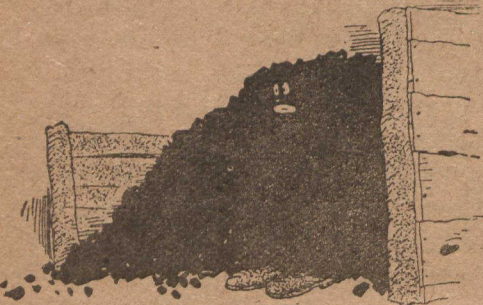




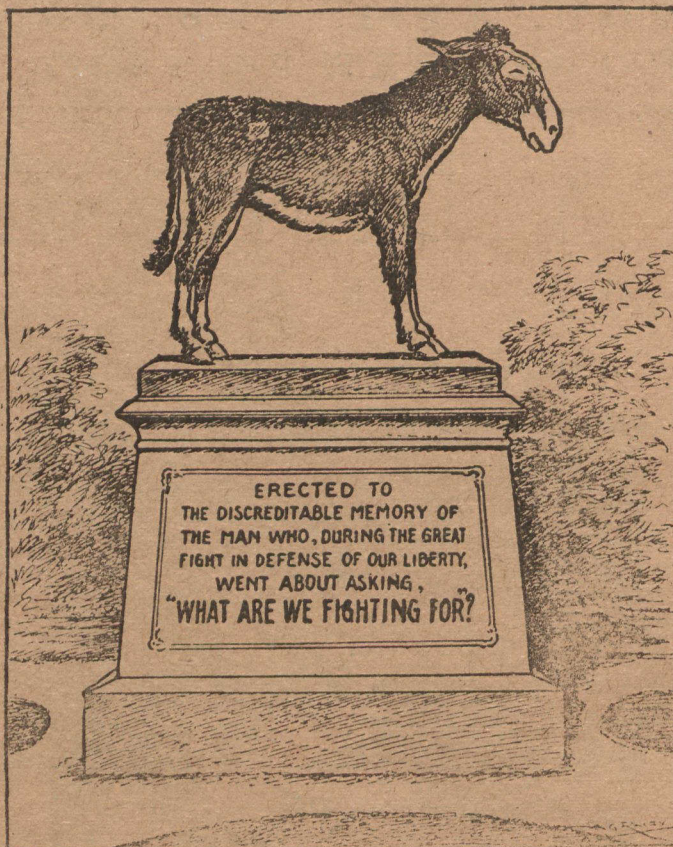
RALPH Barton, in *Cartoons Magazine*, calls this the Douglas Fairbanks theory and practice of war. It seems that on Oct. 1, 1917, Charlie Chaplin and Fairbanks, with the rank of major-generals, called for volunteers from the ranks of their imitators in the various movie concerns. Thousands volunteered.



THE author of this says that the dusky gentleman in the coal-bin is a much more effective example of camouflage than the proverbial dusky gentleman on the wood-pile.

CAMOUFLAGE

EVERYBODY'S doing it, they tell us. Camouflage, the art of enemy bamboozlement, is like appendicitis and la grippe. People had it ages ago when they didn't know what to call it.



NOW, if there's one thing Halifax always did know, it's what the row was all about. Anybody who takes the *Halifax Herald*, from which this cartoon is taken, and doesn't realize that there is some sort of war on most of the time, had better consult a camouflage specialist.



FROM the cover of the *Canadian Journal of Music*, we extract this camouflage caricature of a Dutch 'cellist. Now, nobody ever imagined before that a Dutchman, even by the name of Michael Penha, ever could play the 'cello like this. But of course this is only a caricature. We commend it to the careful consideration of Boris Hambourg (Russian), Leo Smith (English-Canadian), and Pablo Casals (Spanish), as an example of real abandon in the art. Even the *New York Staats-Zeitung* admitted that Penha "draws a big, flowing tone." So glad the *S. Z.* didn't say "flowing bow," in which case we should suppose he was referring to Calgary.

THE MIDDLEMAN AND THE COST OF FOOD

TO many minds the term "middleman" calls up a wrong idea. It suggests an unnecessary go-between, a supernumerary, an intruder between producer and consumer. He seems to stand like a turnpike man—some would go further and say a highwayman—on the road between producer and consumer, taking toll of all that passes by. If it weren't for his intrusion, many people imagine, the producer could deal directly with the consumer, to the great advantage of the latter. So one of the favorite suggestions for the reduction of food prices is the elimination of the middleman.

But a little reflection shows that the middleman performs a service in the economic system that is absolutely necessary, no less necessary than that of production itself. To speak more strictly, the marketing of goods is itself a great and necessary part of production. The middleman distributes products, but he does much more.

Here, for example, is a summary list, given by an expert in marketing, of the services rendered by middlemen:

Assembling, or the seeking out of commodities from various sources;

Making business connections, etc.;

Storing, or the holding of goods at convenient points;

Financing, or the giving of credit, making loans and advances, etc.

Assumption of risks from price fluctuation, deterioration, style changes, etc.;

Rearrangement, or the sorting, grading, and packing function;

Selling (which includes advertising); and transportation (the most important feature of which is the delivery service).

Now all these services have to be rendered by somebody, whether you call him a middleman or not.

(Fourth of a Series of Articles on the Limits and Possibilities of Price and Food Control.)

By PROF. R. M. MACIVER

A particular city-dweller may be in a position to deal directly with a particular farmer, or a group of city dwellers may club together to buy directly in quantity and distribute among themselves. They often save that way, because they are their own middlemen, just as individuals save sometimes by being their own carpenters or plumbers or electricians. But it is only in specially favorable circumstances that consumers can successfully act as their own middlemen. The division of labor that runs through all economic life appears in this sphere also, and classes arise who specialize in the marketing and distributing functions. Because they are specialists they can perform these services far more efficiently and economically than the consumers can. They save time and energy. They prevent much waste by adjusting supply to demand. Think, for instance, of the enormous waste there would be if all the multitude of farmers had to sell their butter and eggs, potatoes and vegetables, and so forth, directly to the multitude of families that consume them. What difficulties they would have in finding one another! One farmer would have more orders than he could fill, another too few; deficit here and surplus there. Think of the amount of sorting and packing in small quantities it would mean. Think of the increased difficulty of inspection and grading, processes absolutely necessary for the protection of the public. Think of the troublesome necessity of always having to order in advance, especially for those who cannot afford to order except in small quantities.

So when it is said that there are too many middlemen, we should distinguish between the number of stages between producer and consumer, and the number of persons who occupy each stage. There is no reason to suppose that the specialization, which introduces a number of intermediate stages between producer and consumer, buying agents, commission men, jobbers, wholesalers, warehousemen, retailers, is anything but an economic benefit. They do a work that has to be done, and they do it better because they make it their whole business. It is significant that the "spread" between producer and consumer is often less in the case of products that pass through several hands than in the case of those that pass through only one or two. Milk and vegetables belong to the second class, and the "spread," the difference between what the producer receives and what the consumer pays, is very large. Sugar is a good instance of the first class, the number of intermediate stages being unusually large and the "spread" unusually small. The beginning of wisdom on this subject is to understand that the middleman has an economic service to fulfil, and that in fulfilling it he is making food not more dear, but more cheap.

When this is granted, there remain more valid grounds on which the existing system may be called in question. We may hold that the food-distributing system is in certain respects cumbrous, badly organized, lacking in uniformity, inadequately inspected. We may hold that there are too many middlemen at each stage of distribution, too many country buyers, too many wholesalers, above all, too many retailers. We are told, also, that the middleman receives too large a return for his services. All these matters call for the urgent consideration of the Food Controller. What can be done and what is being done I shall point out in the succeeding article.