

NUTRITION

The Food for Peace Frontier

Instead of calling attention to disposal of U.S. surpluses, the Food for Peace Program is emphasizing adequate diet as an approach to foreign policy, Faye Marley reports.

► THE KENNEDY administration is overhauling the United States Food for Peace program.

Wheat for many years has been a surplus commodity, expensive to store, to ship, to curtail. Surplus was disposed of by sending it overseas.

Now an attempt is being made not only to share our abundance but to provide nutritional "expanders" as a basic approach to foreign relations.

As a beginning, George McGovern, director of the new Food for Peace program, requested Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman to authorize oil purchases for overseas donations.

Secretary Freeman has already announced plans to buy up to 100,000,000 pounds of refined vegetable oils to be given to needy persons in various countries. Distribution will be made through some 20 United States religious and charitable agencies.

Adds High Energy Food

The Department of Agriculture was already donating flour, corn meal, rice and non-fat dry milk to the voluntary agencies. But Secretary Freeman said the addition of the oils would add a concentrated high-energy food to the diets of the needy and at the same time would give variety and needed nutritional supplements to their meals.

The new approach—that adequate diet is essential to the prompt stabilization of new governments and new nations and a necessary foundation stone for their future economic development—has turned up a

surprising fact: In many foodstuffs, particularly proteins, the U.S. has deficits rather than surpluses.

These facts were brought out in the report of the Food for Peace Committee appointed by President Kennedy when he was still a Senator.

"The most important single recommendation of our Committee," the report stated, "is that our Government should make this deliberate change in the emphasis and direction of our Food for Peace program.

"Inevitably this will require adjustment in production and marketing policies. Ultimately, however, such adjustments may well have the effect of expanding commercial markets overseas for a wider range of American agricultural products."

Mr. McGovern said he would like to see the U.S. think of the Food for Peace program as a positive instrument of foreign policy.

"When I think of the disposal operation," he said, "I think about this little gadget in our sink at home where we get rid of the garbage and this is not the proper view when we talk about the feeding of human beings who are hungry."

Mr. McGovern likes to tell the story of his first experience with the hungry when he was a bomber pilot with the Fifteenth Air Force in southern Italy.

"At Foggia we used to awaken in the morning to the sounds of Italian housewives out scratching around in the garbage dump behind our squadron area looking for food that they could take home to their children."

Mr. McGovern recalled the memory of Italian children tugging at his trousers in a plea for chocolate that was not a luxury but something to answer their need for food.

Food and peace, he said, are two of the most precious words in our vocabulary. There is no peace in a world of hungry people. Economic and physical foundations are what peace depends upon.

In his new job as director of the administration's Food for Peace program Mr. McGovern went to Brazil and Argentina on a mission aimed at doing something about hunger. He recalled seeing a family with seven or eight children in Brazil. They were eating dried cereal because it was the only food in their hut. Two of the children had measles, with little chance of survival because they were so undernourished.

Mr. McGovern also visited a village in which the life span averaged 30 years.

To meet that kind of challenge, he said, we have Food for Peace.

Khrushchev Wanted Secret

Mr. McGovern, a former Iowa Congressman, said when Khrushchev visited Iowa he wanted to know the secret of the amazing productivity of the farmers. He asked no questions about the surplus.

Instead of looking at our surplus as a burden, Mr. McGovern said, quoting President Kennedy, let us look at it as an opportunity to meet one of our most serious problems—hunger. Let us move toward a positive use of abundance.

Asked about the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's Freedom from Hunger campaign, Mr. McGovern said he had met with Dr. B. R. Sen, FAO's director-general. The U.S. Food for Peace program should not be limited by



AMERICA'S ABUNDANCE—Combines harvest a bumper wheat crop in Nebraska. The United States could have a complete failure of wheat harvests for a year and still eat.

the FAO campaign but should give it more thrust, he said.

The FAO Council is considering methods by which present programs for moving surplus food can be improved. At the request of the U.S. delegation, the UN is studying what new techniques can be developed to add to the use of surpluses. FAO findings and recommendations are to be reported to the UN Economic and Social Council in June, 1961.

The Food for Peace Committee said the U.S. is not producing enough oils and fats, meats, butter, non-fat milk, soy beans, peas and other agricultural commodities aside from grains to sustain adequate diets either for our needy at home or for the needy abroad.

"To realize the aim of putting U.S. agricultural capacity to the fullest use to meet human needs and at the same time secure a fair return to the farmer," the committee said, "it will be necessary to bring about shifts in production from wheat and corn into the oils and fats and protein foods needed for a nutritional diet."

The feeding and clothing of the U.S. needy has priority over any overseas program. The program to assist those in economically distressed areas of the U.S. is being carried out by administrative action under existing law, although in some cases new interpretation of the law may be required.

Appropriations to carry out the provisions of Public Law 480 (the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954) are due to come before the present session of Congress. Some of the law's most important financial authorizations expire on Dec. 31, 1961.

The Food for Peace Committee recommends a thorough revision of PL480 "to transform it from a surplus disposal act to a Food for Peace Act." Among the committee's recommendations for the revised law is authorization to the President to use or dispose of foreign inconvertible local currencies accruing to the U.S. under PL 480 operations.

"The steady accumulation of large amounts of inconvertible foreign currencies (allowed by Title I for purchase of commodities) is placing great and increasing burdens on the United States foreign relations and holds potentialities which are highly dangerous," the committee said.

"It is important for the Government, the Congress and the American people to recognize that these local currencies are assets that are usable only in the countries of issue, with the agreement of the countries of issue; that they are not substitutes for dollars; and that they should not be subjected to the appropriations process."

The Food for Peace program is a co-operative effort of a number of agencies, chief among them the Department of Agriculture, the Department of State and the International Cooperation Administration. The Export-Import Bank and the Development Loan Fund also are involved.

Mr. McGovern is charged with planning and coordinating the program. He reports directly to President Kennedy.

• Science News Letter, 79:266 April 29, 1961

GEOPHYSICS

World-Wide Haze Found In Upper Atmosphere

▶ A WORLD-WIDE layer of "haze" in the upper atmosphere has been discovered by U. S. Air Force scientists.

The three-mile thick shell completely surrounds the earth about 11 miles out in space, Dr. C. E. Junge, C. W. Chagnon, and J. E. Manson of the Geophysics Research Directorate, Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratories, reported in Washington, D. C. The layer probably explains certain atmospheric effects observed during twilight hours.

The "hazy" layer was measured for the first time when balloons and aircraft sent aloft for atomic fallout studies collected air samples that contained an unusual concentration of particles at certain altitudes.

The particles were mostly ammonium sulfate crystals with some silicon and iron. Scientists believe the crystals form when gases such as hydrogen sulfide or sulfur dioxide drift upward into the upper atmosphere and are chemically changed by the bright sunlight of ozone, a form of oxygen.

Microscopic meteorites entering the atmosphere probably add to the silicon and iron impurities, the scientists stated.

The layer could produce the so-called "purple light" seen during twilight just after sunset or before sunrise. The hazy layer would scatter the fading rays of light to produce the atmospheric quirk.

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IMMUNOLOGY

Radioactive Tracers Reveal Life Processes

▶ RADIATION is revealing important knowledge about life processes.

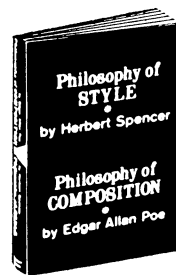
It is being used with great success in studying how bacterial cells make proteins. Proteins or enzymes are the chemical machines that set in motion all the many processes occurring in living cells. They are responsible for converting food into energy and new cell substance.

Dr. G. David Novelli, biology division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tenn., told the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy that the use of radioactive tracers have revealed how a specific protein is formed.

Proteins are large molecules built of 20 different building blocks called amino acids. The sequence of arrangement of amino acids in a given protein is very exact. Radioactive carbon-14 was the tracer used to label amino acids to study the manner by which cells arrange their sequence.

Radioisotopes also have been used in the study of the phenomenon of immunization. These studies, described by Dr. Frank J. Dixon, chairman of department of pathology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, investigate how antigens, foreign substances, react in an individual to develop immunity.

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