

THINK-TANKS PLAN MACHINERY TO ENGINEER MATERIALS SHORTAGES

Nov. 21 (IPS)--Dr. Seymour Blum, Chairman of the National Materials Advisory Board and chief materials researcher for the MITRE Corporation think-tank in Bedford, Massachusetts, told IPS today that those organizations are presently working on "contingency plans" for possible shortages of "critical raw materials" such as bauxite, magnesium, and manganese. Among the options being considered is the establishment of choke-point "maximum price levels" for various commodities. MITRE, Dr. Blum said, is now working to determine "at what price for aluminum, for example, will aluminum can producers stop using aluminum?"

Previously, MITRE has collaborated with Herman Kahn's Hudson Institute on developing the "energy crisis scenario" for an "Arab oil embargo." Now the same think-tank planners are laying the groundwork for commodity shortage hoaxes.

In Washington yesterday, Blum's National Materials Advisory Board concluded a meeting which discussed a U.S. government study on "materials supplies and shortages." The study, portions of which are classified as "secret" by the National Security Council, was leaked in a Nov. 17 New York Times article by Leslie Gelb. It shows, Gelb said, that the U.S. can count on adequate supplies of all major materials and can counter the effects of "cartel-created" shortages, except OPEC's oil.

Several leading scientific advisors present at the Advisory Board meeting yesterday denied knowledge of the contents of the government study. But a spokesman for the Executive Council on International Economic Policy, the international equivalent of the President's Domestic Council, told IPS that the classified study was prepared by an "inter-agency group" including the Bureau of Mines, the Office of Preparedness, and the National Security Council.

This study, the spokesman said, is being prepared in two parts. The classified part is a survey of the existing supplies of world raw materials, with a strategic assortment of all military and political factors that might affect the access to those supplies. Part two, still in preparation according to the Council source, will list recommendations for U.S. supplies policies. The source termed these reports "highly sensitive" and "rather explosive."

The unclassified versions of the study are scheduled to be released when President Ford announces the active formation of Senator Mike Mansfield's proposed Commission on Critical Supplies and Shortages. Formally established by a recent amendment to the Defense Production Act of 1950, the Commission, according to the Library of Congress, is slated to become operative next Jan. 15. It will oversee the development of a new inter-agency body to "monitor" raw materials supplies.

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