

# The PROBLEM of FOOD SUBSTITUTES

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

By PROF. R. M. MACIVER

ONE question that, I think, must often face a Food Controller is this: Shall I try persuasion or compulsion? Here is some saving to be achieved, some diversion of labor to more necessary or more productive employments, some elimination of waste. He has the power to prohibit or to enforce. Shall he use it—or shall he try to persuade instead? It may seem strange, but it is very true, that the question of voluntary versus compulsory service is not so easy in the case of the supply of food as in that of the supply of men. In some respects compulsion is the obvious method, as in respect of liquor restrictions. In others compulsion fails altogether, as all European countries have found in dealing with food-hoardings by peasants. Great Britain found it was worse than useless limiting by law the number of courses to be served in hotels and restaurants—it directly increased the consumption of the food staples of which the shortage was greatest! It is a question full of complications. What is possible in one country is not possible in another. Some forms of compulsion which are possible in England or France or Germany are impossible in Canada or the States, not because the people are less amenable, but because geographical differences over a wide country, transportation problems, differences of racial habit, and so on, put insurmountable obstacles in the way of uniformity.

In one case, viz., the substitution of one food for another, it is clear that the Food Controller must trust largely to persuasion. The necessities of the situation require that we eat less of some foods and more of others, less beef and less bacon and more fish, less wheat and more corn and other cereal products, less butter and lard and more nut-products, beef-drippings (for cooking purposes), and so on. There is a great variety of ways in which substitu-

tion may be made, and these will depend on personal and family habit, opportunity, income, not on regulation. The first thing is to persuade. It is a matter of psychology. Once people realize the need they adjust themselves to it—but the trouble is that it is so hard to make people realize it. It has proved hard even in the countries where the ravage of war is more directly felt. Sometimes it seems as if people were more ready to give up their lives than their habits. Food habits are so engrained, a matter of instinct or routine rather than reasoning. And commercialized advertisement has blunted our minds to appeals. It has made urgent appeal where no urgency exists (save for profits). Still, the method of public persuasion (which is what advertising means) must here be applied. When we are up against such a national habit as, for example, the over-eating of meat, it is no use merely saying, Eat less. It is necessary to explain why, and to explain yet again, and to go on explaining—until the lesson is driven home and a new habit supplants the old.

I have been speaking only of substitution in food-consumption. Behind it lies another question, substitution in food-production. There is no reserve of labor at the present time, and the increase of one form of food-production almost inevitably means the diversion of labor from other forms of production. A certain amount can indeed be done by better organization, as the development of the fish supply, both sea and inland, by the energetic Fish Committee has shown. But there are special factors in this case, and in general the increase of any kind of food supply involves substitution, the decrease of other kinds. It might be expedient, for example, to in-

crease the acreage under beans on account of their high food value, and that would involve a reduction of some other crops. On a matter of this kind, the Food Controller alone, having before him the definite requests of the allies, can speak with authority. But here, too, he must depend mainly on persuasion, which itself ought to be felt as binding by the producers to whom it is addressed.

If you encourage one form of production you are likely to discourage others in that degree—such is the nemesis of labor (and capital) shortage. It is most important, therefore, that in taking any step the whole critical situation be kept in view. This applies pre-eminently to the wheat question. We have been inclined to think of bread as the first necessity, the staff of life. But the supreme food necessity is not wheat but milk. There are substitutes for bread; there is none, in its most important service, for milk and its products. Milch cattle are even more important than fields of wheat. If the herds are diminished, it takes time to restore them, far longer than to restore the wheat supply. Soon after the war the urgent demand for wheat will fall away, but the urgent demand for cattle must, in view of the already existing shortage, continue for a number of years. In the light of this situation Mr. Hoover has recently made a statement of very great significance: "The great present stimulation of wheat growing in the United States by guaranteeing minimum prices may yet have some of the characters of a national calamity." And we in Canada have, necessarily, just the same problem. Hence I would return in conclusion to a point I have already insisted upon from another side, that is, the danger of a high permanently-fixed wheat price which may stand in the way of other necessary measures of food control.

## THE WORLD ITS OWN DOCTOR

*We have a disease. It is Germany. The disease is curable. But the surgical operation known as War is only the beginning of the cure.*

By THE EDITOR

HOW do we face 1918? In the middle of the fourth year of war, can we take national good cheer out of the situation by looking backwards and ahead? If not, let's be candid with ourselves. If ever there was a time when Canada needed to see clearly in order to act unitedly and vigorously, now is the time.

And we can do it. We have the best of reasons for doing it. There never was a New Year in this country when we had such a right to take ourselves soberly for what we are worth based upon what we have done, are doing, and intend to do.

We are at war, more than ever; more than we were in 1915, 1916, or 1917. We are there of our own volition and intend to stay for the same reason. We know better what we are fighting for, what we are fighting against, and what our resources are for keeping up and crescendoing the fight. We are getting rid of the military superiority of language. Bunkum is being reduced. The facts are before us.

The great Fact is vividly, amazingly before us. The great Fact of War. The story is old now. But it comes back every day with the punch of an amazing novelty. What we are fighting against—we are coming to understand better.

What is it? A world disease. Nothing less. And the name of that disease is Germany. We shall never win the war or keep it won until we persist in thinking every day of our lives that Germany is no part of a healthy world. Germany is a cancer. The cancer has been eating its way into the heart of Europe for longer than the memory of any living man. We have pointed it out before. It requires to be kept pointed out. We of the new world need a lot of reminding about what this menace is. Twenty years ago a German officer told an American officer what Germany's programme was. He told it because, as he said, nobody would believe it—outside of Germany.

And we are only now coming to be convinced that the programme of Germany is not a mere delusion or a dream. It is a disease, the roots of which go back to the days before Frederick the Great, whom Carlyle spent 14 years in eulogizing. The wisest diagnosticians the

world over had failed to note that disease. It was there in the heart of Europe, which is still the heart of the world. It has been spreading, slowly, steadily, organizedly, out and out in all directions. A nation organized to a point of mania was to conquer the world. All the forces that have uplifted humanity were to be torn away, and disease was to take its place.

Any country that has escaped the infection is not on a traveler's map. America and Canada have had it sure enough. Canada was to have become a fertile field for Germanism. The youngest countries in the world were to have the disease the hardest; America, including Canada, was to have become the real centre of Germanism. So it was said.

So, the normal state of the world, sick of the German cancer, is to fight disease. The normally well man thinks an ailment is a nuisance. He will soon be well again. But the world is not a well man. The world is a very sick man; and the illness is Germany.

The world's one great business then, before all else and by means of all else, is to get rid of the disease. How? By a decision on the field of battle, in the air, on the sea or under it? Scarcely. The disease known as Germany is not an attack of indigestion. It is a cancer. A curable cancer—but one that will take more than the surgical operation of this war to remove. The world must not only cut out the cancer; it must also so live in its bodily and spiritual health that any growth of the cancer is impossible.

How long will that take? Nobody knows. But the war will not do it. The war is the one heroic and awful thing that must do most of it. But the disease of Germanism has become too far-reaching for any one operation. What civilization must have if it is to make the world possible for an enlightened humanity is a healthy body. The world must continue to fight against the disease that has threatened to kill the world.

And for a long while to come we shall find our greatest inspiration to live in just that one effort. The nations that are uniting now to