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**"Vertical Integration" . . .  
How The Forums See It**

Despite the fact that about 700 panel discussions are supposed to have been held throughout Canada during the past several months on the subject of Vertical Integration, farm people seem to have had only enough information to whet their interest. During the three weeks in which Farm Forum looked at Vertical Integration, the most frequent single query was: "Where can we get more information?"

Perhaps it is significant that, of over 500 forums reporting, only about one third have members who personally have contracted a part of their farm production. The other two thirds of the forums want to know what contracts are available, however, and some of them admit that they would like to enter a contract as soon as possible.

Farm forum people have accepted the idea that vertical integration is here to stay. Early in the series the question was asked: "what do you fear from vertical integration?" The most common answers were: Loss of Freedom and Loss of Control of our Products. Half of the forums feel that Control of the product can be regained through cooperation.

**Cooperation**  
Four fifths of the members of Farm Forum across Canada believe in cooperation to obtain their goals of freedom and control of their own industry. Just about 400 of the 500 forums reporting felt that vertical integration is likely to help them stay in business, provided their cooperative is in a competitive position. Some of the forums felt that coops are not keeping up with the times in many parts of the country, and that they must make available large quantities of Credit through contracts or otherwise, in order to compete with independent business concerns. One forum said:

"As an organization the farm co-ops have a responsibility to their membership to act as leaders in farm marketing and processing. Their duty is to develop trends advantageous to farmers rather than follow willy-nilly a pattern designed for the benefit of middlemen and others."

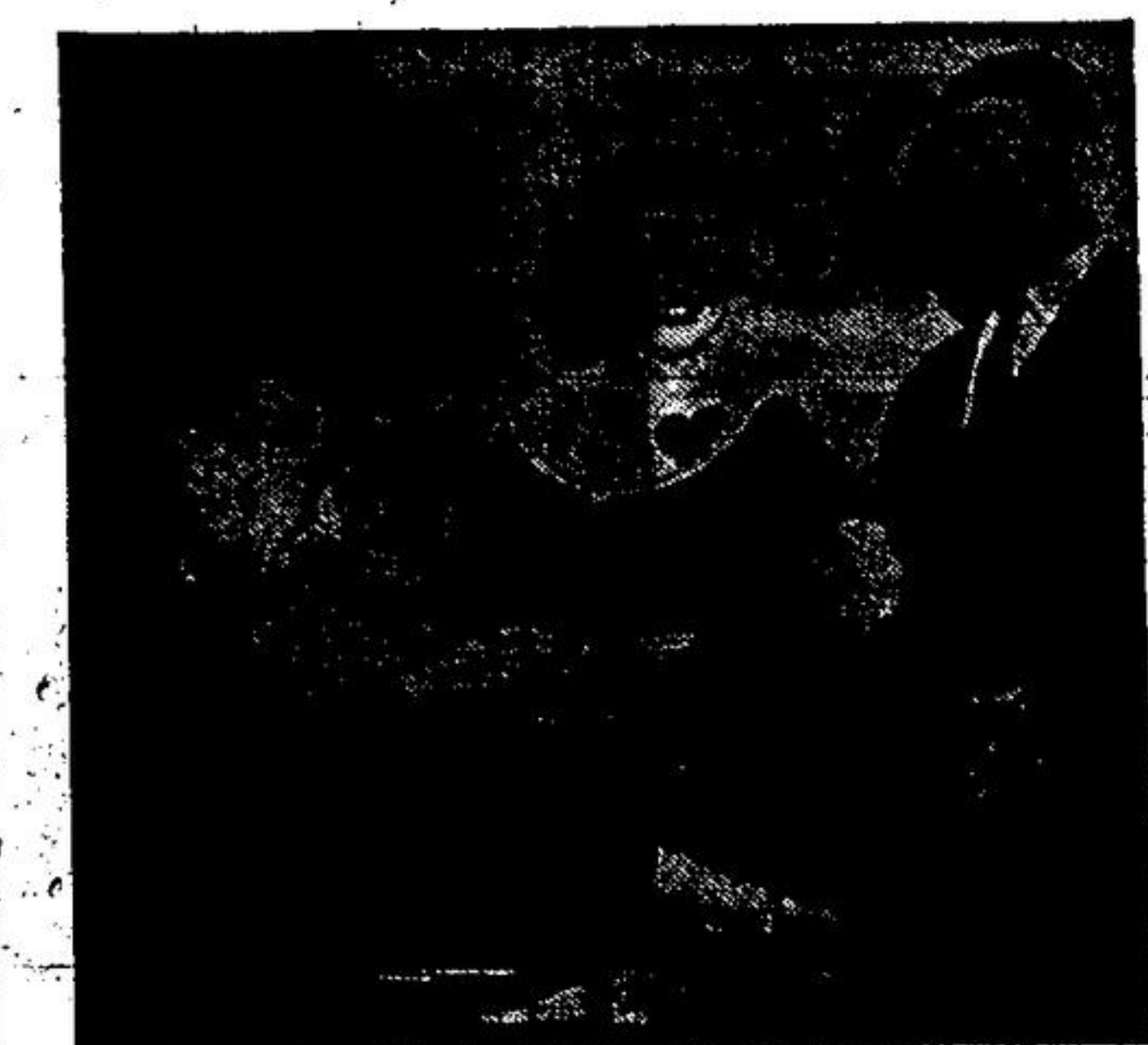
Marketing Boards and their functions are not too familiar to some forum members, but they are regarded as one of the first steps necessary in the organization of effective farm action. A forum comment that was repeated several times was:

"The groups agreed that we must have farm marketing boards with the coops forming the backbone of the organization."

**Contracts**  
While only about one third of the forum members had actual experience with contracts, nearly all of them knew someone who had. Comments and reaction to contracts and terms involved were as varied as the documents themselves. One group pointed out:

"The individual should study the whole question of integration and contracts with care and consult the farm organization legal adviser before signing. If possible the contract should be obtained from the local cooperative."

Another maintained:  
"The organization (coop) should



**INSTANT LINK**—Inauguration of instant Telex service between 23 Canadian cities and Chicago is marked by exchange of messages from representatives of diplomatic corps and business world. In Toronto ceremony Jean Ward of Simpsons-Sears Ltd., largest commercial subscribers in Canada, shows Telex dialling system to W. J. Adams, seated, vice-chairman of Canadian Steele, Canadian National Telegraphs general superintendent. Greetings were exchanged with participants in ceremony at Sears Roebuck Ltd., first Chicago subscriber. Telex is serviced in Canada by Canadian National Canadian Pacific Communications.

have some system or contract which would benefit its members, perhaps a Fieldman as well; to protect the contractor from the hands of the businessman."

Still another forum said:  
"From what we have been able to gather from the radio broadcasts and the farm papers, it appears that the man under contract is doing fine. The question is, How Long? Another damaging factor will be overproduction created by this mass production that seems to be taking over."

**Education**  
Nearly all of the forums reporting felt that too little information has been given by their coops on this subject.

For example:  
"How many of us as average farmers could decipher a contract of 'his nature'? It puts too much power in the hands of big companies who will control the markets and eventually the people on the land. Are our co-ops and farm organizations preparing men to advise us, so that we may handle the threat? The farming populace needs educating on what is good for them — or their so-called independence will be a detriment." Another said:  
"Farm organizations must become the educational body to give direction and act as an agricultural watchdog over integration."

About 250 out of the 500 forums asked for development of improved educational facilities in their farm organizations and cooperatives.

**Small Farmers**  
Most of the forums felt that Vertical integration would prove to be the end of the marginal farmer and the small farmer who did not choose to expand. One forum said:  
"If vertical integration makes farming more profitable, more people will go into it. With supervised production, the unit can be produced more cheaply and of higher quality. The marginal farmer will be forced to drop out." Some groups pointed out that:  
"It will help the small farmer starting out in business without enough cash available. It may help some of the younger farmers. But only a few farmers will have contracts."

Generally this was the feeling:  
"We feel that if we allow vertical integration to grow in its present form, a way of life will be lost. We will be working for large enterprises. The present farmer may benefit but he will leave nothing for his wife and children. We must band together to preserve freedom of enterprise and our way of life and of the family farm for the future."

**The Community**  
The most often repeated comment about vertical integration is that it will result in the destruction of the community, unless some new industries are brought in to produce employment.

"We have already seen what happens when a large operator buys up a lot of land and puts hired hands on it — neither he nor his men are the least bit interested in the community."

Another forum put it this way:  
"Most farmers oppose vertical integration because of the fact that the small landowners, the family type farmers, will be forced out of business. They will lose their sidelines, livestock and poultry, and may not have sufficient capital to support their wives and families. This will eventually force these farmers to leave and search elsewhere for a living. This in turn will have a serious effect on our social life. Community life may vanish in some places and will weaken in others. Our whole nation may change."

A slightly different note was introduced by this group. "Loss of control of product, land and stock, or disappearance of the community — are not necessarily a consequence of integration. If the farmer is prepared to organize himself and take charge of his own holding with better personal org-

anization, there is every reason to believe that substantial benefits to himself and his industry would result."

**Security:**  
Many of the arguments advanced in favour of contracts have used Security of income as a major point. Most of the forums felt that this security did not exist.

"The product of contract farming might lose its appeal to the consumer, since some say that mass production of broilers has produced a tasteless meat; and that hogs, if pushed too hard, might do the same."

"A few years ago, farmers in this district fed turkeys on contract, but got left with the birds when the contractor would not take them had birds."

"We are going to try to stay in business (unsuccessfully) in spite of vertical integration and the surpluses it is causing. From what we have seen of contract farming in our forum, we think it has only been a help to the feed companies and those who let their contracts."

"If a farmer goes in for large scale production of broilers, turkeys or eggs and finds after a year or two that the contractor no longer wants his product, he is left with a lot of equipment and large buildings that are of no use to him."

Some of them told such stories as this:  
"The man under contract was all right as long as the contract lasted, but as soon as the processor had too large an inventory they stopped the contract. The processor was all right . . . no security in that."

Summing up, the 6,000 forum members who took part in the discussions left one predominant impression. They want more leadership in the fields of Credit, Marketing and Processing, Contract Interpretation. They want more education from their organizations; to enable them to fit into new patterns and to ensure the success of farmer-directed projects undertaken by these organizations. Forum members want this leadership from all of their cooperative enterprises — organizations, credit unions, pools, marketing boards and cooperatives — both local and regional.

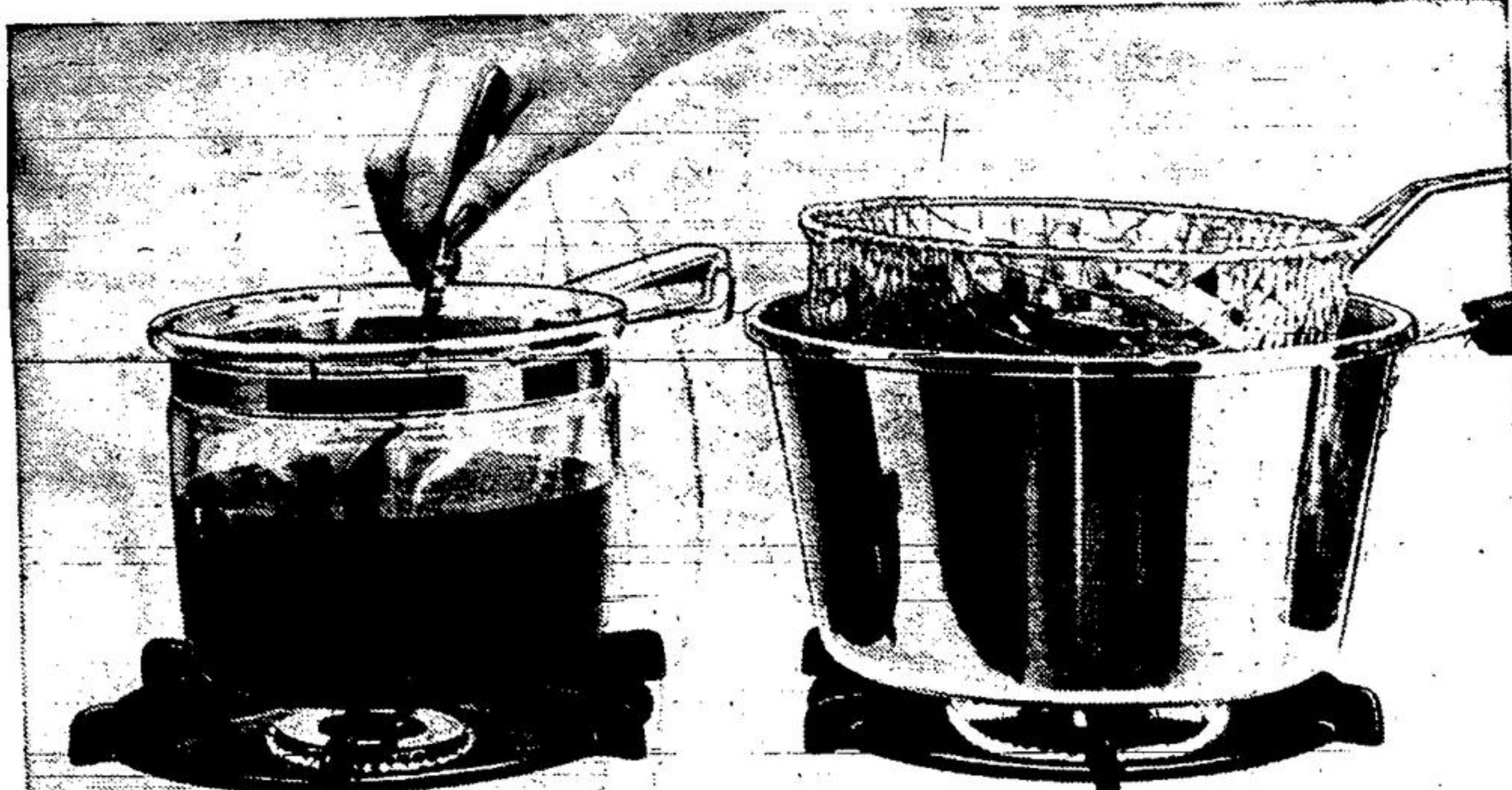
One forum put it this way:  
"Organizations should endeavor to find the best markets and channels to dispose of our products. They should also organize meetings at many places to educate us in the various aspects of vertical integration and our new role. We want to know all about bargaining — with or without handling the product."

1. The central cooperatives should take a leading role as integrator to handle the marketing and processing of all farm products.

2. The Credit Unions and Credit Societies should look to the possibility of becoming the supplier of financial backing where necessary.

3. Farm organizations could become the educational body to give direction and act as an agricultural watchdog over integration."

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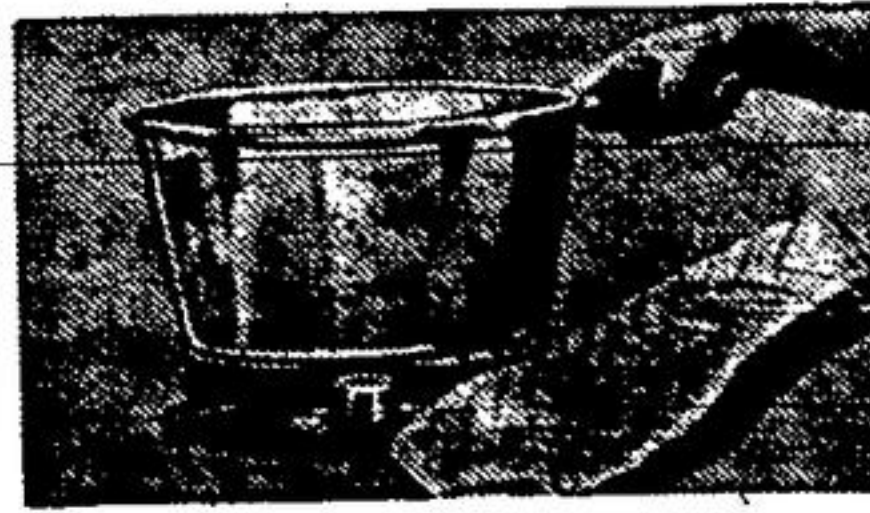
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