

in order to save time and regardless of the danger they were running did not sail along the lane agreed upon. Other cases have not so been proven but a sufficient element of doubt existed as to the actual way in which they were sunk so as not definitively to impugn the good faith of the German Government, difficult as it would be for any civilized being to believe in such good faith.

It is well to remark however that while these sinkings brought wholesale starvation in Belgium to a dangerously close point owing to the delay occasioned in the arrival of the necessary stocks, they constituted no financial loss to the Commission as both ships and cargoes were fully insured and in every case the Commission recovered the full amount.

### **DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD**

Probably the most picturesque and at the same time most complicated task of the Commission was that entailing the safeguarding of the food imported and the proper distribution thereof to the parties to whom it was intended.

This work was taken in hand by about forty Americans who saw to it that not a particle of the food imported went to the Germans, they even did more: by negotiating with the German Government they succeeded in arranging that the foodstuffs produced by the Belgians would be kept for the use of the Belgians.

No precaution was deemed too great to take to keep a careful, strict and close supervision of the imports. On their arrival in Rotterdam they would be taken to the Commission's own warehouses whence they would be shipped or railed to the various depots in Belgium. The barges or rail trucks would be carefully and securely sealed with the Commission's seal and this seal would be broken only by an official of the Commission. Coupons would be sold to those able to pay and issued free to those unable to do so, entitling the holder to the necessary amount of food, — unfortunately always the strict minimum to barely keep body and soul together. While this work was carried out under the direct supervision of the American members of the Commission, they received invaluable help, in securing efficiency and preventing abuse, from the "Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation" which comprised some 30,000 willing workers.

The rations doled out, which consisted mainly of a slice of bread and a bowl of soup per day — while found to be the strict minimum to prevent starvation amongst adults — proved to be pitifully inadequate for growing children who were found in