

## U.S. STOCKPILE DANGEROUSLY LOW

### Wheat Weighs in Diplomacy

After President Johnson spoke alongside a wheat barge during a nationally televised mid-summer visit to Omaha, Neb., he took his party and the viewers aboard the vessel. The cargo of wheat was destined for India. It was a dramatic and tacit acknowledgement that the world's oldest grain was still a weapon of diplomacy.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey meanwhile sounded the alarm that Russia was seeking to corner the world wheat market by buying up surpluses, having just completed the biggest wheat deal in history in the purchase of 336 million bushels from Canada.

Two leading contenders for wheat among the hungry nations of the world are India and Egypt. They will take it either from the United States or Russia, or both.

Egypt, once the "breadbasket" of ancient Greece and Rome, is now an importer. With a population increase of 3 per cent each year, the demand from hungry mouths must be met. Much the same applies to the teeming millions in India who are suffering from malnutrition and die on the streets from starvation.

The largest producer of wheat in the world is the Soviet Union, whose 2.4 billion bushels are more than double United States output, ranked second. We supplied 755,000 tons of wheat and flour to Egypt this year, but we have refused to renew the agreement be-

cause Egypt trades with North Vietnam and thus comes under the ban imposed by the Food for Peace Act of 1966.

Yet strange State Department mental gymnastics have ruled Yugoslavia is not aiding North Vietnam, and therefore is entitled to wheat this year.

India needs about 11 million tons of grain a year from abroad. The United States supplied eight million tons this year. Now Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman suggests that Russia and America might join hands over supplies to India.

This, it should be noted, is the same official who in June was considering boosting our wheat acreage to provide an extra surplus to send to Russia.

A significant factor in the commodity power politics is our own national reserve. Mr. Humphrey in July put the "minimum desirable level" of our stockpile at 600 million bushels. Mr. Freeman admitted this week that the estimated reserve at the end of the current crop year would be between 350 million and 400 million bushels. He said this was close to "hazardous."

Wheat as a bargaining power in diplomacy can only be effective as long as you have enough to bargain with. Obviously we are dangerously close to the stage where we are placing our internal needs in jeopardy and leaving ourselves no aces in the game of international poker.

'A Fire Has Been Brought to My Attention.



HENRY J. TAYLOR SAYS:

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