

THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

of the United Nations

A new step forward in international co-operation will be taken on October 16 in Quebec City, when the Food and Agriculture Organization, first of the permanent bodies planned by the United Nations, formally comes into existence.

In a world in which the longest distances can be covered in a few hours, the affairs and welfare of each nation are clearly a matter of intimate concern to all the others. Isolationism is as out of date as the economic theories under which it flourished.

Out of a growing awareness of their inter-dependence the United Nations, which learned in war to pool their resources to win a common goal, have resolved to continue their co-operation to build a peaceful and prosperous world. From the pressing and complex problems awaiting them they selected food as the first to be tackled. Out of their preliminary study of the matter, begun two years before the end of the war, has come the Food and Agriculture Organization.

FAO, as it is commonly called, grew out of the idea expressed in the Atlantic Charter, of a peace

"which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want."

The Organization believes that the ideal of "freedom from fear and want" can be realized in fact. It considers that the first step towards freedom from want is freedom from hunger, and this will be its primary aim.

It is not, however, a relief agency, and its business is not with the immediate problem of feeding the hungry millions of the earth--that is the job of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. FAO is a permanent body with a long-range program of increasing world production and utilization of everything that grows. Besides food it will be concerned with fisheries, with forestry and primary forest products, and with such non-food agricultural products as cotton, wool, linen and silk; hemp, jute and other fibres; vegetable oils; hides, skins and furs used in clothing and industry; beverage materials; and tobacco. Its broad aim, in brief, is to promote an economy of abundance throughout the world in the field of food, clothing and shelter obtainable from the soil.

Historical Background

World interest in problems of food and agriculture is not a new thing. In the early years of the century the International Institute of Agriculture was set up in Rome and for nearly 40 years has done valuable work in collecting agricultural statistics and furthering collaboration among the nations in numerous technical agricultural projects.

In the depression years of the 1930's when great surpluses of food were unsaleable while millions went hungry, public attention was drawn to the paradox of want in the midst of plenty. At the same time scientists were demonstrating the profound effects of adequate food on health and the prevention and cure of specific diseases.

In 1935 the League of Nations, the International Institute of Agriculture and the International Labour Organization together undertook work on the relation of nutrition to social, agricultural and economic problems. The League set up two special committees, the Technical Commission to assess human requirements of food and the Mixed Committee to report on the relation of