

Chemicals Introduced in Foods

Food and Nutrition Section

✱ The Committee on Chemicals Introduced in Foods was established by the Food and Nutrition Section in 1948. In that year, and again in 1953, a symposium was arranged on this subject and presented at the Annual Meeting of the APHA. All of the papers presented at the 1953 session have been published in condensed form in the August, 1954, issue of the American Journal of Public Health. Reports to the Section members have been made each year and in this, the report for 1954, we believe it is worth while to summarize in the briefest manner the developments since the committee was established a little more than six years ago.

This committee early recommended that legislation be developed to require an orderly consideration by scientific experts and approval before use of chemical additives to foods. This recommendation was approved by the Section, and by vote of the Governing Council it became the official position of the American Public Health Association. That attitude now appears to be widely appreciated. Important segments of the food industry have stated as their considered opinion that the federal law should be modified to provide adequate authority for the Food and Drug Administration to control the addition of unusual substances to nonstandardized foods. The food and chemical businesses in large measure have come to view as a necessary business expense the cost of adequate testing of newly proposed ingredients of foods. Increased attention to experimental studies on the health

aspects of chemicals is being given by manufacturers on their own initiative.

In 1950 the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council established its Committee on Food Protection. In 1950–1952 a Select Committee of the U. S. House of Representatives studied and reported to the Congress its findings and recommendations on the subject of chemicals in foods.

In all of these activities members of this committee have been active. The committee's objective, which is to maintain the integrity of our food supply—its wholesomeness, adequacy, and economy—by orderly and scientific evaluation of additives, has come to be generally accepted.

During the past year the Congress has given some consideration to several bills on the general subject of food additives. One bill which deals with pesticidal residues on raw agricultural commodities has been enacted into law. This law, Public Law No. 518 of the 83rd Congress, became part of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act on July 22, 1954, although not all of its provisions will become effective until one year later. Its provisions were designed to simplify and to facilitate the control of pesticidal chemical additives; these are defined as economic poisons used in the production, storage, or transportation of raw agricultural commodities. It places in the U. S. Department of Agriculture the con-

Report of the chairman of the Committee on Chemicals Introduced in Foods.

Organized in 1948. Published reports: Year Books, 1949–1950; 1950–1951; 1951–1952.

sideration of questions of usefulness of new pesticides and in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the consideration of questions of the possible public health significance of pesticidal residues in or on foods.

Proponents of the use of new pesticides are required to present scientific evidence on the basis of which tolerances may be established. Provision is made for calling upon the National Academy of Sciences to establish an advisory committee of experts to report and make recommendations. In establishing tolerances the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare is specifically charged to give appropriate consideration to "the necessity for the production of an adequate, wholesome, and economical food supply." This new chapter of the law contains many features of wide influence, and it will be of interest to observe how they operate in the control of this phase of the problem of food additives.

There still remain for congressional consideration measures that will provide more adequate control of substances which are purposely incorporated into foods. There is probably no need to state that no manufacturer would want to add to foods any substance, however useful, which is known to be harmful or deleterious. There may be, however, differences of opinion about the interpretation of scientific data, or there may be insufficient data available to permit the drawing of a valid conclusion. These are practical matters. They point up the necessity for the establishment of a more orderly procedure than now exists for the consideration of the health aspects of

new additives; as matters stand, the cautious food manufacturer may be at a sales disadvantage.

The importance of the Food and Drug Administration to have an adequate staff of trained personnel with facilities that are necessary for efficient work is a topic that perhaps is outside the scope of this committee. It may well be mentioned, however, in view of the action by the Congress to give more responsibilities to the Food and Drug Administration, while at the same time the annual budget of this agency is cut below the figure recommended by the Bureau of the Budget. This has happened for two successive years.

The committee believes that the Committee on Chemicals Introduced in Foods should be continued and so recommends. There continues to be a need for an established body within the structure of the American Public Health Association for the consideration of the public health aspects of this field in which important questions still remain to be resolved. Some changes in the committee are no doubt desirable and are being recommended in a separate memorandum to the officers of the Food and Nutrition Section.

In closing this report the chairman wishes to acknowledge the help of each committee member, as well as the encouragement and assistance of all officers of the Section, past and present, and of the Association, in carrying out the tasks which were assigned six years ago.

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