

National Potato Letter

Spud Surplus Depends Now On Imports; Legislation On Spuds Still Up In Air

By A. L. FitzSimmons

Size of the potato surplus from the 1949 crop depends upon the extent to which imports may or may not be controlled. If there are no Canadian imports during the 1949-50 marketing season, surplus will likely run no more than 26 million bushels. With imports equal to those of the past season, the surplus for price support purposes would be approximately 36 million bushels.

Even at the 36 million bushel level, price support operations should entail only about one-fourth as much tonnage as the 133 million bushels the department of agriculture bought from the 1948 crop, and would mean the expenditure of probably not more than one-fifth as much money as was required for the 1948-49 price support program.

Crop prospects in New Jersey appear to have improved but little since the end of the severe drought. New Jersey Cobblers are all dead, but Katahdins have been expected to recover.

Current reports indicate, however, that some Katahdins are developing sprouts and a second-growth set of tubers. In addition, market gossip presents considerable doubt as to the carrying quality of the crop.

New Jersey really is having a bad time. This condition may extend to some areas in Long Island although the Island has considerable irrigation which will assure a better average crop than will be harvested in New Jersey.

Potato Legislation
Keeping up with congressional gyrations affecting potatoes is worse than difficult. The house killed the Aiken act, substituting the Gore extension of 1949 support, and refused to consider any part of the Branman plan.

In the senate, major support still favors a modified Aiken act for 1950. Several senators frankly state that they would prefer to have no new price support legislation until congress returns in 1950.

New development this week has been introduction of a house bill by

Representative Pace of Georgia. This bill seeks to amend the agricultural act of 1938 so as to include potatoes in the list of basic commodities.

Should this latest Pace bill be passed, potatoes would be subject to marketing quotas and the same penalties now applied to the other basic crops. Moreover, and this seems to us particularly important and likely to be overlooked—the bill includes the precise percentages of the national acreage goal to be assigned to each state, without provision for recognition of trends.

Variations in the state percentages of the total acreage would be allowed only in the event of substantial under planting in a state for two successive years as a result of "other than unusual conditions."

We doubt that the department of agriculture will approve of such a policy, as potato acreage never has been static. Department of agriculture is not likely to protest, however, as passage of the bill would end the increasing inter-state bickering over the goal formula.

Miscellaneous
Pennsylvania soon will start rigid enforcement of its state branding law, which requires that closed packages of potatoes be grade-marked and up to grade. Tops of the pack also must be representative of the whole package.

Such a move would protect consumers and honest packers and distributors against many undesirable practices.

Ontario, Canada, has adopted a new crop marketing scheme much like our marketing agreements in the United States. It involves sales

quotas and minimum size requirements.

A recent news item describes a new potato variety which should be dug in the late afternoon, cooled overnight to set the skin, and picked up in the early morning. To our positive knowledge, the department of agriculture was advising hot weather growers to follow such a method ten years ago.

Department of agriculture will insist on correct branding of surplus purchases. Bags do not have to be branded, but if they are, the contents must match the grade markings.

Hearing on the results of the California early agreement referendum should be held soon. The referendum was completed June 30.

Price support purchases to date from the 1949 crop, now total 6.1 million bushels—around one-third as many potatoes as were bought to this time last year.

Chertsey Abbey in England was once decorated with clay tiles on which the romance of Tristan and Isolde was portrayed.

Military Pay Boost Matter To Be Heard

WASHINGTON, Aug. 4 (AP)—Majority Leader Lucas (D-Ill.) said Wednesday the senate will consider a house-approved pay boost for the military services before the present session ends.

"I am certain the military pay bill will come up for action but I can't say when that will be," Lucas told a reporter.

Chairman Tydings (D-Md.) of

the senate armed services committee also has pledged action on the measure, which would raise the pay of most of the 1,600,000 officers and men and women in the uniformed services.

Previously Tydings had questioned senate action until both the house and senate agreed upon a ratification measure that now lacks only President Truman's signature.

Senator Knowland (R-Calif.), a member of the armed services committee, told a reporter he expects the senate to "pass the bill unless they start loading it down with amendments."

Some senators have threatened to attach pay boosts for civilian

government employees to the military bill.

As passed by the house the measure would add an estimated \$302,000,000 to annual pay for the services, although the first year costs would be about \$273,000,000.

The pay boosts would go to the uniformed personnel of the army, navy, air force, marines, coast guard, coast and geodetic survey and public health service.

Cattlemen To Tour Rangeland

BAKER, Aug. 4 (AP)—Cattlemen from Wallawa, Union and Baker counties begin a tri-county range

tour here Monday with an early breakfast party.

The tour sponsored by the State Cattlemen's association, will take members through Baker valley, the Powder river region, Richland, Eagle and East Eagle creeks and to Union and through Ponderosa.

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