

During the war, while the nations struggled against the common enemy, and our gallant men endured and suffered in the cause of righteousness, the people at home most gladly sacrificed many things that victory might come. They stinted themselves in necessary food to supply the men who fought their battles on every front, and to feed the starving millions of Europe. They paid high prices without a murmur because they felt it was necessary under the circumstances. They loyally answered every call of the Food Controller and deprived themselves of many things, while speculators and profiteers made fabulous fortunes out of the food and clothes that went to the Allies and to soldiers' dependents here at home. Their loyalty to the great cause, their deep sense of patriotism and their sacrificial spirit enabled our people to endure to the end and the final triumph.

But what are the conditions we find to-day? During the last five years the prices of food have practically doubled, and they are still going up. But wages have not increased in proportion. According to the statistical experts, food rose in price twice as rapidly as wages, while most professional people, shop-keepers and office workers have had no appreciable increase at all. The poor are suffering from actual want. People of reasonable incomes do not get enough food to supply their needs, while those of fairly large incomes feel the pinch of the cost of meat, poultry, eggs, butter, sugar and many things that, five years ago, were the commonest things on their tables.

What is the cause of it all? Is it simply due to a world shortage of food supplies, as the food speculators and big interests constantly tell us? Or is it due to the fact that these speculators have themselves created scarcity conditions and manipulated prices for their own enrichment? Or is it perhaps a combination of both?

There is no doubt that the war has produced a shortage of food throughout the world. The devastation of large areas of fertile land in Europe; the withdrawal of millions of men from productive labor for the work of destruction, the tremendous losses by the submarine campaign, the present chaos in Russia and other parts—all these have brought about a great shortage in the world's supplies, while starving Europe has to be fed by other countries, like Australia, Canada and the United States for some time to come. This means less food to go around and higher prices till production again becomes normal. But that is very far from the whole story. It forms a favorite text for the speculator and middleman, but the real emphasis must be placed on the other side of the story. Frederic C. Howe, Commissioner of Immigration at New York, is right when he says in his book, "The High Cost of Living," that

"The prices we are paying are far in excess of what we should pay, even with the law of supply and demand freely operative. . . . Speculation is unquestionably responsible for a great part of the increase."