

## Why Not Food Licenses on a Population Basis

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A broadening of our ideas on the subject of communal control has taken place within the last year. We are prepared to admit now what twelve months ago would have been indignantly rejected not only as impossible, but as absolutely beyond the reach of practical discussion. War has changed our point of view. In nothing has it perhaps more changed than in that which concerns public control of privately-owned industries or businesses. That control in the sense of direction in which collective effort shall trend, has been the main cause of success in Canadian munition-making and war orders. It has been still more marked in the case of food control.

Regulation through the license system has opened out possibilities not before within sight. People are to-day, at least, prepared for the question "Why should not food stores be licensed on a population basis?" There may be something comic in the first thought that food businesses should be under regulation just like the old saloon and the hotel. But have we not the same conditions in our food trade that led to the absence of the refreshment house? We know that, apart from alcohol in the refreshments, one of the greatest evils of the old licensed house was the fact that the licensee had to make a living when his competitors were far too near to him; he had to shut his eyes to a general lowering of his business for the sake of keeping the business together. In the vast majority of Canadian towns there are to-day too many people in the food business. All have to make a living by it. Overlapping profits and multiplied profits have to be made by this state of affairs. The public has to pay for it. If licenses were granted by municipalities upon a population basis, again exactly as licenses for standard hotels are now granted, regulations could be laid down for a uniform and economical delivery system. This would reduce the cost of living to something which the Food Board has endeavored to bring about through the "Cash-and-Carry" system of shopping. The volume of business done by the stores would be increased. Overhead charges would be materially reduced, and the necessities of life could be sold at a great reduction on present rates without interfering with legitimate profits sufficient to keep grocers enough in the business to supply all the needs. Regulation of maximum profits, which is already an institution under the Food Board, could be established in permanency. It would give the consumer the guarantee of increased efficiency; the guarantee that he was getting the largest amount of food with the least amount of trade tinkering for which he had to pay food prices.

Regulations upon the sale of food and its distribution could very practically be undertaken by municipalities. The case of milk is a very good instance. The cost of the distribution of milk in the Dominion is admittedly excessive at present, largely due to overlapping in delivery areas, otherwise to too many people being in the business. Last year farmers got 7 cents a quart for milk; on an average it cost 7c more to distribute this seven cents' worth of milk. If municipalities adopted the franchise system and the license for its milk vendors with the municipal area divided into suitable districts, more efficiency, economy and good service could be obtained. When a large number of distributors, as at present, are competing one with another, there is overlapping in their work, duplicating the employment of men, horses and delivery vans. Again the public has to pay.

A similar control might be carried out in our public produce markets. To a certain extent there is control already. Farmers having produce must not hawk it indiscriminately around city streets. A certain allotted place we know as the market is set out for them. If this is an advantage—and except that it gives unequalled opportunities for market hold-ups, which are becoming shamefully common in Canada—it would also be an advantage, and perhaps would correct the hold-ups if the individual were licensed. He would then not fear undue and unfair competition. At the same time the purchasing consumers would feel that the price asked by the vendor of veget-

ables or farm produce or any other food was just and reasonable, and would pay promptly, the only change being according to the quality of the produce.

A licensing system would eliminate the inefficient. There are plenty of people in the small stores today who are, in the ordinary term of the street, "hanging on by their eyebrows." They are not equipped nor fitted for their line of business. They add to the cost of the commodities in which they deal, because they interfere with more efficient business. An instance of this is found in the baking industry. The Canada Food Board has recently received a number of letters from bakers, pointing out that their businesses were improved in efficiency through the working of the licensing system. They have had to keep a strict check on the quantities of flour and substitutes used in the baking, and one firm, a large Eastern Ontario firm, says that what was accomplished would have been considered impossible four months ago. Bakers have been forced to educate themselves in their own trade. The slipshod way of baking could no longer be kept up, and perhaps for the first time in their lives, 80 per cent of the bakers under license have exactly measured the flours they used. A better system of bookkeeping had to be installed, because the Food Board reports, to be made monthly, called for more detailed statements. It was as good as a course in a technical school.

These considerations are suggested by the fact that the first renewal of the licenses by the Food Board is being made this month. These are the millers' licenses. Other classes will fall due for their renewal next month, and so on monthly until about June, when it is expected that the whole of the food trades in the Dominion will be working under their second license issue. Are the cumulative benefits of this preparatory work of licensing to be quite lost to the community? It would be one of the best means of reconstruction if we could voluntarily adopt and continue this system for peace-time, which we have found so valuable in war-time.

### SOCIAL WELFARE.

"Social Welfare" a new monthly, published by The Social Service Council of Canada, made its entry on October 1. The Social Service Council of Canada is a federation of the following bodies:—The Church of England in Canada; the Methodist Church in Canada; the Presbyterian Church in Canada; the Baptist Church in Canada; the Congregational Church in Canada; the Salvation Army; the Evangelical Association of North America; the Canadian Purity-Education Association; the Dominion Woman's Christian Temperance Union; the Christian Men's Federation of Canada; the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.; the Dominion Council of the Y.W.C.A.; the Dominion Grange and Farmers' Association; the Canadian Council of Agricultural Service Council of Canada, made its entry on Oct. 1. tions; the International Association of Rotary Clubs; the Dominion Council, Royal Templars of Temperance; the Social Service Councils of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and Bermuda.

The editor is Dr. Jno. G. Shearer. Charlotte E. Whitton, M.A., is assistant editor. The corresponding editors are: The provincial secretaries; the secretaries of Newfoundland and Bermuda, and Dr. Worth M. Tippy, Social Service Commission of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

The greatest heresy in the world is the heresy of the closed mind. This is the "Unpardonable Sin," to shut your eyes against the light least you see and be convinced. If the truth makes us free then whatever hinders us from seeing truth and saying truth makes slaves of us.—Robert Whittaker.