



GIRL SCIENTIST

Mary Briscoe, 15-year-old Chem Squad member from Girls' Commercial High School, Brooklyn, N. Y., demonstrates the use of sulfamic acid on cloth at right for fireproofing. She took part in demonstrations by boys and girls at a joint meeting of the American Institute Science and Engineering Clubs and New York Electrical Society on May 28.

ACRICULTURE

Enormous Surplus of Wheat Powerful Aid After Conflict

Unprecedented Accumulation of 400 Million Bushels Will Be Augmented by About 850 Million This Year

MOUNTAINS of wheat, bushels in absolutely astronomic number, are heaped up in America's grain elevators and storage bins, as another huge new harvest awaits the reapers, with heads already well filled at the southwestern end of the Wheat Belt. This unprecedented accumulation of basic foodstuff is one of the country's severest economic problems, and in any but an abnormal time would be an unmitigated headache.

As it is, however, there are some redeeming features about this glut of grain, so huge that all the mouths in the country could not eat it up in less than three years, even if not another bushel were added. At least, that is how Vice President Wallace, who as Secre-

tary of Agriculture struggled for eight years with the problem, feels about it. He has this to say:

"In times like these, it gives us a comfortable feeling to know that the new wheat crop, plus the carry-over, will provide us with the largest supplies in history. While we also have a very large carry-over of corn, there is always a possibility that unusually dry weather in July and August may damage the growing crop, and in case of need surplus wheat can be substituted for corn in the animal diet. The proteins of the two grains supplement each other."

The potential economic headache in the wheat surplus lies in the fact that without Government support this enormous mass of grain would force prices

down to levels ruinous to farmers. The new bill just enacted by Congress and signed by the President, which supports the price by loans on wheat produced under AAA contract terms to the extent of 85% of "parity," is intended to keep the farmer's purchasing power abreast of the city man's.

Criticism has been leveled at this advance in the Government loan rate on wheat, and even some of the staunchest supporters of the AAA system have had twinges of doubt whether the increase should have been as great. Advocates of the new act, however, declare that the expected rise, from around \$1 to about \$1.14 a bushel, can legitimately be held responsible for a cost increase of less than a quarter of a cent per pound loaf of bread. If the price of bread goes up more than that, they claim, the rest of the boost must be looked for elsewhere—in the pay envelopes of labor, or in the profits of the processor, or in that vague category styled "general overhead."

However, regardless of controversy over the price of wheat, the quantities of wheat now in sight are simply overwhelming. The carry-over, as of July 1 of this year, is estimated at 400 million bushels—more than twice what it was three years ago. To this will be added the crop now nodding toward harvest, which is expected to roll up to as much as 850 million bushels. Thus, on July 1 there will be in this country about one and a quarter billion bushels of wheat.

Nor is that all. Canada has a much larger carry-over than we have; it amounts to 565 million bushels. Argentina has a 160 million bushel carry-over, and Australia 73 million bushels. Add in the American carry-over and you have a total of nearly one and one-fifth billion bushels of wheat now on hand in these four major exporting countries alone.

The current crop now growing in Canada, and next season's crops being seeded in Southern Hemisphere wheat-fields, are not figured in. Omitted also are the Old World wheat harvests, which because of war conditions are both unknown and uncertain quantities.

The very climate itself has conspired to increase the golden flood pouring through the grain chutes. Fall-sown wheat came through the winter in good shape, and despite drought in the East this spring has matured a good crop. All up and down the Plains region, where a few years ago drought and dust storms blasted the crop, there have been heavy snows followed by abundant rains, so that spring wheat in the Northwest and

fall wheat in the Southwest are in championship condition.

Where to put it all is one of the things that is giving gray hairs to farmers, wheat buyers, millers and Government officials. If all storage space still unused is filled up, and grain is stored in bags in old warehouses hastily made weather-tight, and wheat poured into bins vacated by some of the corn now being rapidly turned into pork and milk and eggs for our own defense workers and for shipment to Britain, it may turn the trick. But it isn't certain yet that Western farmers will not have to do what Canadian wheat growers did last year—just pile it up in enormous hills out of doors, for sheer lack of enclosed storage space. Canada, by the way, is drastically reducing wheat acreage this year by one-fourth, despite the war. Times have certainly changed since 1917!

This enormous reserve of unused wheat, which will keep in good condition for several years if properly sheltered, will stand America and the world in good stead if the war should end in a general collapse of Nazi-dominated Europe, crumbling into starvation-scourged anarchy. Then wheat-crammed ships can rush to the unblockaded ports, bringing to the peoples of the Old World the one best medicine for the malady called despair.

Food was sloganized to win the last war. This time, food can win the peace.

Science News Letter, June 7, 1941

AGRICULTURE

Sphagnum Moss Protects Seedlings Against Fungus

VEGETABLE and flower plants that have to be started indoors, such as tomatoes, cabbage, salvia and China aster, can be protected against damping-off, a deadly fungus disease, by planting the seed in flats filled with sphagnum moss instead of the customary garden soil. This recommendation is made by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, after long and successful experience with sphagnum as a germination medium, at the plant introduction garden at Glenn Dale, Md.

Damping-off is caused by a fungus that lurks in the soil, attacking the roots of young plants. This necessitates the extensive and expensive steam or chemical sterilization of soils that is such a burden to greenhouse men and gardeners.

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NUTRITION

Conference Declares War Against Malnutrition in U. S.

Employment of Minority Groups, No Taxes on Low Incomes, No Waste of Skimmed Milk Among Plans Urged

WAR is declared against malnutrition among the less well-off portion of the American population, low-income families as well as reliefers, in recommendations that have come out of the National Nutrition Conference for Defense.

No reduction in relief allowances under the emergency conditions is an important point. A scarcity of consumer goods that threatens to drive down the real income through price advances warrants putting unemployed to work to make more consumer goods.

Employment of Negroes and other minority groups, no taxes on incomes insufficient to provide an adequate family diet, coverage of domestic and agricultural workers under social security are among the other recommendations.

Soybean, peanut and milk products that are low in cost and nutritious would be encouraged. Milk would be made cheaper and no skim milk would be

wasted. Taxes that discriminate against margarine are protested.

Technically trained producers and students would be given selective service deferment in accordance with another recommendation.

Better feeding of defense workers is another recommendation, since added meals during the work period have been found to increase efficiency, reduce accidents and decrease absences.

Need for the training of cooks and other members of food staffs in restaurants, institutions, etc., was stressed.

There will be state, county, city and local nutrition conferences and committees if several recommendations are carried out.

The suggestions and reports of the nine sections of the conference that will go to President Roosevelt as the results of the three-day conference total more than 12,000 words.

Science News Letter, June 7, 1941

PUBLIC HEALTH

Rehabilitation of Selectees Predicted at Conference

Men Unqualified Physically for Military Service Will Be Put Into Camps To Be Doctored and Fed

PREDICTIONS based on hints picked up at the National Nutrition Conference for Defense:

The selectees that don't make the grade physically now (and thus get out of army service) will soon be put into rehabilitation camps, perhaps under some civilian agency like NYA, CCC or some new one, to be repaired medically and fed remedially to make them fit for service.

Poor people in the cities not eligible for the food stamp plan and not on relief will be helped in some way to bring their diet up to the new food yardstick announced at the Conference.

More and more of our surplus foods, starting with skim milk which is now thrown away in large volume annually, will be dried to preserve it and reduce storage and shipping costs and facilities and thus have it available where and when needed.

These stores of dried foods will be the blue chips with which the United States sits down to the peace conference table after the war. Or, according to American ideals of humanitarianism, they will be the giant Community Chest Fund for feeding the people of the world after the present emergency.

Science News Letter, June 7, 1941