

**SENATOR  
SAM ERVIN  
SAYS**



As every North Carolina housewife knows, the price of food has jumped skyhigh recently. The Committee on Government Operations, of which I am Chairman, and the Comptroller General of the United States have independently compiled very detailed hearings and reports on why this rise took place in order to prevent such drastic food price rises from occurring in the future. Both the Committee and the Comptroller General have attributed much of the recent jump in the cost of food to gross mismanagement of the Russian wheat deal by the Department of Agriculture.

I am certainly not against increased U. S. trade with foreign nations. I believe, in the case of U. S.-Russian trade, it could contribute to better relations between the world's two largest powers. Unfortunately, the mismanagement of the Russian wheat deal seriously depleted the supply of grain here at home and the price of wheat and feed grains went up. Therefore, the price of everything related to grain went up and that includes almost all the basic food Americans eat.

After discussing in great detail the mismanagement of the Russian wheat deal, the Comptroller General, a non-partisan, independent investigative office, concluded: "Consumer costs attributed to the (Russian wheat) sales included higher prices for bread and flour-based products, increased prices for beef, pork, poultry, eggs, and dairy products resulting from higher costs for feedgrains, and a severe disruption of transportation facilities with attendant higher costs and shortages or delays in delivering certain supplies."

The facts surrounding the grain deal are as follows: in July and August 1972 wheat sales to Russia by six large American grain companies totaled 440 million bushels valued at about \$700 million. The Russian wheat deal was the largest single wheat sale in history, comprising over 25 percent of annual U. S. wheat production. Much of the wheat sold to the Russians was purchased by the grain companies from U. S. farmers who did not then know of the huge Russian deal, and who sold at prices far below those that would have prevailed had the Russian sale been disclosed.

There is evidence, uncovered by the Senate Government Operations Committee, that the Department of Agriculture knew in early July of the existence and size of the sale by the grain companies to the Russians. The Department apparently felt no obligation to communicate these facts to the American farmer, even though the Agricultural Act of 1954 specifically directs the Department to assist "American farmers...to adjust their operations and practices to meet world conditions." The Comptroller General was equally upset about this failure to tell the American farmer the truth about the grain deal and he stated:

"Although Agriculture has fairly reliable data on general crop conditions and significant changes in worldwide supply and demand, farmers generally were not provided timely in-

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AMS inspectors first open sample jars of peanut butter to check the spread's aroma. Top quality peanut butter smells like freshly roasted peanuts. The inspectors then spread the

formation...to help them make sound decisions."

In other words, the American farmer as well as the consumer suffered at the hands of the Department of Agriculture and the big grain companies.

Furthermore, knowing of the desperate Russian need for large quantities of wheat to cover their own shortages in 1972, and knowing that the U. S. was the only supplier in the world market at that time, the Department assured the grain companies that the U. S. government would continue to pay them a subsidy on every bushel sold to foreign buyers and that such subsidy would continue at current levels indefinitely. Considering the information available to USDA at the time regarding conditions in the world wheat market, the Department's policy of continuing subsidy payments was at best a monumental blunder, a conclusion which is supported by the Comptroller General. Moreover, if the Department knew specifically of the size of the Russian sale, failure to disclose this information and maintaining the subsidy payments resulted in grave injuries to the farmer and the taxpayer. By the time the Department was finally forced by rising wheat prices to phase out the subsidy in late September the cost to the taxpayer was well over \$300 million. The Comptroller General concluded that "...Agriculture should have responded more rapidly to the available information and reduced or eliminated the subsidies sooner."

It is obvious that the American taxpayer, housewife, and farmer are now paying painfully for the mistakes of the Department of Agriculture. With possible sales of grain to the Chinese now in the news, let us hope that the Administration has profited by the lessons of last year.

peanut butter on a clean, white tray to determine its spreadability, and test it under controlled lighting to check its color.

The inspectors compare the peanut butter's color to their standard color guide to assure that the peanut butter has been roasted to the proper medium brown. Too light or too dark a color may mean that the peanut butter will have a bitter, burned or raw flavor. Finally, the inspectors taste the peanut butter to determine if the flavor is clean, fresh, and has the right sugar-salt balance.

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grade shield. Most plants, however, employ their own quality control personnel to evaluate the product and see to it that it meets their specifications, generally based on the USDA quality grade standards.

The great unity which true science seeks is found only by beginning with our knowledge God, and coming down from him along the stream of causation to every fact and event that affects us.—Howard Crosby.

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