

payroll, and erected the processing plant where flax bought by the field crews is decorticated and baled for shipment to Pisgah Forest.

No sooner were these steps announced in early 1973 than attention turned to final details of a long-

planned project to expand Ecusta's capacity for making flax cigarette paper, a move that would pose even higher demands on flax quantity. It was partly in view of this that attention turned to worldwide supplies and a series of events

leading to today's large usage of imported flax; and to manufacturing changes needed to utilize the markedly different fibre.

Domestic flax can go directly into the digesters. Its fibre length is shortened in the decortivating process that removes the woody fibres, or shives, so that no special treatment is needed prior to pulping. The imported flax, on the other hand, is grown mainly for the textile industry. In contrast to domestic flax which is harvested after the seeds are matured, flax for fabric is harvested when the seeds are not fully ripe, but when the fibres are at their best for removal and processing to produce linen thread. After the plants are dried and seeds removed, the fibres have to be dislodged from the woody core of the plant and the pectic gum that holds them together. Called retting, this process involves soaking the plants in chemically treated water. The result is a much longer fibre length that must be cut prior to pulping, such as now takes place in a converted warehouse south of the Pulp Mill. Supplies of foreign flax seem certain to become a way of life.

(more on flax pages 4-11)



A few miles from the Canadian border in this northern Minnesota flax field, Harvey Wheatley explains to Howard Schmidt, left, the importance of the field organization's close identity and cooperation with flax farmers. Once the seed crop is harvested the farmer can make extra money by selling baled flax straw, whether to Ecusta or competitor, but weather conditions and long distances can persuade the farmer to plow the scarce commodity under. This is not likely to happen when there is friendly identity

between farmer and buyer, Wheatley said. The conversation took place during the daylong aerial audit of flax storage areas, down briefly for refueling the plane. Although this flax growth was shorter than usual because of the dry summer, flax crops a short distance west were damaged by the severe flooding of the Red River Valley. Cooler northern weather held back the blooming of flax in this field near Roseau, whereas in South Dakota the masses of violet-blue flowers faded into sky at distant horizon.



No fish tale this, the evidence speaks for itself. Bobby Fullbright, son of Birdean Fullbright of the Endless Belt Department, caught these fish at Camp Straus a few days before the Fourth of July picnic.