

Of Shortages and Stability--
What Couldn't Happen, Has!

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Things are happening with rapid-fire frequency these days to shake one's confidence in the stability of our institutions, scientific and otherwise.

The other day I went into one of Philadelphia's famous Dewey's chain of quick-service restaurants. I was shaken to the core when I ordered a hamburger and was told they didn't have any. In disbelief I left and staggered into the nearest branch of the even more famous Horn & Hardart Automat establishment only to find that there was no more huckleberry pie, and *no more coffee*. Frustration simmered and boiled over in New York, where I discovered that the Wienerwald was out of wienerschnitzel. I stayed away from the Gaiety Delicatessen rather than risk learning that it might have run out of pastrami. Enough's enough. The day before I had learned that Nathan's in Atlantic City had no more beef hot dogs.

This sort of thing is not confined to favorite foods. The Can-

adian railway and paper mill strikes have caused reverberations throughout the printing industry, which now faces a serious paper shortage. It's by no means impossible that CC® will be affected by it. If you find us using buff-colored or off-color paper in the near future, bear with us and be thankful that we'll have been able to find other stock rather than been forced to reduce the size of CC and cut back our journal coverage. Recently *The Wall Street Journal* and some other periodicals have had to cut back significantly on number of pages.

Hopefully, the paper crisis will be resolved in one way or another, even though for the short-term we may have to resort to use of more expensive, coated papers. Any long-term crisis may have significant impact on information transfer. It may, for example, provide more fuel for the on-line computer-terminal revolution that is already upon us. If the paper shortage doesn't do it,

the cost of transporting paper before printing, or the cost of mailing printed matter afterward may force us, like the Australians, to learn to live more comfortably with microfilm and other alternatives to paper documents. As noted in an item in this week's *Press Digest* it may very soon be cheaper to store information in a computer's memory than to store it on paper.

Unless someone perfects some kind of portable viewing apparatus for microfilm- or computer-stored information, I can't visualize any present type of microfilm reader or CRT displacing a printed version of CC, or printed journals, daily newspapers, or weekly news magazines. But my failure to visualize it may mean little. I

am reminded in this connection of an early Ray Bradbury story in which people wander about the streets completely isolated from one another by their portable radios and earplugs. The story was a vision of the distant future, but we see it all about us on any city street today. So I may be wrong about the near replacement of the printed page. If Dewey's can run out of hamburger, anything can happen!

Shortages may thus contribute to progress in one way or another. Who knows--if the Soviet Union wants to solve its agricultural shortages with its own resources, it might even reconsider its decision to exclude a scientist as valuable as Medvedev.