

An Opportunity for the Municipal Officers of Canada

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"It shall be the duty of each Municipality in Canada to enforce this regulation within its municipal limits."

That regulation, from Order in Council No. 597, is framed in these words: "The wilful waste of any food or food products where such waste results from carelessness, or from the manner of storage thereof, is hereby prohibited." In a special and specific way, therefore, each member of a municipal body, paid or unpaid, is made a policeman to carry out the orders of the Food Board. On their individual interpretation of the scope of "duty" in the present crisis will depend the thoroughness with which they see that waste is stopped. It must be the effort of those who think clearly of all that is here involved to raise the moral tone of our municipalities. This is a personal obligation; it is a moral thing, and therefore cannot be escaped, cannot be shifted or delegated to others.

The Order is not a caprice, lightly written on paper. It is a distinct, well-pondered war measure. It is not of local aim; it is clearly defined in the words "each Municipality in Canada"; it runs from coast to coast; it bears alike in the older settlements of New Brunswick as in the newer farm lands of northern Alberta. In each it aims at the same thing—the making of our Dominion share in the war in Europe most effective in the way definitely learned by the Dominion Government to be most useful. The supply of foods for the fighting armies is, after the enrolling of men for that army, the most vital war measure Canada can take up in 1918.

Since the Military Service Act was passed has there not seemed to be a little slackening in voluntary effort in Canada? We appear to have lulled ourselves into the belief that our duty has been done in that respect, and that there remains little else to do. "Ralph Connor," last July, spoke of this dropping off as the "taking of a second breath." The Canada Food Board has since then found that enthusiasm is none less prompt if rightly directed. The broad, undefined appeal to the patriotism of the whole community was good, but the repeated appeal had naturally to pall with time. So that sectional appeals, with definite schemes of work outlined, were found to give best results in Food Board work. It might be mentioned that in the last two months excellent results have been attained through the Board enlisting the aid of every retail merchant in Canada, so far as he can be reached with the means at their disposal. Out of the 50,000 retailers in the Dominion over 30,000 are now "giving something"—space or time or window display—to Food Board work.

Now much the same thing could be given by the municipal employees. They could give their sympathy and support to all that issues for the control of our food resources, for any addition to our means of food production, through vacant lot or garden. But above all they could aid this truly national effort of ours to share worthily in the war by seeing that the spirit of the Orders in Council that are published from time to time, and which must necessarily be framed to changing circumstances, is carried into effect in their own localities. It should not be their concern whether the next municipality is lax or lazy in such work. In an especial sense this responsibility rests on the higher-placed officials. They have incalculable influence in giving the right trend to public business in their area. A suggestion here or a hint of what others are doing there; a talk with the mayor and commissioners, or with the aldermen and councillors, will go a long way to shaping a policy—for which, of course, they will get no direct credit, but the able municipal employee has long since got beyond looking for recognition of that kind! "It's reward is in the doing."

It cannot be too much emphasized that this is something where the municipal man can do invaluable service to his country. It is well known that there is not to any

marked degree in Canada that indefinite, invisible thing we know as "public opinion" to act as moral police. If those above nod at little lapses those below are not slow to notice. In the same way if the heads of departments set a tone those below are quick to follow. This works for enormous good as easily as for incalculable evil. A right direction given to war effort—and food control is nothing but a war measure, as necessary whether we realize its bearing or not as shellmaking in the Dominion—would have enormous effect. This is fully understood by the Canada Food Board. The Order making it the "duty of each municipality in Canada to enforce this regulation" was not framed by chance, but with a well-thought out design to secure the best that our present social organization in the Dominion can give.

One of the most curious outcomes of the executive work at the central offices of the Canada Food Board at Ottawa is the incredibly heavy amount of added, and, one might add, of unrequited, labour entailed through having to devise means of carrying out Orders and rules that were imperatively required if food conservation and production were not to be dead letters in the land. Had Canada been policed, for instance, as Great Britain, France or Belgium were even before the trump of war, there would still have been greater difficulty in our scattered country in enforcing rules and laws to which the public had been accustomed. In our existing social order, in a state of growth and incompleteness, the task has been vastly greater. The real trouble and anxiety was due not strictly to food measures, but to something aliunde to food proper—the ways and means of carrying food orders into effect equitably in widely differing parts of the Dominion and under widely differing circumstances. A book might, for instance, be written of how the Food Board eventually, by a thousand deviations, was able to get a fish supply into central Canada. Even the flax to make the fishermen's nets had to be imported under the aegis of the Board, as also salt to salt them! It did nearly all except catch the fish!

Thus the enlistment of a new class of men, both intelligent and technically trained for the work as municipal members and employees are, is doubly welcome to the Food Board. Their collaboration will be incalculably easier by the terms under which their municipalities will benefit by vigilance. The virtue of patriotism was never so joined with direct advantage to our corporate bodies! Section 6 of the Order in Council reads:

"Where the proceedings in any case in which a fine is imposed under the authority of these regulations are instituted at the instance of any municipality, or by any officer of a municipality, the fine shall be paid to the treasurer of such municipality, to be disposed of as the municipality may from time to time direct. And where such proceedings are instituted at the instance of, or by any provincial officer, such fine shall be paid to the provincial treasurer, to be disposed of as such treasurer may from time to time direct."

It only remains to add that the individual is equally well protected from "the small mind" by Section 5, which runs:—

"Any person violating any of the provisions of these regulations, or of any order made thereunder, or obstructing or impeding any officer or person enforcing or carrying out any of the provisions of these regulations, or of any order made thereunder, is guilty of an offence, and shall be liable on summary conviction before a Police Magistrate or two Justices of the Peace, to a penalty not exceeding one thousand dollars, and not less than one hundred dollars, or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months, or to both fine and imprisonment."

One may therefore claim that in asking the aid of the municipality and its employees the Canada Food Board has made the means as simple as they could well be conceived.