. Shortman, a biochemist from North Melbourne, said that he is remarkably friendly and is fond of cheese and apples.

As a matter of fact, it seems to eat anything put in front of him.

As yet, his natural diet is not known.

Dr. Shortman said he and D. F. Jamieson, a chemical engineer, found the possum in the University Ski Club hut on Mt. Hotham. It was sitting in the kitchen looking at them curiously and showing no signs of fear.

"I thought it was a marsupial rat at first, but Mr. Jamieson believed it was possum because of the separate thumb on its hind feet, a possum characteristic," Dr. Shortman said.

A biologist at the Fisheries and Wild Life Department identified it as a *Burramys parvus,* a small pigmy possum.

(Cover photograph by Australian News and Information Bureau.)

ENTOMOLOGY

Australia, South America May Be Linked by Insect

➤ A GERMAN scientist is hunting for a fly in Australia which he believes can prove that Australia and South America were once part of the same continent.

Prof. Joachim Illies, of the Max Planck Institute, Holstein, is in search of the stone fly, one of the world's oldest insects.

A few years ago Prof. Illies discovered new types of stone flies in the mountains of Chile, South America. They were closely related to stone flies found in Australia.

The flies are found only near cold-water streams and part of his search will be made in the Snowy Mountains area of New South Wales.

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