

ONE YEAR OF HOOVER'S CONTROL: FOOD ENOUGH FOR ALL ALLIES

Taking a Chance on His Faith in Nation's Loyalty, the Administrator Has Succeeded in Using Volunteer Spirit to Assure Supplies for Democracy's Hosts

Below is the record of a careful inquiry to determine just what has been accomplished in one year of Food Control by the United States Government.

The vital result is that the Allies in Europe are assured of enough food to keep them going until the next harvest, while this country is equally sure of adequate supplies. But the American Nation must continue the same economies and sacrifices which it has undertaken successfully in the first year of war.

ALONG the allied battlefront and throughout the allied nations American food is now being distributed in greater quantities than ever before. But for the food this battlefront and these nations would not have the strength to stand up and fight. Fifty per cent. of the food for the Allies must now be sent from North America.

In an office at Washington, as plain with its beaver board wall covering as that of the Superintendent of some third-class mining camp, there sits from 8:30 A. M. to 7:30 P. M. daily the man who is chiefly responsible for this flow of food to the Allies. He has, in a true sense, become Food Administrator for the Allies as well as Food Administrator of the United States, though Herbert Hoover would be the first to disclaim that distinction; but in support of it might be cited the fact that with him the needs of the Allies come first, as due them for what they have borne and are bearing; next come the food needs of the United States. Both must be satisfied.

How have they been satisfied? What has been accomplished? Every American has contributed to the results, though what these are has been subordinated to the campaign for food saving. It is a fitting time to ask the question, for it is just a year since Mr. Hoover took charge of food conservation, though the law creating him Food Administrator was not passed until later.

Take wheat: Owing to the shortage of last year's crop we had scarcely 20,000,000 bushels above our normal consumption and seed requirements. Practically all this had been shipped by Christmas. Then, in January, came the British Food Commissioner's urgent call for 75,000,000 bushels before the new crop, if the Allies were to have food enough to carry on the war. In response to that call, the American people saved 50,000,000 bushels out of their normal consumption; it was shipped to Europe, and the war goes on!

For the last four weeks wheat consumption in this country has been 40 per cent. below normal. Whole communities have "sworn off" from wheat, for the pressure of the Allies' needs is now at its highest. In the list are many churches and lodges; at the top is an entire State, Texas. From July 1, 1917, to March 31, 1918, America has exported to her allies 80,000,000 bushels of wheat and flour, or 124 per cent. of the amount available for export on July 1, while a year ago, during the same period, we exported to the Allies only 51 per cent. of the amount available for export.

There is another side, in what has been accomplished in wheat price stabilization. In the face of the wheat shortage this is what has been brought about: In May of last year the difference between what the farmer got for his wheat and the wholesale price of flour was equivalent to \$5.68 a barrel; in early May of this year the difference amounted to 64 cents. In May, 1917, the wholesale price of flour at Minneapolis was \$16.75; it was predicted that it would go to \$20 a barrel and higher; in early May of this

year the price of flour was \$9.80 a barrel, a decrease of 41 per cent.

Exports of rye and rye flour from the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1, 1917, through March, 1918, were 32 per cent. larger than last year; of barley 55 per cent. larger, of oats and oatmeal 34 cents larger.

Before we entered the war we were exporting to the Allies 50,000,000 pounds of pork a month. There was even at that time the menace of a hog shortage. When we entered the war the high prices offered by the Allies had increased our exports of pork to 125,000,000 pounds a month. A severe cut in our reserve supplies was the result. In 1917, a month before the conservation program went into effect, the export of pork had fallen to 70,000,000 pounds a month. In March of this year the amount of pork exported to the Allies amounted to 308,000,000

pounds, more than six times the normal and 50 per cent. greater than any previous month in the last seven years. There is in addition 1,100,000,000 pounds of pork and pork products in storage. This is what "porkless days" have done.

Our average monthly production of hog products is 750,000,000 pounds.

Before the war our average monthly exports of beef to the countries of the Allies were less than 1,000,000 pounds. During the last two years we have averaged about 22,000,000 pounds a month. In January the Allies called on us for 70,000,000 pounds a month for the next three months. In March we shipped 86,000,000 pounds of beef and beef products to the Allies. This was 20 per cent. larger than any previous month in seven years and more than twice as great as the highest amount exported in any month in the four years before 1915. Our cattle have not increased since the war, and these increased drafts to the Allies have been provided by reducing our own consumption. It is a result of meatless days.

The production of beef in the United States is about 650,000,000 pounds a month.

Our annual saving on sugar is expected to foot up 400,000 tons. A year ago the wholesale price of refined sugar was 8.33 cents a pound; in April, 1918, with sugar much more scarce, it was 7.3 cents a pound, a decrease of 12 per cent. In the same period the margin between the price of raw and refined sugar was reduced from 2.12 cents a pound to 1.3 cents. A reduction of one cent a pound means a saving to the people of the United States of \$16,000,000, measured by annual consumption. As to general price changes since the Food Administration has been

in charge, the index number of producers' prices for March, 1918, shows an increase of 27 per cent. over August, 1917, while the index number of consumers' prices decreased 13 per cent. Wheat is the only commodity the price of which the Food Administration has authority to fix. For other commodities the prices may be reached indirectly only through regulation of profits. By far the greater part of the reductions have been through volunteer agreements—about 90 per cent., it is estimated.

That, briefly, shows what has been done in food conservation. How has it been done?

Mr. Hoover can't tell; neither can any of his aids, for there is something to be accounted for that does not get into records. A European Food Administrator could give full explanation, out of records, for he has a stringent system, through food cards, which reaches every consumer. It is an explanation that concerns discipline, but what discipline has reached the millions here who have observed the wheatless days and the meatless days?

One of Mr. Hoover's aids in trying to explain fell back on a story.

"A man came up from my State," he said, "to attend a conference that concerned one of the most important food industries in our State. This man is a prominent official at home and a citizen of much influence. He was aroused over proposed interference in the industry by the Food Administration. 'We won't stand for it,' he said. 'It isn't fair. We are willing to be reasonable; we don't ask to make what we are entitled to, but this proposal is too raw. If Hoover insists on it, we'll go after him as he never has been gone after before.' 'Better wait and see what he says,' I suggested. 'After the conference the State official came to me. 'How much longer can Germany hold out on their food supply?' he asked. I told him that Germany was practically self supporting before the war, and had since seized some of the richest farm lands in Europe. 'But,' he broke in, 'it doesn't matter. We'll get them in the end. Of course, we have to make every sacrifice; think of what the Allies are doing over there. All that's worth living for is at stake! We're in to the limit. Hoover can take the whole industry if he wants it, do with it as he pleases. We've got to win. At a time like this who would think of profit?' 'That man did not seem to know that a change had been wrought in him, that something bigger than he had ever known before had got hold of him; for the first time he realized what we are standing

for. And you see he wasn't forced to do anything!'"

Voluntary—that is the word nearest to an explanation of what has been accomplished. More than 100 of the Washington staff give their services, paying their own expenses, and many of them are not men of large wealth, but persons who have resigned their positions to come to Washington for work with the Food Administration; in the national organization there are more than 4,000 who work for nothing and pay their own expenses. Others, it is added, merely accept what it costs to live in Washington. They have forgotten about the connection of money with work.

These volunteers, deriving their inspiration from Mr. Hoover, who in the beginning made the stipulation that he receive no pay for his services, carry this spirit to Omaha and Memphis and other towns. Producers' organizations receive them with frowns, and, in the end, tingling somehow with a new feeling about the war, wonder what has struck them. This is a sample, related by a Hoover aid in Washington:

"One of our men went out to confer with a hog producers' association in the Middle West. They were up in arms and had protested against any interference with the price. They wanted more money instead of less; the time had come for a clean-up, and they demanded the right to make the clean-up. That issue, soon after our representative began to state the situation as it actually was, dropped out of sight, and the really important issue came to the fore. The meeting ended with a resolution in which the members of the hog association pledged themselves not to kill another hog for family use or eat another piece of pork until the Food Administration asked them to."

Other volunteers in other sections had experiences as remarkable.

The third step was the preparation and distribution of written propaganda for food conservation. The volunteers believe wholly in their work; they consider it a rare privilege to be a member of Mr. Hoover's organization. Whatever they prepare, therefore, has the impulse, the emotional drive, of deep conviction. They are well posted on the restrictions which the Food Administration has through the license control of wholesalers, but their purpose is to arouse the volunteer spirit in the consumer and to set it eagerly to work. So that even in preparing a new placard they strive to evoke the ideal of democracy and of service without compulsion.

One of them, a college professor, pointed to a recent utterance of Mr. Hoover on "The Motive of Service":

"Aside from the prime necessity of protecting our independence and our institutions, there is but one possible benefit from the war, and that is the stimulation of self-sacrifice in the people, the lifting of its ideals, and the diversion from its peace-time inclinations toward the purely material things in life, to a strengthening of the higher purposes. I do not say that such compensations are full compensations for the war, but they are at least ameliorations of the terrible currents which are threatening our existence. Therefore we felt if there could be brought home to the sense of every American household the necessity of this personal and individual sacrifice we would have spread the opportunity for service beyond those who sacrifice in



Herbert C. Hoover on White House Steps Last Week.

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giving their sons to immolation on the national altar."

Mr. Hoover took a chance on his faith in the American people. That is the uncertain quantity he undertook to deal with, on a hazard that a mere Prussian materialist would have regarded as inexcusably reckless; the response of the American people to the appeal for voluntary conservation is the one part of the food saving that cannot be explained; it is too deep for that; they did not have to—something utterly unintelligible to the Prussian materialist, but it is sufficient to say that M. Hoover's faith was justified. It is assured that the Allies' needs will be provided for until the next harvest, and there is food enough for the American people.

A rationing system in the United States would face many more difficulties than it does in Europe. Fifty per cent. of the people of the United States are either producers or live in close contact with the producer, and effective restraint on their consumption by rationing would be a problem no European food administrator has had to face; in Germany, however, this very phase of the problem has presented the worst difficulties. In addition, owing to the great variety in habits of consumption among the industrial population, another difficulty would be raised in employing a rationing system. In some parts of the South workers consume no more than two pounds of wheat a week, using other and less needed substitutes for the nutrient qualities of that cereal, while in some parts of the North the worker uses eight pounds of wheat a week. In this commodity a rationing system would force more wheat on the Southern worker than he wants and would cut the supply of the Northern worker below what he needs.

A third consideration is that a rationing system would impose a great cost on the Government.

In Mr. Hoover's opinion only some un-

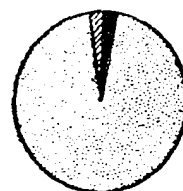


Map and Diagram © Nat. Geographic Magazine, Washington, D. C., 1918.

The Boundary Lines of European Nations, as Drawn by the Gaunt Hand of Hunger.

expected emergency, such as a disastrous slump in the sugarcane crop prospect, would make the installation of a card system necessary. If it were required that normal consumption be reduced 75 per cent., it could be handled only by means of food tickets. The same situation might be brought about in wheat if the crop were suddenly struck by smut.

Circle represents total population under rule of Central and Allied Powers, (the United States excepted.) Black area represents deaths by famine; lined area,



deaths by fighting.

made more remote by increased simplicity of living and the elimination of all waste. Mr. Hoover thinks that the comparative short term of office of European Food Commissioners is due largely to the friction that is caused

by the enforcement of the rationing system.

The crop prospects are full of encouragement, but the same self-denial will be necessary by the American people even if there are bumper yields. A surplus is needed to face the future without apprehension. Food saving also increases the shipping space for the Allies and our own troops; the more food that is conserved in this country the more ships can be withdrawn from the longer routes, as to South America. It takes a ship twice as long to go from an allied port to Argentina as it does to come to this country or to Canada; in addition, the danger of loss from submarine is greater. Just recently, an account of the greater demand for ships by the United States and the Allies, it has been necessary to make withdrawals from the long route to Argentina. Later, emphasizing how food and ships and winning the war are becoming more and more closely inter-related, 50,000 tons of shipping have been withdrawn from the sugar trade between Cuba and the United States. These ships were transferred to the service of the Allies, whose needs are pressing. It may be necessary to reduce our present consumption of sugar by 15 per cent.

Mr. Hoover's sway over the staff of the Food Administration might lead one to expect what is called a "tremendous personality." On the contrary, you hardly know he is in the room until you get right up to his desk, and he is shaking hands, with a trace of a smile. He does not emphasize what he says with clenched fist, as a master of men is expected to do. As he talks, you do not think of Hoover at all, but wholly of the food needs of the Allies and ourselves; you apprehend those needs as never before, and Hoover seems to have forgotten himself. That is probably the secret of it—he has forgotten himself, and he makes others forget themselves, first the circle of his associates, and through them the greater circle of the nation—thus achieving the necessary food conservation by self-denial instead of by compulsion.