

338.1
L58f

H. E. Lewis

The Food Situation of the

Country

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below. A
charge is made on all overdue
books.

University of Illinois Library

MAY 6 1944

NOV 1 1944

APR 18 1962

**THE FOOD SITUATION OF THE
COUNTRY, WITH SOME REMARKS
ON THE URGENT NECESSITY
FOR A NATIONAL FOOD
COMMISSION.**

BY

H. EDWIN LEWIS, M. D.,
New York City.

There is grave danger in the fact that the people of America do not adequately realize the all-important role that the food problem is going to play in the war in which this country is now engaged. They may know, more or less vaguely, that war conditions—German submarines in particular—have created a serious shortage in the food supply of the European belligerent and neutral nations, but it is a matter for genuine apprehension that so few recognize that the final outcome of the war may be determined by the amount of food the United States will be able to contribute to the pool of the Allies' resources. Thanks, however, to the American Press, and the splendid service it has never failed to render at crucial moments, the people at large are gradually beginning to see that the most vital and

copy sent to 6 218 msc 10

dominating question before the world to-day is that of the food supply.

But recognition of the importance of a complex problem does not imply that it is understood, or that its manifold details are widely or generally known. The truth of this is particularly manifested by the amount of definite and comprehensive knowledge which inquiry concerning the food resources of the United States will elicit from persons of even more than average intelligence. The vastness of this country, its wide variation of climate, its diversity of agricultural enterprise, and the localization of interests as a result of state lines, have served to divide the United States into practically forty-eight separate and distinct countries. As a consequence, the information possessed by those who are interested in agricultural matters is essentially limited to their own localities. There are a few, of course, whose knowledge in this direction is national in its scope, but these—with rare exceptions—are the experts connected with the Federal and State governments, whose special studies and labors have given them perforce a comprehensive grasp of the agricultural resources of the entire country.

For nearly three years the American people have been viewing the Great War "from the sidelines." In spite of the attention food matters have received, abroad and in

this country, and the widespread discussion of every phase of the question in the newspapers and magazines, the great majority of the people still look on the food problem as a proposition merely of "increasing the food supply." Recently, numerous publications, well meaning but somewhat lacking in their sense of proportion, have instituted a campaign to stimulate the planting of vegetables in back yards, open lots, small parks, private and public lawns, and so on. This is all right as far as it goes, and it seems too bad to have to criticize a movement so praiseworthy in its intent. But the great danger liable to attend this plan of every one planting his "little bit of ground," is the false estimate sure to be formed of the benefits to be derived from such efforts. A large proportion of those who will thus engage in agricultural pursuits on a Lilliputian scale, are totally uninformed and inexperienced. Not only will this make the harvest extremely doubtful, but devoid as these amateur farmers are of practical knowledge, they are bound to make mistakes, neglect to do the things they should do, and look for results that are impossible of realization. The public, misled by these activities and the attendant enthusiasm, will become oversanguine in regard to the returns, and be falsely reassured as to the effect on the real situation.

To exert any appreciable influence on the actual volume of America's agricultural products, millions of acres must be planted, in addition to those under cultivation in 1915 and 1916. The increased output of grain, potatoes, beans and all other staples must be in millions of bushels to have any measurable effect in meeting requirements. Let us not fool ourselves with the belief that the extent of our back-yard gardens, or the quantity and kind of products raised therefrom, can be more than the proverbial "drop in the bucket." Again, those who plant back-yard areas, aside from expecting too much from their labors, will be very prone to give more time and effort than the actual returns can possibly justify, and thereby waste energies that might much better be directed to more effective pursuits. A particularly apt illustration of this is shown by the picture at the top of the 6th page of the *Times* Pictorial Section for Sunday, April 29th. This depicts a body of seventy or eighty—possibly more—stalwart men engaged in spading up a plot of ground that could be opened up much more satisfactorily—and, of course, more quickly—by one man with a pair of horses and a plow. No criticism can be offered of the patriotic impulses which prompt such concentration of "man power," but is it not reasonable to suppose that the time and

energies of so many men, undoubtedly skilled in other lines of thought and effort, could be utilized to much greater advantage in other directions? It would seem that the use of the time in studying the food situation, and in employing knowledge thus gained to spread the truth concerning the problems confronting the Nation would be much more productive of tangible results. Finally, there is considerable danger that a great many of the people who cultivate a plot of a few feet square, in anticipating far more returns than are possible at best, will sadly deceive themselves as to the value of their contribution to the situation, or their service to the country. I do not want to be understood as discouraging any effort, however insignificant; under no circumstances would I suggest a discontinuance of any one's project, however small and inconsequential; but let us not delude ourselves in regard to our undertakings, and if we do anything, let us employ our energies with a view to the result, not merely to do something—and salve our consciences.

More than anything else needed at the moment in connection with the food question, is a thoro understanding of the fundamental situation; in other words, a comprehensive realization of what the actual problem is, what can be done to solve it, and how this solution can be effected with

greatest certainty, efficiency and despatch, and with least difficulty, waste of effort or disturbance of the economic conditions of the country, now or later.

The American people are level-headed, they have a wealth of common sense, and an appeal to reason thru a plain statement of facts and cold blooded logic, will surely achieve results in needed directions, when more devious and indirect methods would fail. Undeniably, the United States of America is confronted by the most stupendous and serious problem that the Nation has ever been called upon to solve. It is the paramount issue of the hour, the most momentous question that any people have ever had to answer, for on this answer, not only the comfort and well being of millions of our own population will depend, but it is certain to have a far-reaching influence on the whole world. This is a rather large statement, but no one who has kept in touch with the food situation thruout the world during the past two years can deny its accuracy. The march of time, and the irresistible trend of circumstances have made the United States the source of a considerable portion of the world's food supply. Fortunate beyond compare in its natural advantages, and blessed with a large measure of success in making the most of them, the wonderful

prosperity and accumulation of wealth which have made America the most hated and bitterly maligned of nations, enable it to stand today in the happy position of the one country that thru its accumulated riches, unlimited resources, and spirit of magnanimity and philanthropy, can save the world. I say "the world," for tho America is at war with the central countries of Europe, there is no hatred of the people of these nations, or desire to see them suffer; if peace were declared tomorrow, the people of Germany and Austro-Hungary would have no reason to complain at the treatment they would receive from this country. I also say "unlimited resources," for it is an incontrovertible fact that the United States has sufficient tillable land to raise enough grain and other food stuffs to feed the entire white race, and possibly the whole world!

In order to insure the maximum development of the food resources of the United States, however, the people must be mobilized as never before. It must be mobilization of brain power, of comprehension, of cooperative purpose, and above all, of sympathetic approval of the acts and regulations of the authorities to whom we trust our affairs.

As previously stated, an enormous amount has been written and published con-

cerning the food question, and while this has served a very important purpose, much of it, unfortunately, has not been of a character to give the people exact information in regard to

First. What America must do to save the world from famine;

Second. What the actual resources are in (a) surplus food supplies, if any; (b) available tillable land; and (c) prospective labor;

Third. How the forces of the nation can best be organized (a) to increase the food production to the highest point for the coming season; (b) to avoid the various factors liable to jeopardize the various crops; (c) to aid and promote successful harvesting; (d) to control the uses and disposition of the crops when harvested; (e) to insure necessary transportation to storage and distribution centers; (f) to regulate food prices, if necessary, without injury to the producer, injustice to the consumer, or disturbance of collateral trade conditions; and finally (g) to avoid all possible decrease or depreciation of natural resources in order to conserve their future productivity.

With the food problem thus explained in detail, the people will realize the desirability of any action the Government may decide to take, and not only give their hearty approval, but, with the true spirit of patriot-

ism and democracy, will ungrudgingly support and cooperate with the required regulations as they become necessary.

With earnest convictions in this direction, and a firm belief that a matter so vitally important warrants as full discussion as possible from every angle, I deem it not alone a privilege, but a duty to take up *seriatim* some of these various details of the food problem.

First, let us consider what America must do to save the world from famine. Reduced to its simplest terms, this country must contribute, beginning with October, 1917, at least 1,000,000 tons of staple food products a month to the allied and neutral countries of Europe, *over and above its normal exports*; and should peace be declared before this date, this amount will probably have to be greatly increased. To aid in the realization of what this will mean, let us just briefly point out that this increase of food export will require the movement of 30,000 freight cars or 1,000 trains monthly, or over 30 trains of 35 loaded cars daily to get this quantity of food to the seaboard. Carrying this thought a little further, it will require the loading and despatch of over six 5,000-ton ships every day to get this amount of food stuff to the ports of entry on the other side of the Atlantic. Let me emphasize that this is entirely sep-

arate from the shipping that must be devoted to the country's regular foreign trade in food stuffs, or other exports, such as machinery and building material, fuel, farm implements, war munitions and the supplies that will be imperatively needed if an army contingent is sent to France. These figures are conservative and probably should be substantially increased.

There is no exaggeration, therefore, in the statement that this country is face to face with the most prodigious undertaking the world has ever seen. The human mind can hardly grasp what this means in the aggregate volume of material. Before this huge amount is sent away, moreover, the needs of the American people must be looked after, and enough food retained to make certain that grim want shall not make its influence felt here. In other words, sufficient food supplies to meet the requirements of the United States must be conserved, with the retention of necessary reserves to meet contingencies and provide a safe surplus to allow for unexpected crop conditions in the following season. A special reserve for seed purposes must also be held back.

The thought that instantly arises is: how can all these things be accomplished with least possible delay, interference with established customs or usual trade conditions.

and inconvenience or abridgment of individual rights and privileges?

The answer is plain. *There should be an immediate organization of a National Food Commission to take full charge of the food problem.* Doubtless, it is superfluous to state that this Commission should have plenary power in regard to every detail associated with the control and direction of the country's food supplies. It may also seem presumptuous, in view of the thought and attention being devoted to these matters, to make such a suggestion, much less to lay down any definite scheme of organization. But, here again I plead the gravity of the situation, the tremendous importance of getting it well in hand at the earliest possible moment, and the possible aid any earnest consideration of the presenting problem may give in its ultimate solution, if in no other direction than to help prepare the thinking people of the country for conditions certain to arise.

The Commission should not be large. It should consist of seven men; a chairman, to be known as Director of National Food Control, who should be the executive head of the Commission with power and authority to act therefor. To facilitate the work of this Commission, which will be enormous, it should be divided into a number of de-

partments. These, at the beginning at least, should be six, as follows:

1. Department of Food Production.
2. Department of Supplies and Labor.
3. Department of Transportation.
4. Department of Distribution.
5. Department of Finance and Economics.
6. Department of Research and Conservation.

Further study and investigation may suggest a different division of the Commission's activities, but for purposes of consideration and discussion, the foregoing will afford a practical working basis. Each department should have a member of the Food Commission as its head. He should be vested with supreme authority in all matters coming within the purview of his allotted responsibilities, with a single exception; his acts and orders should be by and with the advice and consent of the Chairman or National Director. Experience, in my humble opinion, has shown the wisdom of the centralization of authority in great crises. Given a strong, capable man of high resolve, constructive vision, and a deep sense of responsibility, and the interests of the people will be much better served by him, acting alone, than by a considerable body of men of divided responsibility and restricted authority. The single official, answerable only to his conscience and the laws of his

government, and guided by nothing but his convictions and desire to do his best, will get better results, and much more quickly, than a group of men, each equally able and conscientious but acting in concert. The single official may make some mistakes, but if he is well trained, intelligent and abundantly supplied with moral courage, he will accomplish his task more satisfactorily, and in less time, than a body of men, however capable, but who are handicapped by the necessity of working as a group; that is, considering everything in committee, harmonizing opinions often widely divergent, and being bound by the decision of the majority, which may not be, after all, the actual viewpoint of any one member. Division of responsibility does not promote efficiency, and this has been repeatedly demonstrated by committee administration. The acts of a group of men invariably lack the clear cut decisiveness, or the definite and positive character of those of the official who is obliged to assume entire responsibility in the disposition of any important question. In other words, a committee's acts constantly indicate an attempt to bring the ideas of several men to common ground, to decide on a course of action that shall "strike an average." Too often, therefore, this course is a compromise

reached by mutual concessions of the different members to each other. Thus not infrequently it goes too far for the conservatives, and not far enough for the radicals. Therefore, as before stated, it often represents no one's real opinion or belief.

Recognition of these facts can hardly fail to lead one to the earnest belief that in any great crisis like this concerning food control, individual responsibility insures maximum safety, efficiency and expedition.

The activities of the different departments of a national organization for food supervision and direction, as seems so urgently called for by the exigencies of the hour, will develop as the plan unfolds, and new and unexpected occasions arise.

With these observations in mind, let us briefly consider some of the lines of action that can be foreseen and provided for.

1. *The Department of Food Production.* This should have charge of everything directly concerned in the investigation of present supplies, the kind and quantity of crops raised in the past two years, the available acreage, stimulation of planting, the control and allotment of public lands, the spread of information on all topics relating to crops, the preservation of careful records, and the constant surveillance and direction of food production generally.

These various phases of activity may be given over to special bureaus, each headed by a competent expert, definitely respon-

sible for the matters placed under his supervision, and answerable to his department chief. Each bureau should be a separate organization, entirely distinct from the others in direction, control and personnel, but arranged and prepared to cause minimum delay or "lost motion," if I may use the term, in their active cooperation with each other, or in the performance of their respective duties.

2. *Department of Supplies and Labor.* This department should have charge of the problems of seeds, fertilizers and equipment; the distribution of these where needed to responsible companies, associations and individuals; the arranging for immediate or deferred payments for same; the mobilization of labor for agricultural work; and general direction of all agencies concerned in the cultivation and harvesting of crops.

3. *Department of Transportation.* This department should have entire charge of the movement of food supplies, (a) to concentration points; (b) from these to centers for domestic distribution; (c) to seaboard cities for foreign shipment; the rolling stock required for the proper distribution and handling of food products; the grain elevators or warehouses in which supplies must be stored pending shipment; the labor connected with transportation and storage; the provision and control of docking and loading facilities; the control and management of the ocean or coastwise shipping needed for a steady flow of food supplies to the nation's allies; and general supervision of all matters directly associated with the transportation of the country's food products from the source of supply to the point of final distribution. Thru appropriate

bureaus, this department, in addition to its other transportation problems, will have to provide and maintain a large fleet of ships. Doubtlessly, a considerable number can be obtained thru charter, the confiscated German and Austrian ships will be available, and the special wooden and steel vessels now being built by the Government should be placed under the direction of this department of the National Food Commission. Furthermore, the powers of the Commission should be enlarged to include the building of such additional ships of moderate tonnage as may become necessary or desirable. The work of this Department of Transportation unquestionably will be among the most important of the Commission's activities, for the utility and adequacy of those of all the others will depend to a large degree on the way in which the food supplies are made available to the ultimate consumer.

4. *Department of Distribution.* The activities of this department, at first thought, might be looked upon as falling within the scope or field of the Department of Transportation, but as conceived in the scheme of organization under discussion, its duties will be quite distinct, for they will have to do in particular with the manifold details pertaining to the elaborate mechanism of vending and accounting between the producers, distributors and consumers. So complex will be the questions involved that only the most general description of the duties of this department will be possible at this time. Suffice it to say that all complicated problems concerned with the establishing and satisfying of proprietary interests, the transferring of rights and ownership in food supplies, the investigating and approv-

ing of credits and liabilities related to these supplies with countries, companies, associations and individuals, and the adjusting of all claims, will come within the administrative authority of this department. Its decision will be final, with, of course, the exception of appeal to the laws of the land. Special provision will have to be made to handle and protect individual interests in the delivery of food supplies to European governments. The Commission should stand in the position of middleman in such transactions, and save the producers from the annoyances and red tape which all too often work a genuine hardship on those who deal with governments.

5. *Department of Finance.* The functions of this department will be identical with those of similar departments in all large commercial enterprises; the handling and disbursement of all funds placed at the disposal of the Commission for conducting its affairs; the actual payment of all claims on presentation of orders from the Department of Distribution; the collection of all accounts due from transactions between the Department of Distribution and the nations, parties and persons with whom the Commission has commercial dealings, as agent or principal; and the entire supervision and discharge of the fiscal affairs of the Commission.

6. *Department of Conservation and Research.* This department will have a most important division of the Commission's work altho it may not be as prominent as some of the others. For example, the question of waste will require especial attention. It is a well established fact that the waste of food each year is enormous. The amazing

prosperity thruout the country during the past few years has made the people careless, and in the kitchens of our homes, our large hotels, and public institutions especially, the waste, according to very conservative estimates has been said to exceed ten per cent. Indeed, there are those who, as a result of careful thought and investigation, do not hesitate to claim that twenty per cent. is nearer correct. Obviously, there is no way of ascertaining the exact loss each year from the food waste incidental to carelessness, ignorance and neglect, but the most casual observation justifies but one conclusion, and that is that it must be very great. At any rate, no one will deny that this problem should be studied, and the people taught rational economy in the preparation and use of food stuffs. The housewives especially can be marshalled in this particular movement, and a little teaching along practical lines will enable them to become factors of far-reaching influence in cutting down needless waste in the home.

In addition to the foregoing there is the waste due to thoughtless extravagance in supplying our tables, a common fault of which the majority of the American people are guilty. Thus at every meal in the home or public eating place, the average individual invariably insists on having a great deal more than he needs—often more than he can possibly eat. The remainder is usually thrown away. Not the least of the duties of this department will be the systematic dissemination of information in regard to the amounts and kinds of food required to maintain perfect health. Most people will gladly readjust their habits and customs when shown to be in error; thoughtlessness is almost always the cause of dietetic er-

rors, and education is the most certain means of effecting reform.

Again, the people must be shown the advantages of new, or substitute foods. Our country, fortunately, has such a diversity of climate, and such wide geographical distribution, that there is hardly any known food product that cannot be grown in amounts to meet all needs. Just as an illustration, reference may be made to the avocado or alligator pear as a source of fat. Offering over twenty per cent. of edible fat, this fruit can be grown in quantities to obviate any shortage in this essential direction. In addition, we can have a practically inexhaustible supply of edible oils and fats from our peanuts, cotton seed and cocoanuts. Already a substitute butter made from coconut oil is on the market that seems to settle all fears of any lack of the dairy made product. The way clarified cotton seed oil has been gradually but surely superseding lard for all cooking purposes during the past decade speaks eloquently of the possibilities in this direction. There are many other developments in regard to the evolution of new and valuable food stuffs—only a few days ago the manufacture of a very satisfactory butter from alfalfa was announced—and this department, with its command of the nation's scientific resources, and its own corps of experts, will be able to amplify and expend the available food supply to a gratifying degree, not only by developing new foods, but by devising new methods of using the old ones, and extending popular knowledge in respect to food values.

Another line of investigation that seems to be especially needed is in regard to the undue refinement of various foods, notably the milling of certain cereals, wheat in par-

ticular, whereby the coarser portions of the wheat kernel are removed, leaving only the soft, inner part. This makes the very delicious white bread that has become the most staple article of the modern dietary. It has been claimed by some, however, that this white bread, appealing and appetizing as it is, is in reality much less healthful and nourishing than that containing a certain percentage or made entirely of whole wheat flour.¹ It has also been stated that the use of white flour exclusively entails serious waste. Practically all of the European nations at war have discarded the baking of white bread, and made it compulsory to use only that made from coarser wheat flour, or special combinations of cereals, potatoes, etc. This question of the relative food

¹ "The increase in the price of labor as well as the demand for flour or meal brought about the invention of a device for the more economic milling of these cereals, the roller mill system which came into use in 1878. This process made it possible to separate the several parts of the grain; the germ, the bran and the endosperm or starchy part. This allowed the latter to be ground to a fine flour which because of its whiteness appealed to the housewife as a purer product. The germ and bran were largely discarded as human food, and sold as fodder for cattle, horses and hogs. This new flour has undoubtedly kept better than that made by the old process; the new method employed in its preparation, however, deprives it of valuable constituents. Thus it contains less protein, fat and ash, but what is even more important, it is markedly deficient in certain so-called accessory food substances,—the so-called vitamins which are contained in the intact kernel, the outer layers (aleurone layer) and probably in the germ. In other words, wheat flour, corn flour, hominy and grits, minus the bran and germ, are lacking in vitamins, while whole wheat flour and corn meal contain practically all the vitamins of the whole grain."—AMERICAN MEDICINE, November, 1916.

value and healthfulness of white bread and that made from whole wheat, rye, etc., calls for thoro investigation, as, in fact, does the subject of bread making generally.² If Funk's recent researches, which seem to show that the vitamins or vital substances of the wheat kernel are found only in the husk or pericarp, are substantiated, there can be no doubt as to the desirability of using more of the wheat berry for bread. In regard to the argument as to waste, however, it should be remembered that the portion remaining after the process of "bolting," is not wasted at all, but in the form of wheat bran is utilized completely for feeding cattle, etc.

Another statement that should be carefully investigated is that put forth by advocates of prohibition, that the manufacturing of beer entails the extensive waste of food materials and should therefore be stopped during the war period. I hold no brief for beer, its makers or users, but I do prize the truth, and if the opponents of beer drinking have no better argument than the above, I fear they will get little support or sympathy from thinking people. As a matter of fact, the only cereal used in beer making is barley, and this not only constitutes the main use of this cereal, but as a result of this use, over a third of the barley employed is made available for the special feeding of milch cows. According to facts ascertained by the U. S. Govern-

² Hoover, whose statements are bound to command our deepest respect is quoted as saying that in Belgium the effort to use more than 81 per cent. of the wheat grain in making bread was followed immediately by an increase of a thousand deaths. "After that," he said, "we did not dare to mill more than 81 per cent. of the grain."

ment, the total of cereal consumption involved in the use of beer is a fraction of one per cent. of the grain production of this country! To be sure, a certain amount of sugar may be used in the manufacture of beer, but as this, together with the barley used, enters definitely into its composition, it must be clearly evident that it has a food value to this extent: therefore, tho it may be consumed as a beverage, whatever food elements it carries will be assimilated by the organism, and not "wasted" as claimed.³ I firmly believe in temperance. Never was it more essential than now, when clear thinking is so necessary for the welfare of the nation, but let us be fair and honest in our attitude toward every problem, and remember that there are many good people who have the right to take a certain proportion of their barley and sugar in solution if they wish to. As for whiskey and spirituous liquors, there is no doubt in my mind as to the desirability of prohibiting their sale and use, at least during the war. Even this, however, should be carefully investigated before final action is taken.

There are many other questions that should engage the attention of this Department of Research and Conservation. Thus.

³ Statement by Kennedy Jones, Director of Food Economy in England, May 17, 1917: "If it be found advisable to stop beer altogether—upon which point there is a considerable difference of opinion—it would be simple common sense to allow the workers time to adapt themselves to the change gradually, by a gradual reduction of the supply rather than by checking or stopping the brewing of beer at once. Also it is well to bear in mind that if the worker is not deriving part of his energy, as has been his habit, from beer, he may require more bread, so that practically no actual saving of bread could be effected."

for example, there are an infinite number of problems connected with food production, such as selective planting, the selection of seeds, soil enrichment, the use of plant bacteria, soil antisepsis, crop protection, and so on.

The problems of agricultural waste will also come within the field of this department. Aside from that incidental to faulty planting—improper adaptation of the crop to the soil—there is an enormous waste every year thru careless or ignorant harvesting, improper packing, delayed transportation and unwise marketing of fruits and vegetables. Vast quantities of these valuable food products are allowed to spoil and rot for one reason or another. It is no uncommon sight in the Fall to see the ground in many an orchard covered with apples or other fruits that the owner cannot—or will not—get to the market. This Department of Research and Conservation should have a bureau whose sole duty should be the education of the farmer in regard to proper harvesting, packing, etc., keep him supplied with market information; and give him assistance in getting his produce promptly and profitably to the consumer.

A system of dehydration of rapidly perishable vegetables and fruits should be worked out, as a very great saving has been effected in this way in countries where such methods are in use. At small cost producers can have their own dehydrating plants, and thereby reduce waste and loss to a minimum. Larger and more elaborate plants can be established in each community by the local town or city government, or by groups of farmers themselves on a co-operative basis. The process of dehydration removes the water, but leaves every

nourishing element, and the fruits or vegetables when thus dried keep indefinitely. The reduction in bulk and weight is highly advantageous, as it reduces the storage space required, facilitates handling, and cuts down transportation costs. The method will go far to solve a good many of the problems pertaining to food preservation and the elimination of needless waste, thereby securing directly a substantial increase in the annual food supply.

Many other questions having an important bearing on the conservation of our food supplies will come under the consideration of this department, as its duties unfold. I have only "scratched the surface" of its wonderful opportunities, not only to aid and extend the specific purpose of the Commission, but to serve and promote the interests of all humanity.

Such, briefly, is the plan of organization which plainly indicates the important and far-reaching influence a National Food Commission, with adequate power, will have, not alone in markedly increasing the food production of the country, but in developing our natural resources and placing their direction on a sound and systematic basis.

I have dwelt very briefly on the matter of price regulation, as it is impossible to do more in a general consideration of food production. It cannot fail to appear that any action in this direction must be based fundamentally on a due regard for the farmers' rights. The times and conditions are ex-

ceptional, the country is remarkably prosperous, and the producer certainly has a right to participate in the prosperity of the nation. In any effort to regulate prices, *there must be no disturbing or setting aside, more than is absolutely necessary, of the natural economic conditions created by the increase and urgency of the current demand, and the ability of the people to pay.* At the same time, abnormal influences such as any cornering of supplies, extraordinary increase of transportation rates, combinations or conspiracies "in restraint of trade" to raise and maintain prices of common commodities, and so on, should be dealt with summarily under existing laws, and the interests of the people safeguarded without delay. The study I have given to the proposal to fix prices has convinced me that this should be in the direction of establishing minimum rather than maximum rates. Lack of space precludes my giving all the reasons for this conclusion, but I feel that it has been shown abroad that a minimum price can be fixed with greater fairness, more definite facts for guidance, and readier acceptance and approval on the part of those affected.

In regard to rationing the people I shall also say very little, for I do not believe this will be required in this country, unless some

unexpected condition develops. The prevention of any such outcome is to be aimed at, and I can conceive of no prophylactic measure that promises more certain protection against "bread tickets," "meatless days," and the rationing of the American people, than the early organization of a National Food Commission, with "power to act."

It is hardly necessary to point out that the organization of a National Food Commission is an emergency procedure entirely, designed to meet abnormal conditions created by the European war and the forced participation of this country in it. It should not supersede, nor interfere with the activities of the present departments of the Government; on the contrary, its efforts should aim at as perfect cooperation and collaboration with these as may be possible, in order that it may achieve the specific purpose for which it is to be organized, with the highest degree of efficiency and success. By utilizing the wealth of information of the Departments of Agriculture and of Commerce and Labor, a very great saving of time and effort may be accomplished. Obviously, great tact and intelligence will be needed in carrying out the purpose, and in performing the special duties of a National Food Commission. But with the exercise of care and good sense, it is reason-

able to anticipate unlimited benefits, with the avoidance of friction or serious complications.

The scheme as outlined is necessarily imperfect and lacking in many respects. But I have earnestly tried (*first*) to point out the urgent need of such a commission to meet the present crisis, and (*second*) to show that even tho the stringent control and direction of our national food resources may have certain slight disadvantages, these will be more than offset by the development of new opportunities and the establishment of the whole matter on a well systematized and stable footing; in other words, while the interests of a few individuals may suffer to the extent that they will be prevented from taking advantage of the present day situation to make enormous profits, the people at large—including producers, consumers, and the public—will receive great and lasting benefit—and no further argument would seem to be needed.

The great object that has prompted this consideration of the subject is not, therefore, to demonstrate the gain to the people, except in so far as this is incidental, but to drive home as clearly and forcefully as possible that the predominating need of the hour is the mobilization of our national food resources under governmental organization and control.

It is neither my desire nor my intention to pose as an alarmist. A country that has done so much to carry into the "far places of the world" the message of democracy, that has been the haven of so many seeking personal freedom and opportunity, and that has proven so conclusively the blessed possibilities of a republican system of government, surely ought to be safe against the encroachment of autocracy and tyranny. But conditions have arisen, forces of cupidity, malice and hate have appeared, and a spirit of barbarism and ruthless cruelty has been exposed to a degree that civilized people never dreamed of as existent in the world today. These baneful forces are not only now focussed on America, but there is an abundance of evidence to prove that they have long been seeking an opportunity to do it all the harm they could.

Never, therefore, was our country, and all that makes it dear, so terribly menaced as it is today. Failure on the part of the nation to use its utmost strength—not to crush the German people nor to add to their suffering and distress more than the exigencies of war entail, but to defend our institutions, our homes, and our altars—means, sooner or later, the "rape" of our country. We have witnessed the criminal assault of Belgium, Serbia, Poland, Roumania and France. Our hearts have bled and our

tears have flowed, as we have tried, as far as conditions have permitted, to assuage the suffering and lighten the burden of those who have been the innocent victims of an insane lust for power and conquest. It is for us to say whether we will blindly procrastinate until it is too late to avert catastrophe, or will rise to the situation and place our national existence and welfare on a secure foundation, by giving to the forces of civilization the aid and reinforcement our present, fortunate position makes possible.

If our Government, alive to its responsibilities, and in the fullness of its wisdom, places our food supplies and resources under the administrative control of a National Food Commission, as seems certain, it is to be hoped that every true American citizen will contribute his share to the successful evolution of the plan by familiarizing himself with its purpose and neglecting no opportunity of upholding a movement that first and last will mean so much to all humanity.

Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT JAN. 21, 1908

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
338 1L58F C001
THE FOOD SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY NY



3 0112 018946969