

# To Mill Our Own Flour

Only two thirds of Philippine flour imports derive from the United States—wheat for local milling could all be bought there.

Some wheaten loaf has come to be a staple in the diet of millions of Filipinos during the past generation or two, and an almost forgotten fact is that there was a flour mill on Calle Tanduay when America occupied Manila in August 1898. Even less remembered is the fact that prior to Britain's ascendancy in Philippine trade, friars milled wheat here for many years and found suitable wheat lands in certain regions of Cavite and Batangas, such as the black loam of the well elevated lands along Tagaytay ridge; but that was at a time when problems of economy were by no means close, and no one bothered to learn whether it paid to raise this wheat or not—it was raised because no other wheat was available.

Modern experimentation has been lacking to prove whether the Commonwealth has good wheat lands or not, that is to say, lands that one season after another might grow a suitable yield of wheat per acre, and pay better when planted to this crop than when used for something else. So we say nothing about wheat growing, our subject is wheat milling—something we believe quite practicable.

The Commonwealth is importing about 100,000,000 kilos of wheat flour a year. Sometimes Australia leads in this trade, sometimes the United States. The 1936 imports were 92 million kilos, 35 million from Australia, 30 million from the United States. Canada commonly takes third place, 18½ million kilos in 1936. The 1937 imports were lower, just over 75 million kilos, 27 from the United States, 27 from Australia, 13 from Canada.

But this year's flour imports are higher, with more than 60% coming from the United States and below 30% coming from Australia. Flour is not impervious to spoilage; it is very finely milled, aromatic, safe harbor as well as a sure pantry for many sorts of insects, rodents too, and highly absorbant of moisture and subject to molds; mills pack it in muslin bags, porous and measurably fragile, and in shipping it is handled in nets, on trucks and barrows, through chutes, on men's shoulders and in every other conceivable way; over wide seas, as from America to Manila or from Australia to Manila, there is an inevitable loss of weight as well as change of the quality of flour.

Once the bakeries here and in the provinces get hold of this flour, hardly one of them has hygienic storage for it; yet it is better to buy in the biggest lots the baker's purse can afford, or that may be packed into the bakery in any fashion, for advantages in price and delivery costs, as well as an assured supply.

The argument of all this is that for a good many reasons perhaps, the Commonwealth should import wheat instead of flour; it might be advisable to work out arrangements to mill the wheat in this country, at different cities well located for provincial distribution, and

therefore to buy the whole supply of wheat from the United States as a factor in the reciprocal trade arrangements that are to be effected. It can be put down as certain that when the people get their teeth into really good loaves from really fresh wheat flour, their appetite for the loaf will grow enormously and wheat will therefore prove to be one of the prime items in a balanced commerce. In mills, where wheat is easily shifted from bin to bin and aerated and dusted, milling follows demand and the flour is always fresh.

The nutritive and palatable differences between fresh flours and stale flours are remarkable.

Let an army be raised in a bread-eating country and sent to campaign some place where the flour reaches its field kitchens only after long shipments, and the first thing that blossoms in the homeside newspapers is complaints about the baking, the rancidity and the sourness of the flour. This teaches that if milling once started here, it would soon preempt the field.

But there is more point to the argument than this. When the Commonwealth milled its own flour, it would also fatten its own beef and produce a portion of its fresh milk. The mills should be built with facilities in view for use of the bran and shorts, which, when alfalfa should be added, would fatten beef and batten milk cows. The first saving would be of freights, wheat would ship cheaper than flour. The next would be the bran and shorts, utilizable in dairy barns and stock pens. A bushel of wheat weighs 60 lbs., from which comes 40 lbs. of flour, and nearly 20 lbs., since there is some slight waste, of bran and shorts, both excellent feeds. Mills capacious enough to supply the Commonwealth 100,000,000 kilos of flour a year, would also supply it at least 45 million kilos of these good stock feeds—even more important than the flour itself.

The mills (or other immediate subsidiaries) would then be buyers of cattle from the provinces, to stall-feed for the city markets; and they would maintain dairies, to use up the whole stock of bran and shorts and convert it into fresh milk. Stall-fattening of steers would be necessary, besides economically advisable, because steers from the range, brought in for feeding, would have to learn the trick from hunger and the example of their tamer comrades in adjoining stanchions.

If the Commonwealth went about this commercial reform in earnest, in a decade or two it would make all its own flour and grow and fatten all its own beef; and it would make some inroads on its bill for imported milk, while the diet of its people would be measurably improved. We link milling, dairying, and beef-fattening together because it is no novel combination and because we believe no provincial markets would offer for the bran and shorts, nor would there be a cuntry nearby (as Denmark is nearby England) to exchange milk and butter for these by-products of flour milling.

## Milt Sutherland's . . .

he would stay on, he wouldn't think of leaving a town named for him, but McMann was all for California. McMann said he was going to find a place in the hills of California where it occasionally rained, and he could grow alfalfa, and have a rosetree

over a corner of his porch, the porch of a decent cottage he would build. He was sick and tired, he said, of a country where the only growing things were cacti, mesquite, palma verde and ironwood. Each partner realized his ambition. Sutherland was afterward able to pay McMann a visit at

his pretty California place, with its rosetree and alfalfa field, and found the man, in his age, completely happy; and you will find Bouse happy back in Arizona.

We hope business calls Milt Sutherland to Manila again, his reminiscences are well worth the coffee they cost.