

What a Food Despot Must Do

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published on page 19 of this issue. Ludendorff bucked up the system when Batoeki failed. It was his basic idea that when the whole nation is at war the only business for the nation is to win the war. We in Canada have been talking about these things for a long while. We end in talk. Perhaps we are about to begin to act.

Ludendorff closed up or converted every industrial plant not producing things needed by the nation in war-time. The entire producing capacity of the country was turned over to the war. Other countries have improvised similar measures. Germany believed in no impromptu. She had it planned before the war began, and lost no time carrying out the plan. Business as Usual was never a motto in Germany. The adoption of that slogan in England must have amused Berlin. The time would come—Well, the time did come. It is here now. England, France, Russia, Canada, the United States, all have it. There is a world shortage of food. The only part of the world where food production is not almost paralyzed is very far from Europe. Even Argentina has put an embargo on wheat owing to poor crops. India has a surplus. Australia will have a surplus. The United States will have a surplus. Canada will have a surplus.

But Europe is hungry for every bushel and ton of surplus that can be got from anywhere in the world. Even the rice fields of China may contribute their quota. In the United States a Food Dictator has been appointed. Herbert C. Hoover is the man. Concerning this man an exchange says:

He was reared in Iowa and is a mining engineer, 44 years old, the possessor of \$2,000,000, which he has made since his graduation from Leland Stanford University in 1895. He has great organizing ability, at one time managing 125,000 men, and has been successful in large mining ventures in China, India and other countries. He was in London when the war in Europe broke out and was induced to accept the position of head of the Belgian relief work at the solicitation of W. H. Page, American Ambassador. Grain men who have met and talked with him of late regard him as a man constantly seeking information, and accepting ideas on all things in which he becomes interested. His idea of controlling wheat distribution was much talked of by the grain traders.

Hoover was appointed over the heads of other officials. He is the man for the job. He will organize. He will dictate. He will fear nobody, nothing—except the failure of his work. And he will not fail. The United States is a tremendous food-producer. With intensive farming the State of Texas alone it is computed could feed the United States. On general principles the United States has to ration 33 people per square mile, as against Germany's 100. Some advantage in that. But Germany is exporting no food. Not an ounce. The United States must export—or the war is lost to the allies. Germany is super-organized for production. The United States is just beginning. The results in 1917 may not be remarkable. In 1918 there should be a difference.

What of Canada? As we are said by Sir George Foster to be part of an "economic unit" with the United States, the work of our Devonport Hoover will be somewhat similar to theirs. On a basis of area and population we have about four people to the square mile of available area. Comparatively we have far more to export than the United States. We have a great system of railways in need of more man-power. We have oodles of land, much of it tragically idle, and some of the idlest of it close to our consumption centres. It is too late in 1917 now for our Hoover to tackle that. But 1918 will give him or somebody else a chance. Provincial Governments should be organized for this work. They should have tackled it long ago.

Land, transportation, storage, consumption, distribution, export—these will be the main considerations of our Food Dictator. On the land end of it he can do nothing now for 1917. Transportation with sufficient labour and fuel can be relied upon to carry out its end of the contract. Exports—involving the question of transports—will be a constant big business. We are a food-exporting people. We consume far less than we produce. We have wheat enough

in the country now, if it were not sold, to feed ourselves for at least two years on a normal consumption basis. We do not expect in production to fall much below 1916 when we also had an exportable surplus.

But the export demand will outrun production. We should be able to send abroad far more than our surplus. This demand is certain. Even with England able to sustain her own home population from stocks on hand and harvest to be, the armies at the front must be fed. America, including Canada—mainly—must feed them. The demand for export sends up the price at home. It will be the business of our Hoover to see that the price does not go beyond the assurance that every man, woman and child gets enough to eat without waste.

All excess of demand over visible supply increases the price. But export is only one cause of this. Waste, or over-consumption, is another and a very serious one. No food dictator can stop people from waste. Much of the waste is unintentional, and some of it unavoidable at present. Until the country comes to the universal centralized food kitchens for all ranks and classes there will always be a percentage of unused food in the country, food that goes to the garbage heap or in excess amounts to somebody's stomach, which in extreme cases is the same thing. The waste end of food control we must look after ourselves, and the size of the "wad" in most of our pockets compared to the price we have to pay other people for what we have to eat and wear and live in will teach us to do this better than a food dictator can ever do.

There remain but two main things determining the business of our Canadian Devonport. Storage and consumption. Both of these directly affect the demand in competition with exports and waste. Storage is necessary. It is necessary also to control it. Any cold-storage expert who is stocking up abnormally now at easier prices to unload at high prices on the people whose markets he gets his goods from is a fair mark for the Food-Autocrat. He will be dealt with.

Storage in this case is the business of the State, not of the individual or the private corporation. But the State is no better able to handle storage in the interests of the people than corporations are, except as it regulates the difference between the price at which the food goes into storage and the price at which it comes out to the people. When the war started England was full of storage experts who stocked their own cellars in fear of famine. The famine did not arrive. Had these people kept on storing, something like famine might have been the result, locally at least. The same was true in Germany. A thousand cellars are as good for taking food out of the supply market as one big storage plant operated for cash profit. Our dictator will see to it that the cellars and the granaries of Canada do not bury our food, more than the walls of our towns and cities will be allowed by the War Department to conceal our soldiers. If we make war upon a storage wholesaler who forces up present prices by taking food unnaturally out of circulation, we must also make war upon the storage retailer who does it for the good of his own stomach.

This war on the hoarder applies equally to those who buy and to those who produce. If we are to apply our food to consumption demands economically we must not permit a farmer to hoards wheat for the sake of a higher price.

This brings us down to consumption, which is touched on one side by waste, on the other by storage, and along the line by distribution. Every man, woman and child in a land of exportable food surplus like Canada is entitled to sufficient food, fuel and clothing, as once a famous political document stated that every man is entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But no man is entitled to more than enough. Those who consume more than they should can be looked after by—

By whom? What and where is the army of supervisors capable of looking after these details? We can do as Germany has done; make use of our

municipal machinery. We may go further and hitch up our Boards of Trade. Every community big enough for a council and a Board of Trade is big enough for a committee working under the Food Controllership of Canada.

But who and what manner of man is this controller to be? We are not told as yet. We suspect that like the Railway Commission he must be put on wheels. Any fine morning the Food Controller or some deputy of his should be able to turn up in any community.

Drastic? Oh, yes. But we shan't mind it once we are all committed to the business of making the most of our conditions for the purpose of conserving the nation and winning the war. And when we get to the end of commandeering and conscripting our stomachs for the good of the State we shall put the Ludendorff slave system up on a very high shelf in the world's museum.

Battalions or Drafts?

WHAT method is to be followed in organizing the Selective Draft? Are we to have a large number of new battalions? Or will the 100,000 men be trained as draft companies to reinforce battalions already at the front? Or will both methods be adopted?

The alternative is stated because it exists. It should be an axiom in the further organization of our army that a battalion is organized to go into the firing line as a unit. Objection to breaking up a Canadian battalion as drafts to other battalions may be sentimental. Well and good. So is voluntary enlistment largely sentimental. So is the sending of a Canadian army at all, considerably sentimental. There certainly was no compulsion to offer an army in the first place. Without an Imperial sentiment a Canadian army would have been a small matter. A battalion becomes a sentimental unit. It is not a mere machine. Analyze it and you find a strange, almost profound and quite vagabond set of impulses that hold it together. To break it up is like breaking a family. Once it is cemented together in camp, nothing but death and disablement should tear it asunder.

And we shall no doubt need a number of new battalions in districts where few or none have already been organized. For the sake of the real fighting spirit let us hope that these units are kept together, and that the men clearly understand it when they are drafted. In districts already represented by battalions at the front, the draft would seem to be the better system.

No Party Matter

WE shall do well not to get excited over the anti-conscription outbreak in Quebec Province, on a day when the loyalty of Canadians to the Motherland was being celebrated. Placid acceptance of the idea to be embodied in the Act was not to be expected. The character of the resentment is what counts, where it comes from, who organized it and for what purpose. On the political side we find a certain Liberal demand for various accessories and a much more complete war programme than that embodied in the Selective Draft. Some are said to favour a referendum. Others again talk of forcing an election. Let us be quite sure that a referendum in this case would not become a party matter. The principle of the referendum is all right. But a referendum organized by either party would tend to become a party referendum and to be organized and campaigned for as such. Any more extensive war-programme planks embodied in such a referendum would be regarded as a party platform. The conduct of such a referendum would become a necessary prelude to an election, if not tantamount to an election itself. The country is not concerned with what either party as a party thinks of the war. It is supremely and absolutely concerned with seeing the war to a finish and putting the united national weight of this country behind the Army.