

Patriotism and Food.

Patriotism and food in other countries, too, have been forced to go hand in hand. Of the Allies, France naturally had to deal with the problem first. In September, 1914, she took the first steps. But it was a year after that she made the first order regulating distribution. Up to that time the peace-time foodstocks had not been eaten into. The French Food Control department was for months under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. In January, 1917, food shortage became acute and control passed to the Ministry of Public Works, but in March last a special Ministry of Revictualling was formed. With it conjointly went the Ministry of Maritime Transports. This association shows how closely food supply is linked with the shipping for its distribution. Thanks to being "within the ring," the Central Powers are not dependent on the vagaries of sea-borne traffic for their supplies—a condition which works all in their favor in submarine warfare, for they give their opponents no target.

No country has experimented more with the theory of price "fixing" than has France; the Frenchman clings to ancient economics like a Scot to the Shorter Catechism. One of the French war ministries fell through an attempt to juggle with "price fixing." Certain minimum prices were fixed, only to be revoked as they failed successively. The French Government and people found that maximum prices, too, only worked where the Government had the control of the commodities. Maximum prices in other cases afforded no relief for the growing cost of living. Experience soon taught that nothing so frightened the farmer-producer as a maximum price. He knew that he would have to pay at a higher scale for all he produced each succeeding year, because the price of labor and everything he himself had to buy would go up. He knew that if his selling price were fixed his profits would be small or absent. So the farmer did not produce. Inevitably the cost of living, aggravated by shortage of supplies, went up higher than if no price had been fictitiously fixed.

"Stretching" Wheat Supply.

Wheat milling, also, was not until somewhat late put under public control in France. French millers must now mill 85 per cent of the actual grain-corn into flour for bread-making. The French baker must add 30 per cent by weight of non-wheat flour before he begins to bake.

Then came a systematised delivery from the bakery. Each French baker could only supply bread to customers whose names were on a list approved by a Government official. That prevented waste. It was the first step to the bread card. It prevented a double share going to anyone inclined to "hog." The spreading of this system without inequalities over 30,000,000 people, whose male workers were mostly at war or in war occupations, was an achievement almost unprecedented. Only 7 oz. of bread can now be secured by a French civilian a day: before the war he took bread at the rate of 2 lbs. a day. France has now two meatless days a week and her meat supply is stringently controlled. Her sugar allowance is only 13 pounds a head for a year. M. Maurice Long, the Minister of Revictualling in France, declared with dynamic force on December 31st that the French civil population had only three days' supply of foods and were dependent on British shipping for the rest. And yet France fights unconquerably.

Italy's Effort to Control.

Italy was for two years a long way behind Great Britain and France in Food Control but the severe reverse of last autumn brought a change until it would appear as though Italy is going as far into State food regulation as any of the Allies. A definitive rationing scheme for all staples, meat, bread, fats and sugar, is being prepared. Sugar is permitted only to the extent of 13 pounds a head a year.

Rationing of wheat flour and bread is now obligatory in some communes the rule holds for rye, paste, corn, rice and oats. A family ticket system is in use. The average ration has been fixed at three-fifths of a pound of bread a day for the civil population, while in the working men's lunch rooms—a very common thing in Italy—only three-tenths of a pound of bread can be served at a meal. On January 3 of this year, all grain, even the smallest quantities, were taken over by the Government and any private person storing more than 22 lbs. of flour is liable to have it confiscated. A still later decree permits millers to grind only the grain allowed by the Police Prefects of the district.

(To be Continued.)

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