

the 10-million-acre leasing program.)

The Senate has already passed a bill authored by Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Interior Committee, that could put some crimps in Interior's long-term intentions, if not on the 1975 plan. Passed on 18 September by a vote of 64 to 23, the bill (S. 3221)—an amendment to the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act of 1953—would require the Secretary of the Interior to concoct a 10-year leasing plan. The plan, which would have to be reviewed and revised annually, would, among other things, have to indicate the size,

timing, and location of proposed leasing activity over the decade. All leasing after the beginning of 1978 would have to conform to the plan. The bill calls for a variety of additional mapping and surveying programs by the government and for establishing a liability fund for oil spills and a "coastal states fund" to reimburse states that are "impacted" economically and environmentally by offshore development. Government officials testified against the bill, saying it duplicated many actions already in progress, that annual review of the plan was a nuisance, and that the coastal

fund would siphon off badly needed oil revenues from the U.S. Treasury. Environmentalists objected on other grounds—that the bill did not regulate leasing until 1978 and that the publicized surveys would be useless because they would not be allowed to contain proprietary data purchased by the government from industry.

More immediately related to the plan is the hefty draft environmental impact statement on it that is now making the rounds of government agencies. Comments on the statement are yet to be forthcoming, but Bruce Blanchard of

Briefing

Dietary Morality

Children told to clean their plates for the sake of the starving millions in Asia may be comforted to hear adults confronted with an equivalent version of the confusing reproof. Agricultural expert Lester R. Brown wants Americans to eschew beef, switch to a semivegetarian diet, and quit using fertilizer on their cemeteries and golf courses.

Such actions to help global food needs should be part of the U.S. proposals at this month's World Food Conference, Brown believes. For Americans to simplify their diet and reduce waste would free world food resources and hold prices lower for the poor and hungry in other countries, Brown argues in a new book.*

Brown's nostrum does not find favor with the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the Department of Agriculture. For citizens of rich countries to eat less, a new ERS world food study contends, would not transfer food to the malnourished; even if such abnegation lowered prices, it would also reduce farmers' incentive to produce. (The ERS study was summarized in the *Washington Post* but has not yet been officially released.)

Whereas Brown calls for "a dramatic increase" in support for increasing poor countries' food production, the ERS predicts a surplus of supply over demand for the next decade.

Demand, in the ERS's vocabulary, refers to ability to pay, not hunger, and Brown is quick to point out that poor countries may be priced out of the

world food market. While this may be so, the ERS's forecasts at least imply that massive outbreaks of famine are not round the corner. World food supply does seem perilous—and Brown is expert and articulate in describing all the things that have gone and could go wrong—but the ERS, which has been trotting out essentially the same forecast for 10 years or more, has a long record of being right.—N.W.

Plagiarism and Piracy

Should scientists' applications for grants be secret? The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) says they should be, on the grounds that like a trade secret, they contain information of potential use to a competitor, and trade secrets are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

This position recently suffered a crushing blow in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. "The government has been at some pains to argue that biomedical researchers are really a mean-spirited lot who pursue self-interest as ruthlessly as the Barbary pirates did in their own chosen field," the court observed.

"Whether this is the sad truth," the opinion continued, "or whether, as appellee suggests, 'secrecy is antithetical to the philosophical values of science,' is not, however, an issue in this case. . . . It is clear enough that a noncommercial scientist's research design is not literally a trade secret or item of commercial information, for it defies common sense to pretend that the scientists

are engaged in trade or commerce."

The ruling, which HEW may well decide to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, rips away the veil of secrecy from the peer review system but leaves it with at least a fig leaf. The suit in question, brought by the Children's Defense Fund against the National Institute of Mental Health, refers only to 11 NIMH applications that have already been funded. Though the court held that the applications are not trade secrets—one of the nine exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act—it also ruled that the "pink sheets" (the summary of the peer review group's views and recommendations) may be withheld from public inspection under another of the nine exemptions which allows "inter- or intraagency memoranda" to remain secret.

It is not at all clear how this two-edged ruling will affect the activities of study sections. Hitherto these meetings have been closed by invoking the trade secrets exemption of the act. Since this contention would now seem to be invalid, HEW may have to grasp at the fig leaf left it by the court and argue that since the pink sheets are exempt, the discussions they embody should also be protected from the public gaze.

The Children's Defense Fund, a part of the Washington Research Project, Inc., sought access to the applications in order to investigate the ethics of the experiments in question, most of them to do with the treatment of hyperactive children. William C. Smith, of the Fund, believes that "it is essential for researchers to be held accountable, and the research process has to be something other than the closed society which it is now."—N.W.

* *By Bread Alone*, Lester R. Brown with Erik P. Eckholm. Praeger, New York, 1974. \$3.95.