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## WHAT FOOD CONTROL IS FOR

*Second of a Series of Articles on the Limits and Possibilities of Price and Food Control*

**T**HE case for Food Control in Canada and the States is totally different from that which exists for our allies in Europe. This is very often forgotten, and the result is much mistaken comment, and much misleading comparison between the activities and functions of, say, the British and the Canadian Food Controllers. If it were not for the needs of our allies in Europe there would be no Food Controller in Canada at all. If Canada were isolated there would be no scarcity, but a superabundance of food supplies in this country. It is a supreme duty towards her allies who are bearing the stupendous burdens of this conflict that Canada is called to increase her food production to the utmost and to avoid waste if it would avoid defeat. For our European allies the business of the Food Controller is to enable these countries to live on what they can raise for themselves or import from America. It is a problem of conservation and distribution, for urgent necessities have already ensured the maximum of production. For Canada, on the other hand, the business of the Food Controller is to enable Canada to export the greatest possible amount of food. It is a problem of conservation and production. In England and France they are seeking to make the food supply suffice, in Canada we are seeking to make the surplus over what suffices as great as possible. The importance of this service cannot be exaggerated. The seriousness of the shortage which faces Europe is impressed upon all who know the situation. "Thy need is greater than mine"—this should be our response to every demand upon us, to every call to work and save, to every appeal to abstain or to sacrifice in order that our comrades across the seas may not suffer this last privation.

In England, seeking to eke out her limited supplies, price control (and in the last resort a system of rationing) is of primary importance, for the problem is the best distribution of the available supplies; in Canada, seeking to raise her surplus to the limit, price control is of importance mainly in so far as it can be used to stimulate production. It is clear that the first business of the Canadian Food Controller is not to lower prices, but to increase the surplus. High prices are themselves a stimulus to production, whereas low prices are a stimulus to consumption. If prices are to be fixed at all they must be fixed at a level high enough to make it economically worth while for the producer to make every effort towards further production.

Why, then, it is often asked by those who realize these facts, have a Food Controller at all? Can anything he is able to do equal the persuasive eloquence to the farmer of wheat soaring

under competition beyond three dollars (before control began)? If high demand means high price, and high price means high production and low consumption have we not here the natural and proper spur to production? Why interfere with it at all? Why disturb the beneficent working of the ordinary "laws of supply and demand"?

There are good reasons for a Food Controller. In the first place the situation is one of extreme uncertainty. This limits the stimulating effect of high prices, for the farmer and stock-raiser must look three or six or nine months ahead, and he is, unless guided by some authority, in the dark as to the future market for his increased production. The Food Controller should be in a better position to realize the future demand. He knows, also, what products are most urgently required, and so can help, in conjunction with the Agricultural and other Departments, to direct production, instead of leaving it to the unguided initiative of individual producers.

In the second place, he is needed to check our wasteful methods. Some of these are due to individual carelessness, and the first necessity is that some one in authority should impress upon us the meaning of such waste. Others are due to our standard of living, as it affects the manufacture and preparation of the foods we buy. There is, for example, great waste in the making of patent flours, in the "pearling" of barley, and so on. A recent writer has given evidence to show that in the United States there is lost in the by-products of seven important foods enough food-value to supply the food needs of the country for a whole year. This waste is surely amenable to Food Control. Other forms of waste depend on our whole economic system, our methods of marketing and distribution. These are naturally the most difficult and dangerous to control, but this is a time for doing whatever can be done.

In the third place, he is needed to check "profiteering." By "profiteering" I mean the amassing of profits beyond what is sufficient to give the manufacturer or producer the encouragement required to carry on his business in the most efficient way.

Lastly, he is needed to help in the reorganization of trade and industry. To increase production, to direct production, and to eliminate waste—these require concerted effort in every case. It is necessary to bring producers together, in order that they may act together. This task of co-ordination, of establishing co-operation in place of isolation or competition, between producers, between middlemen, between retailers, between consumers, is one of the strange new tasks the war has forced on government.

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## CONTRACT AND CONSCIENCE

(Continued from page 8.)

"Seest thou a man diligent in business?" said Solomon. "He shall stand before kings." Looking a few thousand years down the ages he might have added, "Rise Sir Joseph."

Success in business based upon delivery according to contract is unassailable. Why? Because that spec-

ies of success determines a man's conscience. And when you get contracts balancing conscience you have a very high evolution of ethics.

Now, then, grant these premises and you see at once that there can be no possible evil in being a rich man.

But once upon a time a certain

great Teacher also had his opinions about great riches.

"It is easier," said He, "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven."

Did Sir Joseph Flavelle examine this statement in all its bearings when

he said "Let the profits go to the hell to which they belong"? Did he mean that no man should ever die rich for fear of going to hell? We do not know. We can only infer that Sir Joseph contemplates a heaven for no man who does not fulfil contract, and that if he does fulfil contract and thereby inspires other men to ethical values and incidentally gets rich himself, he is in no danger of hell.

Therefore we must acquit Sir Joseph of inconsistency and grant him a conscience in good working order. Each depends upon the other. Profits are merely the result. We long ago outgrew the idea that much money damns a man's soul. On the contract-delivery system it makes no difference how much money a man makes. His money in that case is a measure of his conscientious efficiency. The injunction of the great Teacher of old to Cornelius, who wanted to inherit the kingdom of heaven, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor" must be estimated along with that other saying of the great Teacher, "the poor ye have always with you."

Sir Joseph Flavelle would like to see poverty abolished by the increased efficiency of mankind. And he is game enough to take his own chance of avoiding the poor-house in a society based on universal efficiency. He will even back his conscience based upon contract against the recognized crookedness of the people; because he knows that to keep a system together you must have ultimate ethics somewhere.

Having settled all that, there is no necessity for "qualms." In the church gallery may be a poor wretch heading for the same heaven as Sir Joseph Flavelle, but doomed to poverty because he has bad health, poor brains or rotten luck. That man must be looked after if he gets ill; otherwise it is no business of a contractual conscience to interfere. Oblivious to that man's predicament it is quite morally legitimate for Sir Joseph to go on increasing dividends, buying munitions without salary, getting a superior title, lecturing public servants on inefficiency, organizing philanthropies, reorganizing colleges, attending to the church and entertaining important men. It is all a case of pulling stops in an organ, according to the piece you prefer to play.

**N**OW there are a few questions we should like to ask Sir Joseph, that the Commission did not. We should prefer to come across him some Sunday sitting in his opera chair at Sherbourne St. Methodist Church just after the congregation have gone out and the organist is playing a nice conscientious andante. Under those circumstances he might become quite confidential in answer to these questions:

Did you ever offend anybody in Ottawa by handing out advice on how to govern the country?

Did you ever advise the dismissal of a certain Cabinet Minister?

Did that Minister resign?

Had he a conscience?

In the organization of a Union Government were you ever seriously considered for a portfolio when the said other minister was to be left out?

If so, would he be likely to bear you

(Concluded on page 23.)