FOOD FOR FREEDOM
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FOOD FOR FREEDOM WEEKLY NEWS RELEASE #62

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CONCERNING FOOD AND INTERNATIONAL RELIEF: SUMMARY OF MAJOR ISSUES AHEAD

Critical issues in the world food situation arise so rapidly and the actual situation alters so radically, any summary of major issues ahead is apt to be highly misleading unless defined in very general terms. It is increasingly clear that food and relief policies cannot be considered apart from other basic economic, social and political problems. National and world food policies are bound to become more and more interdependent.

The emergency of the war and immediate postwar period has brought to the fore consumer needs and the rightful place of primarily consumer nations on international food agencies such as the International Wheat Council. Today food policies are still far too often dictated by profits, consequently hunger persists. Tomorrow perhaps food production will be primarily geared to man's needs for more food and better foods. At any rate considerable progress is being made in that direction.

The United Nations Every American community ought to have an active UN discussion group which could help its community to keep informed about rapidly expanding UN developments. These groups may well be part of the activities of existing national or local organizations. Their effectiveness will depend on community leadership. Far too little is known in the grass roots or by the public at large about the UN and its many permanent or temporary agencies. Our hopes for lasting peace and prosperity center on the UN.

The newspapers in America, with a few very outstanding exceptions, grant only the briefest coverage to the activities of the UN. This lack is somewhat filled by the excellent job done by several of the country's leading columnists. Most Americans, however, acquire their knowledge of international events through the radio. Therefore radio commentators, news broadcasters and group discussions on the air must be largely depended upon to keep Americans informed about world developments. Urge your local radio stations to carry such programs.

The Assembly of the UN, its Economic and Social Council, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the proposed PTO, and numerous other agencies, such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, will all have important responsibilities affecting food. Collective security in a military sense may still seem far distant but the only solution for the world's food problems is by collective action. Very considerable strides have been made towards this goal in two short years under UN.

The FAO Very few Americans know what the letters FAO signify. Yet tremendous progress already has been made by that first permanent agency of the UN. One of its major responsibilities is to stimulate the governments of its member nations (now 47) to improve the standards of living of their populations. The work of FAO will actually benefit all nations and eventually improve the well-being of mankind. Sir John Orr, its Director General, believes in getting down to brass tacks. He believes in doing everything possible to promote action. The FAO is an advisory body and as
such must depend on a considerable degree of popular understanding to get the necessary collective action by governments. The following list gives a current survey of its major activities.

1) It has developed plans for a World Food Council (reported in some detail in our Release #60). This will probably be adopted in spite of the fact that the Executive Committee of FAO has not been too enthusiastic about being superseded!

2) Today the FAO is opening an International Timber Conference in Prague. Forestry is one of FAO's provinces. Housing is one of the world's great shortages. Vast amounts of lumber are urgently needed. After a world survey the FAO hopes to help open up untapped sources—especially in Latin America.

3) On May 15 representatives of the 8 major rice producing countries and five other interested governments are meeting at Travancore, India. There is at present a greater shortage of rice than any other staple food.

4) Fishing is perhaps the oldest and most underdeveloped industry. There is a world scarcity of proteins. Much could be done to develop methods and markets for greater use of sea food. A preliminary Conference is to be held soon to agree on common terms and methods of classifying equipment etc., in order to attempt for the first time a world census of fisheries. An International Fisheries Conference is planned for 1950.

5) Although the FAO is making every three months a general survey of the world food situation, it is expecting to undertake in 1950 a much more comprehensive World Census of Agriculture.

6) The fact finding and allocating of scarce foods by the International Emergency Food Council has been financed entirely by the FAO. The IEC0 released last week a report on far-reaching actions by Governments to cope with current food shortages. The IEC0 has demonstrated the mutual benefits of collective planning and cooperative action in the food field.

7) The Polish Government has just invited the FAO to send a mission of agricultural and economic experts to recommend reorganization of Polish agriculture. The revised boundaries of Poland have altered its economy greatly.

8) While the Greek Government has not yet requested the UN Commission recommended by the FAO Mission to Greece, when conditions are more stabilized the FAO report is expected to be the basis for much of the economic reconstruction with US aid.

9) Highest caliber Regional Advisors with regional offices and technical specialists are being selected for the following 5 major areas: China, Europe, India, Latin America and the Middle East. Other areas may be organized later.

10) An International Animal Health Conference has just been held to spread knowledge of controls and to work out educational programs by governments to stop the hoof and mouth and other diseases.


12) The FAO expects to set up soon a long range plan for rural welfare to encourage the creation of a kind of extension service which would teach modern agricultural practices to farmers in backward countries.

Further information about the FAO and monthly bulletins may be obtained from the FAO Information Service Division, 2000 Mass. Ave., Wash. 6, D.C.
Proposed International Trade Organization. The major purpose of the ITO is to stimulate orderly expansion of world trade. The enormous increase in American industrial and agricultural production must find enlarged markets overseas, where these goods are urgently needed to expedite world recovery and an increased standard of living. The reciprocal reduction of tariffs and quota systems is a first step in this direction.

The ITO will, if created as planned, have a very definite influence on the movement of food in world trade through its Commodity Councils. International commodity agreements under its supervision for a limited number of staple foods are in our opinion essential to protect the interests of both producer and consumer and to guard against recurrent famines. The first of these is on wheat, apparently reaching successful solutions in London although the Argentine refuses to cooperate.

US Agricultural Policies. The producers, processors and distributors of food have in peace time traditionally controlled the policies of the US Department of Agriculture. It has been called the "captive" of the "farm block". The food and agricultural policies of our nation have frequently been dictated by the food trade through Congress which can cut down appropriations requested by the Department. Even during the war when the tremendous need for food to help feed the countries to be liberated was self-evident and in spite of President Roosevelt's concise directive to the War Food Administrator that ample food reserves should be built up for this purpose, certain key department officials (in private life leaders in the food trade) saw to it that a policy of scarcity was followed.

Early in 1942 when much of the world was facing famine certain officials of the Department slowed down the procurement of supplies for UNRRA until Food For Freedom exposed the situation to the President and to the public. Food became of such strategic importance that a special Cabinet Committee on World Food Programs was created by President Truman. This committee and the appointment of a coordinator of Emergency Export Programs have been largely responsible for the amazingly large shipments of coal and grain from the US this year.

The reason for recalling here the past influence of the food trade and its "scarcity policy" to keep prices and profits high is to urge public spirited citizens and organizations to beware of a return by the Department to those short-sighted policies.

The Secretary of Agriculture last week proposed to Congress a long range agricultural program of continued high production goals of basic foods. Mr. Anderson most courageously recommended a very drastic revision of agricultural policies—in bad times the Government would boost the buying power of the poor rather than pay farmers to produce less. This plan, which the Secretary briefly outlined, closely resembles the Food Allotment Program S.131, reintroduced by Senator Aiken (R. Vt.) last January. Food For Freedom strongly endorses such a plan to improve the diets of low income groups and at the same time assist American farmers by sustaining their domestic markets.

Although most people think of American agriculture as based on free enterprise, it is really in part subsidized and is controlled by more legislative regulations than any other industry. Many of these necessary provisions were enacted at the request of the big farm organizations to protect the farmer. Until 1942 the government offers 90 percent of parity for major crops limited by production goals. Since 1938 basic legislation guarantees loans on wheat, corn, peanuts, cotton and tobacco, if produced within agricultural goals, at varying rates from 50 to 75 percent of parity. Up to now few attempts, with the exception of fluid milk regulations, have been made by the Department of Agriculture to protect the interest of consumers. It is most encouraging that the Secretary of Agriculture has made to Congress these far reaching proposals which would help the less privileged groups. A great deal of public support will be needed to overcome traditional-conservative thinking on this subject.
US retail food prices have risen 31 percent in the past ten months. This has reduced the unit volume (not dollar value) of food sold roughly 8 percent below last year. For example, after the 30 percent jackup in the price of milk, fluid milk consumption dropped 10 to 15 percent. More than half the families in the US are living on less than $2000. These families have to spend about 40 percent of their budget on food. Because of high prices the standard of living of tens of millions of Americans has been sharply reduced during the past ten months.

The US Government on becoming a member of the FAO agreed "to raise the levels of nutrition and the standards of living of its people". The School Lunch Program is as yet the only nation-wide project for that purpose in the US. This school year the states spent $2.18 for every dollar the Federal Government contributed to the project. There is great danger Congress may not appropriate for next year even this year's $75 million (which required a deficit appropriation). Fully $110 million is required for next year to keep up with the rapidly increasing need for school lunches to compensate for the food American children do not get at home.

As long as there are shortages in the world's supply of basic foods some export-import controls should be retained to assure a fair share of these foods through allocation to the needy countries. The Second War Powers Act expires on June 30, 1947. Limited extension of this Act is emphatically necessary.

International Relief

UNRRA is rapidly ending its work in Europe. Its principal remaining task there being the care of refugees. The International Refugee Organization is stalled until Congress authorizes an appropriation for our share of this UN responsibility. UNRRA's delivery of supplies to China will continue for several months. It is slowly becoming more widely recognized that in spite of overwhelming obstacles, campaigns of criticism and inevitable mistakes, UNRRA carried out a stupendous job most creditably.

The International Children's Emergency Fund is the one remaining joint international relief undertaking. It must first obtain appropriations by governments. If the One Day's Pay Plan is successful (outlined in the supplement to our Release #57), the ICNF can help more hungry children. When individual contributions are requested, we are confident Americans will respond most generously.

The $350 million Post-UNRRA Relief from the US to 5 European countries and China and the $400 million aid to Greece and Turkey (the latter primarily military) are instances of bilateral intergovernmental assistance. Canada and certain other countries have indicated their willingness to assist peoples in distress.

The many voluntary agencies conducting relief overseas should be given maximum support especially during this post-UNRRA period. Packages sent through CARE and by individuals brighten the lives of millions.

Adequate food and decent living standards lead the way to peace and freedom. Through collective and cooperative action the citizens of the world can and should see to it that hunger, destitution and war are forever banished. That was the meaning and the purpose of Food For Freedom.