

Food Licensing in Canada

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The Dominion has never experienced so vast a system of licensing as now exists under the Canada Food Board. At the close of the week, ending May 18th, the following were the approximate licenses granted:

Wholesale Fish Merchants, 1,500; Package Cereal Makers, 100; Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Dealers, 1,200; Millers, 500; Manufacturing Bakers, 2,300; Wholesale Grocers, 700; Wholesale Produce Dealers, 500; Retail Grocers, 11,000.

Now practically every dealer in foodstuffs from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, and from the international line northward, except the farmer, is under license. The first and naturally tentative step was taken in June, 1917, when millers' profits were restricted to 25c a barrel, but this was found inadequate to properly control the wheat supply — the most important of the foodstuffs so far as Canada, taken singly, was concerned. On December 1st, therefore, the millers were placed under a licensing system. This gave remarkably good results on the whole, but still it was found that there were loopholes through which some millers did not scruple to slip.

But the experience then gained was enough. The Canada Food Board, advancing in this matter step by step with the authorities in the United States, where the food control problem is almost identical with our own, began a scheme whereby all food dealers, large and small, should come within a really controlling system. They came, willingly in most cases, in the following order: Produce Wholesalers, Produce Commission Merchants, Produce Brokers, in March; Wholesale Grocers, Jobbers, Commission Agents, and Brokers, in April; Retail Grocers, Butchers, Bakers, Produce Dealers, Flour and Feed Dealers in May.

In broad, easily understood language, the "Why" of licensing has been given in the following terms:

"Licensing keeps down profiteering. Every licensee is required at stated periods to make reports concerning his business. Most of these men are upright and patriotic; some, like Hamlet, are 'indifferent honest.' But the LICENSE is the only way of catching the UNSCRUPULOUS. It is the one weapon that in all the warring countries has been found to be the terror of the EVILDOER in business. If there is a SUSPICION of undue profit, an examination of books will be ordered. The LICENSE gives

the power of the SHOWDOWN. Licensing controls profits; with profits controlled, prices are only such as will encourage production. If unfair profit is discovered the license may be suspended or cancelled. And out the profiteer will have to go—for NO LICENSE, NO BUSINESS! 'Price fixing' is only arbitrary, but LICENSING gives the CONSUMER something which protects him from excessive PROFITS and, at the same time, gives the Retailer a means to average his profits, with fairness."

Some of the most pertinent clauses in the already long and rapidly extending series of Orders-in-Council by which the Canada Food Board is alone able to work, may be given here. The regulations in No. 597 were given in some detail in the last issue of the **Canadian Municipal Journal**. One paragraph may be repeated. It is the key to so much that succeeds:

"The wilful waste of any food or food products where such waste results from carelessness, or from the manner of storage thereof, or is due to any other avoidable cause, is hereby prohibited. It shall be the duty of each municipality in Canada to enforce this regulation within its municipal limits."

Seven days after this was published on April 12th, Order No. 26 of the Food Board was issued. Regulation 1, reads:

"No person, without first having obtained permission in writing from the Canada Food Board shall own or hold any quantity of meats, lard or oleomargarine greater than is reasonably necessary to supply his own Canadian trade requirements for a period of sixty days."

So with eggs, butter, cheese, poultry, canned, condensed and evaporated milk, all of which are covered by Order 26. "What is to be done with the surplus," one might very naturally ask. Paragraph 7 of the same Order really indicates the why and the wherefore. It runs:

"The owning or holding of a stock of food or food products in excess of the Canadian requirements as provided in this Order and which stock of food or food products so owned and held, is subject to the orders of the Purchasing Agents of Great Britain and her Allies, shall not be construed as a violation of the terms of this Order."

Then follows the statement that the decision as to what constitutes a reasonably necessary quantity for any person to hold must rest with the Food Board. This brings our food control plainly to its logical end — that it is a war-time measure in which everyone ought to be glad to participate for the sake of getting the foods we have in abundance over where they are wanted on the war front and in the munition-making areas of Great Britain and France. As before stated, it is the duty of "each municipality in Canada" to carry out the Food Board regulations, and the following paragraph should be ample protection against annoyance of any officers working under the order:—

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.

A subsequent article will deal with other aspects of this all-important work of licensing in the all-important plan of our all-important duty in shouldering properly our burden in the war. The aid and the ardent enthusiasm of the municipal employee is especially desirable; he can do so much if he chooses; he can leave so much undone if he so prefers. But the very newness of the work in Canada should appeal to him and should convince him that his aid especially is wanted, because of the wide Imperial need which underlies the very existence of the Food Board in the Dominion. For whether we care to acknowledge it or not, in this war which has already waged for almost four vile years, or whether we care, ostrich-like to hide our head in the sand, there lies the making or the unmaking of a democratic future for this vast land, which we call Canada,

TOWARDS A MUNICIPAL THEATRE—Cont

in theatrical matters, especially in the matter of state theatres.* It is high time we not only recognized her superiority, but surpassed it. That nation realizes the vital need of the people for good plays. Note the example of Dortmund; a German town of 200,000 inhabitants, approximately the size of our Winnipeg. There is a theatre, palatial, adequate, handsome, comfortable, owned by the Municipality of Dortmund. Because it is so owned, the prices of admission are regulated, and accordingly they are low. Because it is so owned, the people are able to choose what plays they will have, and this responsibility reacts to their advantage.

Surely we of Canada who are able to defeat Germany in the field, will not acknowledge Germany master in the matter of municipal theatres: It is no light matter; it is an urgent matter; yet will we be content to let the enemy triumph in this? As Benedick says, "I think not."

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Having got theatres, the next step is to put reliable persons in charge of them. Any butcher can build a theatre, but it takes a business man who combines with his common-sense the gift of artistry to run a theatre.

Municipal theatres, being self-supporting, need no private endowments. The income from seat sales diverts automatically to the upkeep, payment of staff and cast, and general production expenses. In Germany, people support the state theatres; the municipal theatres are run for their benefit. In Canada, precisely similar conditions can prevail.

I admit that we have no Canadian drama, yet. And in Canadian municipally-owned theatres the proper fare to offer is plays by Canadians. But time solves all problems. The passage of years will see us equipped with a Canadian theatre, presenting Canadian plays, acted by Canadians, supported by Canadians; a national and paying and imperishable institution literally of the people, managed by the people, existing for the people.