Science in the News

Food Additive Law Goes into Effect; Discussion Scheduled

The controversial and confusing chemical additives amendment to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, partly in effect for a year, became fully effective on 6 March. The amendment is the first food-law provision specifically to cover the flavors, nutrients, preservatives, and emulsifiers that are put into foods for various purposes. It also deals with traces of container linings, bits of food-processing machinery, and inks on food packages that might get into foods accidentally.

Much of the confusion associated with the amendment arises from uncertainty over (i) which of the more than 1000 chemicals now used in foods are under the jurisdiction of the new law, (ii) who is to assume responsibility for satisfying the government's demands, and (iii) precisely how those demands are to be satisfied. As the law goes into force, only six chemicals have been formally classified by the Food and Drug Administration as food additives. As such, they are subject to control under the additives amendment.

Some 500 other chemicals have been exempted from federal regulation, being "generally recognized as safe" by qualified experts. Another 155 have been proposed for this exempt status, but no decision on them has been made.

As a recent *New York Times* article pointed out, this leaves hundreds of other chemicals in foods still unclassified. These are neither subject to Food and Drug regulation as food additives nor accepted as safe by the experts and thus exempt from the new regulation. The Food and Drug Administration could demand the withdrawal from the market of all foods containing such chemicals; however, agency officials have indicated that no such action is contemplated, except possibly in a few cases where there is reason to question the harmlessness of the chemicals.

Industry will be given a year in which to satisfy the laboratory-test requirements of the new law with regard to the unclassified chemicals. Because the necessary tests are so expensive, it is reported that competitors in some food and chemical industries have joined in cooperative research programs.

President Asks for Clarification

The seriousness of the food additive problem is indicated by a recent Presidential request for reports on "certain aspects of the use of chemicals and drugs as food additives" from scientists of three government agencies—the Department of Agriculture; the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and the Science Advisory Committee.

Missouri Symposium Scheduled

To help clarify the issue, a timely discussion of food additives has been scheduled for 27 April at the University of Missouri. Is it dangerous to eat meat or poultry when the animals have been injected with certain hormones or antibiotics? Is it likely that anyone would have contracted cancer from eating cranberries sprayed with certain chemicals? What is the truth about some of the artificial coloring or flavoring used on food products for human consumption?

These are just some of the questions which may be discussed at the symposium on additives and residues in human foods, which is sponsored by the university's School of Medicine, and which is open to all interested persons. The meeting will bring together outstanding authorities to provide a complete background of information against which to weigh the controversies over possible contamination of foods by chemicals. The symposium will be directed by Thomas D. Luckey, professor and chairman of the department of biochemistry in the School of Medicine.

Speakers and their topics will include: H. R. Bird, professor of poultry husbandry at the University of Wisconsin, "Additives and Residues in Foods of Animal Origin"; Robert N. Goodman, associate professor of horticulture at the University of Missouri, "Additives and Residues in Foods of Plant Origin"; John F. MaHoney of Rahway, N.J., an official of Merck, Sharp and Dohme Chemicals, "The Manufacturer's Viewpoint of Additives and Residues"; Paul L. Day of Washington, D.C., scientific director of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "Government View of Additives and Residues"; and Julius M. Coon, professor of pharmacology at the Jefferson School of Medicine, Philadelphia, Pa., "Medical View of Additives and Residues."

Robert L. Jackson, professor and chairman of the department of pediatrics in the University of Missouri School of Medicine, will serve as moderator of the panel discussion.

U.S.S.R. Sets Up Free University for the Developing Nations

The Soviet Government has announced that a Friendship of Nations University is being established in Moscow for Asian, African, and Latin-American students. A 4-year course will be offered by all faculties except that for medical science: The course in medical science will require 5 years.

In addition, the university will have a preparatory department offering training of from 1 to 3 years for young people not yet ready to enroll in the university proper. Students in this department will study the Russian language and general subjects required for enrollment in the university. The duration of the program for students in the preparatory department will be determined by the extent of their general education.

Free Tuition, Maintenance, and Travel

It is expected that 500 students will be enrolled in 1960, and that in subsequent years the enrollment will increase to 3000 or 4000. Tuition in the Friendship of Nations University will be free. All students will receive scholarships, free medical services, and dormitory accommodations. The students' fares to Moscow and back will be paid by the university. The necessary textbooks and study guides for the university students will be published in Russian and in the respective languages of the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The Friendship of Nations University will be under the direction of a university council, which will consist of representatives of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cul-