CONCENTRATES

Industry/Business

Du Pont plastic for beverages

Du Pont is interested in the huge plastics market represented by plastic bottles for soft drinks and beer. The company has set up a joint development program with Continental Can to look into the commercial potential of a new nitrile-based Du Pont resin, NR-16, in the beverage industry. Du Pont will start making the resin this fall at a plant in Montague, Mich. Monsanto has also been working on a nitrile-based resin, Lopac, for this market for some time. Another contender is Barex 210, a high-barrier acrylic developed by Standard Oil (Ohio).

Inflation has hurt U.S. trade

Inflation has been a substantial factor in the loss of U.S. trade competitiveness in recent years, according to the first of a series of Tariff Commission reports on the role of U.S. industries in world markets. The index for U.S. exports of manufactured goods rose 13% between 1965 and 1969—the largest increase for all major industrial countries, except Canada and the U.K. The report adds that the U.S. retains a strong trade position in goods, such as chemicals, that require a high input of R&D spending and personnel.

Economy not yet out of the woods

The U.S. economy will grow steadily this year but it is not yet out of the woods, according to the latest quarterly report of General Electric's business forecasting service. Gross national product will reach $1.142 trillion this year, up 9%. But for next year there are still some uncertainties—broad expansion of consumer spending has yet to come, capital investment upturn remains tentative, and the credit market is uncertain. However, the survey pegs growth in chemical production at 7.2% this year, 6.7% next. And it expects chemical industry capital investment to be up by 5.7% this year, 8.5% next.

Dow plans TDI plant

Dow Chemical will build its first toluene diisocyanate (TDI) plant. The 100 million pound-per-year unit for this polyurethane raw material is scheduled to begin operation in late 1974 at the company's Freeport, Tex., complex. There is currently considerable excess TDI capacity in the U.S. and its price has been weak. But Dow expects rapid growth for polyurethanes for the next few years and the company is already the major supplier of polyether polyols, the other major polyurethane raw material.

Industry briefs

- The chemical industry continues to outperform the rest of industry in the strength of its 1972 recovery, according to the latest government figures on industrial production. Output of chemicals and allied products this April was 8.4% higher than a year earlier whereas output for all industries was up only 4.5%.
- Addressograph Multigraph Corp. has hired 225 scientists, engineers, and technicians in the past nine months in a major expansion of its R&D efforts. Another 110 will be hired by the end of July when the company's total technical staff will exceed 1000, up 45% from a year earlier. The Cleveland-based company, which makes office machines, says the expansion is to hasten development of new graphic and communications products.
- Hercules has added 5 cents per pound to the price of its 300- and 1050-denier Herculon olefin fibers—another sign of strength in the man-made fiber business. These denier yarns are used in upholstery.

Government

Chances fade for technology assessment office

Chances are dwindling for Congressional passage of legislation to set up some kind of an Office of Technology Assessment this year. The Senate Subcommittee on Computer Services is considering three or four variations of a House-passed bill. Senate subcommittee chairman B. Everett Jordan (D.-N.C.) is busy with a stiff primary fight, few other Senators push for subcommittee action, and some that do push quibble over whether OTA should be a nonpolitical independent assessor for Congress, watered down to the status of a joint committee, or placed under an existing joint committee.

Curbs, not ban, urged on PCB use

A federal task force that has been studying polychlorinated biphenyls and the environment for six months recommends stringent curbs rather than an outright ban on their use. All uses of PCB's, except in electrical capacitors and transformers where an acceptable substitute is not now available, should be discontinued, the task force report says, adding that current environmental levels of PCB's do not constitute an imminent hazard to human health. The Environmental Protection Agency, acting on the report, says it will limit industrial effluents so that levels of PCB's in lakes and rivers do not exceed 0.01 p.p.b.

EPA decision aids catalyst suppliers

Catalyst suppliers should benefit from the Environmental Protection Agency's denial of auto makers' requests for a one-year delay in applying 1975 model-year emission standards. A court appeal or Congressional relief may still be sought, but EPA administrator William D. Ruckelshaus urges auto firms to make commitments soon to catalyst suppliers. He refutes claims of unresolved safety hazards from catalyst systems and says that there is still time to improve catalyst efficiency, durability, and poison resistance properties. Ford has already made a commitment to Engelhard Industries for noble metal catalysts.

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Two moves to boost oil supply

The Government will issue final regulations granting petrochemical makers greater access to foreign feedstocks "within a week to 30 days," an Office of Emergency Preparedness spokesman says, but the petrochemical industry will not get to share in the Administration's 15% boost in oil import quotas this year. Under proposed regulations the industry's quota could about triple within five years. The Administration has also decided to issue construction permits for the Alaska pipeline, but oil won't be flowing through it anytime soon. Environmentalists intend to defend court injunctions that prohibit Interior from issuing the permits.

Private pension plan legislation

Bipartisan legislation to reform private pension plans has been introduced by Sen. Harrison Williams (D.-N.J.) and Sen. Jacob Javits (R.-N.Y.). The bill, S. 3598, has a vesting provision providing for a nonforfeitable right to 30% of pension benefits after an employee serves eight years and full vesting after 15 years. Meanwhile, at hearings before the House Ways and Means Committee, H. J. Ammond of the Political Action Committee for Engineers and Scientists urged that professionals have the right to make tax-deductible contributions to a retirement program.

Washington roundup

- The Senate has passed and sent to President Nixon legislation authorizing the Atomic Energy Commission to issue interim operating licenses to nuclear power plants that AEC says are needed to meet emergency power needs. AEC gets authority to issue the special licenses until October 1973.
- A final decision on canceling remaining uses of DDT will be made next month by Environmental Protection Agency administrator William D. Ruckelshaus. Last week industry and environmental spokesmen presented final oral arguments to Mr. Ruckelshaus on questions such as safety of substitutes and the effect that canceling DDT uses will have on the availability of DDT for health uses outside the U.S.

International

Airborne sulfur oxides study

The movement of airborne sulfur oxides up to 250 miles from their source will be the subject of a three-year international study now getting under way. Ten member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the U.K., and West Germany—will cooperate in the project together with the Commission of the European Communities, the World Meteorological Organization, and the Scandinavian Council for Applied Research. Information about the transport of airborne sulfur oxides should help in setting up realistic air quality standards that will take into account atmospheric conditions as well as local emission levels. Staff at the Norwegian Institute for Air Research near Oslo will coordinate the results provided by the various countries participating in the project.

Shell enters plant breeding business

Royal Dutch/Shell is branching out into the plant breeding business through an alignment with Rothwell Plant Breeders, Ltd., Lincolnshire, England. The main thrust of newly formed universal plant breeding services will be to develop new strains of cereals having improved crop yield, disease resistance, and the like. Work on some new strains is already far along, an RPB spokesman tells C&EN. Shell, one of the world's chief suppliers of pesticides, will contribute its international marketing expertise and technical resources to the venture. Rothwell has test stations in Great Falls, Mont., and Modesto, Calif., as well as in Canada, Belgium, Morocco, and Spain.

Ireland opts to join EEC

The electorate of Ireland has registered a massive "yes" in favor of joining the European Economic Community. The 4-to-1 majority ballot, cast by a record 70% of the voters, clears the way for Ireland to take her place in the community. Denmark and Norway are still considering the issue. But the consensus is that they, too, will choose to join. The three countries, together with the U.K., would swell to 10 the ranks of EEC by next Jan. 1.

Synthetic paper agreement

Hercules has made an option agreement wtih Mitsubishi Rayon Co. for some of the Japanese firm's polyolefin pulp and paper technology. Mitsubishi Rayon is developing a route that features a new polymer extrusion process and ability to form synthetic paper on standard papermaking machines. In exchange for related technology, Hercules will get information about a paper for high-quality markets and a cheaper paper made from synthetic pulp/wood pulp blend. A Mitsubishi subsidiary meanwhile plans a 4000 metric-ton-a-year plant in Japan for film-base synthetic paper using a process of the U.K.'s Bakelite Xylonite, Ltd.

International notes

- B. F. Goodrich Chemical will participate as a minority shareholder in Philippine Vinyl Consortium, Inc. The consortium will build a 20,000 metric-ton-a-year polyvinyl chloride plant near Manila to come on stream in 1974. Vinyl chloride feedstock will be imported.
- Lederle (Japan), Ltd., will build a plant to make desulfurization catalysts at Tahara, 130 miles southwest of Tokyo. Initial capacity is 2.5 million pounds a year. The catalysts help curb air pollution in the burning of fuel oils. Lederle (Japan) is owned jointly by American Cyanamid and Takeda Chemical Industries.

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