

WHAT'S IN A PACKAGE?

Our Food Controller Asks Canadian Women to Support a War Measure that May Banish Some Breakfast Foods and Give Others to Them in Bulk Form Only.

By KATHERINE M. CALDWELL, B.A.

"NO more package cereals weighing less than 20 pounds may be sold in Canada during the progress of the war" rules the Food Controller.

As discussion of the order grows, its objects would appear to be three-fold.

1. To effect an increased use of cereals other than wheat.

2. To force a general stocking of all these substitutes so that they will be available to women.

3. To investigate, perhaps, the prices of some of the packaged foods, to see if the public is paying too much for an idea or a process.

As something done for the relief of conditions, the first inclination of Canadian women is to accept this ruling in a spirit of approval. They are told it is "a measure to effect economy." Good. It has the aspect of a step in the direction of lowering prices. Good, again.

But gradually, the significance of the measure as it affects Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith, as it affects you and me, begins to show itself.

Mrs. Jones lives in a town that boasts of a really high-class grocery store, run by a man who is unscrupulous of to-day's ideas and to-day's methods.

His store is clean, his clerks are clean, in person and in habit. He is equipped with the best fittings he can get and the best facilities for the proper storing of the foods in his stock.

Fortunate Mrs. Jones! She has been in the habit of purchasing her porridge materials in sealed, air-tight packages and has had no trouble with staleness, mustiness, inferior goods, or uncleanness in any form.

Her grocer, however, since he can no longer supply her with these branded food-products, will look after her interests as well as he possibly can.

He will, of course, have to add some new equipment to take care of a greatly increased bulk stock. The old-fashioned open bin or the inadequate sack, will, he knows, never store cereals well enough to satisfy his customers. He knows, too, that he will have to contend with mice, (and the cats he must have, to keep them down), with vermin, with dampness, with every deteriorating influence to which these goods are subject. So Mrs. Jones' grocer gets him some metal-lined bins, with close-fitting covers, and goes back, as efficiently as he can, to the methods of his father, with the scoop and the scale, the paper bag and string.

Somebody Pays

OF course, new fixtures will cost money—so will bags and string and the time of his clerks to weigh and measure and package; and labor is scarce, high in price, and often floor space is more valuable to him than shelf-room—but of course Mrs. Jones will have to help meet these costs. They will all be included in his selling price—with an allowance for the inevitable wastage that occurs when hurried clerks do the packaging.

Is Mrs. Jones, even under these circumstances, quite so fortunate? Her cereals are as fresh as possible—one time better than another—her grocer is buying a good quality of bulk meals, he does his best to give them to her free from dust and contamination and she is getting more weight for her money, so, although she feels that she preferred the less tangible things she bought with the meal in her package, still, these are war times . . . things are different. She "falls in."

In the matter of flour—she seldom purchased it in the small packages so she can still, without hardship, be assured of getting the brand she likes, by buying it in quantity.

But she knows of women who, with just as definite an idea of the flour they want to use, cannot put so much money into it at once—although they know that flour, like most other commodities, is cheaper if bought in quantities.

Such women must buy their seven or fourteen pounds of flour in the grocer's package—weighed and parcelled "to order." If he can do so, the grocer will give them their accustomed and proven brand.

But in each instance, he will charge for package, time and waste.

Troubles in Smithville

What of Mrs. Smith? Her town has three grocery shops but they are all oldish, not very progressive, not very up-to-date.

Mrs. Smith has a delicate child of two years of age, who has lately been thriving on a diet that calls for a finely ground, well-cooked wheatlet.

Mrs. Smith, therefore, tries another grocer; but when (with a word of sympathy for the heavy cold he is suffering from and a private hope that he won't package a vigorous germ with her oats), she follows him to the back of the store where some sacks stand, a big, sleepy-eyed grey cat jumps from the half open top of one of them, and although it is not the sack her meal is taken from, she changes her mind about wanting any cereal to-day!

The family eat less—much less—cereal than they used to eat. They demand bacon or eggs or sausage and more muffins and toast—so breakfast in the Smith family is costing much more than formerly, both in money and in work.

What "Isn't" in a Package?

PRUNES, rice, beans and fuzzy dirt.

Human and animal hairs, straight and curly, and fibres of cotton and wool dyed green, yellow, brown, pink and grey.

Straw and a little bit of bran.

Sand, cornstarch, broken wheat and yeast spores.

Pinewood, and fragments of unidentified other timber.

Tobacco leaf, cigarette paper and cigarette tobacco.

Also the wings and legs of a few unfortunate insects.

And of course some raisins!

This was the interesting collection which state chemist Charles H. Lavall named as the constituents of a purchase made by a special agent of the Dairy and Food Commission of Philadelphia. And the grocer had been asked for a pound of raisins!

After the analysis the poor dealer was held at \$400 bail, says Printer's Ink, which went on to suggest that if it were necessary for each grocer to maintain a high-priced chemist on his staff, the price of bulk goods might not be very low!

A sealed package gave Mrs. Smith just what she needed—uniformly excellent (the manufacturer is, of course, jealous of his good name so his product is always up to standard), perfectly fresh and in a convenient quantity.

Other cereals and prepared breakfast foods for her family's consumption, she has been buying in handy package form and has taken as a matter of course, their good quality, fine flavor and freshness. The members of her family have always liked porridge—made of oats, wheat or corn-meal—and they liked the prepared foods also for variety. She finds a ready-to-serve cereal very convenient, even in winter, on the morning that she gets up early to get the laundry under way for the wash-woman and on other days when getting the children off to school takes more time than usual. The kiddies like these tasty grains, too, for their early tea, served with hot milk.

"No more package cereals, Miss Smith—sell you rolled oats or wheatlets by the pound." No, can't get the baby's kind—mebbe the druggist has a baby food like 'em."

Vaguely troubled, Mrs. Smith buys some bulk meal for the family and finds it fairly good. It is not so even as what she has been getting, so it does not cook so nicely; but on the whole, it is not too bad.

But two weeks later, the oatmeal the grocer sends looks very "specky" and it feels soggy to the fingers. No person eats very much of it. Bessie, who is growing too fast and whose appetite is a little bit finicky, demands a boiled egg, to be cooked in a hurry.

So the rolled oats go back, to find the grocer rather indifferent. They are just what he bought, can't be much wrong with 'em—he hasn't any better.

Mrs. Smith tries some corn meal, instead. It seems to be alright.

The next time she orders rolled oats, they are not musty, but they are flat and flavorless and not very popular in the mornings.

To Consider Ourselves

YOU yourself—perhaps you have found some way of getting fresh, assuredly clean cereals and of keeping them sweet and flavorful—or you may have a good idea for effecting variety with the fewer materials at your disposal. If so, do pass along your suggestions—Canadian women, mothers of growing children, whose catering problem is never a light one, at best—will welcome your ideas.

I—well, I am busy making my adjustments. I shall fit some glass jars with rings and tops, to hold the somewhat larger quantities of cereals I shall have to buy at a time. I know an opportunist who has a little grinding establishment—just a little one-man, grind-to-your-order shop where I have been getting a variety of meals for our war-breads—and I shall fare very well. He and his shop are scrupulously clean; his containers are practically invader-proof; he has no clerk-hostler, to alternately pat his horse and put up my foodstuffs. But few cities and fewer towns have anything like this to fall back on—and as my little shopman becomes better known, things may change a little there.

Also, I am busy comparing prices and just what I can get for my money—and what I will get for it, when, the competition with package goods removed, bulk goods prices are no longer indirectly controlled by the package price. Perhaps, however, the food controller's department has already planned to keep down those prices.

Hitherto, I have cheerfully paid for certain unmentioned things when I handed my grocer so many cents for "A package of cereal."

I bought what I knew would be goods of certain quality. The manufacturer's next sale to me would depend on that—a fact he recognizes and takes due pains to meet.

I bought cleanliness. I have gone through many large plants and have seen grain hoisted from great elevators that held tons of it; I have seen

it cleaned and recleaned, sorted according to size, rolled or roasted or toasted or puffed, poured into cartons lined with waxed paper, weighed and sealed—without ever being touched by a human hand, clean or unclean!

Concerning Profits

I HAVE talked with big manufacturers of food products. I have learned that they need not depend for their profits on any increase which selling so much cereal, in bulk, at a price, has over selling that same quantity, plus the additional cost of packaging it, at a price that will show a greater percentage of profit. That profit should be no larger than the margin on the bulk article allows. Such a manufacturer is financially successful because he gets and holds customers. His good name, the success of his product, depend on a steadily maintained standard of excellence. He stakes his reputation on his product and depends on the great number of his sales, for his profit.

The man who sells to your grocer an unbranded sack or barrel of food-stuff, assumes no responsibility beyond the dealer. You don't know him, might not be able to find out who he is.

His goods may be kept in open containers. Piss may curl up comfortably on them, leaving hairs and contamination behind her; the ubiquitous mouse is ever with us—and where could she find a better place to rear a family, than right by the source of food-supply?

Of course, if the dealer knows of such visitations, being a decent man, he will throw out a handful—and trust that the rest is all right!

Keeping one's eyes open is truly a bit hard on one's appetite, at times—but it does pay. No use allowing sensitiveness and a dislike of crude, unattractive facts, to blind us.

So for a pleasing sureness on such points, for the better preservation of my cereals, for their uniform good quality and for convenience, I have cheerfully paid a few cents extra for my packaged groceries. I have taken from my pudding at night, if necessary, to add to my porridge in the morning.

But now we have a war-measure to consider—and if it is to help matters, we women will do our best to meet the changes and deal with them. If we are assured prices well-controlled (for competition and reluctance to change a standardized price, have kept packaged goods prices pretty well in hand), that will compensate in some measure for what we must give up. Or if we are being charged too much for articles we know and like, we shall be glad if their prices can be lowered.

If the measure to do away with package cereals will really have a direct bearing on the food problem, we will help.

But every woman of us will look forward to the day when we can get again the safe, sure and sanitary food package that we consider gives us a fair sum total of value.

What Tomorrow May Bring Forth

OF course, at the time of writing, we do not yet know just what the special license under which packages may still be sold, will cover. If the voice of the consumer—the woman—is regarded, there will be a number of these grants. Women have liked, have bought, have encouraged the manufacture of, a variety of "breakfast foods." Are the manufacturers of these products to be ordered to close down the factories that have been supplying a definitely-voiced demand? Few of those products could be handled at all in bulk—an airtight package is essential. Again, a product that is a carefully balanced mixture, with medicinal value, might lose its identity entirely, at the hands of a tricky dealer. Mr. Hanna has championed industry and the "organized

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