

# The Echo

# Improving Minnesota Flax . . .

Flax is really a magic kind of word. It immediately brings to mind the finer things of life; the finest of fabrics, a white painted cottage, a well printed book, sleek well-fed cattle, and in recent years the incomparable cigarette and other fine papers, which are now made from American flax. Something special! Flax immediately stamps its products with the hallmark of quality. To maintain and protect this enviable position of flax and its products, an Ecusta Paper Corporation subsidiary, Central Fibre Corporation, has explored and developed many possibilities, even to the growing and improving of the crop itself.

Undaunted by the deplorable weed patches where farmers tried to raise flax in Minnesota ten years ago, Harry H. Straus, President, saw the great possibilities in clean crops and took steps to do something about it. In 1942 a crop improvement office was established in Minnesota to work with farmers toward better handling of the entire flax crop. Dr. W. W. Brookins, an agronomist at the University of Minnesota, who has been conducting a very successful seed cleaning program in flax with funds supplied by Central Fibre Corporation, was engaged to head up this work.

To make a long story short, cooperative work with many groups, research and demonstrations in the field, and a research program supported at the University of Minnesota brought about a remarkable change. Improved methods of handling the land, in preparation for the crop, developed through these studies are now used on eighty to one hundred percent of the potential flax land in the important flax counties. On the average 85.7% of the farms are using the after harvest weed control called "August plowing" where ten years ago it was a rarity in the flax area. In a cooperative study in 1949 with the Minnesota Weed and Seed Division covering farm use of weed control practices, results in twenty-two counties showed distinct

