

CANADIAN COURIER

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What a Food Despot Must Do

By THE EDITOR

ON account of the exigencies of war we take the liberty this week of commandeering this page of the paper for other purposes than talking about ourselves. While the unsociable sun mopes around behind a million acres of cold cloud, and a north-west wind tries to make the buds and the birds regret that they ever came to this country, we propose to say a few words—continued on our regular editorial page—about the

NATIONAL BUSINESS OF FOOD CONTROL,

Which, after all, is a very

IMPORTANT PART OF OURSELVES.

As we write this it is still being debated who is to become the modern Joseph of Canada. But whoever he may be, he will face a strictly unusual and usually unpopular job. This country is not accustomed to food control. Since our pioneer days went by we have been more used to food prodigal-ship. The Canadian who refused to clean up his plate because he declined to compete with the garbage tin may have been a wit, but he should have kept a different kind of garbage barrel in his back yard in the shape of a good-sized pig.

We are only learning the rudiments of food conservation. The only country that understands the higher algebra of it is Germany. Two years ago we set out to hunger-blockade Germany. We have not done it. There are economic reasons why we shall not do it—at least not this year. Germany set out to hunger-blockade England with her submarines. By June 1 England was to have been too hungry to fight. June 1 is one day earlier than the date on the cover of this paper. England is still fighting and will not be hungry.

It takes a lot of food reduction to starve any people. But when a lot of food-reduced peoples are fighting one another, the organized people wins in that particular business against its competitors. Germany, anticipating food-reduction in a long war, began to organize food control before the war began. She studied the most advanced methods of food-culture in other countries. When the war came she had a vast cold storage of information on the food question. The Eltzbacher Commission carried it out. The Commission was composed of agricultural and nutrition experts. Nothing left to haphazard. A scientific diet was worked out for a whole nation, estimated not in tons, but in calories or heat units—food regarded as fuel. On the walls of the General Staff Office in Berlin there is a food map of the German Empire, which shows, wheat red, potatoes blue, grazing-lands green, etc. War cook-books were got out and distributed by millions. The army controlled the system. But army control failed. There was hoarding, shortage, price-boosting—riots. Food control was placed under a War Nutrition Office of experts in production, transportation and distribution headed by Batocki. The regulations of this body are enforced by civil and municipal authorities.

To quote from an article on food-controllorship in the Atlantic Monthly:

His regulations are law and are enforced by the machinery of government, national, state and municipal. His power is absolute in food matters. He dictates the kinds and amounts of crops to be grown and cattle to be raised, what portion the farmer may keep and what he shall sell to the State, the price he shall get, how and by whom the foodstuffs shall be handled, both wholesale and retail, and the prices to be charged. Finally, by the card system, he regulates consumption by the individual, ensuring to each his share.

This is a pretty stiff order. It comes as near despotism as we can ever tolerate in a democracy. If we are to copy Germany in this as we did in army mobilization and trench warfare, we shall pray that such a job do not give the man who gets it a hat several sizes too small before he makes the cost of living any less. The man who plays such a role of dictator in this country of big production and small consumption will need to be,

Not so much a man of Ideas as of Action.

Not a man who knows so much as a Man who can Find out Things Quickly and Act like Lightning on What he Finds Out.

Not a friend of statesmen and of politicians, but a man without fear of any class interest and absolutely a just mediator between producer and consumer with the distributor between.

Not a man of judicial temperament merely, but a man who can accustom himself to probe, and probe, and then again—and tell every man the truth in the interests of the whole people.

Six months after this system was started Germany passed a civil service mobilization law drafting every man and woman between eighteen and sixty into State service. The chief aim of this was to get labour, not only for munitions, but for crop-production. In this drastic co-ordination may be traced the hand of Ludendorff, the greatest dictator Germany has ever known since Bismarck. An admiring article on this 101 per-cent-efficient co-ordinator is

(Continued on page 14.)

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