

# A long legacy of service

The US association of bakery equipment manufacturers made an indelible impression on the twentieth-century baking industry and will continue to do so in the twenty-first.

Bob Hirsch, Bakery Equipment Manufacturers Association



*George E Dean, manager of United Steel Products Company, a pioneering bakery equipment manufacturer.*

During the First World War (1914–1918), supply shortages were so severe that the baking industry in the USA was forced to undergo fundamental change. Exports of wheat and rye surpluses to war-torn Europe pushed flour prices ever higher. In response, the US Government encouraged American housewives not to bake bread so as to help lower the cost and demand for baking ingredients.

With the American consumer not baking at home, a new market emerged: ready-made baked products. This, in turn, led to the development of bakery equipment such as bun and bread moulders (machines that pressed dough into the shape of buns).

When the war ended, hundreds of thousands of people were left starving in Europe. The USA was seen as the only nation that was prepared and had the capability to aid those in need. Bakery equipment manufacturers, however, were disorganised and in no position to apply to the US War Department for the materials they needed to assist with the relief effort. To remedy the situation, they agreed to meet at a hotel in Chicago and sketch out the framework for an organisation that would voice its members concerns and recommendations, and encourage production and safety improvements. Thus, the Bakery Equipment Manufacturers Association (BEMA) was born.

Since inception, BEMA has made substantial contributions to the baking industry. A selection of the most important is described below.

## Baking exposition

In 1920, BEMA launched the National exposition for the baking industry (later renamed the International baking industry exposition, or IBIE). The first meeting took place at the American Association of Baking Industry's national convention in Atlantic City. BEMA sectioned off a small area for manufacturers to showcase developments in bakery equipment and other products.



*The National exposition for the baking industry set precedents.*

Five of the 150 exhibitors displayed automated bakery operations, while others showed off an array of bakery machinery. The show was a resounding success.

In 1922, the exposition welcomed 180 exhibitors. This time, an entire bakery was in operation throughout the show. Also on display was a selection of equipment that had never been assembled under one roof before, including a travelling oven, wrapping machine and proofers.

Such was the importance and success of the exposition that it continued to take place every three to four years. In 1949, BEMA formed a strategic alliance with the American Bakers Association to co-sponsor the show. This partnership has benefited the US baking industry ever since.

At present, IBIE is the largest baking exposition in the western hemisphere. It is held every three years and on a schedule with the international bakery exhibition (iba) and Europain to avoid any conflict. The next IBIE will take place on 15–18 August 2004 in Las Vegas, USA. BEMA anticipates a record turnout, with more than 500 exhibitors and more than 25,000 attendees expected. In 2001, more than 30 per cent of the attendees were from overseas. International exhibitor participation is also growing.

## Open pricing and firm bidding

In 1929, BEMA took the lead and adopted the practice of open pricing and firm bidding. Its aim was to enforce fair bidding

practices by requiring its members to instruct purchasing agents to only accept firm bids. This prevented price fixing by the seller and possible price revisions.

Firm bidding ensured accurate cost estimates, improved the quality of products, increased plant efficiency, controlled wage costs and resulted in lower priced goods for the consumer.

### Second World War effort

In 1941, BEMA worked with the US Government to ensure that the baking industry was identified as a priority industry during wartime. Early on in the conflict, BEMA asked its members to freeze prices on their products. The association itself set an example by purchasing war bonds. Once the war was over, BEMA was instrumental in getting price controls lifted on capital goods and processing machinery.

### Sanitation

In 1948, BEMA formed a technical committee to study federal, state and municipal sanitation regulations for baking machinery. The committee subsequently established the first set of sanitation codes. The following year, it worked in cooperation with allied organisations to form the Baking Industry Sanitation Standards Committee (BISSC). The objective of this committee was to help promote the design and manufacture of sanitary bakery equipment.

BEMA remains active in BISSC. At present, it is assisting with an effort to secure American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accreditation for the BISSC sanitation standards.

### Korean War initiative

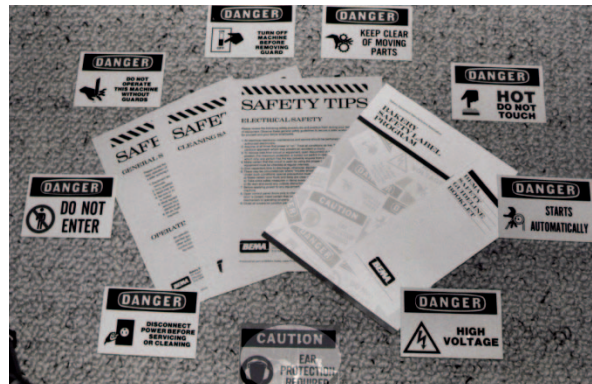
In June 1950, conflict broke out in the Republic of Korea. This lasted for three years. A year later, at the request of the US Government, BEMA formed the National Defense Preparedness Committee to study ways in which baking equipment manufacturers could prepare for future shortages. It thus helped the government determine each industry's metal requirements.

### Legislative and financial support

In the 1960s, BEMA was actively involved in promoting enriched bread and also the passing of the Omnibus Farm Bill, which put forward the elimination of proposed increases in wheat certification costs. In the 1970s, it threw its support behind passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and the Workmen's Compensation Act. Thousands of workers owe their lives to these important laws. OSHA heavily penalises companies that fail to properly ensure employee safety. Yet it did not have as much impact on the baking industry as it did on others, because BEMA had already established a strict safety code for its members. Eventually, the safety code was absorbed into the ANSI Safety Requirements for Bakery Equipment.

Since 1979, BEMA has poured hundreds of thousands of dollars back into the baking industry. These funds have helped

allied baking organisations to implement their own missions more effectively and, in particular, have assisted the American Institute of Baking (AIB) create and sponsor important educational programmes.



Manufacturers can display a variety of labels on their equipment.

### Warning label programme

In 1984, BEMA launched a warning label programme that disseminated information about all the different labels equipment manufacturers could display on their products. In 1991, BEMA transferred the programme to the AIB where it was incorporated into the AIB safety programme.

### Scholarships

In 1984, BEMA launched its first scholarship programme with \$50,000 it had received from IBIE. Since the programme's inception funds have accumulated, thus enabling many individuals to attend the AIB baking technology and maintenance courses.

In 1997, BEMA launched a second scholarship programme to support BEMA member employees. Funds were donated to the association in honour of former president Bill Pulver, after whom the programme was named.

In 2000, BEMA established a third scholarship programme, setting aside \$500,000 to support the educational advancement of those both entering and currently employed in the baking industry. More recently, in 2002, it began contributing funds to the Independent Bakers Association in support of an internship programme for baking executives (which enables participants to study the legislative process in Washington DC, USA) and for a scholarship to the Bakery Science programme at Kansas State University, USA.

### Continuous advancement

After 85 years of service to the baking industry, BEMA's future prospects are encouraging. There is no doubt that it will build on this impressive legacy and continue to promote the advancement of the industry. ❖