

Tie-up Could Cause Food Shortage

By Jack Anderson

The oil shortage could be compounded this year by a food shortage, because food stocks have dropped to the lowest level in 20 years.

All it would take would be minor crop failures or transportation tieups to cause basic foods to start disappearing from the supermarket shelves.

Agriculture Department sources have told us the nation would be in "awful shape" for food if the delicate food delivery system should be fouled up.

The supplies of corn, potatoes, peas, dried beans, canned peaches, pears and cherries have hit bottom. Cheese and butter supplies are low.

To strengthen the dollar abroad, the government has been exporting grains as fast as the farmer can grow them. Grain stocks are now so low that legislation has been introduced in the Senate to establish a national reserve system.

The meat outlook isn't much better. "A two-week tie-up in the transportation system could cause serious meat shortages," an Agriculture Department expert told us. "The meat delivery system has only about a four to five day flexibility. After that, the shelves would start looking bare."

The few temporary shortages of 1973 have made the consumers wary. Many of them, apparently, have been stocking their pantries with canned goods. A surge in the demand for canned goods has exacerbated the tight supply situation.

Transportation foul-ups are not uncommon. A few weeks ago, chain stores had to rely on their own reserves for a few days because of transportation problems. A more troublesome tie-up could cause serious shortages.

What is needed, the experts say, is a national system of food delivery planning. None now exists, leaving the populace at the mercy of the fluctuating marketplace.

Footnote: There is even a shortage of raisins, because wine makers are buying up the grapes to keep up with the growing demand for distilled spirits.

Nixon's Whipping Boy—Speaker Carl Albert has warned his Democratic colleagues behind closed doors that President Nixon will use Congress as a "whipping boy."

Albert's warning came after House Majority Leader Thomas O'Neill (D-Mass.) finished reciting the issues confronting Congress. He neglected to mention impeachment, which brought

Rep. Jerry Waldie (D-Calif.) to his feet. Impeachment was "very important," protested Waldie.

Later, the Speaker told about his association with Mr. Nixon since they came to Congress together in 1947. Albert said the President "always needed a whipping boy." As a Member of Congress, Mr. Nixon always blamed the President, recalled Albert. Now, said the Speaker, the President will try to blame Congress for everything that goes wrong.

The bantamweight from Oklahoma received a standing ovation.

Strange Loan—The man appointed by West Virginia's Gov. Arch Moore to stave off the collapse of a \$65 million loan empire has a secret \$26,000 personal interest in the failing firm. He is State Banking Commissioner George Jordan, who borrowed \$26,000 from the Diversified Mountaineer Corp. in 1972.

While other borrowers were paying soaring interest rates, the lucky banking commissioner, who was supervising banks with intimate ties with Diversified, got a bargain 6 per cent loan.

Jordan confirmed to us that he had borrowed the money

from a special loan portfolio kept by Diversified. He said there were rumors other West Virginia officials also had Diversified loans. But he firmly denied any conflict of interest.

Gov. Moore, who appointed Jordan, has praised his excellence and expertise as a banking commissioner. Despite Moore's trust in Jordan, federal Securities and Exchange Commission sleuths have been poking around in Diversified's files. The federal men hope to save the assets of its 25,000 depositors and investors, many of them poor coal miners.

Burr's Bourbon—It was with a song and a stein that the late Rep. Burr Harrison (D-Va.) wanted to be remembered. So he provided money from his estate to ensure that the mourning would be minimal.

After his recent passing, his executor found a handwritten note. It requested that the traditional bar association memorial service be suspended and that his estate provide bourbon for the "next evening debauchery of the gentlemen of the Bar."

Footnote: Harrison also asked doctors to use his body for any medical experiment "which in the future they think might reduce their many past mistakes."

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