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Special Articles

Banking and Business Affairs in the U. S.
By Elmer H. Youngman.

The Effects of War Upon Labor.
By W. W. Swanson, Ph.D.

The Interest on the War Debt.
By H. M. P. Eckardt.

A Business Government.
From Our London Correspondent.

Conditions in the West.
By E. Cora Hind.

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The Children's Dry Bread

ON questions concerning agriculture and food production generally there is no better authority in Canada than Dr. J. W. Robertson, long a chief officer of the Dominion's Department of Agriculture, later head of the Macdonald Agricultural College, and now co-operating with the Food Controller in advising the people respecting the need of economy in the use of foods. Dr. Robertson addressed a meeting in Montreal on Thursday night, at which one of his audience drew his attention to a matter which we discussed in our issue of last week—the continued prohibition of margarine in Canada. The report says:

"Professor Robertson gave it as his opinion in response to a questioner that oleomargarine was just as valuable in nutritive properties, pound for pound, as butter for all ordinary purposes. The only reason it had not been allowed in Canada was that dairymen felt that it had been sold in the past not as a substitute for butter, but as a counterfeit of butter. The Government did not want to precipitate a conflict on this question during war-time between the country and city people. The speaker had at one time made oleomargarine. It could be made so much like butter that he had known two experts unable to decide between two articles which was butter and which oleomargarine. Butter seemed better in hospitals as it was richer in the vitamins so necessary to digestibility."

Dr. Robertson, no doubt, stated the situation correctly. But is it not a humiliating position to place our Government in? If the farmers' objections to the use of margarine now had any reasonable ground, the Government, would, of course, be right in deferring to their views. But Dr. Robertson's remarks show very clearly that there is no sound objection now to allowing the people to purchase a cheap food that is so much needed in these times of stress. Years ago margarine was produced under conditions that gave good ground for treating it as unwholesome. But those conditions have long passed away. Margarine, as made to-day, is recognized in every civilized country except Canada as a legitimate article of commerce. Our farmers are very human. They are naturally inclined to look out for what they believe to be their own interests. When somebody tells them that the use of margarine will reduce the price of butter they are disposed to accept that view. But, on the other hand, the farmers of our country are one of the most intelligent classes, and they surely are not less disposed than others to be fair and just to their fellow-countrymen, when all the facts of a case are

laid before them. If the proper steps had been taken to inform the farmers of the truth of the margarine question, there is no room for doubt that the most intelligent and representative among them would have seen the injustice of the present law and would have assented to its repeal, or at least to its suspension during the war. Dr. Robertson, if assigned to such a duty, could in half an hour's discussion satisfy any intelligent farmers' meeting of the absurdity of the prohibition in war time and of the cruel injustice (the words are none too strong), that it does to the poorer classes, who are so hard pressed by the present food prices. When there is an almost unlimited demand for butter, and the article sells readily for between forty and fifty cents a pound, it is folly to think that the producer of it requires any form of protection. As to the substitution of margarine for butter, we have abundance of laws to guard against fraud of that kind and there is no difficulty in enforcing them.

When the price of butter began to soar to figures beyond the reach of the poorer classes the Government's Department of Agriculture should have taken up the margarine question immediately and, having satisfied itself that, as Dr. Robertson shows, the article is pure and nutritious, the Department, by its literature and its speakers, should have placed the truth of the matter before the farmers of the country, and then taken steps to give the Canadian people the right to purchase this food-stuff which is not denied to the people of any other civilized country. We refuse to believe that the farmers of Canada, a most intelligent and probably, on the whole, the most prosperous class of our people, desire their poorer fellow citizens in the cities to be denied the privilege of buying this cheap food. To the workman whose children eat dry bread the Government virtually say: "We know this is wrong. We know that margarine is wholesome and cheap. We know that if you lived anywhere else in the wide world you would be free to use it in your home. But as we are afraid of the votes of the farmers, and we are not willing to take the trouble of educating the farmers in the truth of the matter, your children must still eat dry bread."

Is there any exaggeration in this? Is it not a fair and correct statement of the attitude that is taken on this margarine question by the Government and Parliament of Canada?

The Next War Loan

ALTHOUGH no very definite announcement has been made, an intimation has been given that another Canadian war loan will be issued in November. It may reasonably be assumed as unlikely that the general