'Save Today What Our Allies Need Tomorrow': Food Regulation in Canada During the First World War

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Abstract

The First World War caused serious dislocations in the world's food supply and distribution networks, meaning that Canada had to produce and export larger amounts of foodstuffs to Britain, its traditional primary market. To do this, the Borden government appointed a Food Controller in June 1917, whose duties were to regulate the Canadian food supply in the hopes of realizing as large a surplus of exportable foods as possible. The first Food Controller, William J. Hanna, encountered stiff resistance from a public struggling with ever-mounting food prices and the cost of living. They believed that the government's first duty lay with Canadians, rather than British consumers. Hanna's inability to secure the full cooperation of Canadians (largely due to his refusal to control prices), along with the worsening of food conditions overseas, led to the establishment of the Canada Food Board in February 1918. This agency, headed by Henry B. Thomson, was larger and in the end far more successful in obtaining public support. This success was partly due to the government's realization that old methods, grounded in non-interventionist economic models, were no longer an effective response to the demands of war. The Food Board reflected this shift in attitude by passing stricter regulations that relied more on compulsion. While the Food Board did not enact price controls to any great extent, its ubiquitous propaganda and insistence on food service as a moral duty tended to drown out the voices calling for stricter state economic regulations. Food control was hampered by the nature of the food system itself, which had developed into an intricate web of frequently contending groups, with producers, dealers, and now consumers all seeking to safeguard their own interests. Canada's food controllers had to balance these narrower interests against the much broader concern of winning the war. Drawing on the rich collections of the National Archives of Canada and contemporary periodical literature, this thesis argues that the goals of wartime food regulation in Canada ran contrary to these narrower concerns, and demonstrates that state intervention, especially one without previous models to draw upon, can be a fundamentally unpredictable process, and one whose results can depend upon the successful balancing of competing interests. While food regulation may have grown out of a straightforward desire to mobilize Canada's food resources in the service of war, it also constituted an important and innovative foray by the state into the daily lives of Canadians.

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Introduction
'Food Means Victory and the World Made Safe for Democracy': Canada's Food and the First World War

"I shall anchor my storm-tossed soul to the British fleet and make a batch of bran biscuits." So declared Anne of Green Gables' housekeeper, Susan Baker, in Lucy Maud Montgomery's popular 1920 book, *Rilla of Ingleside*, set during the First World War. Bran biscuits, apparently, were a suitably patriotic way of enlisting one's stomach in the fight against the Hun. Readers might have smiled at the character's obvious consternation in the face of wartime food regulation, while at the same time recalling, perhaps somewhat ruefully, their own recent struggles under the same conditions. The Great War had led to a number of seismic disruptions in the lives of Canadians, but few more direct than the transformation of food into a weapon of war. With the global food system in disarray, Britain found itself in a baleful situation. In light of this, Canada's food exports became a crucial pillar of wartime support. Therefore, to help ensure adequate food supplies overseas, Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden had, in June 1917, inaugurated a new era in home front food conservation and production, by appointing Canada's first Food Controller. Susan Baker, whose life and livelihood revolved around the kitchen, had become "somewhat disgruntled" in the face of the rapidly multiplying food control edicts, a situation that not only tested her patience, but that had even begun to affect her political convictions. As Montgomery wrote of her character:

> Her loyalty to the Union Government is being sorely tried. It surmounted the first strain gallantly. When the order about flour came Susan said, quite cheerfully, 'I am an old dog to be learning new tricks, but I shall learn to make war bread if it will help defeat the Huns.' But the later suggestions went against Susan's grain. Had it not been for father's decree I think she would have snapped her fingers at Sir Robert Borden. 'Talk about trying to make bricks without straw, Mrs. Dr. dear! How am I to make a cake without flour or sugar? It cannot be done — not cake that *is* cake. Of course one can make a *slab*, Mrs. Dr. dear. And we cannot even camooflash [sic] it with a little icing! To think that I should have lived to see the day when a government at Ottawa should step into my kitchen and put me on rations![1]

Rilla of Ingleside remains one of the best fictional accounts of ordinary Canadians facing the multiple challenges of war. Much of the novel's richness is derived from the author's own

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1 Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (Toronto, 1920), pp. 230-231.

exceptional observations of life on the home front; in writing the book, Montgomery drew heavily on the journals that she had kept throughout the war, which themselves contain an unparalleled record of Canada's wartime ordeals.[2]

These included the wholly new experience of food regulation, an unprecedented measure in a land where food was abundant, and where the food chain was largely free from state interference. Prior to this, Canadians had "never been used to any stint of food or regulation of diet other than that imposed by individual means," according to William J. Hanna, the nation's first Food Controller.[3] During the war, Canadians were not 'put on rations,' so to speak, but they *were* subject to a growing list of food restrictions and a level of food 'control' that became progressively more intense as the war continued. Montgomery's inclusion of the beleaguered housekeeper's response to the intensified food restrictions, a relatively minor detail in the book, is nevertheless a potent reminder that food control, largely unremembered today, was in fact a tangible, pervasive part of life on the home front, and that the nation's food contributions were a major ingredient in Canada's war effort. The most destructive war that the world had ever seen affected the Canadian food supply in a singular fashion, reaching into every kitchen, mobilizing (and perturbing) the 'Susan Bakers' of Canada in an unprecedented manner.

All Canadians were affected by food control. Food regulation was state intervention of a highly personal nature, as food is, after all, what Anthony Winson has aptly termed the "intimate commodity."[4] To state that there is nothing on earth more crucial to our survival than food and drink is axiomatic. The constant, implacable need for sustenance is so basic to our existence as human beings that is it often overlooked by historians, who fail to see the food supply for what it can all too readily be: an important historical variable with far-reaching consequences. The place of food in history is thus paradoxical. A quick literature search will turn up a seemingly endless list of food-related studies, spanning a large range of topics and sub-fields within the historical discipline, all indebted to the pioneers in social history (especially Fernand Braudel and others from the Annales school) who began to include diet and the food supply as categories of analysis. That being

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2 Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 165-166.

3 William J. Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller* (Ottawa, 1918), p. 12.

4 Anthony Winson, *The Intimate Commodity: Food and the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex in Canada* (Toronto, 1992).

said, historians who, as a rule, do not make food their primary focus tend to neglect its importance; it is far too easy to dismiss as a 'trivial' detail. There have, however, been recent indications that food is in fact moving closer to the centre of the historical stage, most notably with the publication of the *Cambridge World History of Food*, a comprehensive, scholarly monument to the undeniable power of food to shape and influence the course of history, whether in times of peace, or times of war. One clear way in which food has behooved historical interest occurs when the supply has been disrupted or compromised in some way, either through environmental factors such as famine or drought, or through man-made conditions such as war.[5] This thesis will address the latter issue, by examining how Canada sought to assist the Allied war effort during the First World War through greater production (and lesser consumption) of food — a measure which not only had consequences for the average Canadian, but which was also an important, unprecedented example of state intervention in Canada.

From the late nineteenth century to the outbreak of war in 1914, Canada's food system underwent a fundamental shift, becoming an industrialized sector on the road to modernity, expanding and sharing in the material advantages that the 'wheat boom' and its attendant prosperity had brought to the nation. Into this, a short, sharp recession intruded in 1913, followed by a war in which Canadians would participate willingly and wholeheartedly, convinced not only of their duty to Empire, but also (it must be admitted) of the benefits that could accrue from this involvement. Eventually, as the nature of the war contoured itself in unexpected ways, this duty would encompass far more than manpower and munitions — Canada became 'the granary of the Empire,' shipping ever-larger amounts of foodstuffs to embattled Britain. As the war devolved into a situation of stalemate, blockade and counter-blockade, Canada's food surplus — as much as the country could produce — became a crucial component in the fight, leading to new and frequently problematic economic controls imposed by the state. "World War I," writes Carol F. Heltosky in the aforementioned *Cambridge World History of Food*, "as a contest of industrial and military strength, made necessary the efficient management of resources, including food. Governments were thrown into the roles of suppliers and distributors of foodstuffs, and much of food policy formation was

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5 Although, as environmental scholars like to point out, famines can also be exacerbated or caused by human actions. See, for instance, Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London, 2001).

piecemeal, at times chaotic, in nature."[6] Significant in times of peace, the security of the food supply took on an even greater urgency in a time of war, especially a war whose ultimate, if indirect goal became the destruction of civilian strength and morale. The importance of food to the Allied war effort — and Canada's status as one of Britain's major prewar food suppliers — drew the Canadian food system (and thus every Canadian) into the fight.

This happened largely because of the changing nature of modern war. Prior to the advent of total warfare in the twentieth century, the adequate feeding of military personnel alone was generally sufficient to ensure an effective war effort. But the First World War's envelopment of the civilian altered this; the lengthy, industrialized warfare that developed forced the state to include the civilian population in its plans. In total war, the food line stretched well past the mess tent deep into the homeland. Germany, which on the surface appeared self-sufficient as far as foodstuffs went, for instance, saw its citizens suffer miserably when Britain set up an effective blockade, and this distress filtered down through to the front line soldiers, adversely affecting morale. By early 1917, Britain's food supply, heavily dependent on imports, would also suffer as the Germans countered the British blockade with unrestricted submarine warfare. Thus, the prime strategy of the war evolved into a basic, almost primitive struggle to starve the enemy into submission. The First World War gave rise to many new, frequently negative developments, and the transformation of food into a powerful and desperate weapon was one such occurrence. In short, food arguably became one of the most important factors in determining victory or defeat. The ability of Great Britain, with assistance from North America, to overcome the obstacles posed by the German counter-blockade, would prove crucial to the Allied victory. Canada, both the senior dominion and strategically situated, stood as a key player in this effort.

Of course, at the civilian level, Canada's participation in the first total war of the twentieth century was, as compared to the European experience, somewhat less than total. While large numbers of Canadians left their homes for service overseas, Canadian soil remained free of battle, and Canadian civilians were largely free from the more obvious physical ravages of war. Mass starvation did not threaten a country as vast and as agriculturally productive as Canada.

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6 Carol F. Heltosky, "The State, Health, and Nutrition," *Cambridge World History of Food*, vol. II (Cambridge, 2000), p. 1577.

Nevertheless, the impact of the First World War was indeed profound. Life on the domestic front was fundamentally changed, as the most elemental of everyday decisions — what and how to eat — took on a more critical significance. Thus, while the emotional costs of the war ran high, the socio-economic toll was also significant, especially for the average consumer. Canada's contributions during the First World War amounted to more than simple military assistance. The nation's industrial and material support, as a vital aspect of Canada's overall support of the Allies must also be taken into account, especially in the realm of foodstuffs. And, perhaps, the "old" history of Canada's participation in World War One -- a history of battles, conscription and diplomacy -- need to be considerably stretched. Canada's role as a 'breadbasket' of the Allied war effort drew the nation into new and uncharted territory as a political and economic society. By 1917, this transformation would become starkly apparent.

On June 16, 1917, thanks to a new willingness on the part of the Canadian government to meet the pressures of war with previously untried methods, an Order-in-Council was passed that provided for the appointment of a Canadian Food Controller. The basic duties for such a position, as set out in the order, were twofold: to investigate the "quantities, location and ownership" of food supplies, as well as their prices; and to "ascertain the food requirements of Canada and to facilitate the export of the surplus to Great Britain and her Allies."[7] The Controller was also empowered to make regulations, "where he deems it in the public interest," that would control the prices, storage, distribution, sale and delivery of foodstuffs, as well as their manufacture and preparation. The Food Controller could also purchase or requisition food as he saw fit. A clause in the order also enabled the Controller to pass laws "providing for the conservation of food and the prevention of waste thereof and governing the consumption of food in hotel, restaurants, cafes, private houses, clubs and other places."[8] The Controller's mandate was thus sweeping and unprecedented. William J. Hanna, former Provincial Secretary of Ontario and a loyal Tory, was officially named Food Controller on June 21, 1917, a post he would hold until his resignation on January 24, 1918. Hanna's tenure was marked by severe public criticism, mostly relating to his refusal to enact price control, and he was castigated in the press for not doing enough to keep steeply rising food prices down. In February,

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7 P.C. 1460, "Order in Council Appointing Food Controller For Canada," June 16 1917, *Sessional Papers, Seventh Session of the Twelfth Parliament*, Vol. 21, 1917.

8 Ibid.

1918, as part of a recognition that Canada's production levels were not meeting overseas demand, the Office of the Food Controller was replaced by the Canada Food Board. This was a more elaborate and effective organization, headed by Henry B. Thomson, and falling under the ultimate jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. After directing several measures to increase production, and drawing up a series of regulations that restricted Canadians' food consumption habits as never before, the Board was dissolved in March 1919.

During its twenty-month existence, the mandate of food control seemed deceptively simple: realize as large of an increase in exportable food commodities as possible, by curbing home consumption and increasing agricultural production. Under the auspices of the draconian War Measures Act, food control officials issued a raft of orders and regulations that could help achieve these goals. Meatless days, prohibition, anti-hoarding laws, the licensing of food dealers, profit-fixing, the periodic banning and restricting of certain food products were just some of the measures imposed on Canadians. Propaganda-driven voluntary campaigns, such as the Food Service Pledge drive and the 'Soldiers of the Soil' movement, were launched in an effort to turn people's thoughts towards the need to conserve and produce. By the summer of 1918, no part of the food chain, it seemed, remained untouched. Marginal lands were brought under the plow, backyards bloomed with vegetables instead of flowers, women were instructed in the arts of canning and preserving, refreshments were discouraged at meetings and all were exhorted to cut back on their regular consumption levels. Canadians were encouraged to use substitutes, to try the new foods that food control officials were regularly trotting out before the public. A massive 'Eat More Fish' campaign, for example, resulted in an astounding increase in the amount of fresh seafood consumed by Canadians. Other, more exotic foods, such as whale and beaver, were suggested, but did not meet with much success. All of this was accompanied by a steady diet of patriotic, moralistic propaganda that poured out of the food control office, seeking to mobilize the minds, and stomachs, of Canadians.

Food control was an embryonic form of state intervention that can show how fundamentally difficult regulation of any sort, but especially one so *personal* as food, can be. This was a measure whose results were often unexpected and at times quite different from those which had been envisaged, a consequence which arose directly out of the variegated nature of the food chain itself — an intricate web of individuals and groups each vying with the other, each seeking to safeguard

its own vested interests, along the lines of what Tom Traves has described as "the delicate balance of power between contending classes and interest groups."[9] The food chain, or system, was at the time of war in the midst of a revolution, as new technology and other scientific developments changed the nature of food production, delivery and consumption on a fairly regular and rapid basis. Into this tumult stepped the state, now seeking to harness an industry with a vast and diversified nature, not to mention the behaviour of Canadians as consumers. Food regulation, and those who tried to direct it, got caught up in this tumult, in this sticky web of food dealers, consumers, producers, and their political spokespeople — each group with a different expectation of how food control was to proceed, and indeed, of the very *nature and purpose* of food control. The main challenge faced by Canada's Food Controllers came in brokering some form of harmony between these contending groups, so that the goals of wartime food regulation (more food for the Allies) could be achieved. In short, food control was an attempt to attain what, in the long run, would be most beneficial for all citizens of Canada (victory over the Central Powers), at the expense of short-term economic interests such as cheaper food. Thus, food control was really an exercise in balancing broader, long-term interests with narrower, short-term interests — a trade off with which many Canadians, initially at least, did not seem to accept. While victualling the Allies was indeed a noble goal, and one with which few patriotic Canadians could disagree, concern over soaring food prices and the cost of living was of immediate concern to many, and an obstacle that the state had to overcome. With no desire to alter the *laissez-faire* economic policies upon which the state had relied in peacetime, the government's trump card was quite simply to place the needs of the Allies before domestic concerns. Food control thus adopted the same moral suasion, based on the same sacrificial rhetoric, that had been used to mobilize Canadians in other segments of the war effort.

This thesis has several objectives. The first is to recover a forgotten yet crucial aspect of Canada's First World War effort, by drawing on government reports, parliamentary debates, documents held at the National Archives of Canada, and a variety of contemporary newspapers and periodicals. In so doing, it will attempt to reach into the lives of Canadians on the home front, in order to illustrate some of the daily challenges that the war presented to civilians. Finally, by using

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9 Tom Traves, *State and Enterprise: Canadian Manufacturers and the Federal Government, 1917-1931*. (Toronto, 1979), p. 156.

food control as a sort of 'test case,' a broader objective will be to reflect upon the 'untidy' nature of government regulation, where intended results do not always correspond with actual outcomes. In his 1928 history of British food regulation, William Beveridge wrote that food control touched "the fringe of larger political movements and manoeuvres."[10] One can easily say the same about the Canadian attempt at food regulation, for it too brushed against larger issues and questions that the pressures of war had brought to light. This thesis will argue that wartime food regulation in Canada ran up against much wider social trends and debates, demonstrating that state intervention, especially one without previous models to work from, can be a fundamentally unpredictable process, and one whose results may depend upon the successful balancing of competing interests. The seemingly matter-of-fact nature of food regulation ran headlong into deep undercurrents, both political and social, that had been stirred up or exacerbated by the war. Issues of Imperial loyalties and Canadian nationalism, regional tensions, economic disequilibrium, a growing urban/rural divide, gender roles and social reform, were all reflected in the origins, processes, and results of Canada's food control experience. While food regulation may have grown out of a straightforward desire to mobilize Canada's food resources in the service of war, it also constituted an important and innovative foray by the state into the daily lives of Canadians.

This thesis unfolds chronologically, with the exception of chapter one which offers an historiographic overview of the subject, and which seeks to situate the present study within the larger framework of scholarship on Canada and the First World War. It also addresses work that has been done on the British and American food control experience, looking largely at the themes and issues that have been highlighted by international scholars of wartime food regulation. Chapter two gives the reader an overview of the Canadian food system from 1890 to 1914, placing food regulation within its proper, 'revolutionary' context. It looks at the prewar development of the three main groups which would be affected by food regulation — producers, dealers, and consumers. What was the nature and extent of the food system in Canada on the eve of war? For that matter, what exactly did the food system encompass at this point in time, and how had it gotten to that point? Chapter three, moving from 1914 to the end of 1916, looks at some of the main ways in which the first two-and-a-half years of war affected the food system in Canada, and how the nation's

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10 Sir William Beveridge, *British Food Control* (London, 1928), p. 2.

political leaders slowly began to respond to these mounting pressures. Chapter four, covering January, 1917 to late August, 1917, shows how mounting food needs overseas, along with concurrent domestic pressure for cheaper food, pushed the government into appointing a Food Controller. Following William J. Hanna's first two months on the job, the chapter seeks to highlight the manifestation of a growing sense of unease on the part of consumers, who erroneously assumed that food control meant 'price control.' Chapter five, moving from September, 1917 to March, 1918, follows the public debate that consequently arose over the purpose of food control — was it solely a means to achieve a greater food surplus for overseas shipment, as the government intended, or, should the Food Controller use his considerable, if vague, powers to keep the soaring price of food at reasonable levels, as the public, and the Liberals, demanded? Chapter six, beginning in April, 1918 and ending in March, 1919, covers the work of the Canada Food Board, under which food control became increasingly strict, its regulations routinely enforced, as well as the eventual process of decontrol which followed the cessation of hostilities in November 1918.

A history of food control in Canada during the First World War may seem to be a curious subject. At first thought, food control appears almost incidental, just one of the many wartime complications to which Canadians were subjected. But, underneath the superficially placid veneer of the question of food and war lies a decisive clue as to the realities of war as experienced by ordinary Canadians. It opens up questions about government regulation, social control, the relationships between citizen and state, business and consumer, state and business, and the balancing of competing interests, even at a time when circumstances are exceptional. Despite the obvious importance of Canada's food contributions to the Allied war effort, this is a subject which has received scant attention — Canadian historians have tended to concentrate on the seemingly more exciting aspects of the military conflict. Battles, political intrigue, labour strife, and ethnic discord have dominated the accounts of Canadian involvement in the war. But such accounts fail to acknowledge that soldiers, politicians, and citizens at large need food to make history. Canada's important military sacrifices, while richly deserving of our consideration, have been and continue to be, well served. It is now time to turn our attentions to food -- to Susan Baker's bran biscuits -- as a neglected aspect of our history, our military engagements, and as one of the basic realities of everyday life on the home front.

Chapter One
The Historiography of the Home Front: Approaching the History of Canadian Food Regulation During the First World War

Introduction

The history of Canada's war effort during the First World War is an ever-growing, unwieldy body of scholarship, a large portion of which appears to be aimed squarely at satisfying our apparently unending fascination with all things military. The home front, an equally compelling subject, has been less well-served by the Canadian historical community, albeit with some notable exceptions, which this chapter will address. This general deficiency makes the absence of any work on wartime food regulation understandable, if not entirely acceptable. Food control is not a glamourous subject by any means. Still, it remains a salient facet of civilian life, probably the only wartime measure with truly universal applicability. Ask any grandmother about food rationing and you will get a fascinating piece of oral history. The Second World War experience of food control, with its far more extensive system of rationing and price controls, is slightly better known, but this was built upon the crucial lessons learned during the Great War — a proving ground for government regulation as a whole.

Due to the lack of any sustained scholarship on this particular topic, any attempt to recount the historiography of food control in Canada would be, on its own, extremely brief. Therefore, in order to gain a fuller understanding of where the subject fits historiographically, it must be placed within a broader context, one that takes into account the great span of historical literature touching on the wider field of Canada and the First World War. Of this, only a relatively small proportion examines the effects of the war on the domestic front. This becomes especially evident when one makes the comparison with the vast of amount of military history that has come out of the war. Existing scholarship that does deal with life on the home front includes several key books and articles that consider subjects such as the politics of the Borden government, the growth of state intervention, the wartime economy, agriculture, and propaganda, all of which are notable peripheral elements to consider when studying the food control situation. By examining how some historians have approached these related issues, we can hopefully gain a fuller understanding of how the First World War both affected and shaped Canadian society.

Since so little has been written on the subject of food control itself, an added objective in

this chapter will be to note where it *has* been addressed, and, specifically, the issues that have been raised in accordance with this topic. The scope of this initial 'setting of the stage' can be broadened still further by looking at some of the international literature that has been produced on the subject, particularly in areas where the Canadian scholarship is especially weak. To this end, several prominent books that deal with the British and American experience of food control are included in this analysis. When these areas of historiography are considered as an integrated whole, one can begin to see the rich potential for historical enquiry that surrounds a study of Canadian food control, and thereby sense where an investigation of this type would fit within existing scholarship. Providing an overview of the historiography surrounding food control is important, but this chapter will also argue that certain abiding trends within Canadian historiography are appropriately reflected within the narrower field of the history of Canada and the First World War. This chapter will subsequently look at some key examples of Canadian scholarship on the First World War, focusing squarely on the home front. The second half of the chapter will address gaps within Canadian historiography by looking at some international literature.[1]

The search for a comprehensive monograph dealing with civilian life in Canada during the First World War, along the lines of Arthur Marwick's influential work, *The Deluge*, on Great Britain, yields somewhat disappointing results.[2] At most, the war in Canada has been fitted into larger themes — most notably the 'great transformation' theme so evident in Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown's *Canada: A Nation Transformed, 1896-1921*. Regional aspects of the war are well served by works such as John Herd Thomson's *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* and Barbara Wilson's *Ontario and the First World War: A Collection of Documents*. These are but a few examples of the fine books which exist, mostly dealing with specific aspects of the war, such as the economy, government, agriculture, state intervention, as well as ethnic and cultural tensions. When taken together they offer an excellent overview, albeit one with some obvious gaps. Day-to-day existence on the home front has been overlooked, but the appearance of recent books such as *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War*, by Ian Miller, is an indication that this is changing. As an even narrower slice of daily life on the home front, the study of food regulation

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1 It should also be noted that, mainly for reasons of space, this overview will consciously stay away from the vast and well-known literature on conscription. The issue of manpower mobilization does nonetheless come within the purview of food regulation, and consequently will be dealt with only in relation to the wartime shortage in agricultural labour.

2 Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (Boston, 1965).

offers an opportunity to examine the broader themes associated with war and social regulation, as well as the emergence of the modern regulatory state. Food control is consequently an excellent example of an inceptive attempt to direct public energies towards larger collective concerns. One of the main points of this chapter is that the lack of secondary scholarship on food control is mitigated somewhat by the quality of the historiography which surrounds the issue, and upon which it will build.

One should naturally begin by assuming that the types of historical questions that were being asked, as well as the types of topics being pursued, were much different in the 1970s or 1980s than they were in the 1920s or 1930s. Examining the historical scholarship in a chronological manner will allow us to isolate certain historiographical trends reflected in that literature. Note that contemporary and immediate post-First World War accounts were unavoidably coloured by their proximity to both the war and its after effects. Therefore, the first section of the chapter (pertaining to Canada) will begin with scholarship from the era of the Second World War, and consider key works that have been published since then. Why the Second World War? This period is of particular interest due to the string of articles that appeared early in the conflict, mostly studying the economic effects of the Great War. The First World War had created a font of historical memory, one that Canadians turned to when again confronted with global conflict in 1939. Such literature provides an excellent example of historical study informing contemporary problems of public (wartime) policy — could the second Great War be fought more effectively if the 'lessons' of the last were understood? Some decades later, as the influence of the 'new' histories made its way into more traditional subject areas (e.g. military history), Canadian scholars seemed to show more interest in the impact of the war on the home front. There appears to be a strong regional bias within much of this history, as several of the books, and many of the articles, concentrate their investigations on particular parts of the country. Canadian historiography of the First World War, in general, also seems to lag behind international scholarship. In some cases, the types of questions that were being asked in Great Britain or in the United States decades ago are just now being addressed in Canada (e.g. the question of how wartime 'memory' is formed and sustained.) In order to fill that gap, and to better highlight areas which could benefit from a Canadian perspective, the second half of this chapter will consider international works dealing with sub-themes within the history of the Great War that, for the most part, have yet to receive comparable attention from Canadian historians.

The Historiography of Canada and First World War: The Home Front

The traditional political and economic focus of Canadian history, which had prevailed in the years prior to the emergence of the new social histories, is duly reflected within the historiography of the First World War.[3] With the advent of the second global conflict, *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* published several articles that reflected these venerable concerns, some notable examples of which were "Canadian War Finance and the Balance of Payments, 1914-1918," by Queen's academic F.A. Knox[4], as well as an intriguing piece by Mitchell Sharp on Allied wheat buying from a Canadian perspective.[5] These articles were dedicated to explicating the macroeconomic management of society in war in the hope that the excesses of the Great War would not be repeated. Food regulation as such was only a partial and peripheral focus of many of these studies, and when addressed, used mainly as an example of temporary wartime state economic intervention. They were part of a sub-genre of economic history which began to appear during the early 1940s, one that compared Canada's war effort during the First World War to the that of the new conflict in which the country now found itself. Another good example of this is "War Finance and the Canadian Economy, 1914-1920," by J. J. Deutsch, Professor of Economics at Queen's University, future Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance, and later Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada. In this piece (based on a paper given to a joint meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association and the Canadian Historical Association), Deutsch noted that while the economic burden of Canada's Great War effort had been considerable in proportion to the country's size, it was still "relatively light when compared with the demands of the struggle she is engaged in today."[6] In the First World War, besides putting as many men into khaki as possible, Canada had also been relied upon for "foodstuffs, raw materials, shells, and wooden ships, things which she was

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3 Reg Whitaker, "Writing About Politics," in *Writing About Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History*, ed. John Schultz (Scarborough, 1990), pp. 8-9.

4 F.A. Knox, "Canadian War Finance and the Balance of Payments, 1914-1918," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, VI (May 1940), pp. 226-257.

5 Mitchell Sharp, "Allied Wheat Buying in Relationship to Canadian Marketing Policy, 1914-1918," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, VI (August 1940), pp. 372-389.

6 J.J. Deutsch, "War Finance and the Canadian Economy, 1914-1920," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, (November 1940), p. 537.

eminently equipped and suited to produce."[7] Evidently, some historical perspective was felt to be needed. The war demands of 1940 were more complicated; what Britain needed now were technologically-advanced weapons such as aircraft and heavy artillery, the production of which required more a complex industrial adaptation than that of the First World War.

A similar article by journalist Grant Dexter, strongly influenced by the Deutsch piece, was published the following year in the influential journal *Foreign Affairs*, explicitly comparing the two World War efforts. Fittingly titled "The Canadian Economy in Two Wars," Dexter's article echoed Deutsch's sentiment that, compared to the new conflict, Canada's First World War effort was "comparatively simple"; foodstuffs and munitions were Canada's main material contributions to that war. Both of these articles also made a point of noting that in 1914, thanks to the "great era of expansion which was just ending" Canada had been well placed to provide what Great Britain required from the country.[8] The more intense demands of the Second World War, however, meant that the "do-nothing economic policy" pursued by the Borden government would not, according to Dexter, serve present purposes.[9] It was clear that Canada would be called upon to make an increased financial commitment, and that government economic policy would have to address this in its planning. By embodying a scholarly preoccupation of the time, these articles are an example of how present concerns can at times influence the types of subjects that scholars choose to study, suggesting that the historiography of the First World War is no exception.

The impact of the war on the state is an area that is inextricably linked to food regulation. With regulatory power extended much further than ever before, even the Canadian diet came within the government's reach. Some other World War Two-induced articles, such as "The Growth of Government Activities in Canada 1914-1921," by another prominent Queensian, political scientist J.A. Corry, offer some insight into the evolution of the Canadian state apparatus during the Great War. Corry's article, published in 1940, is another piece whose *raison d'être* owes quite a lot to contemporary circumstances. Implicit in this article are questions pertaining to the government's socio-regulatory behaviour during the First World War, and the legacy that this left to the Canadian state, as well as to the Canadian people who now had become "acquainted with the idea of

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7 Ibid.

8 Grant Dexter, "The Canadian Economy in Two Wars," *Foreign Affairs*, XIX (January 1941), pp. 442-443. Note that Deutsch's 1940 article was the only source cited by Dexter.

9 Ibid., p. 445.

government regulation of business and with the concept, technique, and philosophy of the social services."[10] The unparalleled growth in government agencies and state economic regulation, while intended to meet only the extent and duration of the wartime emergency, did accustom both the government and the public to the *idea* that the state had a right, and perhaps even a duty, to intervene when circumstances dictated.

Overall, Canadian historians seem to have accepted the notion that the unprecedented circumstances faced by the nation in World War One facilitated an extension of government power. The political process through which this was actuated, namely the passage of the War Measures Act, has been of some interest to historians as well. This 1914 act, and its effects on state power and civil liberties during the war, was the subject of David Edward Smith's 1969 article "Emergency Government in Canada." This piece highlights the growth of state control, as well as the increasing willingness of the Borden government to impose regulatory constraints on various aspects of Canadian life, including the economy and the consumption of foodstuffs. Such wartime controls were constantly adjusted to meet the unprecedented challenge of the Great War. As Smith notes, the powers of the Food Controller gradually increased over time (much like the Canadian state as a whole) to the point where, he argues, the Canada Food Board was largely responsible for the passage of the infamous 'Anti-loafing law' of 1918, which made it an offence for an able-bodied Canadian male to be without productive, gainful employment.[11] This particular law grew out of the need to increase the amount of farm labour available, thereby aiding a sector of the economy that was experiencing serious manpower problems. Despite this incredible invasion into domestic labour, most scholars looking at Canada in the First World War have chosen to focus on the divisive and tumultuous debate over military, not domestic manpower and conscription. However great the need for front-line soldiers may have been, the need for agricultural labour was just as crucial. But from history's point of view, the national unity implications of military manpower have proven to be far more beguiling. Rural and agricultural history has consequently not received a great deal of attention in Canadian historiography.[12] Only John H. Thompson's *Harvests of War* has

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10 J.A. Corry, "The Growth of Government Activities in Canada 1914-1921," *Papers of the Canadian Historical Association*, 1940, p. 73. In 1965, Corry became Principal of Queen's, a post he held until 1968 when he was succeeded by J.J. Deutsch.

11 David Edward Smith, "Emergency Government in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, L (December 1969), p. 435.

12 John Herd Thompson, "Writing About Rural Life and Agriculture," in *Writing About Canada: A Handbook for*

demonstrated that the exigencies of war and food production can furnish a powerful explanation of Canada at war. This thesis will seek to add the history and implications of food regulation to the already compelling story of Canada and the First World War.

To date, political factors have dominated our approach to unravelling the First World War in Canada. Obviously, the manner in which Canadians responded to wartime exigencies was due in large part to the direction provided by the country's political and religious leaders, whose actions helped shape Canada's response to the conflict. The wartime government and the manner in which it sought to direct the war effort has been the subject of a certain amount of scholarly work, although perhaps less than one might expect given that Borden helped navigate the country through one of its most turbulent and divisive eras. Save for the work of a few historians, notably Robert Craig Brown and John English, Borden has not received the attention that such an individual might reasonably be expected to command. This could be due to the fact that, by the 1970s, political historians were already being usurped by a cadre of social historians whose abilities and attentions were focused in far different directions. The study of politics was thus left largely to political scientists, who were more concerned with the "processes of government," rather than individuals and the institutions which they shaped, and in which they served.[13] Borden's neglect was perhaps reinforced by the long-standing perception that he had been a failure — the man who wounded us terribly by forcing conscription in 1917 — and as such did not warrant serious study. Despite this, the seventies did produce some key scholarship focusing on Borden and his leadership. In 1975, Robert Craig Brown published the first volume of his biography of the wartime prime minister, and in 1977 John English produced *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1904-1920*, a study focusing on Borden's tenure which concentrates heavily on the war years. English presents a complex political mindset, portraying the prime minister as a Canadian-style progressive, whose vision of binding the nation around an Anglo version of 'service' was oblivious to Canadian reality. When taken together, these two books offer a balanced view of the political system during the war years.[14]

The 1970s also saw the publication of what is still one of the best general accounts of

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Modern Canadian History, ed. John Schultz (Scarborough, 1990), p. 97.

13 Whitaker, p. 13.

14 John English, *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1904-1920* (Toronto, 1977) and Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography* (Toronto, 1975, 1980).

Canada and the First World War. While only a few chapters in Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown's *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* are devoted to the war, they form a credible, concise description of the home front, and one which touches on the most salient events of the period, including a brief summary of food control activities.[15] An entire chapter, for example, is devoted to economy at war. The only drawback here is its relatively short length, and to a lesser extent, the fact that it was written in 1974, just at the start of the period where the 'new histories' were beginning to contribute to Canadian history, meaning that some subjects did not receive as much coverage as one would hope. Certainly, a major part of this 'great transformation' was that the food chain in Canada, as elsewhere, was changing. Food increasingly became an outcome of systematic, industrial production — partly a chain of production from farm to kitchen, but also one which now included the large-scale food processor and manufacturer. For other historians, the message of a nation transformed did not always sink in very deeply. In 1989 Jack Granatstein and Desmond Morton produced *Marching to Armageddon*, a popular, narrative history of Canada in the Great War which, while extremely readable and genuinely engaging, is somewhat less than scholarly, and is clearly directed at a broader audience, a situation reflected in its lack of footnotes, or even a bibliography.[16] It has, therefore, proved difficult to wean our historical community from treating war as alluring military history rather than society at large at war.

Both *Canada: 1896-1921* and *Marching to Armageddon* devote a small amount of space to food regulation, and each approaches it from very different angles. Granatstein and Morton give few particulars about the institution or its activities, choosing instead to emphasize some of its shortcomings, but without providing much in the way of context. For example, the authors focus on the wartime campaigns to enlist urban dwellers as emergency harvest labour, but chose to emphasize the government's "failure to transform white-collar professionals into hardened farmhands," a statement that warrants no further explanation.[17] In another aside, the reader is told that "mobilizing young 'Soldiers of the Soil' may not have made much difference to shrinking harvests but it was smart and patriotic business for the Montreal Shirt and Overall Co.," which made the uniforms for

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15 Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto, 1974).

16 J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Marching To Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Toronto, 1989).

17 Granatstein and Morton, p. 97.

these ersatz farmers.[18] They do not elaborate; the 'Soldiers of the Soil' campaign remains unexplored, and indeed, largely unexplained. They also commit a mild, yet annoying, error when they state that "Under W.J. Hanna, an Imperial Oil executive, the Canada Food Board did all it could to promote free-enterprise solutions to wartime problems."[19] Unfortunately, the Food Board did not actually come into being until after Hanna (who was also a fairly influential member of the Ontario provincial cabinet) had resigned. Such is the cursory treatment of the role of food in Canada's war.

In general, the impression conveyed by the authors of *Marching to Armageddon* is that the work of the Food Controller, as well as the Canada Food Board, was largely ineffectual, and thus not worthy of examination — we failed in many of our battles but we still study them because defeat is said to be a lesson for future victory. The efficacy of food regulation is beside the point; the authors could have used food control as a significant example of Canada's wartime experiments with socio-economic intervention, whether or not they achieved their desired results. These seemingly pedantic complaints add up, and have a negative effect on the book's overall credibility. In contrast, Cook and Brown's treatment of food control is positively encyclopedic, offering much more concrete information on the establishment and conduct of this department during the war. The reader is treated to an objective, lucid account of the Food Controller's initiatives. Granatstein and Morton dismiss food control as an ineffective, amusing sidenote to the war, while Cook and Brown offer a more substantive account.

Several other books were produced in the late 1960s and 1970s that offered new, more socially-oriented perspectives of Canada's experience during the Great War, several of which reflected the growing trend towards a more regional focus within Canadian historiography. Also evident in the historiography are the differing ways in which the war affected urban and rural Canada. Canada's military contribution to the war was a national undertaking; soldiers often went overseas in formations drawn largely from the same areas of the country, but once overseas they became 'Canadian' troops. Back on the home front, however, regional differences and divides remained, and were at times heightened by the economic, political, and emotional strains of war. Perhaps this can help explain why a good portion of the literature dealing with home front issues is

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18 Ibid., p. 98.

19 Ibid.

written from a regional perspective, or is otherwise reflective of the urban/rural divide. At any rate, this section will highlight this particular trend within the historiography of Canada and the Great War and look once again for evidence of the place of food in war.

At the risk of conflating Ontario's experience with that of Canada as a whole, one should begin with Barbara Wilson's *Ontario and the First World War*, which, despite being a collection of documents pertaining to a specific region of the country, still offers a good overview of the issues that most Canadians, whether Ontarians or not, faced during the conflict. From the outpouring of eagerness that characterized the outbreak of war through to the armistice, Wilson pulled together documents from both private and official sources, giving each thematic section its own introduction. The winner of a 1979 Canadian Historical Association Clio Prize for merit in regional history, Wilson's work demonstrates the extent to which Ontario society was permeated by the war. The volume is reflective of some of the 'new' histories as well. Wartime problems related to food conservation and production are briefly mentioned in the sections dealing with the home front and with women. Education, ethnicity, and culture are heavily emphasized in the choice of topics, while politics and the military are virtually absent.[20]

Another notable work, also with a heavy Ontario bias, is the collectively-produced *The Great War and Canadian Society*, very much an exercise in history 'from the bottom up.' A collection of oral interviews conducted as part of the 1974 War and Canadian Society Project, this work provided a more personal perspective of life on the home front, and tried to impart "a deeper understanding of popular experience during the Great War."[21] These two books exemplify a drive to capture the everyday experience of life during the war, to reconnect with the general mindset that prevailed on the Canadian home front. A history of food regulation could also significantly contribute to this reconstructing of 'ordinary' experience, allowing us to gauge how wartime regulations and socialization affected the Canadian public.

Agriculture, especially cereal production, is a sector which is intimately connected to the subject of food control, and it too tends to be studied on a regional basis. It should come as no surprise that the only substantial monograph detailing some of the Great War's effects on agriculture focuses on the wheat-rich West. This area has been dominated by the pioneering work of John Herd

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20 Barbara M. Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War: A Collection of Documents* (Toronto, 1977).

21 *The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History*, ed. by Daphne Read (Toronto, 1977).

Thompson, whose 1978 book *Harvests of War* described the impact of the conflict upon Canada's western provinces. In what is very much a regional study, one of Thompson's most compelling arguments is that government emphasis on increased production, as well as tantalizingly high grain prices, led to soil exhaustion, an overall neglect in proper farming techniques, and an increase in farmer debt loads.[22] While *Harvests of War* also deals with other issues related to war-related social stress (ethnic tension, for example), everything seems to be tied to the fundamentally wheat-driven nature of the Western prairie economy, as well as the regional injustice perceived by many westerners in Ottawa's insistence that their wartime role was to 'mine' wheat. Of special note, however, is the fact that a study of this type could include so little about the impact of federal food control regulations and efforts, devoting only a few pages to this agency. What Thompson does say, however, is quite engaging, and speaks to the book's regional focus. Noting that Hanna was a Tory from Ontario who was "unpopular from the first in Western Canada," he also points out that Westerners viewed him as an "Eastern Canadian Food Dictator" whose regulations did not "take into account Western conditions."[23] The regional perspective is quite evident here, and also in the widespread suspicion, illustrated by Thompson, that the rural West was shouldering an unfair burden in the war, and conversely, that the industrial East was reaping undue benefits from the conflict. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, Thompson does introduce food into the wartime equation but does so to demonstrate the burden of national unity. The end of the war and economic recession in 1919 would, Thompson argues, reveal the cruel trap of the west's wartime mandate to grow wheat.

This regional approach to the effects of war upon agriculture can be detected elsewhere. The manpower question loomed large on the prairies, especially at harvest time. The Canada Food Board's 'Soldiers of the Soil' campaign sought to alleviate this shortage by 'enlisting' urban youth into harvest brigades, sending them out to help bring in the precious crops. This fascinating campaign has been completely ignored, save for one first-person account by a former participant which appeared in *Manitoba History*.[24] In this reminiscence, the author wonders why this campaign

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22 John Herd Thompson, *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto, 1978). Thompson also covers this in his article "Permanently Wasteful but Immediately Profitable: Prairie Agriculture and the Great War," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers*, 1976, pp. 193-206.

23 Thompson, *Harvests*, p. 158.

24 Gerry Andrews, "Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Soil," *Manitoba History*, (Spring 1989), pp. 26-30.

was largely forgotten, as it seemingly addressed a critical issue, and sought to fill a serious wartime need. (One could easily extend that particular question to the history of Canadian food regulation in general). The SOS campaign was only one in a series of initiatives through which Canada's food control agency sought to increase agricultural production. Another campaign, specifically dedicated to encourage the mechanization of wartime farm labour, has also been examined, again from a regional perspective, in "Government Tractors in Ontario, 1917 and 1918," by A. Margaret Evans and R.W. Irwin.[25] The authors focus mainly on the Ontario Department of Agriculture's attempts to sell subsidized tractors, purchased by the Canada Food Board, to Ontario farmers, in the hopes of increasing production by decreasing reliance on manpower and fodder-consuming horsepower. Some of the problems illustrated in this article again remind us that the era of Great War coincided, often with ruinous outcomes, with the emergence of industrial and technological modernization. The food chain itself was in the midst of this revolution — the application of industrial processes to the manufacture of various food products was becoming an important industry in Canada. The production of food was becoming crucially linked with Canada's urban-industrial economy with names like Weston, Massey-Harris, Burns and Richardson all becoming associated with the food chain. The attempts by the Food Board to encourage the mechanization of agriculture, and their results, broaches another set of questions deserving of further investigation.

The article by Evans and Irwin is a reminder that the West was not the only area suffering from a severe wartime shortage of farm hands, as Ontario was also in great need. Of particular concern to Ontario farmers were the dramatic effects of rural depopulation, a circumstance due not only to military enlistments, but also to the draining of farm labour into industrial urban areas, where wartime munitions work was much more lucrative. W. R. Young has analyzed this problem, as well as its after effects, in his article "Conscription, Rural Depopulation and the Farmers of Ontario, 1917-1919." As John Herd Thompson once noted, politics (and by extension, war) and agriculture are intertwined in post-Confederation Canada, so much so that the history of one must necessarily refer to the other.[26] To Young's credit, he demonstrates the fundamental incompatibility of the government's haphazard manpower policy with its emphasis on increased agricultural production, a paradoxical situation that was perceived all too clearly by farmers of the time, and

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25 A. Margaret Evans and R.W. Irwin, "Government Tractors in Ontario, 1917 and 1918," *Ontario History*, 61 (2, 1969), pp. 99-109.

26 Thompson, "Writing About Agriculture," p. 109.

which helped give rise to the postwar agrarian protest typified in the United Farmers of Ontario.[27]

The connection of food and war did not end at the concession line. Urban residents also had to contend with various war-related irritants, such as restrictions, soaring food prices, and at times even shortages of certain commodities. While the food situation does not receive an overwhelming amount of attention in Ian Miller's *Our Glory and Our Grief*, the author still conveys a rich sense of urban wartime life in one of Canada's biggest cities. Food control (thanks to public misapprehension that prices would be brought down) and the cost of living were linked in the minds of Canadian consumers, and the idea that food 'profiteers' could be growing rich as a result of war conditions was particularly galling to many. Michael Bliss ably portrayed this rather vexatious aspect of life on the home front in his biography of Joseph Flavelle, millionaire pork baron and head of the Imperial Munitions Board. Flavelle was typical of the new food industry in Canada; he grew rich by mastering the systematic movement of food from farmers to store shelf. The pork profits scandal in which Flavelle found himself embroiled dominated the headlines throughout the summer of 1917, and unfortunately, coincided with the first tentative steps towards state regulation of the food supply. Any study of food control would have to take into account the issues raised here. Also, it should be noted that many studies dealing with wartime economics fail to capture the human realities behind the cold statistics; it is one thing to note that inflation was rampant and that the cost-of-living was of immediate concern, but it is quite another to illustrate the vehemence with which suspected profiteers were assailed, especially by the press. Perhaps this type of colour is simply easier to capture in a biographical study; however, in this genuinely engaging book, Bliss, while leaning towards a flattering and exculpating portrait of Flavelle, does succeed in bringing this significant wartime issue to life.

Public opinion may not have been on Flavelle's side, but government agencies did all they could to ensure that it was on theirs. The use of propaganda to manipulate public opinion during the Great War, a conflict that ushered in a new era of mass persuasion, was the subject of Jeffrey Keshen's 1996 book *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*. The propaganda of food control has not in itself been the subject of any sustained study, in Canada or elsewhere, although Keshen does briefly look at the 'educational campaigns' conducted by the Food Controller

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27 W.R. Young, "Conscription, Rural Depopulation and the United Farmers of Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review*, LIII (September 1972), pp. 289-320.

and the Canada Food Board. He quite rightly argues that the intensity and sheer volume of the publicity material flowing out of the Food Controller's Office was the direct result of the logistical impossibility of "policing every citizen."[28] It might be fair to suggest that, regarding food control, the level of propaganda that each nation employed may well have been a reflection of the nature of the regulatory measures applied in that society. In the United States, for example, where the Food Administration relied heavily upon voluntary public compliance, propaganda of an exhorting character would, conceivably, have filled a larger role. In Canada, where food control efforts were based on a fusion of both compulsion and voluntarism, propaganda would have had to reflect this ambivalent character. Not surprisingly, patriotism became the rhetorical device of choice, mixed in with the threat of public opprobrium should one be caught shirking one's duty. In this sense then, food control propaganda seems to have been very much in line with other types of wartime 'information.'[29]

Evident is the extent to which journalists and the press were vital participants in the propaganda machine. This was also true in the U.S.; the nature of American food control propaganda was the subject of a short article entitled "Popular Propaganda: The Food Administration in World War I," by University of Oregon professor Stephen Ponder.[30] Using the U.S. food control situation as an example, Ponder refuted the older, more palatable notion that American journalists chaffed under the restrictions placed upon them by wartime censorship, resisting the censor's long arm. Instead, he argued that the position taken by the press was much more complex than this, and that many reporters were in fact "caught up in the patriotic fervor" of war, and willingly cooperated with the Committee on Public Information. This is one area which could be investigated further; food control's Educational and Publicity Departments were both directed and staffed by "newspapermen," and the connection between food propaganda and these individuals is of interest. Obviously, a deeper analysis of the types of persuasion employed by the

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28 Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton, 1996), p. 52.

29 The threat of dishonour was also prominent in British propaganda, which has been treated to several comprehensive assessments and reassessments over the years. One example in particular is Cate Haste's *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War*, (London, 1977) in which the author examines the nature and purpose of the propaganda through which the state sought to mobilize public opinion, although little attention is paid to the Ministry of Food.

30 Stephen Ponder, "Popular Propaganda: The Food Administration in World War I," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72 (Autumn 1995): 539-550.

Food Controller and the Canada Food Board is in order, along with a fuller examination of the links between the press, advertisers, and the institution of food control.

In general, Canadian scholarship on civilian life during the First World War has by and large tended to reflect the abiding trends present in Canadian historiography as a whole. Prior to the emergence of socially-oriented historical analyses in the 1970s, the economic and the political dominated historical discourse surrounding this subject, as it did elsewhere. The work done on the home front remained significantly overshadowed by the more popular works taking military topics as their focus, but a few noteworthy exceptions demonstrate that the strains and stresses of civil life merit their own studies. This also illustrates a very real gap which seems to exist between Canadian and international historiography; scholars from other nations, including Britain and the United States, have produced a much larger body of food regulation literature dealing with the experiences of both of those nations. Any potential historians of Canada's own food control experience are indebted to this existing scholarship, to which we now turn.

International Historiography of Food Control: Great Britain and the United States

We have already noted that Canadian historiography of the First World War, particularly in traditional areas, is substantial. It bears repeating however, that in terms of the home front, lacunae remain to be filled, and for this, international models must be sought. As previously mentioned, the international historiography of food control during the First World War is much more extensive, especially that relating to Great Britain. In the postwar period, the innovative character of the British food control situation inspired many eulogistic accounts penned by enthusiastic former Ministry of Food officials, eager to portray their efforts in a glorious light. In the past twenty years or so, modern scholars have reexamined this subject from a more detached, objective point of view. While this older literature does contain certain biased interpretations, these works are still immensely valuable for anyone undertaking a study of Canadian food control, as they provide a crucial context for Canada's role. In fact, one could argue that attempting to write the history of food control in Canada *in isolation*, without at least some knowledge of affairs overseas, would be self-defeating. Just as Borden shaped our diplomatic and military policies using his exposure to what he sensed our Allies needed, so too were many of our domestic policies molded by knowledge of policies elsewhere. In addition, while examining international food control literature for the sake of context is rewarding in its own right, it might also be helpful to note how Canada's efforts are

portrayed within this body of work.

For the first two years of war, there was, as William Beveridge noted, "no general food problem in Britain," and thus, no real food control.[31] This *laissez-faire* approach ended in the fall of 1916, when it was clear that Germany's submarine warfare was causing havoc on Allied shipping, and becoming a severe threat to Britain's import-dependent food supply, and all that this entailed. Lloyd George's response was to create a Ministry of Food and to appoint a Food Controller. The first six months of food regulation were marked by a largely voluntary system of conservation, an initial stage of food control which "invit[ed] the public to avoid compulsion by voluntary sacrifices."[32] But the staggering shipping losses sustained in the wake of Germany's 1917 resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare meant that this reliance on voluntary saving was not enough. Thus, a system of compulsory rationing was developed, and gradually "complete control over nearly everything eaten and drunk by forty million persons" was realized.[33] This was the synchronous model which Canadian officials would take, with many modifications, as their guide. It was also, as E.M.H. Lloyd put it, truly an "experiment in state control," a recognition that the role of the state was moving into hitherto uncharted waters.[34]

The first extensive treatment of the British experience to appear was Frank Coller's 1925 *A State Trading Adventure*, a somewhat witty account (oddly enough) in which the author ("sometime secretary to the Ministry of Food") detailed the work of the ministry.[35] The title alone denotes something of the innovative character of food control, for it really was perceived as an 'adventure,' an enterprise for which no precedent existed. Never mind that the British government had waited until late 1916 to even begin to inaugurate something of the sort, only then unwillingly, and largely out of fear of public disquiet. The very first sentence of Coller's book tells us that "The Ministry of Food was instituted in the third year of the War as a *reluctant sacrifice on the altar of industrial*

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31 Beveridge, p. 2.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 E.M.H. Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control at the War Office and the Ministry of Food* (London, 1924).

35 Frank Coller, *A State Trading Adventure* (Oxford, 1925). Something of the book's tone can be gleaned from the following passage: "The haters of dogs pestered us even more than the lovers of horses. They made out a total and strong case for the total or partial elimination of the pet dog. 'Pekes' were gravely asserted to consume 2lb of underdone steak every day... the feeding of our dog population required 360,828 tons 6 cwt. of food a year. A Committee sat, and, as the habit then was, presented forthwith a string of recommendations." (End result: no one was allowed to keep more than four dogs, and dog biscuits were to be diluted. Guide dogs and farm dogs excepted.), pp. 35-36.

unrest."[36] Canada's role, heralded as vital by the Borden government and our own Food Controllers, is virtually ignored by Coller, although we do merit some attention as one of the Americas' "three granaries," the other two being the United States and "the Argentine."[37] The Canada Food Board, which according to Coller "followed closely the lines and policy of the American Food Administration," appears in the index exactly twice.[38]

Other accounts, while more substantial and slightly more academic in tone, still retain a decidedly self-congratulatory aura about them. In 1928, as part of the stately multi-volume *Economic and Social History of the World War (English Series)*, Sir William Beveridge (later author of the famed Beveridge Report) produced, in 1928, *British Food Control*, a dry, detailed analysis of the mobilization of the food supply in Great Britain, whose stated purpose was "to describe, not the means to victory in war, but the effects of war upon the economic and social life of the combatant peoples."[39] Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Economics and History, Beveridge's 457-page book is an in-depth look at the manner in which the British government sought to maintain sufficient food supplies during the Great War (not to mention equitable distribution of said foodstuffs). Beveridge was himself a former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Food, and at the time the book was published was Director of the London School of Economics. Like Coller's work, *British Food Control* is preoccupied with the 'how' of British food policy, and seems to sum up the success of food control on the score that "the British people before the war ate up to a certain standard. During the war they ate on the whole a little better."[40] As with Coller's book, Canada is not really addressed in *British Food Control*, although attention is very briefly paid to Canadian exports of commodities such as wheat, bacon and other pork products; Beveridge also admits that when it came to cereal prices, British farmers "were treated perhaps less well than American or Canadian or Argentine farmers."[41]

In 1944, Sir Thomas G. Jones, another Ministry of Food official, published *The Unbroken Front*, an account of the Ministry's activities from its inception up to 1943. This book, while rather

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36 Ibid., p. 1. Italics added.

37 Ibid., p. 98

38 Ibid., p. 101.

39 Beveridge, p. 334. Lloyd's *Experiments in State Control*, which looks at the British government's attempts to regulate certain vital aspects of the wartime economy, including the food supply, appeared in this series as well.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 172.

superficial in its treatment, is noteworthy for its aim. Written at the height of the Second World War, Jones' book is an unsubtle, didactic attempt to "rally the troops" behind the flag of food control, at a time when the British were under yet another severe wartime emergency. Writing in the wake of this second war-related food crisis, Richard J. Hammond began his look at Britain's Second World War food efforts by harkening back to these very pioneers of food control, and the manner in which they portrayed their endeavors. What these books all have in common, according to Hammond, is an apparent sense of wonderment at "achieving so much in so short a time."[42] Prevalent also is an almost naive belief that Britain's success was *de facto* guaranteed by merely having established a regulatory agency for which no prior experience had prepared it, a success that was of course validated by the military victory. While this may have been a reasonable line to take, an objective, more critical account British food control would not appear until 1985.

Modern historiography has, at intervals, discovered some compelling angles within the subject of food and the First World War. A more recent examination of the British experience appeared with the publication of L. Margaret Barnett's 1985 *British Food Policy During the First World War*. This book, adapted from the author's Ph.D. dissertation, provided the first comprehensive, modern-day study of British food policy efforts. As Barnett rightly points out in her introduction, previous works on the subject tended to be "highly laudatory" having been "written by men personally involved with the administration of the food supply during Lloyd George's premiership."[43] Placing Britain's food situation in a much wider context, she argued that international cooperation "provided the key to victory in the First World War, rather than any individual *tour de force*."[44] Barnett's book also brought up issues that were previously overlooked, or even dismissed. The role of labour in influencing food policy, for example, as well as the role of consumer advocates and public opinion, are given much greater weight here than in the older works. Also approaching matters with a broader view was Avner Offer, Professor of Economic History at Oxford, who in 1989 produced a wide-ranging, frustratingly tantalizing book entitled *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, in which he studied some of the many intersections between the food supply and the Great War. The morality of blockades, the importance of food in prewar planning, food science, and international supply are just a few of the diverse areas that the

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42 Richard J. Hammond, *Food* (London, 1962), p. 3.

43 L. Margaret Barnett, *British Food Policy During the First World War* (Boston, 1985), p. xiv.

44 Ibid.

author addresses. In addition, unlike other British scholars, Offer devotes a positively dizzying amount of space to Britain's "Agrarian Bond: The United States, Canada, and Australia," concluding that Canada "emerged from the war in a better financial shape than either Australia or the United Kingdom, because of its smaller commitment and its large sales of munitions and food."[45] The main problem with Offer's work is that all of its diverse strands are not really drawn together in a coherent fashion, but that being said, it remains a remarkable book, one whose scope indicates something of this area's potential richness.

Peter Dewey, author of 1989's *British Agriculture During the First World War*, also wrote "Food Production and Policy in the United Kingdom, 1914-1918," in which he refuted the contention that increased production was the reason that adequate food levels were maintained during the war. Instead, Dewey concludes that domestic (i.e. British) conservation was the key to victory.[46] As with many other British scholars who have addressed the subject (except for Offer), the role played by Canada is not dealt with in any sustained manner. In fact, it is quite easy, after going through the British literature, to feel more than a little dismayed by the apparent air of indifference surrounding Canadian food control. One is immediately struck by the dissonance created by juxtaposing the boisterous means through which Canadians were exhorted to conserve food with the level of disinterest with which consumers abroad met our efforts. It must be admitted that attempting to gauge the importance of Canadian efforts by noting how Canada was or was not reflected in British literature may seem unsound; one must however also recognize that this absence can nonetheless be revealing in its own right.

Having no doubt learned from the British experience with food, the United States moved with impressive speed, once war was declared, to mobilize its own food resources. Herbert Hoover, the hero of the Belgian relief effort, was immediately asked to take over the new U.S. Food Administration. His mandate was similar to that eventually given to Canada's food controllers: to increase food production and conservation, in order to amass surpluses that could then be shipped overseas. Under the slogan "Food Will Win the War," Hoover's agency, which emphatically stressed the principle of voluntarism over more 'Prussian'-style tactics, became an impressive wartime agency of size and influence — Hoover himself added to his own reputation as an expert

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45 Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 370.

46 Peter Dewey, "Food Production and Policy in the United Kingdom, 1914-1918," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 30 (1980), pp. 71-89.

organizer and administrator — helping ameliorate food conditions overseas. As vast as Canada's agricultural capacity seemed, the nation's contributions were outstripped by those of their much larger neighbour to the south.

The role of the U.S. Food Administration receives at least twice as much coverage in the British literature than does Canada. Pragmatically speaking, this is no doubt attributable to U.S. size and economic strength; American efforts were both far more massive, and superior in organization. American influence in inter-Allied trade relations, as typified in its stringent insistence that the Allies should not, under any circumstances, compete with each other on the open market for foodstuffs, should not be overlooked. Both Beveridge and Coller admitted that this U.S.-driven centralization of Allied purchases increased the overall effectiveness of food control measures. However, one can also discern unsubtle echoes of the same 'laudatory' attitude taken by certain British writers in some of the U.S. scholarship. This is most evident in the words of former associate director of the Hoover Institute Witold Sworakowski, who, in writing in the late 1970s about U.S. food control, remarked that this was "a war in which hunger was used with callous deliberation as a strategic weapon," and that this "crucial battle" was in fact "fought and won on the American home front under Hoover's leadership."[47] As Sworakowski further notes in his essay "Herbert Hoover, Launching the American Food Administration, 1917," the success of the U.S. food initiative was both "resounding" and "uncontestable." Hoover was portrayed as very much the "devoted and selfless" public humanitarian, working to rescue millions from the spectre of starvation and misery.[48] Such a view does much to modify the prevalent view of Hoover as the ogre of the 1930s depression. As for the British, Coller noted that American efforts to supply Britain with foodstuffs was "really rather wonderful," and their control of food exports "invaluable."[49]

Harkening back to older British and American historiography for a moment, it should be mentioned that echoes of the reluctance to 'problematize' food control can also be seen in the scant attention that Canadian scholars have paid to the subject. At times, as with Granatstein and Morton, the treatment of food control tends to have an aura of facetiousness about it, as an event that is seen

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47 Witold Sworakowski, "Herbert Hoover, Launching the American Food Administration, 1917," in *Herbert Hoover: The Great War and its Aftermath*, ed. Lawrence Gelfand, (Iowa City, 1979), pp. 40-60.

48 Ibid., p. 58.

49 Coller, p. 146. The Halifax explosion is mentioned, for "it destroyed some heavy shiploads of breadstuffs for British account" and "was followed by a still greater disaster caused by a blizzard in the United States of America which lasted at intervals throughout January 1918."

as a sort of humourous sidebar to the war. Other historians, such as John Herd Thompson, take the topic of Canada's food and war much more seriously. Perhaps these differing approaches can be traced to the disparate types of history that these scholars were doing. Granatstein and Morton who, generally speaking, are more concerned with the military and political aspects of war, might be more apt to find the idea of food control diverting. The heartbreak of having less sugar to sprinkle on your cornflakes pales in comparison to the carnage of the battlefield or the stresses of wartime politics. This notion that food control was peripheral to the greater war effort, indeed almost an afterthought, might also explain why so little attention has been paid to it. Others, mainly social historians concerned primarily with the impact of the war on civilians, might be more apt to treat this topic with a greater sense of its centrality to the whole war experience. An adequate handling of this subject would not seek to downplay the seriousness of the situation, but would also recognize that there is an undeniably ironic atmosphere surrounding certain aspects of Canadian food control, especially when considering the hortative propaganda that was employed, and some of food control's more 'colourful' aspects.[50]

The economic and material side of the U.S. war effort has been well served by historians, predominately by Robert Cuff, a scholar who was eminently more willing to look at Hoover and food control in a critical light, one unbiased by Hoover's later fall from historiographic grace as an inept president. Of especial note is Cuff's 1973 book on the U.S. War Industries Board, as well as several articles relating to various aspects of American mobilization, many of which dealt with the singular nature of the relationship between government and business which prevailed during the First World War.[51] This work was foreshadowed in 1969, when he published an interesting piece comparing Canadian and American war efforts during the First World War, and in which he highlighted both the tension and cooperation between private industry and government that characterized both nations' wartime organizations.[52] Cuff went on to write several articles that related in some way to U.S. food control, with particular reference to the direction of Herbert Hoover, and the manner in which his views on professionalism, business, and public duty helped

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50 The "Eat More Fish" campaign, for example, seems inherently comical for some reason. Also odd, the official symbol of food control which featured a beaver gnawing on some sort of log. The relation to food control would be...?

51 Robert Cuff, *The War Industries Board: Business Government Relations During World War I* (Baltimore, 1973).

52 Robert Cuff, "Organizing for War: Canada and the United States During World War I," *Canadian Historical Association Papers*, 1969, pp. 141-156.

shape the U.S. Food Administration. Hoover's reliance on "the ideology of voluntarism in action," for example, formed the basis of Cuff's "Herbert Hoover: The Ideology of Voluntarism and War Organization During the Great War."[53] Cuff later looked at some of the drawbacks inherent to this type of ideology in "The Dilemmas of Voluntarism: Hoover and the Pork Packing Agreement of 1917-1919."[54] Hoover and his policies were also the subject of a 1992 article by the aforementioned L. Margaret Barnett, in which she attempted to determine the extent to which certain prevailing 'scientific' notions of nutrition and diet influenced the types of policies pursued by the U.S. Food Administration.[55] What this summary of the American literature seems to indicate most is the extent to which Hoover himself, and his voluntaristic creed, dominated this field; his overarching influence and the intense level of his own personal command over the U.S. Food Administration is categorically reflected in these studies. Cuff's work on Hoover reminds us that it was this pointed and determined emphasis on voluntarism as the guiding principle of American food control which would, more than anything else, set the U.S. experience apart from that of Canada, where voluntarism was tempered by a judicious measure of compulsion.

With this in mind, no examination of American food control would be complete without including George Nash's impressive biography of Herbert Hoover, the third volume of which focuses almost exclusively on the U.S. Food Administration.[56] A richly documented, highly-detailed study, Nash's book brings to mind Bliss's work on Joseph Flavelle, as both are able to capture the 'essence' of the period, through vivid portrayals of the individuals involved, as well as the issues. It is interesting to note that Bliss and Nash would also appear to share certain ideological viewpoints as well. Both can be regarded as traditional, somewhat conservative historians, a situation that one can see reflected in their work — both appear to subscribe to the 'great men doing great things' school of history. This should not, however, detract from the overall worth of their scholarship, which is excellent. In general, Hoover's stature does tower over most of the studies mentioned here,

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53 Robert Cuff, "Herbert Hoover: The Ideology of Voluntarism and War Organization During the Great War," *Journal of American History*, 64 (2, 1977), pp. 358-372. This essay also appeared in *Herbert Hoover: The Great War and its Aftermath*, pp. 21-39.

54 Robert Cuff, "The Dilemmas of Voluntarism: Hoover and the Pork Packing Agreement of 1917-1919," *Agricultural History*, LIII (4, 1979), pp. 727-747.

55 L. Margaret Barnett, "The Impact of 'Fletcherism' on the Food Policies of Herbert Hoover During World War I," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, LXVI (2, 1992), pp. 234-259.

56 George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Master of Emergencies, 1917-1918* (New York, 1996).

and more than anyone else Hoover is one individual whose name should be synonymous with food and war in the early twentieth century.

Overall, American scholars, perhaps because they are more numerous, have proven to be far more curious than Canadians about food control and the First World War. Two in particular have, unsurprisingly, been especially drawn to the role played by women in the food campaign. This is only natural; one inescapable fact surrounding food control efforts is the extent to which women were the main controllers of the household food supply, and by extension, a major target demographic for state propaganda, and patriotic 'exhortation.'[57] Marsha Gordon, in her fascinating article "Onward Kitchen Soldiers: Mobilizing the Domestic During World War I," suggests that while the state indeed sought to mobilize women for war, it also sought to keep them, as much as possible, within their traditional domestic sphere. However, that sphere was itself militarized to a certain extent, as the 'Kitchen Soldier' campaign would indicate.[58] Again, Gordon also notes the extent to which journalists and advertising men were responsible for much of the propaganda that emerged, not always from official sources, but also voluntarily from private sources as well. Propaganda found its way into the very content of women's magazines, newspaper advertisements, etc. Mark Van Wienen, professor of English at Augustana University, also picked up on this theme in his piece entitled "Poetics of the Frugal Housewife: A Modernist Narrative of the Great War and America," in which he blends history and literary theory to analyze the highly gendered "politics of food conservation" in the U.S.[59] This attention to gender is a fairly recent phenomenon. While it would be unfair to say that all of the previous food control historians have missed this important point, this salient item of analysis has, unfortunately, slipped beneath the notice of many scholars. This is doubly odd in that women have commanded attention in two other crucial aspects of World War One: suffrage and temperance. Perhaps the fact that food regulation, by its very nature, reinforced women's 'traditional' role as homemaker makes this topic less compelling than others which deal with the expanded roles for women in wartime. Beveridge remained largely silent on this issue, but Coller did acknowledge that since "the American women largely dominated

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57 Numbers varied, but it was widely held that women controlled between 80-90% of the food supply at this time.

58 Marsha Gordon, "Onward Kitchen Soldiers: Mobilizing the Domestic During World War I," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 29 (2, 1999): p. 70. In 1918, *Good Housekeeping* began a pledge card campaign in which readers could 'enlist' as 'kitchen soldiers.' They would receive a "richly printed colour certificate" in return.

59 Mark Van Wienen, "Poetics of the Frugal Housewife: A Modernist Narrative of the Great War and America," *American Literary History*, 7 (1, 1995): p. 55.

consumption," their cooperation with Hoover's economy campaign was crucial to its success.[60] This kind of oversight can be expected in the older scholarship, but neither does Barnett seem to make much of an effort to include women in her study. The history of Canadian food control could conceivably incorporate a discussion of gender and food service, drawing perhaps upon some of the themes taken up by scholars such as Gordon and Van Wienen.

Conclusion: Writing the History of Canadian Food Regulation

What this historiographical overview has sought to accomplish is threefold. First, it tried to identify trends within existing Canadian scholarship on the home front during the Great War, with particular reference to food regulation and related issues. In so doing, it argued that some of these trends can be seen to reflect broader currents within the writing of Canadian history in general. Save for those interested in rural or agricultural issues, food and war has generally escaped detailed study by Canadian historians, but it has at times attracted the attention of 'progressive' historians, those interested in what 'great men' like Flavelle did in the war and in the changing frontier of state-society relations in Canada. Secondly, it identified aspects of food regulation in war that have not been satisfactorily addressed in Canadian historiography, using examples of scholarship from the United States and Great Britain to illuminate those gaps, and thereby to suggest possible ways in which Canadian scholars can address those issues. Finally, it alluded to key areas that have yet to be explored, and to promising new approaches, like gender and social control, that can be taken when writing the history of food regulation in Canada during the First World War. While these are areas that for the most part have been relatively neglected in Canadian historiography, international literature can indeed furnish models and questions that can be applied to the Canadian experience. For example, the establishment of food control could be approached as an instance of state intervention resulting from exceptional wartime circumstances, one that illustrates the manner to which twentieth-century warfare extended to include *all* members of a society. Or, did the war simply exacerbate or accelerate certain tendencies already under way in the urban/industrial transformation? A history of this nature would examine the issue from an entirely domestic perspective, focusing on the war's impact on everyday life, on the civilian, on the consumer, or on

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60 Coller, p. 145.

women, children, and families. Or, it could be examined from a broader, inter-Allied perspective, one that focuses on the function of international cooperation during times of global crisis. It could also seek to incorporate elements from all or several of these angles. Overall, what this investigation suggests is that a study of this type would not only fill an obvious historiographical gap on it own, but could also begin to open up other aspects of life on the Canadian home front that remain largely unexplored. Though he may or may not have been referring to war, the famous French gastronome Brillat-Savarin once wrote that "the destiny of nations depends on how they nourish themselves," a simple statement which at the same time appears to be a most profound insight.[61] The time has come to ask why this should be, and to put food on the table of wartime history.

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61 Jean-Anthelm Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste, or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. M.F.K. Fisher (Washington, 1949).

Chapter Two
Setting the Stage for Food Regulation: Canada's Food System, 1890-1914

Introduction

The First World War disrupted Canadian society and economy on many levels. The peacetime process of supply and demand became skewed in an environment of total war. Several initial observations can be set out to summarize the impact that this had on Canada's food system. To begin with, international demand for Canadian foodstuffs would rise, entailing an increase in production and intensifying the prewar rise in domestic food prices. Secondly, the need to realize a larger food surplus would prompt regulations directed at the food trade and industry. Finally, through a mixture of state control and moral coercion, Canadian consumers would be called upon to modify their own private food habits for the public good, in other words to 'conscript their stomachs' into the service of war. But before these dislocations can be properly understood, and before leaping into the history of Canada's first attempt at wartime food regulation, we must first lay out the prewar pattern of Canadian food production and consumption. Mirroring trends in other areas, the years between 1890 and 1914 were a period of widespread change in Canada's food system. Covering all aspects of the food chain during this time would involve an unwieldy array of topics. Consequently, this chapter will be confined to issues that would later prove to be of particular relevance to the subject of food regulation, namely the agrarian and dietary links forged between Canada and Great Britain, the connections between industrialization, urbanization, and food, shifting channels of food distribution, and factors surrounding the food consumption habits of Canadians. An analysis along these lines will allow for a greater understanding of the impact of food control, by setting out the larger context into which this wartime initiative fell.

Feeding a growing nation is a complex process. The broad contours of Canada's prewar food system encompassed the production, export, distribution, processing, selling, purchasing, and consumption of food. Clearly, every Canadian at the turn of the century was a consumer of foodstuffs in some quantity. On the eve of war, Canada was still a predominantly agrarian country, and a large segment of the Canadian workforce was employed within the food chain itself, engaged in either the growing, manufacturing, handling, or selling of food. The prewar food chain, at its simplest, was made up of three basic elements: the producer, the commercial dealer, and the

consumer. Producers of foodstuffs included both the farmer, who grew the raw, primary product, and the food processor who took that product and transformed it — generally creating a mass-market commodity that would serve the needs of a growing urban-industrial population. By the time the Great War broke out in 1914, over 700,000 farms were dotted across the Canadian landscape, and out of a population of around eight million, close to one million individuals were engaged in some form of agricultural pursuit, comprising thirty-five percent of the total workforce.[1] Thanks to a great rise in agricultural exports in the decades prior to the First World War, Canadian farmers fed not only Canada, but also contributed to the British food supply as well. Beginning in the mid to late nineteenth century, the technological and scientific changes brought forth by the industrial revolution led to the emergence of a large-scale food processing industry in Canada. The food processors also employed a significant, if smaller, portion of the workforce, while at the same time changing both the means through which Canadians obtained their food, as well as the very nature of the food itself. The vibrant agricultural sector of the Canadian economy stimulated economic expansion elsewhere. For example, makers of agricultural implements, like Massey-Harris, boomed and quickly discovered export markets. In this period, the making of food thus became a modern, interdependent economic activity far removed from the haphazard, self-sufficient farming of early Canada. The emergence of a modern agro-industrial complex was well underway.

The expanding numbers of farmers needed outlets to dispose of their produce, whether domestic or foreign markets. In general, the commercial food trade encompassed both wholesalers and retailers. An assortment of middlemen (wholesalers) positioned themselves between the primary producers and food dealers, buying and holding large quantities of food products, and selling them in smaller lots to retailers, who would in turn supply consumers. The retail end of the food trade was expanding and evolving throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An army of food merchants and purveyors, working in establishments that ranged in size from small rural general stores to large urban concerns, provided Canadians with their daily food needs. Standard packaging and pricing became the norms of Canadian food consumption. In the cities, 'groceterias' (such as the Dominion Stores) began purveying on a one-stop basis. Food was now an advertised commodity over which the consumer exercised discretionary spending. Finally, at the

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1 Census of Canada, 1911, vol. VI, Occupations of the People, p. xviii, xx. Also M.C. Urquhart and K.A.H Buckley, *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto, 1965), Series A15-19, "Population, rural and urban, census dates, 1871 to 1956," p. 14.

very end of the food chain stood the consumer, whose buying and eating habits would, with the coming of wartime food regulation, be the subject of unprecedented state interest. As well, the rise of 'science' reached into the Canadian home, as women were increasingly encouraged to buy, prepare and serve meals based on scientific principles. Domestic Science classes appeared in schools, and in 1903, the MacDonald Institute was opened at the Ontario Agricultural College, devoted to teaching women the fundamentals of efficient, scientific homemaking.[2] This, very briefly, was the system that the government, spurred by wartime exigencies, would attempt to regulate beginning in June 1917.

The Start of the Food Chain: Food Exports and the Anglo-Canadian Connection, 1890-1914

Agriculture has always occupied a recognized place of importance within the Canadian economy. This is hardly an original assertion, for abundant scholarship has demonstrated that agriculture did indeed drive Canadian prosperity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This occurred even as the number of individuals working the land was falling, while the trend toward urbanization and rural depopulation continued apace.[3] However, as the war years approached, Canada's farmers still formed a large and (as postwar events would show) influential segment of the population.[4] The marked demographic changes that Canada experienced since Confederation resulted in a much larger, increasingly urban, industrial population that needed a continuous supply of food. Family economy in Canada generally moved away from self-sufficiency to dependence on a wage economy. Canada's farmers had few problems meeting domestic food requirements; this national self-sufficiency in food supply meant that farmers had to find external buyers for their surplus. Not surprisingly, given the preferential Imperial tie and tariff barriers with the United States, these buyers were found mainly in Britain, which formed Canada's principal

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2 Linda M. Ambrose and Margaret Kechnie, "Social Control or Social Feminism?: Two Views of the Ontario Women's Institutes," *Agricultural History* (Spring 1999), p. 225. Also Robert Stamp, "Teaching Girls Their God-Given Place in Life," *Atlantis* 2 (2, 1977), pp. 29-30.

3 Urquhart and Buckley, Series C1-7, "Population and gainfully occupied 14 years of age and over, in nonagricultural pursuits, census years, 1881 to 1941, and for the labour force in 1951," p. 59.

4 W.R. Young, "Conscription, Rural Depopulation, and the Farmers of Ontario, 1917-19," *Canadian Historical Review*, LIII (September 1972), pp. 289-319.

foreign market.[5] By the time the Great War broke out, Canadian primary producers had placed themselves within an international system of trade and food distribution, ensuring that Canada could reap the benefits associated with a brisk wartime export trade.

Wheat was Canada's most significant food export during this period. The "Wheat King" became a potent symbol of Canada's economic coming-of-age — thick sheaves of golden wheat adorned immigration pamphlets and bank calendars. But as important as wheat was, it was not the only agricultural product being shipped to foreign buyers. Sizable proportions of Canadian exports were in the form of cheese, bacon and ham, which, along with wheat, were all products that figured prominently in the British diet.[6] Great Britain provided Canadian farmers and food processors with a substantial market for these commodities. While rising standards of living in the latter half of the nineteenth century had improved Britons' access to a more varied diet, the traditional British meal still included considerable amounts of bread, cheese, and meat.[7] Prior to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, British agriculture was protected by tariffs that kept foreign food out of the domestic market. After 1846, the ascendancy of free trade, together with the growth of industrial manufacturing in Britain, led to a gradual decline in the agricultural sector.[8] During the latter half of the nineteenth century, imports of food rose appreciably, to the point where the British were dependent on foreign sources for approximately half of the nation's food supply.[9] Canada, conversely, was a net exporter of food, producing large surpluses of certain commodities, of which

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5 Carl E. Solberg, *The Prairies and the Pampas: Agrarian Policy in Canada and Argentina, 1880-1930* (Stanford, 1987), p. 9.

6 John Stovel, *Canada in the World Economy* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 109.

7 Information on the British diet was taken from James Johnston, *A Hundred Years Eating: Food, Drink, and the Daily Diet in Britain since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Montreal, 1977); Derek J. Oddy and Derek S. Miller, eds. *The Making of the Modern British Diet* (London, 1976); John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day* (London, 1966); and J.C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, *The Englishman's Food: A History of Five Centuries of English Diet* (London, 1939).

8 The Corn Laws, restricting foreign grain imports, were passed in 1815, in part to sustain the artificially high food prices that had prevailed in Britain during the Napoleonic wars. They were finally repealed after thirty years of agitation. This did not have an immediately negative impact on farming; paradoxically, it led to the "golden age of high farming." When grain from the new world began to arrive in earnest around 1870, prices fell and an agricultural depression began that would last until 1914. P.J. Perry, *British Agriculture, 1875-1914* (London, 1973). See also Richard Perren, *Agriculture in Depression, 1870-1940* (Cambridge, 1995).

9 G.B. Roorbach, "The World's Food Supply," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (November 1917), p. 3.

many were in high demand in Britain.[10] Thus, the links between Canada and the 'mother country' had a strongly agrarian character.

The extraction, production and export of staples looms large in the history of the Canadian economy. Some scholars have argued that Canadian prosperity has traditionally hinged upon the robustness of a foreign trade heavy in primary products. In 1931, K.W. Taylor observed that between 1880 and 1910 five staple products, namely "grain, dairy and meat products, lumber, fish and non-ferrous metals," accounted for close to eighty percent of Canada's exports.[11] Of that eighty percent, wheat formed a considerable proportion, and, it has been argued, had a stimulative effect on the rest of the Canadian economy.[12] In the words of W.A. MacIntosh, another proponent of this view, exports of wheat "primed the pump of Canadian industry."[13] The extent to which wheat facilitated industrial development remains a subject of contention, but it was still Canada's preeminent agricultural commodity in the years leading up to (and during) the Great War.[14]

As the western prairie lands were brought under the plow by the steady advance of agricultural settlement, Canada's wheat yield grew significantly. This great production of wheat is of no small importance, as grain would become the main focus of food control regulations in both Great Britain and Canada, as well as in the United States. In 1901, Canada's total annual wheat production stood at 55.6 million bushels, of which 14.8 million bushels (in the form of wheat and flour) were exported.[15] By 1913-1914 the Canadian wheat yield had risen dramatically to just over 230 million bushels, with exports rising to half of the country's total production.[16] This was the

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10 Ibid., p. 3. See also Ian Drummond, *Progress Without Planning: The Economic History of Ontario From Confederation to the Second World War* (Toronto, 1987), p. 34.

11 K.W. Taylor and H. Mitchell, *Statistical Contributions to Canadian Economic History*, vol. II (Toronto, 1931), p. 1.

12 G.E. Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (Stanford, 1962), p. 27.

13 W.A. MacIntosh, "Economic Factors in Canadian History," in *Canadian Economic History: Classic and Contemporary Approaches*, ed. M.H. Watkins and H.M. Grant (Ottawa, 1993), p. 13. Some scholars have argued that the staples thesis is too simple an explanation, and places far too much importance on exports in accounting for Canadian prosperity and development. For sentiments similar to this regarding Canadian wheat, see Mancur Olson, "The United Kingdom and the World Market in Wheat and Other Primary Products, 1885-1914," *Explorations in Economic History* (Summer 1974), pp. 325-355.

14 Graham D. Taylor and Peter A. Baskerville, *A Concise History of Business in Canada* (Toronto, 1994), p. 289.

15 Britnell and Fowke, p. 442.

16 Ibid. Canada exported 115 million bushels of wheat in 1913-1914.

famous prairie 'wheat boom' which saw Canadian wheat exports quadruple.[17] At the turn of the century, Canada claimed just one percent of the world's wheat market, but by 1910 this number had risen tenfold.[18] The timing of this was fortuitous, for just as Canada was beginning to sense the potential of its grain-growing frontier, in the U.S. wheat production was already beginning to level off.[19] In addition, scientific developments had dramatically improved the quality of Canadian wheat, turning it into a "super-staple"[20] of sorts, and this was beginning to impress foreign buyers as well. Using a system of experimental farms, the Canadian government had expended considerable energy (as well as money) in developing new, hardier strains of high-yield wheat. The best known of these, Marquis wheat, had a dramatic impact on the wheat sector. Research and education, as Carl Solberg has noted, had thus become "a cornerstone of government agrarian policy" in Canada.[21] The drive to develop better wheat reflects both its importance to the Canadian economy as well as the recognition by Canadian authorities that they were not alone in the global scramble for wheat markets. Other rising wheat exporters, such as Argentina and Australia, were also looking to dispose of their expanding surpluses. Russia and, increasingly, the United States, while large wheat growers, produced mainly for their domestic markets. Canada was able to compete with South American and Australasian wheat mainly on the basis of shipping costs — distance alone meant that it was cheaper for buyers to ship Canadian wheat to Europe than it was to transport it from other, further-flung parts of the globe. This advantageous geographic positioning would prove to be of considerable benefit further down the road. All in all, Canada would enter the war as one of world's preeminent wheat producing, and wheat exporting, nations.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of wheat as a global commodity both prior to and during the First World War, and an examination of the prewar international wheat trade serves to place Canada's production in a wider perspective. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, wheat had become, in the words of Bruce Rickard, "the international medium of exchange."[22] Industrializing countries whose populations had surpassed their farmers' ability to provide enough

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17 Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, p. 157. Also Urquhart and Buckley, pp. 33-4, 38.

18 Bruce Rickard, "The North Atlantic Triangle and Changes in the Wheat Trade Before the Great War," *Dalhousie Review* (Summer 1975), p. 269.

19 Rickard, p. 262. See also Solberg, p. 25.

20 Solberg, p. 2.

21 Ibid., p. 111.

22 Rickard, p. 263.

grain for domestic requirements looked to the leading wheat producing nations to make up the shortfall. Russia, the United States, Canada, India, Australia, Argentina, and Romania produced ninety-four percent of the total amount of wheat available for export.[23] As scholars have noted, however, many of these countries had large grain consuming populations of their own, meaning that only a small proportion of the world's total wheat crop (around fifteen percent) was available for foreign trade.[24] Purchasing the bulk of that fifteen percent, prior to the outbreak of war, were future belligerents Germany, Britain, France and Italy, who together accounted for sixty percent of worldwide wheat imports. Of this, a yearly average of 221,000,000 bushels (thirty percent) went to Great Britain alone.[25] Britain was thus highly dependent on foreign wheat, gleaned from five main sources, many of which could, potentially, be jeopardized by war. Canada and the United States provided roughly thirty percent of Britain's prewar wheat supply, thirty-five percent came from the Black Sea region, while the remainder was purchased from distant India, South America, and Australasia.[26] The nightmare scenario of war threatened to cut off Britain's Black Sea supply, with the result that over a third, at least, would have to be gathered from other sources. Perceptive observers might have noted that distance and lack of shipping space would make transporting wheat from Australia and New Zealand problematic, meaning that Canada and the U.S. would somehow have to increase the amount of wheat each had available for export. Keeping exports of this valuable commodity flowing would hinge upon safe and adequate ocean shipping.

British food habits and dietary traditions assigned a certain level of urgency to the maintenance of adequate grain supplies, even in times of peace. For centuries, bread had been a crucial part of the British diet, although this had changed somewhat in recent years. In the late nineteenth century, bread lost its stature as *the* most important staple in the national diet. As incomes and living standards rose, consumption of bread, in some ways, fell.[27] National nutrition became a more complex affair. This phenomenon is akin to that explained by Engel's Law, i.e. that as incomes rise, the proportion of money spent on food decreases.[28] James Johnstone argued that

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23 Roorbach, p. 7.

24 Offer, p. 157. These countries included Russia, India, and the United States.

25 Roorbach, p. 7.

26 Barnett, *British Food Policy*, p. 4.

27 Burnett, p. 98.

28 W. Hamish Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market, 1850-1914* (London, 1981), p. 27.

this can also be applied to the types of food consumed; a rise in purchasing power translates into less money being spent on staple foods, such as bread, in favour of luxuries and a more varied diet.[29] None the less, wheat was still a component of these new 'luxury' foods, for example, of mass produced cookies and biscuits, such as those made by Ontario's Charles Doerr (founder of what would later become Dare Foods). Bread was also a dominant part of the French diet, where average consumption in 1900 stood at one and a half pounds per person, per day.[30] In 1917, social scientist Francois Monod noted that while this substantial consumption of bread cut across all classes, it was particularly crucial to the diet of French peasants.[31] A cheap and filling food, bread was also the cornerstone of the British working-class diet.

Along with breadstuffs, the British consumed sizable quantities of meat, although the amounts were still smaller than those eaten by North Americans. In fact, on a global level, meat was consumed in large quantities in relatively few parts of the world. These were delineated by G. B. Roorbach as "the newly-opened countries of large grazing facilities and small population," such as Canada, and "countries of large industrial population that can readily import meat," such as Britain.[32] Estimated annual per capita consumption of meat in Canada stood at 113 pounds (beef, pork and lamb) in 1900, rising to 137 pounds ten years later.[33] In Britain, per capita consumption of meat products in 1906 was estimated to be just under 120 pounds.[34] These statistics demonstrate that the British ate almost as much meat as did Canadians, despite having to import forty percent of their meat requirements from other countries. As with wheat, Canadian producers capitalized on a profitable opportunity, supplying Britain with an abundance of pork products.[35]

This Canadian specialization in pork, as Michael Bliss has observed, came about by default. The United States and Argentina had a firm grip on the trade in exported beef, while Australia and New Zealand already supplied the British with ample quantities of mutton and lamb. Accordingly, Canada's largest meat packing firm, the William Davies Company of Toronto, took advantage of the

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29 Johnston, p. 23.

30 James Trager, *The Food Chronology* (New York, 1995), p. 365.

31 Francois Monod, "Food for France and its Public Control," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (November 1917), pp. 85-86.

32 Roorbach, p. 25.

33 David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto, 1996), p. 359.

34 Roorbach, p. 26.

35 Ibid., p. 27.

available niche and began to export large amounts of bacon and ham to Britain.[36] To this day, peameal bacon is called "Canadian bacon" in Britain. The trade reached its peak towards the very end of the nineteenth century; in 1899, Britain imported just over 50 million pounds of bacon from Canada, and a further 16,878,176 pounds of ham. While these numbers pale in comparison with the amount that was shipped to Britain by the United States, it was still a noteworthy trade.[37] The export of bacon and ham to Britain, which made up virtually the entire foreign market for Canadian products of this nature, declined in the five years or so prior to the First World War, hitting a low of 25.3 million pounds in 1914. Other countries supplying Britain with pork products such as Denmark were, however, especially vulnerable to potential wartime disruptions and, like wheat, Canadian exporters sensed that opportunities awaited them if Europe should fall into conflict.

Cheese was another food commodity that Canadian farmers exported in large quantities. Until the early 1880s, butter had been sold to Britain in substantial amounts, but after 1885 this was supplanted by cheese, which became by far the most important Canadian dairy product sent overseas, and was yet another food product for which Canada received international recognition. In 1892, Ontario cheese producers exhibited a 22,000-pound mammoth cheese at the World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago, where Canadians also won 736 medals for their 849 entries in various cheese competitions.[38] The cheese industry, particularly in Ontario, expanded greatly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Ontario, with 1,237 cheese factories by 1906, generated the bulk of Canada's cheese output. This growth, as Robert Ankli and Wendy Millar have noted, was mostly export-led; without strong British demand for Canadian cheese, it is doubtful that this industry would have increased to such an extent.[39] To put this in perspective, eighty percent of Canada's total cheese production was exported, destined mainly for British plates. Annual Canadian cheese exports to Britain averaged 74.5 million pounds in 1886-90, and for the period of

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36 Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire*, pp. 38-40.

37 Canada, Department of Agriculture, *Statistical Yearbook of Canada* (Ottawa, 1901), pp. 110-111. In comparison, the U.S. exported 457,917,152 pounds of bacon and 204,284,080 pounds of ham to Britain in the same year.

38 W. H. Heick, *A Propensity to Protect: Butter, Margarine and the Rise of Urban Culture in Canada* (Waterloo, 1991), p. 23.

39 Robert Ankli and Wendy Millar, "Ontario Agriculture in Transition: The Switch from Wheat to Cheese," *Journal of Economic History* (March 1982), p. 209. See also Margaret Derry, "Gender Conflicts in Dairying: Ontario's Butter Industry, 1880-1920," *Ontario History* (Spring 1998), pp. 31-47.

1906-10, they rose to 185.8 million pounds.[40] In 1899 alone, Canada sent almost 150 million pounds of cheese to Britain, far outstripping the much larger United States' total of 66 million pounds.[41]

Besides filling the voracious British appetite for products of this nature, cheese had certain advantages over butter. It had a higher, value-added content as it required more labour, kept for longer periods, had superior uniform quality, and could better withstand the long journey across the Atlantic.[42] As the twentieth century progressed, Canada's cheese preeminence grew. According to Roorbach's figures, Canada was the world's leading exporter of cheese between 1911 and 1913. World cheese exports for these years were, on average, 548 million pounds, with Canada alone accounting for 157 million of those pounds. Figures given by Britnell and Fowke show that virtually all of the Canadian cheese exported during these years (as in previous years) went to Britain.[43] The British were during this same period the world's leading importers of cheese, taking in an average of 253 million pounds a year, out of annual worldwide imports averaging 539 million pounds.[44] All of these figures show that, in the decades before the war, Britain was a lively market indeed for Canadian cheddar, buying as much as the nation could produce; much of the cheese consumed in Britain was, in fact, Canadian.[45]

At the risk of looking too far ahead, it should be noted here that these foodstuffs (wheat, pork, and cheese) would remain Canada's primary exports to Britain during the First World War. This helps explain why these specific foodstuffs were later viewed as 'targets' for food control on both sides of the Atlantic. It made sense that Canada should continue to supply Britain with the same types of commodities that it had already been sending overseas for decades. For this reason, demands for grain, dairy products, and animal fats featured strongly in British wartime appeals to Canada. Canadian producers would naturally see the war as an opportunity to enhance their market share in Britain as other suppliers fell on hard times, or were forced out of the market. Firms and producers who had been exporting to Britain prior to the war were in an especially good position to take advantage of war conditions, even more so due to the fact that Britain needed products that had

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40 Ankli and Millar, p. 209.

41 Statistical Yearbook of Canada, 1900, p. 114.

42 Heick, p. 24.

43 Britnell and Fowke, p. 462.

44 Roorbach, pp. 30-31.

45 Fraser, pp. 29, 158.

traditionally come from Canada in great quantities. In one instance from March 1917, Canadian authorities were informed that the British placed "great reliance" on Canadian wheat, as well as pork and cheese.[46] Later that year, on July 26, British Food Controller Lord Rhondda informed his Canadian counterpart William J. Hanna that wheat was Britain's "principal need" and that bacon was "next in importance."[47] An appeal typical of those that would follow throughout the war, Rhondda's message also noted that more oats, cheese and butter were required. As the war continued, the message remained the same: the British would call on Canada to export ever-larger quantities of the same products. Britnell and Fowke were absolutely correct when they wrote that, with regard to Canadian wartime exports to Britain: "it was a question of more, much more of the same, rather than a marshalling of commitment to accommodate unfamiliar demands."[48] Thus, while the composition of wartime Canadian food exports to Britain remained generally consistent with those of the prewar period, the extent of those exports increased dramatically with the demands of war. Prewar consumption of Canadian farm produce ensured that when war came Britain would quickly come to see Canada as a 'bread basket.'

There is, however, a difference between 'food' and 'nutrition.' Wartime food policy would aim to supply as much food as possible to the civilian population, but maintaining the health of that population would obviously be a concern as well. Many basic modern concepts of nutrition were still unknown at the time, meaning that the British practice of grounding the wartime diet on prewar favorites such as starches and fats would not be a decision based on sophisticated nutritional calculations. By all indications, any physical benefits of the wartime diet were incidental; scientific knowledge of food was scanty. Prior to the war, nutrition was still in its developmental stages, indeed the first vitamin (Vitamin A) would not be officially discovered until 1912.[49] In short, the value placed on certain foods tended to be based more on tradition and on anecdotal, rather than scientific evidence, with substances such as sugar, fats, and starches viewed as energy-giving, healthful foods. This was certainly nothing new; throughout history, the belief that certain foods had an effect on the health and well being of individuals had been widely held. Only in the early

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46 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 35406, Sir Robert Borden to A.E. Blount, March 19 1917; March 20 1917, p. 35410.

47 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 167241, Sir Walter Long to the Duke of Devonshire, "Following from Rhondda for Hanna," July 26, 1917.

48 Britnell and Fowke, p. 27.

49 Trager, p. 403.

twentieth century, however, did modern science begin to explain why, in part by pointing out the possible negative effects of the contemporary diet. For example, E.V. McCollum, the father of modern nutrition and co-discoverer of Vitamin A, wrote in 1916 that "the typical American's diet ... was derived too largely from white flour or cornmeal, muscle meats, potatoes, and sugar."[50] This description could easily apply to the diets of Canadians and British as well. In fact, an unintentional side effect of wartime food regulation, at least in North America, was the encouraging of what today would strike many as an ideally healthful diet. The eating of whole grains, fresh vegetables and fish, less use of fats and a reduced consumption of meat, not to mention sugar, was the wartime diet urged upon the Canadian and American public in 1917 and 1918. Scarcity, and a reduction in the consumption of 'luxury foods,' would therefore be the handmaiden of nutritional progress.

Thus, while British imports reflected the British diet and prevailing notions of food 'values,' Canadian exports reflected the opportunities that these food habits presented to Canadian farmers and food manufacturers. The war would cause severe economic and social dislocation in many parts of the world; however, it would also present certain nations (especially Canada) with a profitable opportunity. If, however, exporting tended to be a controllable affair governed by large wholesalers and government departments, domestic food consumption was far more atomistic and less amenable to control. Unable and unwilling to police the legion of consumers, Canadian food controllers would instead place substantial emphasis on regulating the food dealer. When one considers the difficulties inherent to controlling Canada's vast food supply, it makes sense that the bulk of the regulation would fall upon those situated at the choke points of food distribution, those who were less in number, and thus, more easily managed. Consumers were encouraged to follow orders, whereas processors, wholesalers, and retailers were subject to stricter measures, including profit-fixing, licensing, and inventory limits. Due to soaring food prices and prevailing suspicion regarding combines, speculators and profiteers, and fueled by patriotism, the public would welcome the constraints placed upon the food trade — provided, of course, that they were of benefit to both the consumer and the war effort.

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50 E.V. McCollum, "My Early Experiences in the Study of Foods and Nutrition," *Annual Review of Biochemistry*, 22 (1953), pp. 10-11. See also Harry G. Day and Harry J. Prebluda, "E.V. McCollum: 'Lamplighter' in Public and Professional Understanding of Nutrition," *Agricultural History* 54 (1, 1980): 149-156.

The Middle of the Chain: Food Processors and the Commercial Food Trade in Canada, 1890-1914

While Canada's economic base remained firmly dependent on agriculture and primary exports, Canadians, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, were nevertheless becoming an urban people. The shift that occurred was merely part of the broader transformation prompted by industrialization. Pulled by higher incomes and the attractions of city life, rural inhabitants moved into urban areas in search of greater economic opportunity. The figures are worth noting: In 1901, the population of Canada's towns and cities stood at 1,990,102, but by 1921 that number had increased to 4,257,443.[51] A large, hungry market appeared, one that Canada's farmers and food producers could gainfully serve. Of prime consideration were the needs and wants of the wage-earning urban consumer, larger in number, and the main customer base for the industrial and commercial food trade.

Feeding the urban consumer presented an opportunity, one that prompted the rise of large food processors who applied new principles of mass-production to the food business. These enterprises initiated and employed several new techniques in both the manufacturing and marketing of food products, including advances in food preservation, such as refrigeration and canning, and the development of brand names. In the United States, Henry Heinz began turning out a variety of condiments and pickles, while firms such as Kellogg's, Post and Quaker Oats vied with each other in the newly developed prepared-breakfast food industry.[52] America's preeminent business historian, Alfred Chandler, has noted that the American genius in business in these years was based on a knowledge that 'velocity' and integrated production was the key to profits and a large market share. In Canada, firms such as William Davies adopted the same "assembly-line" approach to processing foodstuffs that had evolved in the United States.[53] These new techniques not only increased the volume of output, but also enabled firms to produce food products of uniform quality that could then be packaged and marketed under the company's own 'brand' name, with a standard price. Manufacturers began to create and advertise lines that reflected both the uniqueness of their

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51 Urquhart and Buckley, series A15-19, "Population, rural and urban, census dates, 1871 to 1956," p. 14.

52 Richard Pillsbury, *No Foreign Food: The American Diet in Time and Place* (Boulder, 1998), p. 87. See also Nancy F. Koehn, "Henry Heinz and Brand Creation in the Late Nineteenth Century: Making Markets for Processed Food," *Business History Review* 73 (Autumn 1999).

53 Taylor and Baskerville, p. 315. For more on the development of food processing and brand name marketing, see Koehn.

product as well as its 'purity.' The growing consumer demand for cheap and reliable food also led to government measures aimed at preventing adulteration and ensuring food safety. As processing techniques progressed, so too did the state's interest in ensuring the quality and safety of the final product.

Consistent with overall industrial development in Canada between 1880 and 1914, the food processing industry grew tremendously in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Census figures from 1911 bear this out. Food manufacturers had become significant employers, with a workforce totaling some 52,730 Canadians. The combined capital of the food manufacturing sector, valued at some $46.6 million in 1890, had risen to over $133 million twenty years later, an increase of over 185 percent.[54] Output values had increased as well; in 1890 food products worth just under $76 million were produced in Canada, a figure which had more than tripled by 1910, when the industry's total products were valued at $245.6 million.[55] These numbers reflect the fact that in central Canada, and especially Ontario, where many of these firms were located, this period was one of rapid expansion in the manufacturing of consumer goods.[56] Consumers themselves became used to having, at their disposal, a wide variety of convenient, ready-to-prepare food products.

The types of food commodities produced by the processors varied, but flour millers, sugar refiners, and meat packers are the most obvious examples of large-scale food manufacturing firms of the era. They were also perhaps the most significant, at least in terms of capital and output. Canada's 1141 flour and grist mills produced products valued at over $82 million in 1910.[57] During the same year, the meat packing industry's output was valued at just under $42 million, an impressive number considering that there were only seventy meat packing establishments in Canada.[58] The sugar refining industry, while not as large with only seven firms, still produced output worth over $21 million in 1910.[59]

Flour milling was dominated at this time by two Montreal-based firms, Ogilvie Flour Mills

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54 Census of Canada, 1911, vol. III, Manufactures for 1910 as Enumerated in June 1911, p. x.

55 Ibid., p. xi.

56 Drummond, p. 104.

57 Census of Canada, 1911, vol. III, pp. 4-5.

58 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

59 Ibid.

and the Lake of the Woods Milling Company.[60] The late-nineteenth century decline in Ontario wheat growing had prompted Ogilvie to expand its operations westward, and in 1881, it opened its first prairie grain elevator. From there, the enterprise grew, concurrent with the expansion of Canadian wheat and flour exports.[61] By the war years, Ogilivie had become the most important milling company in Canada, and, in the words of John Everitt, was (somewhat tellingly) "large enough to be able to compete with the largest American concerns."[62] The Lake of the Woods Milling Company was perhaps Ogilivie's closest rival in the prewar period. In 1900 they owned 48 licensed elevators to Ogilvie's 45, but by 1911 the latter firm had outdistanced its competitor, operating 118 elevators to Lake of the Woods' 88.[63] Here too, government hesitantly intervened in the food chain. The federal government moved to regulate the grain trade and even to own grain elevators in an effort to give the farmers some power over the middleman in the trade. In 1911, for instance, the Borden Conservatives won western support on promises of Progressive agrarian reform.

The growth of flour milling was joined by the emergence of a large-scale meat processing industry in Canada. By 1900, the William Davies Company was by far the largest meat packing concern in the country. Indeed, by the turn of the century it had become the most significant pork processor in the entire British Empire.[64] In its heyday in the 1890s, the company was responsible for much of Canada's bacon trade with Britain.[65] By 1914, however, its considerable exports to Britain had dropped dramatically, as they were unable to compete with the cheaper Danish product flooding into the British marketplace. In 1914, Denmark exported 2,714,807 pounds of bacon to Britain, compared with Canada's 342,286 pounds.[66] This steep decline would, in the near future, be countered by two factors: the war, which stimulated demand for pork, and, in the words of Ian

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60 Taylor and Baskerville, pp. 252, 289. See also Drummond, p. 122. Known primarily for Five Roses brand flour, the company produced the hugely-successful *Five Roses Cookbook* as a marketing tool in 1913, which by 1915 had been distributed to over 950,000 Canadian homes.

61 John Everitt, "Some Early Development of the Flour Milling Industry on the Prairies," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 19 (3, 1993), p. 284.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., p. 285.

64 Drummond, p. 128.

65 Bliss, p. 52.

66 Canada Yearbook, 1914 (Ottawa, 1914), p. 448.

Drummond "the mushrooming of the domestic market," which allowed William Davies to sell more of its products at home, and thereby capture better economies of scale in production.[67]

Selling to the blooming domestic market was helped along by the company's chain of retail stores, established by Joseph Flavelle in the 1890s, primarily as outlets for factory byproducts. Preceding the appearance of the larger grocery chains in Canada, the William Davies retail stores were ahead of their time, and they flourished. The chain grew steadily, and by 1904, the company ran forty stores, all in Ontario; expansion to other provinces was not far behind. One of the most significant economic aspects of this entrepreneurial venture was that, as Michael Bliss has suggested, the operation of a retail chain "disrupted the normal channel of distribution, manufacturer through wholesaler to retailer."[68] By eliminating the middleman, prices could be kept down. However, Flavelle decided that instead of passing the savings on to the consumer, which could be construed as an unjust advantage over the smaller, independent dealers, and a violation of his own sense of 'fair play,' the William Davies stores would instead focus on quality of both product and service, rather than price-cutting, to attract customers.[69] One other point that set the William Davies stores apart was their insistence on cleanliness, an important quality in a late nineteenth century world that was increasingly concerned with the safety and sanitation of the food supply.[70]

In these same years and for these same pressures, the culture of food also changed at the point of consumption — the home. After the death of her son in 1890 from tainted milk, Adelaide Hoodless of Ontario campaigned to raise awareness in the area of food safety. In 1897, Hoodless founded the Women's Institutes of Canada, an organization dedicated to educating women in the realm of domestic science. The Institutes were to be a vehicle through which women could learn the scientific management of the home and kitchen, in part to protect their children and families from food-borne contamination.[71] This concern over the purity and safety of food was part of a wider trend that erupted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gradually, legislation began to appear in many countries, including Canada, that was geared toward protecting the consumer.[72]

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67 Drummond, p. 128.

68 Bliss, p. 113.

69 Ibid., p. 114.

70 Ibid.

71 Stamp, pp. 18-34.

72 Bruce H. Lauer, "The Rage for Cheapness: Food Adulteration in the United Canadas and in the Dominion, 1850-

This preoccupation with food sanitation was also a factor in the development of packaging, which dovetailed with the development of brand name marketing.

Prior to the food packaging revolution, as Richard O. Cummings notes in his book *The American and His Food*, grocers "received most of their supplies in bulk. Cracker barrels," (an image later to be made famous by Canadian-born J.L. Kraft) "molasses casks, and other containers littered the floor of the grocery, and conditions were often unwholesome and dangerous to health."[73] Producers often adulterated their products with cost-saving fillers, such as chalk. Technological advances in the mass production of goods now allowed for consumer commodities to be sold in their own individual containers. The rise in popularity of processed foods also allowed meal preparation to become less labour intensive. Items that had traditionally been made in the home by housewives, such as various condiments, were now available for purchase, ready-made and in sanitary containers.[74] Some of the first foodstuffs to be sold in this way also included various brands of cocoa, coffee, and tea, as well as different types of "fluid beef," such as Bovril and Oxo.[75] 'Purity' was a virtue extolled by many a manufacturer in advertisements, as their products were now encased in hygienic packages.[76] In another sense, 'purity' was also on the moral agenda of Progressivism, as with Sunday closing laws, for example.

The development of the package also allowed the manufacturer to exercise more control over the marketing of their products, and, to this end, brand names emerged. In the United States, one of the most prominent examples of this was the success of Uneeda Biscuits. In 1898, National Biscuit sought to create a brand-name cracker that would, in the words of James Trager, "surmount the anonymity of the cracker barrel seen in every grocery shop."[77] Clever advertising led to sales which reached 10 million packages a month by 1900.[78] What was occurring was no less than a massive revolution in food delivery systems and consumerism that would eventually spread through the entire food industry. A cracker was no longer just a cracker, a generic commodity to be fished

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1920," M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1993.

73 Richard O. Cummings, *The American and His Food* (New York, 1970), p. 104.

74 Koehn, p. 355.

75 H.E. Stephenson and Carlton McNaught, *The Story of Advertising in Canada: A Chronicle of Fifty Years* (Toronto, 1940), pp. 57-67.

76 Cummings, pp. 91-110. See also Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York, 1973), p. 331.

77 Trager, p. 359.

78 Ibid., p. 366.

out of unsanitary barrels by grocers. It was now a brand-name product, marketed and advertised by manufacturers who sought to maximize sales by differentiating their products from others of a similar nature. Consumers were instructed to 'ask for' a certain brand, rather than allow the grocer to sell them whatever type of undifferentiated article he happened to have on hand, or one which he believed to be a quality product. After finally emerging as a respectable vocation in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the grocer now lost some of his professional autonomy, in effect becoming a "nickle-in-the-slot machine, answering the request of purchasers for this or that commodity which they had seen advertised."[79] The independence of the grocer was constrained still further by the power of the wholesaler, upon whom the grocer depended for inventory. All of these changes also reflected the rise of a cash-oriented society; barter was replaced by cash thereby making way for standardized, one-price foods.

The years preceding the First World War also saw changes in the established channels of food distribution. Wholesalers, bolstered by the powerful Dominion Wholesale Grocers' Guild, solidified their status as the most significant link in the important process of getting food from producer to urban consumer. The growing populations of Canada's cities and towns meant that it was essential to have large amounts of foodstuffs available; this was facilitated by the wholesalers. The middleman was the conduit through which rural products made their way into the hands of urban consumers, while the excess would be sold to foreign buyers.[80] Producers, either farmers or manufacturers, would generally sell their products to these wholesalers or 'jobbers,' as they were known, who in turn supplied food retailers with their wares. The farmers could also sell part of their produce directly to local retailers, especially dairy products and meat, but in general, they sent most of their surplus to jobbers. Typically specializing in one type of product, most wholesalers employed an army of 'commercial travellers' (travelling salesmen) who fanned out over their territory, calling upon each grocer, taking orders, and maintaining the commercial relationship between the wholesaler and the retailer.[81] Railways now made the delivery of such foodstuffs cheaper and more predictable. This was a convenient system for grocers, as buying from wholesalers helped food retailers cope with the burgeoning variety of products available and demanded by their customers, and allowed for more efficient management of their inventories.

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79 D. Monod, p., 22. Quote is from Cummings, p. 108.

80 Bliss, p. 28.

81 Drummond, pp. 277-288.

They were, however, beholden to the wholesalers, who set prices and maintained control over the lines of credit extended to grocers. In the days before cash-and-carry became the norm, food retailers themselves extended credit to their customers, who were not invariably prompt in paying their bills -- grocers were thus not always assured of having large amounts of ready cash on hand.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the wholesaler was thus the pivot around which distribution, and to a large extent prices, revolved.[82] According to the 1911 census, there were only 1,641 wholesalers in Canada, employing some 4,620 salespeople -- they formed a powerful group. Unfortunately, they are lumped together in one census group, without distinction as to the types of products they handled.[83] There was also a certain amount of wholesale/retail overlap, especially earlier in the period. Rural merchants tended to fall into this category, for along with supplying the area with retail goods, they would also frequently buy, and then resell, commodities produced by local farmers.[84] In certain cases, grocers could purchase mass-produced product lines directly from the larger manufacturers, without having to go through a middleman, a development that, predictably, wholesalers would not welcome. The emergence of large-scale manufacturing caused the wholesale trade to lose a measure of its dominance. Many large firms preferred to sell their goods directly to the retailers, allowing for more control over the marketing of their products.[85] This period also saw the rise of the big retailers, department stores such as Eaton's and Simpson's who, in buying large quantities of goods, preferred to deal directly with the manufacturer, cutting out the middleman. In the postwar years, grocery chains like Dominion Stores could in certain cases bypass the wholesalers completely, by setting up their own buying agencies to supply their stores. Breaking away from the wholesaler was more difficult for smaller, independent grocers, as the perishable nature of their wares meant that they had to buy more frequently, and in smaller quantities.

Naturally, the price of any given commodity would rise depending on the number of hands through which it passed, as profits were taken at each link in the chain, adding to the end cost of the item. A bushel of beans sold by a farmer to a wholesaler for 2½ cents could end up costing the

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82 D. Monod, p. 138.

83 Census of Canada, 1911, vol. VI, p. 28.

84 D. Monod, p. 20.

85 Ibid., p. 141.

consumer 6 cents a pound by the time it reached the end of the food chain.[86] Theoretically then, fewer links in the chain between producer and consumer *would* result in cheaper food, or so it was argued. Supply and demand, however, an economic tenet that would reach canonical proportions during the war years, also had a powerful effect on the price of food. Food dealers argued that the interplay between supply and demand governed prices, while consumer and labour groups were apt to blame rising food costs on the exploitative nature of the retailers themselves, as well as the preponderance of middlemen, speculators, and, with the coming of war, 'profiteers.' In general, it appears that retailers agreed with the contention that wholesalers were partly to blame for higher prices, protesting that if they were free to buy directly from the manufacturer, the savings would be passed on to the consumer.

Echoes of this pre-war debate would be evident in the post-war testimony given to the Cost of Living Committee in 1919. D.W. Clark, vice-president of the Retail Merchants Association, in his testimony before the Committee, was adamant that the power of the wholesalers to force grocers to buy their goods from them, rather than the manufacturer, was a major cause of high food prices. While Clark would not go so far as to call this a wholesale 'combine,' he nevertheless held that "an agreement with the manufacturers" existed that kept grocers from direct purchasing.[87] Clark was generally correct in his assessment, for as Ian Drummond noted, the Wholesale Grocers of Ontario "worked hard to ensure that manufacturers would sell only to wholesalers, not to retailers or to co-operatives."[88] In 1919, one such co-operative attempted to break out of the wholesale hegemony when a number of Toronto grocers established their own buying agency, called the York Trading Company, much to the displeasure of the WGO.[89] The anger that the grocers aroused is understandable, as this occurred at a time when wholesalers were beginning to decline in both numbers and influence. As David Monod observed "eleven Ontario grocery wholesalers disappeared between 1910 and 1925, and of the ten largest food wholesalers in Toronto in 1917,

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86 Canada, Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living, *Report of the Board*, vol. II (Ottawa, 1915), pp. 41, 75. Based on average prices for 1913.

87 Canada, Special Committee to Inquire into the Cost of Living, *Minutes and Proceedings of Evidence*, (Ottawa, 1920), p. 276.

88 Drummond, p. 287.

89 Canada, Special Committee to Inquire into the Cost of Living, *Minutes and Proceedings*, pp. 277-283. See also Drummond, p. 287, and D. Monod, p. 256.

only five were still in operation ten years later."[90] In this fluid and tumultuous period, the changes that were taking place within the food system were combining to have a negative impact on the power of the wholesaler, but they were also affecting the retailer as well.

While reliable statistics on the retail food business in Canada during the prewar period are often difficult to locate, something of the extent and nature of the food trade at this time can be gleaned from census data, as well as from other sources, such as the above-mentioned testimony presented to the Cost of Living Committee. The retail end of the food trade was rather more diffused than it is today. While modern food shoppers can satisfy most of their food needs in one establishment, urban consumers in the years leading up to the First World War frequently had to visit several different dealers, each of whom would specialize in a particular type of commodity. For example, grocers would supply the bulk of consumers' 'dry' food needs, but few also sold 'provisions,' i.e. fresh meat, milk, or other dairy products. Grocers, in general, would handle only cooked or cured meats such as bacon, sausages, and ham, while a butcher would handle the fresh meat products.

The 1911 census reported that there were 11,541 Canadians working as grocery dealers in 1910, employing a total of 11,907 salespeople. Of the grocers enumerated, 1,084 were women, a surprisingly high proportion.[91] The size of a grocer's establishment could vary considerably, from small shops such as that of W. Doyle et Frere, located in the Maisonneuve section of Montreal, to larger, more prosperous stores such as those owned by Thomas V. Dion. Doyle's employed a single clerk, had a small $3000 capital investment, and in 1918 realized a turnover between $25,000 to $30,000.[92] With a staff of up to forty clerks, Dion's grocery business presented a stark contrast. Situated in wealthy Westmount, Dion's turnover for 1918 stood between $375,000 and $400,000, and the business involved some $145,000 in capital.[93] In between these two examples were grocers of varying size and success, most of whom would in some way be affected by the war.

Fresh fruits and vegetables were available from the almost 1,500 dealers who specialized in that particular commodity, as well as from some of the larger grocery shops. Smaller grocers sold

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90 D. Monod, p. 181. See also Drummond, p. 277.

91 Census of Canada, 1911, vol. vi, p. 18. The presence of over one thousand women in the grocery trade is interesting, as the occupation, especially during this time period, has traditionally been viewed as a male vocation.

92 Canada, Special Committee to Inquire into the Cost of Living, *Minutes and Proceedings* , p. 222.

93 Ibid., pp. 227-233.

mainly tinned or dried produce. Bakers, numbering 8,731 in 1910, were also a part of the urban foodscape. While store-bought bread was still looked down upon by many as a 'lower-class' convenience, it was readily available to even the most status-conscious housekeeper, should a breadstuff-related emergency arise. Butchers and provisions dealers, over 6,000 of them, were the source of the urban consumer's fresh meat products. Dining outside of the home became a more frequent pursuit in the early twentieth century. The hospitality industry, comprising a variety of restaurants, cafes, and hotels (of differing degrees of quality and respectability), was growing. According to the 1911 census some 2,700 respondents were listed as 'restaurant keepers.' These establishments, many owned and operated by recent immigrants, also employed 7,243 cooks and waiters.[94]

In the years prior to the First World War, while the nature of certain food products had been modified, the *pattern* of food buying remained relatively unchanged from the previous era. Modern grocery shopping as we know it today would not evolve until the later popularization of 'self-serve' supermarkets.[95] In the United States, the A&P grocery chain had begun it great expansion in 1912, but in Canada, chain grocery stores tended to be a largely postwar phenomenon. This was in fact a period of transition containing elements of the past as well as hints of the future. One could still find the old bulk barrels of oatmeal lined up in front of shelves which held crisp packages of Quaker Oats. The typical customer, overwhelmingly female, would enter the grocer's shop and request certain items. Aside from the packaged goods which merely had to be fetched from a shelf by the grocer or an assistant, other foodstuffs still had to be cut off or scooped out in the desired amounts, then weighed on the ever-present scale. (Careful consumers would keep their eye on the scales, lest 'inaccuracies' in the weights and measures occur). 'Cash and Carry' would not become the norm until after the war, and, until then, most purchases were made on credit. The consumer might leave the shop with her purchases, or more likely, would have them sent to her home in the grocer's horse-drawn delivery rig. Bigger retailers might have run more than one wagon, and some even made deliveries in automobiles.[96] In general, despite indications that changes were on the horizon, on the

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94 Census of Canada, 1911, vol. vi, p. 32. A considerable number of restaurants were opened by immigrants, especially those from China. See Jean Burnet, "New Arrivals in the Twentieth Century and Their Food Traditions," in *Consuming Passions: Eating and Drinking Traditions in Ontario* (Willowdale, Ont., 1989), pp. 253-264.

95 Drummond, p. 286.

96 Much of this section is based on the testimony given by witnesses to the Cost of Living Commission in 1919.

eve of war the process of food shopping remained relatively consistent with that of an earlier time.

If one takes the 933,735 Canadians employed in the agricultural sector and adds to them all those who worked in either the food manufacturing industry or in the retail food trade, it becomes evident that well over one million people derived their employment from either growing, processing, selling, or handling food, out of the total Canadian workforce, which in 1910 stood at 2,723,634 individuals. But, as important as food was to the Canadian economy in terms of exports and employment, it was still the "intimate commodity," one that had to be consumed on a fairly regular basis in order to ensure health and well-being.[97] During this period, the food-buying public was also becoming increasingly aware of their own agency as 'consumers,' with the power to demand such things as greater hygiene, sanitation, freshness, choice and availability in food products.

The End of the Chain: Food Habits, Food Prices, and the Canadian Consumer, 1890-1914

James Johnston has noted that British middle-class food at the turn of the twentieth century "lacked variety and excitement."[98] The same could also be said of Canadian food of the time, for when contrasted with the diverse food choices that Canadians are presented with today, the early twentieth century diet seems unbearably bland.[99] In the years preceding the First World War, progressive agricultural techniques were still developing, transportation was slower and less efficient, and refrigeration, while available, had not yet reached its full potential. The range of foods available to the Canadian consumer *was* widening, thanks partly to the arrival of immigrants who brought with them their own food traditions, but it was still somewhat constrained. While the colder climate affected Canadian food consumption to a certain extent, the diets of Americans and Canadians were broadly similar. Differences appear to be slight, involving amounts, rather than the nature of food. For example, according to the report of the 1915 Cost of Living Inquiry, Canadians were generally believed to consume more cheese and pork than Americans, but less beef and poultry; tea consumption was higher in Canada, coffee consumption lower.[100]

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97 Winson, 1992.

98 Johnston, p. 8.

99 Unfortunately, serious scholarly work on the Canadian diet during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on par with that done by John Burnett, James Johnston, and Derek Oddy on Britain, and Harvey Levenstein on the United States, has yet to be written. Consequently, this section is a bit speculative in nature.

100 Eleanor A. Bartlett, "Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Vancouver, 1901-1929," *BC Studies*, (Autumn 1981),

As we have seen, thanks to abundance and affordability, the North American diet at this time contained a large quotient of meat and other animal products.[101] Statistics for 1910 show that Canadians consumed just under 137 pounds of meat per capita, consisting mainly of beef and pork.[102] By contrast, in France the average consumer ate only 80 pounds of meat per year, less than half of the typical American's consumption of 170 pounds.[103] The prototypic Canadian consumer of 1910 also ate 204 eggs per year, along with 28 pounds of butter, and 3 pounds of cheese. Of particular note is Canadian sugar consumption, which in 1891 stood at 54 pounds per person, per year. By 1910 this had risen to 86 pounds.[104] Significant consumption of poultry was almost nonexistent until after the First World War. Fruits and vegetables, staples in other parts of the world, do not appear to have been quite as popular with prewar Canadians. This can be partially explained by the climate, one that was not conducive to the extensive cultivation of vegetables. Until the development of reliable refrigeration, along with faster and more efficient transportation, most Canadians had access to fresh fruits and vegetables for only a part of the year. Canned, dried, and otherwise preserved products were widely used when fresh produce was unavailable. Apples were probably the most popular fruit, as they tended to keep for longer periods, and in consequence the average Canadian consumed two bushels a year in 1914.[105] Canadian consumption of foreign fruits expanded greatly between 1900 and 1913. Currants, raisins, and dates were popular, and as the twentieth century progressed, more exotic products such as bananas and pineapples joined them on the Canadian table. Other fruits, such as oranges and lemons, were available, but costly.[106]

Vegetables were a labour-intensive crop, and thus expensive to grow. The popularity of certain vegetables during the years before the war depended on many of the same factors that determined the types of fruit eaten by Canadians. Cabbage, much hardier and easier to keep than lettuce, formed the basis of most salads of the time, while some salads do not appear to have contained many vegetables at all. For example, the following vegetable recipe appeared in the popular *Home Cook Book*, first published in Toronto in 1877. Entitled simply 'Salad', the recipe

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p. 22.

101 Pillsbury, p. 24.

102 D. Monod, p. 359.

103 Roorbach, p. 26.

104 D. Monod, p. 359.

105 Canada, Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living, *Report of the Board*, vol. II, p. 1007.

106 Ibid., pp. 41, 1009-1010.

calls for a mixture of "Two eggs boiled hard, one teaspoon mustard, two tablespoons vinegar, one cup milk, two heads celery, and one-half cup sugar."[107] Lettuce would not become popular until after the development of the longer-keeping 'Iceberg' variety in 1894; new technologies (such as refrigeration) helped here. Root vegetables and tubers, such as carrots, turnips, beets, and the ubiquitous potato were consumed in large quantities, thanks no doubt to their rugged qualities. Between 1911 and 1913, the Canadian potato crop averaged 78 million bushels, of which only 1.4 million bushels, on average, were exported. Therefore, during these years it appears as though Canadians consumed an average of 76.6 million bushels of potatoes, or roughly 9.5 bushels per person.[108]

Potatoes also had the important virtue of being relatively cheap. Rising food prices became one of the most pressing issues for Canadian consumers in the years prior to the First World War. The economic prosperity that Canada enjoyed during the boom years between 1900 and 1912 was a double-edged sword as prices for many consumer goods and services rose, including food. As usual, some Canadians suffered more than others as a result, and according to scholars such as Michael Piva and Terry Copp, this inflation had an especially detrimental effect on the purchasing power of the worker.[109] The trend towards higher food prices was worrying for middle-class urban residents as well, for whom food was still the "largest category of purchase."[110] These consumers had grown accustomed to indulging in new and varied food products during the deflationary period in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and were now faced with the possible disappearance of this level of affluence.[111] Although the rise in prices was relatively gradual from 1900 to 1914, it was still a matter of some concern for most classes of Canadians.

Food is generally viewed as an inelastic, or 'fixed,' expenditure in the sense that, in order to ensure survival and adequate energy levels, it needs to be purchased and consumed on a fairly regular basis. However, fluctuations in both wage rates and food prices do affect the types and amounts of food consumed, turning the average Canadian's total expenditure on food for themselves or their family into an elastic one, at least in terms of the quality of the food consumed, and to a

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107 *The Home Cook Book* (Toronto, 1877), p. 112.

108 Roorbach, p. 21.

109 D. Monod, p. 103.

110 Ibid., p. 130.

111 Ibid., p. 104.

certain extent, the quantity. Other inelastic expenses affected the disposable incomes of Canadians. Housing costs took up a large segment of the family budget, and in the decade prior to the war, rents were rising. In his 1915 report, Robert H. Coats of the Department of Labour (later appointed Dominion Statistician) presented the findings of the Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living in Canada. The results of the investigation showed what many Canadians had long known, that prices had indeed been increasing. The report noted that between 1909 and 1915, Toronto had seen a "rapid" increase in average rents, a situation that was mirrored in other Canadian cities. Coats also noted that in Toronto, "houses eight or nine years ago renting at $12 to $15 now command $20 to $22, seven or eight-roomed houses with modern conveniences bring $26 to $30."[112] The housing situation in one of Canada's largest cities was bleak, with an estimated shortage of 10,000 homes, and predictably, it hit the working-class the hardest. As Michael Piva has noted, "a six-room house with sanitary conveniences in a workingman's district of Toronto rented, according to the *Labour Gazette* survey, on average for about $23.50 in 1914."[113] Individuals and families surviving on labourer's wages had to "double up to save rent and resulting in lodging house and tenement house problems."[114]

Manual workers typically received the lowest wages, averaging a yearly income of $417 in 1910, and their jobs were frequently less secure or seasonal in nature.[115] By contrast, average salaries for managers and other white-collar employees in Canada stood at $994 per annum in 1910. Average budgets from 1900 to 1914 show a steady annual increase; a family of five would typically spend $9.47 per week in 1900 on food, shelter, fuel and light. Within four years this had climbed to $14.58.[116] According to the Department of Labour, a family of five in 1900 would spend, on average, 27 cents for two pounds of sirloin steak; the same amount would cost close to 47 cents in 1913. One pound of creamery butter priced at 25 cents had climbed to 35 cents during the same period. Potatoes, beef and pork all rose, and the price of eggs doubled. Items such as cheese, flour, rolled oats, apples, and granulated sugar also rose in price, but less markedly. The cost of other

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112 Canada, Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living, *Report of the Board*, vol. II, p. 387.

113 Piva, p. 134.

114 Canada, Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living, *Report of the Board*, vol. II, p. 387.

115 Yearly figures taken from Urquhart and Buckley, series D280-287, "Annual earnings in manufacturing industries, production and other workers, by sex, Canada, 1905, 1910 and 1917 to 1959," p. 99.

116 Piva, p. 45.

foodstuffs such as tea, coffee, vinegar, yellow sugar, and rice remained relatively constant over the same period.[117] The gradual but steady increase in the prices of staple foods from 1900 to 1913, along with rent hikes from the same period, demonstrates that this was a particularly inflationary time for the consumer. All of these rising expenses added up, and Canadians increasingly began to look for answers.

One phenomenon that fanned widespread public suspicion in Canada's gilded age was a series of investigations into the existence of food 'combines' or 'trusts.' As we have seen, sugar refiners, flour mills, canning firms, and meatpacking together formed a burgeoning sector of the Canadian economy, and was one whose members showed a remarkable propensity to organize amongst themselves. Consistent with business trends of the time, the food manufacturers and processors sought to eliminate competition by forming combines, cartels, and by entering into other 'arrangements' that would allow them to control their markets, costs, and ultimately, prices. The anti-combines legislation passed in 1889 proved ineffective, and business mergers could and did take place with little hindrance. Between 1909 and 1913, as Ian Drummond notes, "a spectacular wave of mergers" took place, resulting in several huge conglomerates.[118] The combine became a public *bete noire* in Canada, and any upward movement in prices was generally laid at the feet of the unscrupulous 'Big Interests,' who were excoriated in the press. The belief that food prices were controlled by a cabal made up of cold storage plant operators, millers, meat packers, sugar refiners and others, would prove to be a popular and tenacious one, cutting across class, regional and ethnic lines.[119]

Thus, rising costs, along with a popular notion that the 'Interests' were making considerable amounts of money, were already prevalent prior to the outbreak of war. The strains of war could only compound public fears over this issue, thus creating an atmosphere of anxiety, anger, and frustration. This turbulence over prices and combines led to an increased militancy on the part of frustrated consumers. Led by various organizations such as the Trades and Labour Congresses, groups began to organize and demand action.[120] Eventually these groups, among others, would initiate a crescendo of calls demanding that the state step in to keep prices steady, if not down, and

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117 Ibid., p. 75.

118 Drummond, p. 114.

119 D. Monod, p. 134.

120 Ibid., p. 130.

to battle against the profiteer and the speculator. Canadians *expected* the government to take action, and they were willing to allow unprecedented intervention in the economy and into their own private lives if only prices would stop rising. This level of public anger provoked by a sharply rising cost of living was not unique to Canada, as anxiety over the price and availability of food prompted protests and occasional riots between 1900 and 1914 in various parts of the world.[121] Canada, luckily, escaped food-related violence, but this was not because the government handled the situation in any supremely competent manner. As we have seen, food was a serious issue for both the consumer and the state, and the tenacity of the public in demanding affordable foodstuffs would prove to be one great challenge to the state's later efforts to regulate Canada's vast and complex food system.

Conclusion

In the decades prior to the First World War, the Canadian food system had undergone a dramatic transformation, one that had it roots in the socio-economic and demographic shifts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Canada was a fundamentally agricultural nation undergoing rapid industrialization, one whose large food exports to Britain were coupled with the need to feed a growing domestic population. As Canada entered the war, it did so not only as a promising member of the British Empire, but also as one of Britain's established trading partners and a source of needed foodstuffs. Much of the produce that Canada shipped across the Atlantic were commodities such as wheat, dairy products, and pork, all items that made up a large portion of the prewar British diet. This foreign trade helped meet the British appetite for such products, and in turn helped enrich the Canadian producers of these commodities. The war would change the level, but not the nature of these Canadian food exports; the same types of commodities were sold, albeit in much greater amounts, as the next chapter will show. At home, the domestic food trade had been growing as well, thanks to the expansion of Canada's urban, industrial population. The development of this mass market led to changes in the domestic distribution of food, one that in turn led to a changing relationship between wholesalers, retailers, and consumers. Prosperity also had an impact on the cost of living in Canada, causing a sharp increase that was in no small measure due to

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121 See Lynne Taylor, "Food Riots Revisited," *Journal of Social History* (Winter 1996), pp. 483-96; A.J. Cole, "The Moral Economy of the Crowd: Some Twentieth Century Food Riots," *Journal of British Studies* (Fall 1978), pp. 157-76; Paul R. Hanson, "The Vie Chere Riots of 1911: Traditional Protests in Modern Garb," *Journal of Social History* 22 (3, 1988), pp. 463-481.

rising food prices. Many of the staple products which made up the Canadian diet rose in price, leading to increased consumer agitation, and as the war years dawned, the pressing issue of food prices was one of the major domestic issues with which Canada's political leaders would have to contend.

Chapter Three
The Granary of the British Empire:
Canada's Food System and the Challenge of War, 1914-1917

Introduction: Canada, Great Britain and the Wartime Food Supply

On August 5, 1914, one day after the outbreak of the First World War, the *Winnipeg Free Press* fatefully declared that: "History has never known a conflict as the European war will be, if it comes to pass that there is a general war, so history can throw little light on the effect a bitter and protracted fight will have on the food supply of the world."[1] The *Free Press's* anxiety was predicated upon the realization that, when it came to food, there *were* no historical precedents to give Canadians a sense of how their own supply would be affected by the outbreak of war, or even if it would be affected at all. In the prewar decades, as we have seen, Canada had set itself up as an agricultural nation, more than capable of feeding itself, and one whose surpluses also helped to feed millions overseas. Ripples abroad could cause disruptions much further afield; the nation's food economy, after all, was now inextricably linked to the international sphere. So the war brought with it uncertainty — over the extent and nature of the nation's involvement in the conflict, as well as the effects that such a disruption might have on Canada's economic health. From the outset of war, questions surrounding the length and scope of the conflict also gave rise to fundamental concerns over the relative security of Britain's food supply, and thus Canada's status as 'the Granary of the Empire.' This very insecurity, however, could lead to significant opportunities for Canadian food producers — more would be required of Canadian farmers and food processors than ever before. Accordingly, they were strongly urged to produce more, inspired by patriotic appeals that pragmatically (and at times, unabashedly) touted the potential profitability of the war.

Profits and patriotism aside, between August 1914 and January 1917, Canada's food system (like other sectors of Canadian society) was indeed affected by the war. Incertitude and the lack of previous experience clearly informed how Canadians approached the food question. Quite naturally, people initially drew on existing, prewar conceptions of a non-interventionist state relying on voluntarism and exhortation in order the meet the challenges that arose. At the federal level, the

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1 "Famine Likely to Follow War and Pinch World," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 5, 1914, p. 2.

first twenty-nine months of the First World War were marked by an unwillingness on the part of the Borden administration to intervene in the economy, despite calls for greater state control over skyrocketing food prices. The process of supply and demand was allowed to operate unchecked, for it was believed that this was the most efficient means of conducting a wartime economy, an early phase of the war to which historians have often applied the label 'business as usual.' As time passed, however, the mounting wartime pressures on the food system eventually vanquished this old reliance on the *laissez-faire* production and distribution of food. Producers, commercial dealers, and consumers all had to cope with rising food prices, unpredictable supplies, and government policies, which, in the minds of many, failed to address the problems in any meaningful way. These policies were not, strictly speaking, regulatory in nature, but were instead based on an investigatory ethos — an idea that 'investigation' could, in its own way, bring about the desired result — which was an important stop on the road to government regulation of the food supply. Suspicions abounded that food manufacturers and merchants were 'profiteering' by charging extortionate prices for food products, and more importantly, that a lack of government action was allowing this to occur. In consequence, by 1917 cries promoting the opportunities of war had been overcome by a popular outcry against 'opportunism.' Pressured by public opinion, political criticism, and economic malfunction, the Borden government finally moved to impose a new regulatory norm on the way food was supplied to Canadian society. In short, the years 1914-1917 would be a transitional phase within the Canadian food system, when accepted economic and political models proved increasingly unequal to the unprecedented challenges of global war.

The First World War: 'Canada's Opportunity'?

On the eve of war, Canada and Britain were engaged in a symbiotic relationship. As chapter two demonstrated, the amount of food imported by pre-war Britain was considerable, and a large portion of that was Canadian in origin. By 1914, sixty percent of the total calories consumed by the British came from imported foodstuffs, and, as Avner Offer has noted, the types of foods typically eaten by the working classes (i.e. large amounts of sugar and cereals, cheaper forms of meat, lower quality dairy products) came from overseas.[2] The implication of this cheap foreign food, argues

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2 Avner Offer, "The Working Classes, British Naval Plans and the Coming of the Great War," *Past and Present* 107

Offer, was a heavy reliance on the navy to keep the oceans safe for British food shipments — the *pax Britannica* mattered deeply to English larders. The prospect that transatlantic shipping would be disrupted by the war was likely, but, strangely enough, few concrete plans had been formulated by the British authorities to deal with that possibility. The strength of the British fleet, coupled with the confident belief that the war would be a short one, thus marked Britain's early, lackadaisical attitude towards the wartime food supply. War might threaten Britain's trading relationships, but the much-vaunted British navy was seen as the safeguard that would keep food distribution channels open. As Greg Kennedy has noted, most British war plans were predicated on this basis in a brief, limited war, which had repercussions for Canada as well. Despite the large amount of Canadian foodstuffs exported to Britain prior to the war, Canada was not, initially at least, viewed as a strategically critical part of the British war effort.[3] This would change, and by early 1917, Canadian food contributions would come to be seen in their true light — as a crucial pillar of the British war effort.

The trials of war would make evident this extent to which Britain had grown to depend on Canadian agricultural products. Canada, in turn, had in Britain a steady, profitable export market; the problem was that war would undoubtedly disrupt that relationship. But in the early days of the war, little was known and nothing was certain; Canadian exporters and British consumers trusted in the *status quo*. In August, anxious Londoners, worried about the security of their food supply, were no doubt comforted by a notice "prominently displayed in the Canadian Immigration Offices at Charing Cross" that Canada had set aside seven months' worth breadstuffs "for the motherland."[4] Back in Canada, however, an August 8 editorial in the *Toronto Star* presented Britain's food situation in bleaker, more realistic terms. Limited food reserves coupled with a large industrial population, not to mention a heavy dependence on outside sources of supply, could spell disaster for the British working classes, not in the form of hunger, but in the form of rapid price increases. Keeping British cupboards full of Canadian fare would help alleviate this. "To send food to Great Britain," the *Star* pragmatically concluded, "may not be quite as spectacular as to send soldiers, but

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(1985), p. 204.

3 Greg C. Kennedy, "Strategy and Supply in the North Atlantic Triangle," in *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956*, B.J.C. McKercher and Lawrence Aronsen, eds. (Toronto, 1996), p. 53.

4 "Canada's Food Supply for the Motherland," *Toronto Star*, August 7, 1914, p. 12.

it is, at least, as necessary."[5] Unfortunately, the *Star* failed to consider the domestic consequences in wartime of exporting large amounts of Canadian foodstuffs to Britain; unless Canada's own food stocks were kept at reasonable levels, food prices would invariably rise on this side of the Atlantic. On the other hand, it *was* conceivable, in the heady, early days of the war, that Britain's food supply would not be unduly threatened. On August 10, 1914, the *Star* assured Canadians that the "Shipping Menace in [the] N. Atlantic" had been "exaggerated."[6] Citing the Naval Editor of London's *Daily Telegraph*, the *Star* told Canadians that the likelihood of German cruisers disrupting shipping was "absurd." The article also reported that the food supply in London was good, and that "the only conceivable shortage is in eggs and bacon, which form the middle class Englishman's usual breakfast."[7] Presumably, concerned Canadians were gratified to learn that British lunches and dinners were not yet endangered.

The early days of war saw well-intentioned Canadians scrambling to find ways to contribute to the war effort. Able-bodied men enlisted, women rolled bandages, the wealthy raised battalions, and many made financial donations of varying amounts. Another phenomenon that marked Canada's initial response to the war (and one that underscores the largely voluntary nature of Canadian involvement), was the donation of large amounts of foodstuffs to Britain by the Dominion, various provincial governments, municipalities, and private individuals. Ranging widely in size, substance and significance, these "war gifts" of food had, by September 16, 1914, already reached considerable proportions. In perhaps the most famous example, the federal government donated 1.6 million bags of flour to Great Britain, while Quebec sent along four million pounds of cheese. New Brunswick donated 100,000 bushels of potatoes, while patriotic British Columbians proudly contributed 1.2 million cans of salmon to the war effort.[8] Cities and towns such as Oakville, Ontario did their bit as train loads of food and other supplies were gathered together for the relief of

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5 "Britain's Food Supply," *Toronto Star*, August 8, 1914, p. 4.

6 Ibid, August 10, 1914, p. 7.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., September 16, 1914, p. 7. Robert Rogers refuted rumours that the flour had in fact been bought in the United States; informing the House of Commons that the flour was purchased from the Ogilivie Milling Company, the Western Canada, Maple Leaf, and Western Flour Mills. Furthermore, Rogers pointed out that the flour had "been made entirely with Canadian wheat." *Debates of the House of Commons*, August 21, 1914, p. 50.

Belgium.[9] It was reported that an amount of foodstuffs big enough to "fill three large ships" was collected by farmers from across Ontario.[10] Food manufacturers were eager to do their part as well, since supporting the Allied cause undoubtedly made for good publicity. One of the first out of the gate with gifts of food was the Cowan Company of Toronto, which offered to provide 5000 pounds of chocolate to the Canadian military.[11] Chocolate seems to have been a popular gift, as 65,000 bars of it were donated by the William Neilson Company to the soldiers training at Valcartier.[12] In hindsight, these gifts may seem a quaint reminder of the innocence with which the conflict was met; the patriotic urge to contribute symbolic of Canadians' overall reaction to the war. But this was all in keeping with the fundamentally *voluntary* nature of Canada's early war effort, reflecting the conviction that this war would be conducted along traditional lines. Only later, when the full seriousness of the situation became clear, would these gifts begin to pale in comparison with the vast amounts of foodstuffs produced and shipped overseas. When the full brunt of total war began to affect the Canadian economy, it was discovered that the accepted modes of voluntarism, as reflected here, could in no way repair a malfunctioning food system adjusting to brand-new challenges.

'This Gigantic Struggle of the Empire': Canadian Food Production and the War, 1914-1917

In their classic examination of Canadian agriculture and war, economists George Britnell and V.C. Fowke stressed two factors that had a profound impact on the Anglo-Canadian food relationship during the Great War. Of primary importance was the fact that the channels of trade between the two countries had been well-established prior to the war. The other significant factor was that Canada's food-raising potential had by no means reached its full extent by 1914; the war might lead to further development and the expansion of Canada's productive capabilities. Quantifying Canada's food exporting mentality at this time is difficult, but the tremendous growth that had preceded the war may have advanced the notion that Canada had almost limitless potential as a food producer and exporter. The convergence of these two circumstances meant that Canada

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9 *Toronto Star*, October 14, 1914, p. 7.

10 *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*, 1914, p. 234.

11 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 104574, Robert Borden to Sam Hughes, August 14, 1914.

12 *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*, 1914, p. 234.

was well-placed to supply the Allies with much of their wartime food requirements.[13] The most striking characteristic of wartime exports was their continuity, in nature if not volume, with prewar exports. Throughout the duration of the war, Canada was not called upon to contribute unfamiliar commodities to the British larder; the need was for increased production of foodstuffs already produced in the country. Wheat was undoubtedly the most important peacetime export, but sizable quantities of other food products had also been shipped overseas, and would soon be at a premium. Additional grains, such as oats, barley, rye, and corn were also bought by British provision agents, and Britain constituted almost the entire export market for Canadian butter, cheese, and pork products. The aggregate figures tell the story: In 1914, Canadian exports of foodstuffs were worth $250 million; but by 1918 this had increased to $740 million.[14] Britnell and Fowke confirm that during the war, the types of food exported from Canada were the same as those exported before the war, and to the same destination as well; the only difference was that much greater amounts were shipped out.

Canada's history as an exporter of breadstuffs to Britain meant that grain was almost automatically viewed as the main area in which the Dominion could contribute, in a meaningful and significant way, to the Allied war effort. On September 15, 1914, with the war in Europe only forty-one days old, a headline in the *Toronto Star* declared that "Canada Must Double Wheat Production." The article informed worried Canadians that a dramatic increase in grain growing was necessary in order to "prevent famine in Europe." Duty, however, was to be balanced by reward: farmers were also told that in so doing, Canada would "leap to the forefront of nations."[15] Food was therefore seen as an instrument of economic patriotic nationalism, a means of assisting the Empire while at the same time realizing its own economic ambitions. This was an irresistible prospect, but farmers on the prairies could be forgiven if they were not quite as optimistic. The sharp economic downturn of 1913 that had followed the prosperity of the 'wheat boom' was causing some hardship. The intense recession that had begun in 1913 had stung many sectors of the Canadian economy, and agriculture was no exception. Wheat growers had to deal with depressed commodity prices, an

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13 G.E. Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace: 1935-1950* (Stanford, 1962), pp. 23-61.

14 Arthur Barriedale Keith, *War Government of the British Dominions* (Oxford, 1921), p. 53.

15 "Canada Must Double Wheat Production," *Toronto Star*, September 15, 1914, p. 4.

increase in the cost of living, and, as ever, the unpredictability of nature.[16] The wheat crop harvested in the fall of 1913 had been the best ever realized in Canada, amounting to almost 232 million bushels. The following year's wheat yield was disappointing, especially when compared with the richness and quality of the preceding year's bounty. Coming in at just under 162 million bushels, the wheat harvest of 1914 was far below expectations.[17] A severe drought had led to decreased yields, meaning that a 'doubling of the wheat crop' in 1915 might not be as spectacular as it sounded.

As the fall of 1914 wore on, it became increasingly apparent that the war was perhaps not going to be as 'limited' as many had hoped. A natural desire to keep "useful" articles (such as wheat, flour, and other grains) out of enemy hands led to export restrictions.[18] Following the October 29, 1914 passage of legislation prohibiting the export of goods to enemy countries from Britain, Canada followed suit, by passing its own Order-in-Council confining overseas exports of such goods to ports in Britain, France, Russia, Spain and Portugal.[19] The fact that Britain had been one of Canada's major trading partners prior to the war made this narrowing of potential markets less painful than it could have been, as did the fact that the 1914 harvest had been, in the words of C.F. Wilson, "relatively light."[20] In early November, the British Board of Trade suggested that the Canadian government encourage its farmers to increase the amount of wheat being sown, as this would "not only be profitable to themselves, but advantage[ous] to the Empire."[21] (British farmers were also being encouraged to grow more wheat, but this alone could not make up for the shortfall that might occur with a further disruption of shipping, should Germany engage in intensified submarine warfare.) In order to facilitate this increased production, the federal Department of Agriculture instituted a campaign designed to raise awareness of this need to educate farmers of the role they now occupied in the war. "Leaflets" and "specific instructions" were among the items distributed to farmers throughout the country, and an "Agricultural War-Book" was drawn up that

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16 Thompson, *Harvests of War*, p. 13.

17 M.C. Urquhart and K.A.H Buckley, Series L125-138, "Crop statistics, grain and hay, acreage and production, Canada, crop years, 1851-1960," *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto, 1965), p. 362.

18 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 1, 1915, p. 553.

19 C.F. Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain: Government Policy to 1951* (Saskatoon, 1978), p. 58.

20 Ibid.

21 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 161343, L. Harcourt to the Duke of Connaught, November 6, 1914.

laid out for farmers "the opportunities for profitable Canadian enterprise *and at the same time* patriotic service."[22] In it, Minister of Agriculture Martin Burrell stated that:

> Britain needs more than men, she must have food — food this year and food next year ... The Canadian farmer, earnestly bending all his energies to increase the food supply for the Britisher at home and the British soldiers at the front, is doing his share in this gigantic struggle of the Empire.[23]

Finally, in order to "arouse the entire farming population to what may be regarded as their duty and opportunity," plans were made to hold some 350 agricultural conferences, gatherings at which farmers would be given information and encouragement.[24] All of this activity, prompted by British needs and desires, had as its goal one clear and salient end: to improve crop yields and ensure a decent surplus for overseas export. By 1915 it was becoming quite evident that securing an adequate food supply would be a critical factor in the war — here was a chance for Canada to show Britain, and the world, of what the young country was capable.

Thus, in the first flush of hostilities, duty to country and Empire was balanced by the promise of financial gains. Expanded wartime trade could perhaps assuage the current economic slump, which had seen a decline in exports. The refrain of 'opportunity' was repeatedly sounded in the early days of war, especially in regards to Canada's still vast agricultural potential. "We could," noted the President of the Royal Bank of Canada, H.S. Holt, "produce almost incalculable riches from the soil which is laying idle."[25] What appeared to be the putative profitability of wartime agriculture attracted its share of new sodbusters, who poured onto the prairies. As John Herd Thompson noted, despite the virtual cessation of immigration, 40,000 new farms were established on the prairies between the years 1916 and 1921.[26] The Department of Agriculture was a virtual font of exhortation, looking for new farmers even as the war thundered on. "Millions of acres in Canada await the settler," ran one ad targeting British immigrants. "The world's food supply is seriously imperilled by the War," it continued, "You can help to make good the deficiency."[27] Another, from October 1915, used that year's bumper crop as a selling point. According to the ad, the harvest had

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22 *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*, 1914, p. 263. Italics added.

23 Ibid. Quote also appears in Britnell and Fowke, pp. 35-36.

24 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 110894, Martin Burrell to Borden, February 8, 1915.

25 *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*, 1914, p. 262.

26 Thompson, *Harvests of War*, p. 61.

27 *United Empire*, January 1915, p. ix.

yielded "enough Wheat to feed every Man, Woman, and Child in Canada and the United Kingdom for a Whole Year, besides Oats, Barley, and other Field Crops." "The Canadian farmer," it concluded, "secures a rich return for his labours."[28] This early-war response to food production was another echo of pre-war norms — the idea that immigration would lead to higher production, and that the government's proper role was to snare potential farmers who could make a short-term difference on the food front and a long-term contribution to Canada's overall national prosperity.

The department's primary focus, however, was concentrated on getting Canada's established farms to produce as much as possible. To this end, each year they instituted differently-themed campaigns, which shifted their emphases as the war effort intensified. In 1914-15, the push was for 'Patriotism and Production,' while the title of the 1916 campaign — 'Production and Thrift' — suggested a grimmer, more pragmatic approach to a war that showed few signs of resolving itself. 'Production,' in this context, largely meant wheat, the significance of which has already been discussed. The war served to enhance its importance, and in February 1915, the British periodical *United Empire* told its readers that:

> Never within living memory has the grave importance of greatly enhanced output of wheat, both national and Imperial, stood out so clearly or so strikingly. ... For patriotic purposes every available acre in Canada is to be sown. The Canadian Department of Agriculture has recognised the supreme necessity of still further making Canada "the Granary of the Empire" ...[29]

The Dominion government, recognizing the importance of expanded cultivation, duly passed measures designed to act as incentives. A special amendment to the Bank Act allowed farmers to take out loans to buy more seed grain, and Parliament later agreed to spend eight million dollars to finance further purchases of this nature.[30] These early government efforts to bolster Canadian agriculture output, a step beyond mere encouragement, were still hortative in nature, not regulatory or interventionist, and were, in this sense, a perpetuation of pre-war attitudes. Like regulation, they had as their goal a modification of behaviour -- but these means were not coercive in nature. Some historians, notably John Herd Thompson, have argued that the wartime campaigns waged by the Department of Agriculture in encouraging extensive and intensive monoculture of wheat led farmers

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28 Ibid., October 1915, 1915, p. ix.

29 Ibid., February 1915, p. 93.

30 R.T. Naylor, "The Canadian State, the Accumulation of Capital, and the Great War," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16 (Fall-Winter 1981), p. 39.

to abandon proper agricultural techniques, sacrificing long-term productivity for short-term gains.[31] While Thompson's arguments are persuasive, in retrospect the fact remains that farmers were not compelled to follow the advice given them, but were, like many others, eager to exploit the opportunities that the war presented. Farmers who ignored proper cultivation techniques had not been robbed of their critical faculties by government schemes and propaganda, rather, they made a conscious decision based on motives that were as profit-driven as they were patriotic.

The 'patriotic' message being sent to Canada early in the war was that the Empire relied on the efforts of farmers to produce more food; not only would this aid the motherland, but, as profits were to be had, it would also benefit individuals and the nation as a whole. The government was not ready to step into the economy with regulatory controls; in keeping with the Anglo-Canadian attitude of 'business as usual,' a reliance on private trading channels was the norm. Official figures 'encouraged' further efforts, on a basis that mixed duty with profit. In September 1914, the Governor-General, the Duke of Connaught, had informed a crowd attending the Canadian National Exhibition that:

> The present struggle has dislocated industry throughout the world, but it has also given great opportunities. The people of Canada should avail themselves of these. A better and wider market for food products is certain for some time to come at good prices and Canada should increase as much as possible the area of cultivation, in order to profit thereby.[32]

Throughout the winter, farmers were continuously exhorted to plan on planting more acres, which they did, increasing the following year's crop acreage by some five million. This "seeding of the greatest crop on record," in the spring of 1915, took place under what observers called "ideal conditions, the ground being moist and the weather warm."[33] Canada was following the British lead, confident that in serving Britain, it was performing a patriotic service, and would be compensated for its diligence. By late spring 1915, however, indications were that this was not case.

On June 16, 1915, Canadian authorities let it be known that they were disappointed in the amount of Canadian farm produce being purchased by the Allies. A message from Rideau Hall was conveyed to Arthur Balfour, Secretary of State for the Colonies, expressing anxiety over this state of affairs. Wartime legislation had limited the number of markets to which Canada could export, and

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31 Thompson "Permanently Wasteful," pp. 193-206.

32 "Cultivate More Land, Is Duke's Message," *Toronto Star*, September 10, 1914, p. 1.

33 *United Empire*, "Round the Empire: Monthly Notes," May 1915, p. 375.

the country had large food stocks soon to be joined (it was hoped) by a good crop that would create a "great exportable surplus." Unfortunately, the United States, a major Canadian competitor, also had crops to sell, and as a neutral nation, was under no trading restraints. Allied war orders to Canada had "practically ceased," and were instead being directed to the U.S., which, the government complained, could export to whomever it chose.[34] Had Canadians not been told, in the early days of the war, that Britain would need as much grain as Canada could produce? Had they not heard, from a figure no less luminous than the King's own representative, that Canada should seek to increase its output as much as possible? The response from Britain was discouraging, for on July 20th it was learned that the British could not possibly purchase any of Canada's coming wheat harvest. The problem was that the British government, as an entity, was not actually buying wheat. 'Business as usual' meant that wheat continued to flow through peacetime channels. Private interests continued to purchase cereal products, and if these dealers could find cheaper wheat in the United States, then they would do so, for they were under no compulsion to buy Canadian wheat.[35] An added complication was the fact that the Allies were still buying food supplies on a competitive basis, and Britain, operating along peacetime lines, did not want to drive up prices. Patriotism and profitable farming did not, it seemed, always coincide.

As many had been predicting, the harvest of 1915, coming in at 394 million bushels, shattered all previous records. Responding to the government's "energetic conduct ... in stimulating wheat growing,"[36] Canada had indeed 'doubled' her wheat output. New land had been broken and more acres sown (over 15 million) than ever before.[37] Still, questions surrounding Canada's ability to dispose of this huge harvest persisted. The very size of the crop was a problem, with, as Britnell and Fowke have pointed out, "transportation and storage facilities" clogged with the country's rich bounty.[38] Falling prices, rising freight rates, and the prospect that Russian wheat could soon be flowing through the Dardenelles made matters even more pressing. As a result, the federal

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34 NAC, RG 25 External Affairs, vol. 263, file: "Privy Council Office (Canada) — Food Stuffs — Canadian prohibition and export of," Governor General to Colonial Secretary, June 16, 1915. This was not the only sector suffering from a lack of war orders. The textile industry, for example, was also lobbying for more wartime trade.

35 Sharp, p. 373.

36 *United Empire*, "The Food Supply," September 1915, p. 637.

37 Urquhart and Buckley, Series L125-138, p. 362.

38 Britnell and Fowke, p. 36.

government lobbied for British assistance to dispose of the insolently large crop, and to help facilitate this Borden appointed a short-lived cabinet Wheat Committee, composed of Burrell, George Foster (Minister of Trade and Commerce), Arthur Meighen (Minister of the Interior), and J.D. Reid, with Robert Rogers as Chairman, and Sanford Evans, former journalist and ex-mayor of Winnipeg, as Secretary.[39] The issue was finally resolved in November 1915, when the Allies agreed to buy most of Canada's wheat surplus, which in turn prompted an unprecedented move on the part of the Canadian government. To fill these large orders in an efficient, timely and cost-effective manner, the Dominion "commandeered all numbers one, two, and three Northern wheat in elevators under Grain Commission," on November 27, 1915. This amounted to some 13.6 million bushels, to be bought at the prevailing rate.[40] The seizure was deemed necessary in order to avoid the added complication of speculators; as Meighen pointed out, in other countries government purchase of wheat had led to 'abnormal' rises in prices, a situation Canadian officials were anxious to avoid.[41] Thus, it was clear that, despite reluctance to step into the economy, the government was perfectly willing to do so should circumstances dictate, and indications were that the early-war reliance on hortative patriotism was at last being supplanted by more interventionist methods. Britain also gave up its initial reliance on free market operations when it came to wheat purchases. The following year, 1916, saw powerful upheavals in the wheat market, including drastic price increases, which prompted Britain to appoint a Royal Commission on Wheat Supplies to handle British procurement. In November 1916, this agency took over all Allied wheat purchases, ending the counter-productive competitive buying in wheat that had plagued the Allies. In Canada and the United States, wheat traders were replaced by agents of the state-run Wheat Export Company, who now handled all Allied wheat purchases in North America.[42] Welcome or not, international developments beyond their control would force Canada's political leadership to accept increasingly interventionist economic measures.

As casualty lists grew, and as the war showed no foreseeable signs of ending, the early focus

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39 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. I, 1969, pp. 248-249.

40 George Foster to Grain Commission, November 27, 1915, *Documents on External Relations*, p. 100. The prices paid for the wheat were as follows: No. 1 Northern: $1.04¾, No. 2 Northern: $1.03 1/8, No. 3 Northern: $.98¾. Britnell and Fowke, p. 36.

41 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. I, 1969, p. 249.

42 Britnell and Fowke, p. 37.

on 'opportunity' and 'profitability' became less appropriate, and less acceptable to a nation mourning the loss of so many. The erstwhile notion of profitability, while never wholly abandoned, was now partially displaced by sentiments of a higher moral tone, and by an increasing insistence on the primacy of sacrifice and duty. Farmers were now informed that the production of more food should not be driven by self-serving motives; rather, it should come out of a desire to serve Canada, the war effort and the Empire. A backlash against the profits made by farmers, as exemplified in political economist Stephen Leacock's 1917 essay "Our National Organization for the War," would eventually materialize. Calling the farmer a "parasite," Leacock argued that food's importance to the war effort should be recognized by the implementation of what was, in essence, a pervasive government intervention in agriculture. Only when that happened, according to Leacock, only when the farmer received "only enough food and clothes to keep them going" (rather than profits), would they be engaged in noble work worthy of the war effort.[43] Despite Leacock's arguments, Canadian officials never truly abandoned their faith in supply and demand as the most effective way to realize larger levels of production, and nationalization of Canada's vast agricultural capacity was far beyond what the ruling Conservatives were willing to consider.

Food production was, however, not just about tilling the soil and selling the crop. As with agricultural producers, Canadian food processors and manufacturers were urged to increase production, and as with farmers, the initial message was a judicious mixture of both profit and patriotism. A front-page headline in the *Toronto Star* of October 3, 1914 confidently announced that the war was going to be "Canada's opportunity." Reporting that conditions in Europe would lead to increased markets for North American firms, it asserted that such a "big boom in [a] short time," would leave Canada "in just as good a position as the United States to benefit from these conditions."[44] The Allies would need supplies, and Germany's export markets, cut off by war and blockade, now beckoned. Still, the path was not entirely clear. While the war the would heighten demand for Canadian products, some food processors might be limited by their ability to secure raw materials, as well as the labour necessary to keep the factories running. But for those who could surmount these difficulties, opportunities abounded. As previously noted, sugar refiners, millers,

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43 Stephen Leacock, "Our National Organization for the War," in *The New Era in Canada: Essays Dealing with the Upbuilding of the Canadian Commonwealth*, J.O. Miller, ed. (London, 1917), p. 413.

44 "Canada's Opportunity," *Toronto Star*, October 3, 1914, pp. 1-2.

and meatpackers were among the largest and most significant Canadian food manufacturers at this time. The discrete nature of these industries, and the products they produced, meant that the war would affect them in very different ways. Still, all depended on continuous delivery of primary products to ensure the viability of their businesses — refiners needed raw sugar, millers needed wheat, and meatpackers needed livestock. All were subject to wartime obstacles that ranged from seismic shifts in international markets, and fluctuating prices, to uncertain levels of supply and labour. The business of processing food had more to do with industrial economics than the agrarian economics of the primary producer out on his farm.

By 1914, sugar refining had become a significant industrial pursuit in Canada, a reflection of the growing importance of sugar in the western diet. During the nineteenth century, sugar had become an important food staple, transcending its beginnings as a luxury food to become a vital foodstuff. The new pressures created by rapidly industrializing societies meant that sugar's primary value lay not in its intrinsic nutritional worth, but in its status as a cheap source of food energy. The modern conception of sugar as consisting mainly of 'empty calories' was then largely unknown, and considerable amounts were used in food processing, preservation, and in the manufacturing of new 'convenience' foods marketed to a faster-paced society.[45] This expanding demand for sugar attracted Canadian businessmen, and between 1854 and 1915, several large-scale sugar refineries, including Canada Sugar, St. Lawrence Sugar, Dominion Sugar, B.C. Sugar, the Acadia Sugar Refinery, and Atlantic Sugar, were established in Canada, assisted by a tariff structure that allowed domestically-processed sugar to compete with cheaper foreign products. Sugar was a classic example of Canada's success with tariff-based policies of import substitution.

While Britain relied heavily on external producers for its grain supplies, with the outbreak of war, it was sugar that attracted the immediate attention of the government. Until late 1916, the securing of Britain's food needs was left in the hands of private traders, but with sugar the state acted much earlier. This may have been prompted by the fact that Britain's prewar sugar supply had been derived largely from Germany and Austria-Hungary. There was also little chance of acquiring alternate supplies from other parts of the continent, for northwestern Europe's sugar-beet production

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45 Ken Cruikshank, "Taking the Bitter with the Sweet: Sugar Refiners and the Canadian Regulatory State, 1904-1920," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXIV (3, 1993), p. 369.

had been curtailed by the war.[46] On August 20, 1914, the British government had appointed a Royal Commission on Sugar Supplies, a buying agency whose activities caused an immediate dislocation in the world sugar trade, as it bought and hoarded available sugar supplies.[47] The end result was a reduction in international sugar stocks and a corresponding rise in prices.[48] This global disruption inevitably affected Canadian refiners; this was the first indication that keeping up with consumer demand might be difficult in a era of precarious supplies.

Between 1914 and 1917, Canadian firms faced increasing difficulties in obtaining raw sugar, as well as higher duties on that which it could import. The industry led a precarious existence during the war, as refiners who used imported raw sugar (mostly Cuban) were dependent on reliable shipping to acquire their feedstock, and the conditions of war were certainly not conducive to safe, secure ocean transport.[49] At times, the failure of shipments to arrive on time, or to arrive at all, led to temporary shutdowns as reserve stocks were quickly exhausted.[50] In 1916, the six Canadian refiners produced 345,089 tons of sugar, having a total worth of $47.4 million; a significant portion of this output was due to the arrival of British war orders.[51] For example, in May 1916 the Canada Sugar Refinery of Montreal received an order for 10 million pounds of sugar from Britain, and, in August, a further 2.24 million pounds were requested.[52] Thus, one benefit brought to refiners by the war was the development of an export market — something that they did not have prior to the war, when they were producing sugar mainly for domestic consumption.[53] Sugar thus provided a leading-edge indicator of the kind of disruption that war could create in food production.

Canadian meatpackers, hurt in pre-war years by a significant drop in exports, were also quick to seize the opportunities offered by the war. The war caused a curtailment in Danish and Dutch exports to Britain, meaning that Canadian bacon and hams were once again highly-sought

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46 John Schreiner, *The Refiners: A Century of BC Sugar* (Vancouver, 1989), p. 56.

47 Britnell and Fowke, p. 32.

48 Richard Feltoe, *Redpath: The History of a Sugar House* (Toronto, 1991), p. 237.

49 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 440.

50 Feltoe, p. 240.

51 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 440.

52 Feltoe, p. 241.

53 Cruikshank, p. 371.

after by British buyers.[54] The Toronto-based William Davies Company, whose exports to Britain had been undercut by the availability of cheaper, better quality pork products from Denmark and Holland, took advantage of disrupted trading patterns and had almost doubled their exports by April 1915. They also took advantage of overseas contacts to secure government orders. While the public's food supply was still in the hands of private traders, the British War Office was a substantial purchaser of tinned meat for military use. (Canned meat products — 'bully beef' — developed into an indispensable part of soldiers' rations). The end result was a startling increase in the company's fortunes, with revenues rising every year. From $154,605 in 1914, profits rose to over $500,000 in 1915, and then to $1.5 million in 1916.[55] As in other wartime industries, wages advanced as labour grew scarcer, but this was mitigated by the firm's overall prosperity. As with other industries, meatpackers discovered that war could be very good for business.

Much rested upon Canada's ability to produce ever-larger surpluses of food products. Massive Allied armies needed to be fed, as did the citizens who fueled the war efforts on the home front. There was also the question of food relief for war-torn populations, such as that of Belgium, which was facing severe shortages; France's own agricultural capacity had been seriously impaired as well. The difficulties involved in transporting grain from South America and Australia placed the Imperial burden squarely on Canada's shoulders. The situation was made commensurably worse by the activities of German submarines, which mercilessly sunk ill-fated merchant cargoes en route for Europe. British shipping losses amounted to some 252,738 tons in 1914, a figure that climbed steadily throughout the war; by 1916 it stood at over 1.2 million tons. Prior to the war, as J.A. Salter wrote, "Neither of the combatants ... realized the possibilities of the submarine."[56] The British navy failed to take into account the destruction that could be wrought by underwater vessels of war; the Germans diligently applied this technology and used it to try to break out of the strangling Allied blockade, and at the same time deny the Allies their own replenishment. Except for brief periods, until 1917 Germany's U-boats had confined themselves to Allied shipping, generally sparing those of neutral nations, especially the United States. The internal situation in Germany in late 1916 and early 1917, however, was dire enough to drive the German high command to take the desperate and

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54 Bliss, p. 237. See also H.A.R. Smidt, "Dutch and Danish Agricultural Exports during the First World War," *Scandinavian Economic History Review & Economy and History* XLIV (2, 1996), pp. 140-160.

55 Bliss, pp. 238, 332.

56 J.A. Salter, *Allied Shipping Control: An Experiment in International Administration* (Oxford, 1921), p. 118.

risky measure of adopting 'unrestricted' submarine warfare. With this decision, all shipping, neutral or not, would become fair game for German submarines, a situation which had the potential to wreak untold havoc on the high seas.

But the consequences of this military policy were still off in the not-so-distant future. As 1917 dawned, Canadian food production and exports had already advanced, and seemed set to soar as a result of the war. In 1915, the amount of land under seed had stood at 39.1 million acres, but by 1917 this had risen to 42.6 million. A gain of three million acres may seem modest, but, it must be noted, the largest jump was still to come, as the pressures of war would push Canada's agricultural output even higher.[57] Also significant was the rise in crop value: Canada's field harvest, which had been worth just over $825 million in 1915, rose to $1.1 billion in 1917. While wheat and other cereal products formed the bulk of wartime agricultural exports to Britain, dairy products were also important, with cheese and butter remaining much sought-after commodities throughout the war. Canadian production of cheese remained steady between 1914 and 1917, and exports, while not as large as they had been in previous years, stayed relatively constant. By 1917, cheese production reached a wartime peak of just under 195 million pounds, of which 180 million were exported. The butter situation was slightly different, as the prewar drop in exports had been allayed by a rise in domestic consumption, so much so that by 1914, Canadian butter exports had become almost negligible. During the war, a sharp reduction in the production of milk, combined with increased overseas demand, led to a disturbing rise in the price of butter and prompted a popular movement for the legalization of margarine.[58] The system of food production and exports which had been established prior to the war found itself expanding even further — and the greatest increase remained on the horizon.

Canada's prewar food exporting relationship with Britain meant that the nation was well-placed to fulfill at least part of Britain's wartime food needs, especially grain products. A profitable expansion in Canadian agriculture was envisioned, and used repeatedly as a means to mobilize farmers to seed more acres, and grow more food. The mixed message of duty and profit seemed to achieve the desired results, with a rise in both harvest size and crop values. There were, however,

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57 *Canada Yearbook*, 1920, p. xvi.

58 Margarine, an unlikely object of condemnation, had been outlawed in Canada, and the powerful dairy industry had been fighting to keep butter substitutes off Canadian tables. Their fight would continue during the war, however, given the growing needs of both the domestic and Allied markets, legalization loomed on the horizon. See Heick, p. 31.

some initial difficulties to be faced in the marketing of Canada's crops, a problem overcome by diplomatic lobbying and the mounting pressures of war. As the human, emotional, and fiscal costs of war grew, it became clear that the early reliance on profit-driven exhortation would no longer serve, and indications were that the state would have to put its reluctance to abandon *laissez-faire* principles aside, and take a more 'active' role in the directing of Canada's food resources. Food processors, generally speaking, had already-existing market niches that they could exploit early on in the war, which was helped along by the prevalence of 'business as usual' attitudes and practices. Conditions would change, however, and disruptions in both labour and supply would affect output. The initial lesson of the war, as far as food manufacturers were concerned, was that the food processing industry was inherently precarious, and subject to numerous external forces. The nation's food production potential, while promising, perhaps needed further incentives to realize the necessary surplus levels. With the sinking of food shipments, Canada would be pressed to adopt further, stricter measures to increase food surpluses. By the spring of 1917, calls for increased production would be joined by calls for the conservation of food as well — to be directed by Canada's first 'Food Controller.'

'Feeling for the Bounds of Public Toleration': Food Dealers, the Cost of Living, and the Domestic Economy in War, 1914-1917

The First World War struck at Canada's commercial food dealers in a direct way, affecting both prices and supplies. Initially, wholesale importers and exporters were unsure of how their suppliers would be affected, and this made retailers apprehensive as well. Following the first news of war, food prices immediately rose, led by staples such as sugar, flour, cereals and rice; these increases, at times alarming, continued over the next few weeks.[59] The disruption worsened as scores of anxious Canadians descended upon their local grocers, buying up vast quantities of foodstuffs, which gave rise to further increases. This panicky reaction was a worrying development for food dealers already coping with sharply rising prices, and a mounting sense of uncertainty over just how disruptive the conflict would be. For the *Canadian Grocer*, the situation in early August 1914 seemed dismal and unclear — how should retailers cope with an international food market that now seemed hopelessly awry? The future extent of the dislocation depended on two familiar things:

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59 "Upheaval of Many Prices Caused by the War," *Canadian Grocer*, August 7, 1914, p. 39.

the length of the war, and keeping transoceanic shipping routes open and secure. The trade paper reasonably concluded that a long, involved war could only lead to further disorganization. "We can see nothing ahead," ran one prescient editorial, "but a general advance in foodstuffs should the conflagration continue for any length of time."[60]

Despite appeals for calm, uneasy consumers continued to hoard food throughout August 1914, and consequently prices continued to rise as stocks became depleted. Food dealers were also concerned with growing criticism, leveled at the grocery trade, that self-serving retailers were to blame for the high prices.[61] Grocers in turn placed the onus on the consumer; news of the war had thrown the grocery trade into a chaotic state, and for some "the scared consumer," making illogical and irrational purchases, was to blame for most of this turmoil.[62] It was repeatedly stressed that people simply did not need to buy hundreds of pounds of flour and sugar at once. The *Canadian Grocer*, reflecting on the price increases, grumbled that "If it had not been for the hogging of sugar on the part of the consuming public it is certain that it would not have run up so high and so rapidly."[63] This initial period of disruption, however intense, did not last very long — by November the term 'business as usual' was also being used to describe the wartime grocery trade in Canada.[64]

For the most part, the period between 1914 and early 1917 was a relatively calm one for Canadian food dealers. There were as yet no serious shortages of goods and, apart from the anxious days in August, 1914, no serious dislocations in buying patterns. Unfortunately, as the cost of living issue heated up, food retailers unavoidably found themselves on the front lines. Grocers and their employees had to face the buying public on a daily basis, and there was no way to hide from consumers angry over mounting food prices. Food retailers essentially spent the remainder of the war attempting to repudiate charges that they were to blame for high food prices. While dealers undoubtedly sought to make a profit on their business — they were, after all, moneymaking institutions — it seems unlikely that *all* grocers deserved to be referred to as 'profiteers.' To help dispel the image of the 'grasping grocer,' the commercial food trade used their professional associations and the voices of prominent members as means to combat bad publicity and to help

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60 "Havoc Created by War on the Prices of Foods," (editorial) *Ibid.*, August 7, 1914, p. 32.

61 "Unjustified Criticism of Retailers," *Ibid.*, September 4, 1914, p. 45.

62 "Grocery Prices are Still Running Amuck," *Ibid.*, August 14, 1914, p. 27.

63 *Ibid.*, September 4, 1914, p. 45.

64 *Ibid.*, November 20, 1914, p. 29.

make their case to the public. The Retail Merchants' Association was one group whose efforts were expended in this direction. In November 1916, after the passage of the government's anti-profiteering legislation, delegates from the RMA met with the Minister of Labour, Thomas Crothers. During this meeting, the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that "the retailers entered a plea of not guilty," stressing that they were not at fault in the matter of high prices, rather, "they ascribed the situation to general conditions," which included poor crops and a lack of labour.[65] Earlier, A.A. Ayers, one of Montreal's largest wholesale exporters, had angrily reacted to reports that a 'food trust' was responsible for rising prices. Increases in the prices of wheat, flour, cheese, butter and eggs he noted were "owing to the necessities of the war department and the wants of England centred in London. In other words, the law of supply and demand fixed the price, and the stocks held in Canada of all the articles mentioned are much lower than usual."[66] Wholesalers and retailers were doing what they had always done, charging enough to cover their own cost and whatever the market would bear; as their own costs rose, so to did those that were passed on to the consumer.

As 1917 opened, the growing uproar over high prices and 'middlemen' continued to anger those in the food trade, which believed that it was being unfairly singled out. The *Canadian Grocer* commented in January 1917 that

> It is becoming the habit of newspapers and civic authorities to clamour for investigation into the high cost of food products. Because food is high it is at once assumed that either wholesalers or retailers are growing wealthy on his ill-gotten gains. ... Men who are making a comfortable living are absurdly eager to know that the food handler should not be making more than a starvation profit.[67]

One of the problems in a food system left to *laissez-faire* operation is that friction will be hottest where supply and demand comes into direct, daily contact. But behind this daily skirmishing between food consumer and food purveyor stood a larger, more complex monetary drama that was playing itself out in Canada, one that contributed to the growing adversarial relationship between shopper and seller. The cost of living, which had been steadily rising prior to the war, continued its upward climb in 1914-1915. This, however, was a relatively stable period; an alarming rise took place during 1916 and 1917, one severe enough to prompt widespread public dissatisfaction.

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65 "Minister Probing Supply of Food," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 21, 1916, p. 1.

66 "Criticized Talk of Market Superintendent, Mr. A.A. Ayers Says Mr. Biron's Statements Regarding Food Cost Unwarranted," *Montreal Gazette*, October 13, 1916, p. 4.

67 "The Middleman Not to Blame," *Canadian Grocer*, January 12, 1917, p. 21.

Thanks to the conditions of war, food prices had climbed to such a degree that Canadians began to suspect that businessmen, retailers, and farmers were making unduly high profits at a time when such unscrupulous considerations were, supposedly, to be set aside in favour of higher motives. Profits, on their own, would probably not have caused such an outcry, but the fact that prices were rising sharply at the same time gave rise to bitterness and mistrust. Still, popular unrest would not be enough to prompt any radical changes in the government's hands-off approach to high prices. Although many agitated for price controls and other coercive measures, the Borden government did not take strong action — the principle of supply and demand was to remain the primary regulator of consumer prices in Canada.

The high cost of living, or the 'HCL,' as it was called, became a global phenomenon during the war, thanks to the interruption of peacetime channels of trade and production, and supercharged demand. In London, war panic in early August 1914 had led to a clearing out of some food shops by anxious consumers. Similarly, some Canadians, all too familiar with the way in which food prices had been steadily climbing over the last decade, immediately suspected that those in the food business would see the crisis as an opportunity to drive up prices even further. The result was the aforementioned wave of panic buying, as housewives stocked up on staple commodities such as flour, sugar, and bacon. The Winnipeg *Free Press* noted that women were buying vast amounts of supplies "as though preparing for a siege."[68] This hoarding of food was widespread enough to prompt the William Davies Company to take out large advertisements denying that they had "large quantities of meats in cold storage," and further, claiming that they "had no intention of withholding meats from the market when Cured because a war situation might make it advantageous to do so."[69] The company also took the unusual step of dissuading people from buying "unreasonable" quantities of their pork products, warning that that if anything was going to drive up prices, it was panic buying. Reports of hoarding and mass purchases of sugar prompted B.T. Rogers, founder of B.C. Sugar, to comment that "in order to compel the consumer to economize, prices will have to go gradually up until they reach a point which will conform to prices ruling in other parts of the world."[70] The key word here was 'gradually' — any rapid increases would be sure to set off another

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68 "Winnipegers Lay in Extra Supplies," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 6, 1914, p. 14.

69 *Toronto Star*, August 10, 1914, p. 7.

70 Schreiner, p. 58.

wave of 'unreasonable' buying.

It was convenient for food dealers to blame the consumer, who, in stocking up was merely reacting to a mixture of past experience — rising inflation and a growing skepticism about the competitive powers of 'trusts' — and the new, unknown variables of war. What would seem like perfectly rational behaviour on the part of consumers seeking to avoid exorbitant outlays on food was to the dealer an irrational action, one that would lead to further disruptions. The intensity of Canada's sudden economic recession meant that consumer patience was wearing thin, and rising food prices did nothing to help the situation. In mid-August 1914, the *Toronto Globe* reflected prevailing sentiment by commenting that those in the food trade were coming dangerously near the "bounds of public toleration."[71] Things were so bleak, the paper ironically suggested that Canada should "ask [for] relief by a food ship from Britain. Prices are normal there."[72] Some firms, however, were brazen enough to try to turn economic conditions to their advantage. In a full page advertisement, the Cowans Company bragged that, despite the "many advances in the cost of food products," it was pleased to announce that there would be no rise in the price of Cowans Perfection Cocoa "between now and Christmas."[73] Another ad, this one for Shredded Wheat, argued: "Meat takes another jump' — a familiar headline in your daily newspaper. But why worry about what you don't need? The most expensive foods are generally the least nutritious."[74] The makers of Egg-O brand baking powder felt that "in view of the high cost of living, it behooves every housewife in Canada to learn to do her own baking."[75] The war turned a growing antipathy between food dealers and consumers into an increasingly adversarial relationship, marked by patronizing language and behaviour on one end, and suspicion and mistrust on the other.

Some believed that the government's fiscal policies also had a hand in rising food prices. As part of the government's plan to fund the war, Thomas White, the Minister of Finance, proposed a series of 'luxury taxes' in August 1914 — tariff duties were to be increased on non-essentials such

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71 *Toronto Globe*, August 17, 1914, p. 4.

72 *Ibid.*, August 18, 1914, p. 4.

73 *Ibid.*, August 17, 1914, p. 5. The ad also noted that "cocoa and chocolate are foods as staple as flour. Cocoa is not a luxury, but a staple necessity of life."

74 *Ibid.*, July 4, 1916, p. 7.

75 *Ottawa Citizen*, November 8, 1916, p. 2.

as coffee, sugar, spirits and tobacco.[76] The sugar tariff alone was expected to bring in five million dollars per year, giving rise to Opposition fears that these additional duties would "of necessity affect the homes of the poor to a very great degree."[77] New Brunswick's Frank Carvell, declaring that this was merely "another little dip into the pocket of the poor man at this very unfortunate time," argued that increased sugar duties would cause manufactured foods (many of which contained sugar) to go up as well.[78] William F. Carroll, Liberal MP for Cape Breton South, agreed that adding to the consumer's load was not the proper way to raise war finance. Carroll stated that

> There should be other ways of raising a war tax, of raising money to help out the mother country, and we are all anxious to help her out in her hour of distress, than by placing a tax on the food of the common people. ... they are burdened enough now, they are overburdened, and it is a serious matter to burden them further. The cry in Canada, according to my own humble opinion, is for cheaper foodstuffs and we are not going to get cheaper foodstuffs by increasing the tariff on these commodities.[79]

The popular cry *was* for cheaper foodstuffs. Between 1914 and early 1917 the prices of most commodities, with a few exceptions, rose unchecked by voluntary restraint or government regulation. In 1915 the wholesale price index stood at 142.3, but by 1916 it had risen to 176.6, a hitherto unprecedented rise. This was still mild compared with what was to come, for between 1916 and 1917 the rise was startling, climbing to 236.7.[80]

These numbers are certainly telling, but what did this state of affairs actually mean for the average, 'overburdened' consumer? A pound of pork chops sold for an average price of 21 cents in 1914, but by 1917 this had risen to 30 cents a pound.[81] Similarly, a pound of sirloin steak that cost 25 cents at the beginning of the war had risen to 31 cents by 1917, with the steepest increase coming between 1916 and 1917. The price of bacon exhibited a particularly alarming tendency to soar during the war; a half-pound in 1914 cost a mere 15 cents, but in 1917 it stood at 22 cents.[82] A pound of lard climbed from 17 cents a pound in 1914 to just under 27 cents a pound in 1917. Between 1914 and 1917, the price of other staple foodstuffs, such as bread, flour, eggs, and of

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76 *Debates of the House of Commons*, August 20, 1914, p. 25.

77 *Ibid.*, August 21, 1914, p. 70.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

80 Urquhart and Buckley, Series J1-14 "Wholesale price indexes by commodity groups, 1868 to 1925," p. 291.

81 Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Urban Retail Food Prices, 1914-1959* (Ottawa, 1960), pp. 9, 15.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

course, sugar, also rose substantially.[83] Butter was another commodity whose price would be driven up by wartime shortages.[84] In November, 1916, the *Ottawa Citizen* mordantly pointed out that a pound of butter in Berlin cost 39 cents, while in Ottawa it had risen to 50 cents. A peck of potatoes was selling for 21 cents in Germany's capital, while Ottawa residents were being charged two dollars a bag. "The tariff," concluded the pro-free trade *Citizen*, "seems to be able to give us all the sensation of a blockade."[85]

As the war continued and as prices rose, the press increasingly carried echoes of the debate within their pages. Commentators generally agreed on two things: that the pressures of war were causing prices to rise to unheard-of levels, and that this presented new and serious challenges to Canada's food system. The consensus broke down over the question of the government's proper role in the matter. Should the state step in to ensure adequate supplies both here and abroad? Was there a way to strike a balance between domestic and Allied food needs? And who, exactly, was to blame for high food costs? When the war opened it was still too early to know the extent of British and the Allied needs, but given the increased demands of war and the unsatisfactory state of affairs at home, the notion that Canada's food supply needed serious re-evaluation had begun to percolate as 1915 dawned. On February 2, the *Toronto Globe* ran an editorial arguing exactly that point, noting that "If new methods are necessitated by new conditions the public should be prepared. We are suffering from an artificial food shortage, and the resultant prices, while burdensome to the consumer, have not reached the producers."[86] Where, then, was the money going? To the *Globe,* this was obvious: "the middleman, the miller, and the speculator has had his share of the inflated profits." An 'artificial' food shortage, according to some, was being caused by unscrupulous use of cold storage -- keeping supply levels down by keeping large amounts of food in storage, to be released when prices reached an accordingly high level. It was feared that cold storage was being being used to manipulate, to 'control' food prices to the detriment of consumers, and the enrichment of dealers. The current war made this increasingly dangerous; arguing that Canada's food contributions were of greater value than her military assistance, the editorial concluded that "Our

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83 *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 47, 53, 54.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

85 *Ottawa Citizen*, November 17, 1916, p. 14.

86 "An Unprecedented Food Situation," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, February 2, 1915, p. 4.

greatest strength is in our capacity to fill the granary."[87] But how could the granary be filled if most of Canada's food was locked away in cold storage plants? Not everyone agreed that this was a problem; food dealers argued that the 'problem,' if indeed one existed, was being exaggerated, and that wartime conditions alone were responsible for high food prices.

Canada and the Food Question: Political Responses

The level of popular unrest associated with rising prices gave the Opposition an ideal political weapon, and in March 1915 it was assisted by an unlikely ally, a member from the other side of the House. Denying that it had any "political significance," William Cockshutt, Conservative MP for Brantford, introduced what the *Winnipeg Free Press* called "an insolent proposal,"[88] namely, a resolution calling for government control of food exports, which would, he argued, regulate the domestic price of staples such as bread and meat.[89] Pointing mainly to wheat, Cockshutt argued that if too much food was allowed to leave the country, then domestic prices would rise accordingly. His arguments were not entirely without merit; in November 1916 Canada's Dairy and Cold Storage Commissioner, J.A. Ruddick, would admit that the price of milk and butter in Canada hinged on "whatever price cheese may bring in Great Britain."[90] The export market drove domestic food prices. Cockshutt's motion was defeated, but not after touching off a lengthy parliamentary debate that demonstrated the extent to which the rising cost of food was developing into a serious, and divisive, political issue.

Cockshutt began his argument by admitting that a move such the one he was proposing would upset accepted economic tenets, namely, that supply and demand did and should govern prices. His argument rested on the premise that the conditions of war called for new approaches, and that the old ways of doing business, which were obviously failing, needed to be set aside, in favour of bolder, more interventionist policies. According to Cockshutt, increased control over Canada's food supplies would be of considerable benefit, to both Canadian consumers and to the Allies. He was aware of Canada's position *vis a vis* the Empire, and believed that his resolution

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87 *Ibid.*

88 *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 3, 1915, p. 9.

89 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 1, 1915, pp. 526-27.

90 "The Supply of Butter," (editorial) *Ottawa Citizen*, November 16, 1916, p. 14.

would ultimately work in Britain's favour. In Cockshutt's opinion "It would be a thousand pities if Canada, the granary of the British Empire, as we have called it, should fail at this critical moment. There is danger of its failing to do what is expected of it in the food supply."[91] Part of Cockshutt's unease stemmed from the fact that despite legislation prohibiting exports to enemy countries, it was feared that Canadian cereal products were ending up in enemy hands, through neutral countries such as Denmark and Norway. In October 1914, for example, the French had seized a shipment of Maple Leaf flour that was on its way to Holland, out of fears that it would find its way to Germany.[92] What Canada needed, then, was more 'control' over its food resources — the state needed to step in to ensure an equitable balance between the interests of the Allies, producers, food dealers, and of course, the consumer.

J.J. Merner, a Conservative MP for Ontario's South Huron riding, wanted to know who, exactly, Cockshutt was "trying to hit" with this resolution. If it was the farmer, then Merner would not support such a motion, feeling that it would be harmful to Canada's primary producers.[93] Neither could W.M. Martin, MP for Regina, who remarked that Cockshutt had "started at the wrong end of this question."[94] It would be far more productive to look at the milling industry as a cause of high breadstuff prices. Presenting an opinion that would gain strength in the coming years, Martin was pointing his finger at the unscrupulous 'middlemen,' lining their pockets at the expense of consumers. Labour MP Alphonse Verville suggested that Cockshutt's arguments gave the impression that the workingmen of Canada "ate bread and nothing else." Verville, the member for Montreal's Maisonneuve district, then advanced a standard labour concern by stating that he would support the motion if Cockshutt would expand the scope of his resolution, and "ask the Government to regulate also the prices of everything that comes on the workingman's table."[95] He also raised the point that, while farmers were not paid enough for their produce, the food of the workingman was still far too expensive. For Verville, as for Martin, all indications pointed to the middleman as the main culprit responsible for unduly high prices, a belief echoed by Richmond, Nova Scotia Liberal MP George Kyte. W.F. Carroll hoped that the government would "take some steps to prohibit the

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91 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 1, 1915, p. 531.

92 "Maple Leaf Flour Seized by French," *Toronto Star*, October 5, 1914, p. 3.

93 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 1, 1915, p. 536.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 539.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 540.

enormous profit that middlemen are making upon the food products of the country" and "exercise the power they have and *control* the prices of foodstuffs."[96] Unfortunately, Verville, Carroll, and for that matter Cockshutt, were ahead of their time — the types of economic controls hinted at by these members would not even be conceivable until the spring of 1917, when conditions on home fronts both here and in Britain had worsened considerably. They had, however, discerned a mounting public concern over the price and availability of food, and they were beginning to convey this concern through calls for new state initiatives.

After Cockshutt *et al* had their say on the issue, the Prime Minister rose to put an end to the matter, and in "a careful speech," took the opportunity to impart the then-attitude of his government towards interventionist economic policies, an attitude which, for all intents and purposes, would undergo few fundamental changes during the war.[97] Borden stated that

> ... the less interference by a Government under conditions such as prevail at the present time, the less interference with the business activities of the country, with the sale or free exchange of products, the better for the country, except in so far as the war itself demands otherwise.[98]

As for fixing a price for wheat, Borden's argument against this was simple. The increased production of wheat was incompatible with a fixed price; otherwise, there would be little incentive for farmers to realize greater yields. On the issue of 'the middleman,' Borden was less forthcoming. The government, he vaguely noted, was aware of the rising cost of foodstuffs and had "endeavored to watch the situation very carefully."[99] In essence, it appeared as though Borden would respond to conditions only if they abjectly hindered Canada's ability to contribute to the war effort, and at this point, no such measures were deemed necessary. A disappointed Cockshutt agreed to have his motion "lost upon division."[100] Such a substantial consideration by Parliament of the question of food supplies would not occur again until March 1918 — during a most serious and critical phase of the war.

Reaction to this failed proposal was mixed. Out west, where farmers were never happy to hear of price ceilings and curtailed markets, the motion's defeat was welcomed. In central Canada,

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96 *Ibid.*, pp. 550-551

97 "Motion to Fix Price of Wheat Declared Lost on Division," *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 2, 1915, p. 1.

98 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 1, 1915, p. 552.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 554.

100 *Ibid.*, p. 559.

urban opinion seemed less thrilled. The *Ottawa Citizen* sarcastically remarked that

> The Dominion government will not take any action in regard to food prices just now, we are assured. The government is quite right. Any steps in this direction might psychologically affect the people and cause them to think that prices had really gone up. Needless alarm and panic are to be carefully guarded against.[101]

Opinion out of Toronto, the heartland of Anglo support for the Borden government, did not seem pleased with the government's lack of action. The state had moved to protect other sectors from the dislocations of war, such as banks and manufacturers. "Why," asked the *Toronto Globe*, "should it not see that the consumer of such a staple as bread is protected?"[102]

Price control was a touchy subject for a government whose economic philosophy encompassed traditional, *laissez-faire* principles. The classic economic theory espoused by the Borden Conservatives was based on nineteenth-century notions of a free-market, rather than centrally-directed economy. The emergency of war might, at times, call for special measures, but the overall approach was to maintain normalcy, and to keep government intervention to a bare minimum. Opponents of this approach routinely pointed out that tariffs and other national trade policies were, in essence, a form of government economic intervention; what then, was wrong with price controls? The problem was that the working of supply and demand was the fundamental base upon which the Canadian economy rested, and as David Edward Smith wrote "The price mechanism ... is basic to a free market economy and its alteration works a change on the whole system."[103] For the traditionally-minded Conservatives, the risks involved with price regulation were far too great, and, in 1915, conditions were in no way serious enough to prompt a radical modification of Canada's underlying economic policies.

By the fall of 1916, there was as yet no indication that Borden and his ministers were ready to countenance direct intervention in the economy, even when faced with mounting public concern over food prices and the lack of government action. The demand for an end to this inertia on the question of food prices nonetheless grew with every jump in the cost of living. Led by labour groups demanding government action to protect their interests, rather than *the* 'Interests,' the

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101 *Ottawa Citizen*, March 3, 1915, p. 12.

102 "The Consumer Needs Protection," (editorial), *Toronto Globe*, March 11, 1915, p. 4.

103 David Edward Smith, "Emergency Government in Canada and Australia 1914-1919: A Comparison," Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University, 1964, p. 92.

advance of wartime inflation gave rise to increasing militancy on the part of consumers. Groups such as the Consumer's League and the Trades and Labour Congress took the lead in advancing consumer concerns. David Monod's point that the fight against high food prices was led not by the working-class, but rather by civic leaders and 'skilled' blue-collar workers, is well-taken.[104] T.E. Bissell, a businessman from Elora, Ontario, wrote to Borden in October 1916, expressing his opinion that "the government should do more than has yet been attempted. The question of recruiting, and the high cost of flour and food stuffs, are becoming serious."[105] In his reply, Borden was surprisingly blunt, noting that the price of foodstuffs had recently been investigated by a committee of the Privy Council, but adding that unfortunately "few, if any practical suggestions were offered." Borden then reiterated his position on price controls, stating that while improper speculation could be combated, "it would be difficult to control prices which are based not upon the needs of Canada alone but upon the laws of supply and demand throughout the world, under extraordinary conditions."[106] Supply and demand continued to operate as the ideal system of price regulation, and one that the Canadian government was not going to abandon, even in the face of mounting pressure from consumers. But at innumerable grocery counters across the nation, the 'ideal' system had long since seemed to have stopped operating. Thanks to protesters like Mr. Bissell of Elora, the message was beginning to penetrate Ottawa's political status quo. Investigation, whether or not it resulted in any concrete action, was a sign that Canadian authorities were at least willing to look into some of the problems wrought by a malfunctioning wartime economy, and perhaps — should the war continue to intensify — they would also 'investigate' new methods of dealing with the new problems.

The first significant indication that the government was willing to bend, if not break, on this issue, came in November 1916. Upon the initiative of the Minister of Labour, Thomas Crothers, legislation was introduced "respecting the high cost of living." This anti-profiteering order,

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104 D. Monod, p. 130.

105 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 32129, T.E. Bissell to Borden, October 20, 1916. Bissell had been moved to write Borden after reading reports of Ontario Premier Hearst's speech to the Empire Club in Toronto, on October 16, 1916. Bissell may have been reacting to Hearst's comments that: "Many of us are following our daily avocations but little inconvenienced and little disturbed by the terrible conflict upon which not only the future of the British Empire, but the future happiness of the world depends. It is surely time that we took the war more seriously to heart even than we have yet done; and bend every energy and make every sacrifice that may be necessary."

106 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 32132, Borden to T.E. Bissell, October 30, 1916.

designed to curtail speculation, made it illegal to engage in business practices that would result in undue price increases of staple foods, or what were termed the "necessaries of life."[107] Under the terms of the law, no one was allowed to hold 'unreasonable' quantities of these items, and if found, the government could force the holder to sell the articles at a reasonable price. Since part of the legislation provided for an investigation to take place whenever unlawful price inflation was suspected, an "Acting Commissioner of the Cost of Living" was appointed, with full power to inquire into the transgressions. There were, however, some problems associated with this procedure. As Robert McFall, the Cost of Living Commissioner from 1918 to 1919, later reflected, there was so much delay built into the process of investigation that

> ... possible offenders were given every opportunity to prepare a showing to suit themselves or even to destroy or change records, and in no case was the public authority allowed to make a thorough investigation of any business bringing to light any and all matters found worth while as continues search progressed.[108]

As a result, during the Commission's three-year existence, only once was an offender actually prosecuted.[109] McFall laid the blame for this squarely on the shoulders of W.F. O'Connor, the first Cost of Living Commissioner and a convenient scapegoat for the situation since it was he who had drafted the legislation. The goal of the government in passing such regulations had been to "allay popular unrest" over rising costs, but according to McFall "it actually fomented trouble."[110]

An example of this 'trouble' soon erupted in the mining industry, as workers demanded wages that kept up with the increasing cost of living. On November 11, 1916, the day after PC 2777 was passed, Borden received a cable from the miners at Fernie, B.C., who threatened to strike if they did not receive a "war bonus of twenty-five percent," or, failing that, a committee to "investigate the increased cost of living," and to arrive at a suitable sum.[111] This labour unrest may have been just what the government had feared: by taking measures designed to deal with rising costs, it was

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107 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board papers, file 2, P.C. 2777 and 2957, November 10 and 29, 1916. The 'necessaries of life' referred to "a staple and ordinary article of food (whether fresh, preserved, canned, or otherwise treated). clothing and fuel."

108 Robert J. McFall, "Regulation of Business in Canada," *Political Science Quarterly* XXXVII (June 1922), p. 183. Interestingly, in this article McFall never refers to O'Connor by name, only as "the first commissioner."

109 Smith, pp. 93-94.

110 McFall, p. 184.

111 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 120205, William Graham, President of the Executive Board, District 15 — United Mine Workers of America, Fernie, B.C. to Borden, November 11, 1916.

admitting that a problem existed, and opening a door that perhaps was better left closed. Unfortunately, armed with outdated, peacetime notions of economic management, Ottawa was poorly equipped to deal with the situation. Other developments were politically ominous. A mass meeting on the high cost of living was held at Toronto's Massey Hall on November 29, 1916; it was presided over by populist Mayor Tommy Church and included an array of labour groups. Speakers derided the recently-passed government measures as being "half-baked."[112] Meeting delegates demanded, among other things, price controls, tariff reform, government investigations, a single tax, women's suffrage, and "elimination of the middleman, trusts and combines."[113] While investigation (such as that provided for in P.C. 2777) at least offered the government a chance to *appear* to be taking action on an issue, it was all too apparent that this alone would not placate public opinion — results were demanded. By 1917 it was clear that new and unfamiliar pressures had undermined the federal government's reliance on the same *laissez-faire* principles that had operated in peace time, leading to social and political discontent — these distressing outcomes showed that it was equally apparent a more aggressive, interventionist style of policy was needed to deal with the present economic realities.

Conclusion

As 1916 ended, Canadians were faced with increasingly ominous conditions, on both the battlefield and on the home front. The early enthusiasm that had led to an overflow of recruits and a raft of well-meaning 'war gifts' had gradually ebbed away, dampened by unending casualty lists and rampant wartime inflation. Initial calls to support the war effort had been made on the basis of duty to Canada and the Empire, but they had also been accompanied by appeals to personal gain. Agricultural producers and some food processors were indeed finding that the business of war could be a profitable, if distasteful, pursuit. Retailers, caught between high prices and consumer anger, tried to deflect the blame elsewhere. The government, eager to conduct the war on the basis of *laissez-faire* economic principles for as long as possible, implemented a few, generally ineffective measures, trusting to the belief that 'supply and demand' would continue to regulate prices as it had in peacetime. Meanwhile, consumers were bearing the brunt of the dislocated markets and

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112 "Cost of Living Order a Half-Baked Measure," *Toronto Globe*, November 29, 1916, p. 1.

113 Ibid.

intensified demand for foodstuffs brought by the war. While wages had increased, any gains were eroded by the high cost of living, contributing to labour unrest. As the strains of war began to enervate the average citizen, the money allegedly being made by retailers, wholesalers, processors, and even farmers, took on an increasingly malignant character in many eyes. Consumers were paying more for staple food commodities, and as prices continued to rise, suspicion boiled over into a certainty that this was the fault of a selfish triumvirate made up of 'the profiteer,' 'the speculator' and 'the middleman.' This discontent held a real kernel of danger for Borden, who needed the domestic political capital necessary to fulfill Canada's commitments to the Allies; failure to address problems on the homefront might adversely affect the nation's ability to meet overseas needs. Still, as difficult as the first two- and-a-half years of war had been, 1917 and 1918 would prove to be the challenging proving ground for new means to control the efficiency and equitability of the food supply system as a lifeline of a modern society locked in total war, leading to unprecedented levels of state control and economic intervention that would have been undreamed of in 1914.

Chapter Four
'Once More Canada Must Stand in the Gap':
The Inception of Wartime Food Regulation in Canada

Introduction: 'A Drastic Measure'

In the words of Canadian historian W.L. Morton, 1917 was "the critical year of our century during which any return to the old world became impossible and the new world in which we were henceforth to live began to unfold."[1] Prior to this, it was as if the full impact of the war had been dormant. Some Canadians spent the first part of the war largely isolated from the 'immediacy' of the conflict, perhaps lulling themselves into a state of benign complacency. Undoubtedly, those with loved ones on the front lines felt the anxieties of war more sharply than those who did not. The war, which for others had thus far been a distant, amorphous phenomenon, would strike much closer to home as this pivotal year unfolded. Morton, a schoolboy in rural Manitoba during the war years, recalled that by 1917 "everyone knew the magnitude of the struggle and the difficulty of victory." During the spring of that year, Germany's renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare, the Russian collapse, and a series of disciplinary troubles within the French forces all brought the intensity of the war to a new and alarming level. On the home front, the seemingly incessant rise in the cost of living shocked consumers, and led to public demands for state regulation of food and food prices. At the Imperial level, the British came to the realization that increased support from the Dominions, in the form of food and men, would be unavoidable. In this vein, in February Robert Borden left Canada to attend the Imperial War Conference in London, an opportunity that the Prime Minister termed "an immense privilege."[2]

The Canadian presence would prove to be a shrewd move on the part of canny British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, as Borden would return to Canada imbued with a heightened sense of commitment and purpose, as well as a new willingness to employ hitherto *verboten* compulsory

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1 W.L. Morton, "Furrow's End," *Journal of Canadian Studies* (Fall 1986), p. 25.

2 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. II, 1969, p. 63.

measures. Historians have traditionally pointed to conscription as the most direct evidence of this. Other measures, however, were taken upon Borden's return that also demonstrate the impact of his overseas visit on other aspects of managing the domestic war effort. Within six weeks, Canadians would have controllers for food, fuel, and grain, an outcome that suggests a seismic shift in the attitude of the government, which had heretofore been reluctant to intervene in the domestic economy. If Borden's new approach towards state economic policy was prompted by conditions to which he had been privy overseas, it was also in alignment with the current of Canadian public opinion. A torrent of petitions, calling for various forms of economic regulation, including a food controller, greeted the Prime Minister upon his return in May. The major difference was that the public demand for food control was motivated largely by dislocations in the domestic economy, which had caused the intense rise in the cost of living. Significantly, Borden's principal consideration of supporting Allied supply levels seemed to be only a secondary concern for many beleaguered Canadian consumers.

The engrained trust in *laissez-faire* and patriotic exhortation as a basis for ensuring an adequate domestic supply and steady exports had exhausted itself by 1917. By appointing a food controller in June 1917, the government finally recognized that conditions had reached a level where it was now feasible to use the power of the state to modify the food consumption habits of Canadians. Public opinion on this issue made this move to state management of food politically attractive. The words and actions of William J. Hanna, the man initially charged with marshalling Canada's food supply in the service of war, strongly indicate that the government was not, however, prepared to embrace the price control measures urged by some members of the public. Unfortunately for the government, Canadians, for the seven-month duration of Hanna's term as Food Controller, were under the impression that 'food control' and 'price control' were in fact synonymous. Most government efforts to counter this misconception were weak and ineffective. It is therefore impossible to separate Canada's first foray into wartime food regulation from the broader issue of the high cost of living, since the two were conflated in the minds of most citizens; this was a confusion that inexorably led to ill-will between Canadians and the Food Controller's Office. Expectation had been high that Hanna would use the powers conferred upon him to set maximum prices on staples such as bread, meat, and sugar, a move that he steadfastly refused to

make. This first national attempt at food regulation would thus be hampered by the failure of the Food Controller to position food control as a war measure, and to combat the serious public misperception of the ultimate goal of his department. In short, the Borden cabinet saw food control as a broad war policy, while the average Canadian expected it to be a narrower instrument of controlling soaring food costs. Unfortunately, under William J. Hanna, these two attitudes never intersected.

The Development of Canada's Wartime Food Regulation, January-June 1917

One of the primary factors that kept the Conservatives in Ottawa relatively inactive on the food front prior to 1917 was the fact that Britain did not move to control its own food supply until December 1916. The traditional view of Britain's handling of the food question contends that between 1914 and 1916 the government was reluctant to impose any rigid controls on the food supply. Under the torpid direction of Prime Minister H.H. Asquith, Britain's food had been subject only to indiscriminate regulation, with a few committees set up which sought to direct the supply of certain commodities, such as sugar and wheat. In 1916, increased shipping losses, a drop in its own domestic agricultural production, and a serious decline in food stocks, coupled with an increasingly dismal military outlook, finally prompted the British government to enact food control measures. Another key element that explains this change in policy was the fact that David Lloyd George, Britain's newly-installed Prime Minister, was far more amenable to the imposition of the assertive measures needed to win the war. "The established order," he later wrote in his *War Memoirs,* "reacts slowly and reluctantly to the appearance of an unexpected factor," concluding that "The food question ultimately decided the war."[3] More recent scholarship has been more charitable to Asquith, demonstrating that under his stewardship the groundwork was laid for the much stricter food regulation that was eventually passed.[4] In addition, Lloyd George may not have had much choice in the matter. By November 22 the city of London's wheat stocks had dwindled to only a two-day

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3 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, vol. III (London, 1934), p. 1269.

4 Barnett, *British Food Policy*, p. 90.

supply, an indication of the overall gravity of the situation.[5] The pressures of the time clearly called for a more methodical approach to wartime food regulation.

Under Lloyd George's direction, the creation of the Ministry of Food was authorized on December 22, 1916, and four days later, Lord Devonport, a wealthy wholesale grocer, was appointed Britain's first Food Controller.[6] Devonport's mandate was to "regulate the supply and consumption of food and to take such steps as he thinks best for maintaining a proper supply of food and to take such steps as he thinks best for encouraging the production of food."[7] Unfortunately, as Margaret Barnett points out, the new Food Controller's powers were not ample enough to carry this out. Working under the Board of Trade, he lacked the authority to requisition foodstuffs, and as sugar, wheat and meat were controlled by other, separate bodies, he could not implement effective price controls on these important commodities.[8] Still, for Britain, a nation whose food supply was inherently precarious, the creation of the position was an important capitulation, a recognition of the need to jettison old norms, and to embrace new methods. Devonport would be followed by Food Controllers who, once the wrinkles had been ironed out of the system, were much more effective.

In Canada, where the authorities had largely been content to follow the British lead in most war matters, no immediate need to enact corresponding measures was felt by the ruling Tories. This continued vacillation prompted MP William Cockshutt to remind the House (and his party) of their failure to pass his 1915 motion calling for government control of the Canadian food supply. On January 24, 1917, six days after the new Parliamentary session had opened, he reiterated his theory on the linkage between exports and prices, noting that food control measures of various sorts had been enacted in Australia, India, several European countries, and now in Great Britain.[9] Cockshutt understood the government's hesitancy, this was, after all, "a drastic measure." That being said, the

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5 Ibid., p. xv.

6 Beveridge, p. 33. Other British ministries created at the same time included the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Shipping.

7 Ibid.

8 Barnett, *British Food Policy*, p. 100. Wheat and sugar were controlled by Royal Commissions, while meat came under the purview of the Board of Trade.

9 *Debates of the House of Commons*, January 24, 1917, p. 107.

times called for such actions — "We are at war," he noted, "and we must adopt war measures." Cockshutt's seemingly simplistic interpretation of the food question was reflective of one idea popular in Canada at the time — that the nation's increased exports were a direct cause of high domestic food prices. "All we have to do to regulate prices," he stated simply, "is to prevent too much of our food going out of the country." Cockshutt's argument, emblematic of a certain prevailing view, indicates that the issue of supplying the Allies was becoming associated with the rising cost of living, a potentially dangerous trend. This was not in line with the realities of war — Britain and the Allies needed increasing amounts of food to exit Canada, not less. This type of reasoning could prove hazardous if the war was to continue for any length of time; countering it would involve changing the way Canadians conceptualized the country's food contributions. Canada's food exports needed to be seen as part of the country's sacrificial duty, on par with her sacrifices on the battlefield.

Robert Borden, who on February 14, 1917 left Canada to attend the Imperial War Conference in London, may not have been fully aware of the extent of Britain's domestic food problems until he arrived in that country. Reading the reports of shortages could not possibly convey the same sense of urgency as actually witnessing them first hand. Hindsight reveals that the invitation was a pragmatic move on the part of Lloyd George, as war-weary Britain needed a futher commitment from her resource-rich Dominions.[10] Borden was to be in Britain until May 5, and perhaps his experience overseas filled him with a new sense of just what the war entailed, for upon his return, compulsion and a new regulatory impetus would replace voluntarism and exhortation as the basis upon which the Canadian war effort would be conducted. In all fairness, the relative naïveté which marked Borden's outlook prior to his trip may not have been entirely the Prime Minister's fault. As Robert Craig Brown pointed out in his biography of Borden, the amount of information passed on to the Canadian government by the British was "disgracefully inadequate." This lack of communication inevitably coloured the Prime Minister's view of the war effort. In January, 1917, Borden confided to his diary his naive belief in the superiority of Allied strength, as

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10 George L. Cook, "Sir Robert Laird Borden, Lloyd George and British Military Policy, 1917-1918," *Historical Journal* XIV (2, 1971), p. 371.

well as his hope that peace would finally arrive in 1917.[11]

Distance and a paucity of solid information from Imperial officials thus left the Dominion (and its leaders) in a state of guileless optimism. For the most part, Borden had to rely on press reports, routine diplomatic dispatches, and "a flood of uninformed rumours and occasional insights of unofficial Canadian observers in London."[12] One such observer was Sanford Evans, who on February 1, 1917 reported on the seriousness of the submarine campaign and its effects on the British food supply. "...[T]he only effective measure against the growing submarine menace," he informed Borden, "is that Canada (and the United States) should produce during this year, and for the term of the war, every abundance of essential foodstuffs of which it is capable."[13] Historians have noted that upon his arrival in London, Borden's realization of the true scale of the war was "sudden, violent, and complete."[14] He also learned that Britain was relying on her Dominions to put forth every effort; Lloyd George's "asset-stripping" of the Empire — in order to bring about victory — had begun.[15] Thus, Borden's attendance at the Imperial War Conference, it can be argued, opened the Prime Minister's eyes to wartime realities, accounting for the shift toward a centrally-directed war effort based more on the principle of compulsion than that of voluntarism.

In February, R.B. Bennett, head of the National Service Board, embarked on a speaking tour through the western provinces. He asked the London-bound Borden to secure a statement from the British affirming their need for Canadian cereals, as well as confirmation of the fact that they were "relying upon us for food products."[16] Bennett got his reply, but it came over a month after his original request, and was too late to be of any use during his western trip. Borden cabled that "After *careful inquiry and necessary conference* I am assured that the British Government place great

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11 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. I, 1969, p. 57.

12 Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography*, vol. II, p. 73.

13 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 122690, W. Sanford Evans to Robert Borden, February 1, 1917. Evans was the chairman of the Georgian Bay Canal Commission at this time.

14 W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, 1918-1929, vol. I: Problems of Nationality, 1918-1937* (London, 1952), p. 64.

15 Robert Holland, "The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p. 125.

16 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 89084, R.B. Bennett to Borden, February 14, 1917.

reliance upon the Canadian wheat crop of the coming season and that they consider it exceedingly important that the production shall be as large as possible."[17] Thanks in no small measure to the poor quality of Canada's 1916 wheat yield, Britain was suffering from some of the worst food shortages that they had yet seen.[18] Accordingly, they took this opportunity to inform Borden of their 'hierarchy' of food needs. Not surprisingly, this list of "essential food supplies from Canada" was headed by wheat, flour, and oatmeal, followed by those old export standbys of "bacon, ham and cheese."[19] The same products, the same needs — but greater demand, and far greater urgency.

During his stay overseas, Borden sent back numerous dispatches and orders dealing with various aspects of the food situation, insofar as they pertained to Canada's ability to alleviate British conditions. Britain, Borden had discovered, was in dire need of dairy products, and was hoping to "secure the entire export of ascertainable supplies [of] Canadian cheese during [the] coming season."[20] After overcoming the reservations of Martin Burrell, months of cross-Atlantic negotiations resulted in the appointment of a special commission. In May, the British Board of Trade finally struck a deal with the Canadian government, and arranged to purchase all of Canada's cheese surplus at a fixed rate of 21¾ cents.[21] By the end of the year, Canada had not only shipped 155,062,463 pounds of cheese to Britain, but had also financed the purchase by extending $40 million in loans to the British.[22] This proved to be a boon for British consumers, as securing the cheddar at a fixed price allowed the Ministry of Food to control the retail cost of cheese, making it the only staple food whose price actually dropped between April and July, 1917.[23] Canadian foodstuffs were helping to control food prices in the United Kingdom, while at home they continued to rise.

While the cautious language used in many of these dispatches might suggest that Canadian

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17 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 89125, Borden to R.B. Bennett, March 19, 1917. Italics added.

18 Britnell and Fowke, p. 39.

19 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 89127, Walter Long to Borden, March 19, 1917.

20 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 35381, Borden to Acting Prime Minister, March 1, 1917.

21 Documents detailing the cheese saga can be found in the Borden Papers, NAC, especially pp. 35381, 35397, 35534, 35544, 35550. Britain also purchased cheese from New Zealand and Australia. *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 378.

22 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 378.

23 Barnett, *British Food Policy*, p. 119.

officials still needed British reassurance that Canada's food contributions were not only welcomed, but necessary, Bennett was one politician who believed that the nation's agricultural contributions were as important to the war effort (if not more so) as its military assistance. In March, 1917, Bennett wrote a long memo to Borden, summing up the impressions he gained on his swing through the prairies. Of particular importance is the fact that Bennett firmly believed that victory would ultimately hinge on maximizing the productive capacity of Canada's western provinces. He had also become convinced that this could only be realized if adequate numbers of labourers were left on the farm. To this end, Bennett strongly urged Borden that "Not a man should be taken from the three prairie provinces under existing conditions."[24]

The cost of living, which had reached alarming heights in 1916, continued its upward march in early 1917. At the same time, the food situation overseas was beginning to deteriorate, raising questions as to the proper role Canadians should play in fortifying the increasingly unsatisfactory Allied food supply. To some, it was galling to note that Canadian food was subsidizing British food prices. To others, the fact that Canadians continued to grouse about food prices while their partners overseas were struggling to secure enough food to feed their populations, as well as the armies in the field, seemed self-centered. The *Canadian Grocer* alluded to the incongruity of the situation when it commented that

> France is shortly to pass a regulation whereby restaurants will be obliged to serve only two dishes at each meal. Britons are eating their two-course meals and saying nothing. In Canada our menu is limited only by our pocketbook and our appetite, yet we are making the Welkin Ring with our sorrowness over the high cost of living.[25]

Food retailers were no doubt tiring of customer complaints, as well as the mounting level of hostility being levelled at their profession, viewed increasingly in an extortionate light. "How much are eggs?," asked the "Cautious Customer" in one contemporary joke. "How much have you got?," replied the "Grasping Grocer."[26] While grocers may not have seen the grim humour in such a jape, consumers, for their part, were tiring of incessant price hikes, increases that seemed out of place in a

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24 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 89155, R.B. Bennett to Borden, March 14, 1917.

25 *Canadian Grocer*, February 2, 1917, p. 24.

26 "Humour of the Hour," *Toronto Globe*, May 10, 1917, p. 6.

country whose agrarian capacity allowed it to produce, and export, vast amounts of foodstuffs.

Consumers were not the only ones puzzled by the price increases; theories as to the cause of and solution to rampant inflation were proposed and debated by academics, politicians, and businessmen. The demands being placed on Canada's food supply due to the war (which would only increase as the conflict dragged on) were undoubtedly at the root of the problem, but how could this be assuaged? For their part, the government continued to insist that price controls were not necessary, and further, that such measures would not be welcomed by Canadians.[27] Taking advantage of popular anger and suspicion, the Opposition insisted otherwise, and attacked the government's inaction by drawing on the worst fears of the consuming public. In March, the Central Liberal Information Office issued a pamphlet whose title "High Cost of Living — Government Dormant — Profiteering Rampant — Combines Unmolested — The Poor Suffer — The Rich Fatter" fairly sums up the Liberals' position on the issue.[28] The pamphlet decried the largely investigatory actions taken by the Borden government to deal with the cost of living since 1914, judging them to be woefully inadequate and concluding that "The consumer has little to hope, and the middleman and profiteer little to fear from the government's elaborate bluff at dealing with the high cost of living."[29] For some it was all too clear whom the Tories were interested in protecting — and it was not the workingman.

In Borden's absence, the Conservatives struggled gamely to keep the Opposition at bay, but with lackluster results. With some foresight, J.K. Foran suggested to Wilfrid Laurier that he make use of the issue for political gain, by moving for the creation of a "Food Control Board," which, in Foran's words, would be "the most popular move in Canada to-day."[30] While Laurier did not propose such a motion, the Liberals continued to enjoin the Tories in heated debates on the cost of living. Not long after Foran made his suggestion, the Minister of Labour, Thomas Crothers, found himself on the receiving end of an Opposition barrage in the House of Commons, regarding food

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27 *Canadian Grocer*, March 23, 1917, p. 28.

28 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 41057, "High Cost of Living," (pamphlet) Central Liberal Information Office, Ottawa, March 1917.

29 Ibid.

30 NAC, Laurier Papers, p. 195246, J.K. Foran to Wilfrid Laurier, April 13, 1917.

costs. The Liberals wanted to know if, apart from the anti-profiteering legislation passed in November, 1916 and the subsequent appointment of W.F. O'Connor as Cost of Living Commissioner, any "practical steps" had been taken to address the problem.[31] Crothers managed, on this particular occasion, to sidestep the issue, but the Liberals clung tenaciously to the question, seizing opportunities to berate the government for its mishandling of the domestic economy. On May 3, 1917, a heated debate occurred in Parliament over the fixing of flour prices. "The government," reported the *Toronto Star*, "leaderless and drifting, seems to have struck a snag in the food question, struck it good and hard in the Commons last night, when one leading supporter, W.F. Cockshutt of Brantford, broke squarely from his party."[32] Cockshutt, Parliament's stormy petrel of food control, had finally reached his limit. His party's steadfast refusal to take command of the cost of living crisis — for crisis it had become — forced him into the political wilderness.

Wartime inflation had become a global phenomenon by 1917, affecting most countries, irrespective of their status; belligerent and neutral alike suffered from international dislocations in both production and distribution. In early March the *Canadian Grocer*, a kind of harbinger as far the food situation went, endorsed Stephen Leacock's view that increased food production was the only way to "avoid national and world disaster." Calling the professor "a voice crying in the wilderness," the editors of the *Grocer* thought that his was an accurate assessment of global food conditions.[33] As shortages grew, the availability and price of food gave rise to sporadic outbreaks of unrest and violence around the world. In what is probably the best-known example, in March [February] 1917, housewives, calling for bread, took to the streets of St. Petersburg and precipitated what would become the Russian Revolution. As 1917 wore on, even countries 'of plenty,' such as the United States and Australia, were also the scene of riots and violence, triggered by the high food prices and scarcity.[34] Clearly, this was a vital issue that no country, even one as seemingly placid as

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31 *Debates of the House of Commons*, April 23, 1917, p. 695.

32 "Food Question Put Hard Up to the Ottawa Government," *Toronto Star*, May 4, 1917, p. 5.

33 *Canadian Grocer*, March 2, 1917, p. 26.

34 See Judith Smart, "Feminists, Food, and the Fair Price: The Cost of Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August-September 1917," *Labour History* 50 (1986): 113-131, and William Frieburger, "War Prosperity and Hunger: The New York Food Riots of 1917," *Labor History* 25 (2, 1985): pp. 217-239.

Canada, could ignore. Even if violent protests were to be avoided, food costs and shortages could have a dangerously adverse effect on civilian morale.

In Canada, 1917 was a particularly inflationary year. The cost of living index, which had stood at 88.1 in 1916, rose to an alarming 104.3 in 1917, and the numbers for food alone were no less grave: 103.5 in 1916 jumped to 133.7 one year later.[35] As these conditions on the home front deteriorated, vague demands for government action began to become more focused. The spring of 1917 was marked by a rising crescendo of voices that, cutting across the barriers of politics and class, called for a 'food controller,' and in some cases, a 'food dictator,' whose primary purpose would be to keep food prices down — patriotic motives in the form of war service seemed almost an afterthought. One can argue that the appointment of such an official in Britain caused the idea of a Canadian counterpart to germinate. Inflation at home and food shortages overseas made the appointment of a food controller seem both natural and pragmatic, a move that could perhaps resolve several problems at once. Yet another precedent had taken place closer to home. While the launch of the U.S. Food Administration would not officially take place until August, 1917, upon its entry into the war, the U.S. immediately assigned to businessman Herbert Hoover the important task of overseeing the vast American food supply.[36] The federal Liberals, as we have seen, had for some time been strongly urging the government to take a more active role in regulating the food system. All of these factors, combined with the undertow of concern over prices, promoted the formation of a cohesive body of opinion in Canada, one which deemed the appointment of a food controller to be in Canada's best interests.

Another factor that cannot go unmentioned pertains to food conditions in Britain. Under Lord Devonport, a voluntary ration scheme, with an emphasis on saving bread and meat, had been introduced, backed up with the 'threat' that, should this fail, the government would have no choice but to enact compulsory methods.[37] Articles and reports by overseas correspondents, such as "How John Bull is Tightening His Belt," in the much-read *Saturday Night*, informed Canadians of the

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35 Urquhart and Buckley, Series J139-146, Cost of Living Index, 1913-1952, p. 304.

36 Nash, pp. 4-5.

37 Beveridge, p. 34.

visible changes taking place in how the British approached mealtime.[38] In one example, *Saturday Night* featured a report by correspondent Lacey Amy which looked at the impact that the "submarine piracy" was having on Britain. Restrictions had been placed on public meals, meaning that in the U.K., dining out had become an uncertain affair, for "It may be a potatoless or a meatless day and the sole you had yesterday may be so deeply crossed out as to prophesy its absence for a week. ... the waiter and you perform a little mental exercise in determining what the food regulations allow. And you leave stimulated in mind, and not debilitated by overfeeding."[39] Reports of this nature not only gave Canadians a sense of conditions overseas, but for those astute enough to read between the lines, it also held out little hope for any improvement in the near future. Ironically, within five months restaurant-goers in Canada would also be performing the same 'mental exercises' needed to figure out what, exactly, they too could have for dinner. Taken together, these factors gave Canadians ample reason to expect that their government would (and should) impose some type of regulatory control over the country's increasingly valuable food resources.

In early May, the strongly Liberal *Toronto Globe* chastised the still-absent Borden for "prancing about on Imperial hobby horses" while in Canada "the conduct of the war goes from bad to worse."[40] The march of high prices continued as the dislocations in the world's food supply worsened. German U-boats were causing havoc on the high seas, turmoil that trickled down to the Canadian consumer. Allied and neutral shipping losses for 1917 were staggering: 3,660,054 British tons were sunk, with most going down between February and August. In particular, the figures for April 1917 reveal the seriousness of the situation at its peak, for more British tons were lost that month (526,447) than all American wartime shipping losses combined.[41] "The spectre of famine is threatening the whole world and the submarine menace is growing," wrote author Lucy Maud Montgomery in her journal, also in May, 1917. "Prices," she continued, "are now terrible. Potatoes

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38 "How John Bull is Tightening His Belt," *Saturday Night*, May 19, 1917, p. 2.

39 Lacey Amy, "Looking Facts in the Face: How the British People are Meeting Submarine Piracy," *Ibid.*, April 21, 1917, p. 2.

40 "The Business of Government," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, May 5, 1917, p. 5.

41 Salter, pp. 355-359. According to the figures given by Salter, the United States lost 339,069 tons of merchant shipping between 1914 and 1918.

are four dollars a bag and may soon not be obtainable at any price. We allow ourselves a ration of *five* a day. Did I ever dream I should come to that with *potatoes*."[42] Inflationary conditions in the domestic economy were taking their toll across Canadian society. As one of Canada's most celebrated and best-selling authors, this was obviously not the voice of one dealing with abject, or even nominal, poverty. Yet the growing cost and scarcity of food was clearly worrisome to Montgomery, who in the passage quoted above seems fairly shocked that the price of such a staple (and under normal conditions ample) commodity as potatoes should have risen to such a degree. Toronto's potato shortage was acute enough to prompt the Reverend Byron Stauffer, of the Bond Street Congregational Church, to even suggest that Woodbine race track should be plowed up, and seeded with the vegetable.[43] Everywhere one looked in the spring of 1917, food — or its scarcity — was on the nation's mind.

If relatively well-to-do figures such as Montgomery were feeling the pinch of high prices, then one can well imagine the challenges faced by those of lesser means in meeting their daily food requirements. Unemployment, rampant at the beginning of the war, had virtually disappeared, and workers were earning wages far higher than in prewar days; this, however, was offset by the steadily advancing cost of living.[44] As Barbara Wilson has suggested, "in 1917 money was no guarantee of comfort."[45] Scholars have debated the hard issue of 'real wages,' and the erosion of purchasing power during this period,[46] but the fact remains that rising food prices created an *atmosphere* of anxiety and mistrust — one that would eventually bedevil Canada's early food control efforts. The public 'campaign' for food regulation reached its peak in May, 1917, after Borden's return from

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42 Lucy Maud Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery, Vol. II: 1910-1921* (Toronto, 1987), p. 216. Italics in original.

43 "Plow Up Woodbine and Raise Potatoes," *Toronto Globe*, May 7, 1917, p. 7.

44 "Wages Have Gone Up, and the Hours Climb — But the Cost of Living Has Been Climbing in the Wartime," *Toronto Star*, May 5, 1917, p. 14.

45 B. Wilson, p. ix.

46 See Eleanor Bartlett; Michael J. Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921* (Ottawa, 1979), and Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto, 1974) argued strongly that real wages declined during this period, that any gains made by the working class were eroded by the advancing cost of living.

London. Unsurprisingly, the conscription issue would dominate the headlines and political discourse of the time, greatly overshadowing the concurrent debate that occurred over the feasibility and necessity of food control. Still, the food question was a considerable issue in its own right, and one which engaged the minds — and stomachs — of many, as documented by the spate of articles that appeared in the press, as well as in a series of appeals that were sent to the Prime Minister, all addressing the need to enact some means of food regulation.

In early May, the *Globe* reported that following the British example, the Canadian government was likely to appoint either a food controller or a food commission.[47] This proved a tad premature, but public feeling that such a position *should* be created was certainly running high. Throughout May and June 1917, organizations from across Canada, including municipal councils, trade and labour groups, patriotic leagues, women's clubs, and professional associations, all passed resolutions calling on the government to regulate food *and* food prices. The first of these began to trickle in even before Borden had sailed from Britain. On May 2, the Duncan, British Columbia, Board of Trade summed up prevailing sentiment when it asked that the Dominion government "follow the example of the Mother Country and the United States of America" and "institute a Food Controller to the end that speculation and the rapid rise in all food products may be stopped, and the food reserves of the country be regulated and applied to the best advantage in assisting the Allies to win the war."[48] Larger municipalities, such as Winnipeg, Victoria, and Toronto also passed similar motions that were duly passed on to the Prime Minister. The Winnipeg City Council, for one, went straight to the heart of the matter in its petition, stating that in view of the "almost prohibitive prices now being asked for even such food stuffs as are the necessaries of life, and in the belief that the food situation in Canada will shortly reach an acute stage," they urged the government to mobilize Canada's food supplies, and to institute a body which would regulate prices.[49]

Labour groups and unions also set forth their own positions regarding the food situation. The members of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union of Toronto expressed their displeasure at the

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47 "Government Control of Food," *Toronto Globe*, May 5, 1917, p. 5.

48 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102308, Duncan, B.C. Board of Trade to Borden, May 5, 1917.

49 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102315, Winnipeg City Council to Borden, May 16, 1917.

apparent discontinuity that prevailed in Canada, a land with seemingly vast food stocks and irrationally high prices. In order to remedy this situation, the Union called upon the government to "immediately appoint a food controller with a view of alleviating the conditions which now prevail."[50] The St. John Trades and Labour council used stronger language in its petition, claiming that the "enormous increase in the cost of living" had produced "severe hardship among the citizens of St. John, with the prospects of many coming to the verge of starvation." They further "emphatically" demanded that "the federal government immediately take measures to mobilize all food supplies, and place same under the direct control of a representative federal commission with power to set a *maximum price* based on the cost of production."[51] The Moose Jaw TLC, voicing similar concerns, urged the appointment of a "food dictator,"[52] while the South Waterloo District TLC, opposed to conscription unless wealth was conscripted as well, was also pro-food control.[53]

Various other organizations passed resolutions along the same lines, such as the Patriotic Committee of Northumberland, New Brunswick.[54] The Victoria Conservative Association wanted the government to appoint a food controller to fix food prices, "without loss of time," while the Central Committee of the Toronto Ratepayers' Association "deemed it advisable" that such a post be established, with the stipulation that the interests of the appointee should not be "likely to conflict in any way with the interest of the public."[55] Another interesting petition came from the Baptist Pastors of Montreal, who expressed their "disapproval" of the "unjust conditions" that had resulted from the high cost of living. Calling the high cost of living "a menacing burden to the people who have so finely sacrificed for the welfare of our own Christian Civilization," the pastors

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50 William Brown, Secretary, Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, Toronto to Borden, May 17, 1917, Borden Papers, NAC, pg. 102326.

51 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102334, St. John Trades and Labour Council to Borden, May 18, 1917.

52 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102368, Moose Jaw Trades and Labour Council to Borden, May 23, 1917.

53 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 42274, South Waterloo District Trades and Labour Council to Borden, May 31, 1917.

54 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102362, Borden to E.P. Williston, Patriotic Committee of Northumberland West, May 23, 1917.

55 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102379, William F. Ralph, Secretary Treasurer, Central Committee of Ratepayers' Association (Toronto) to Borden, May 26, 1917.

also urged the government to keep food prices down.[56]

Women's groups also sent various appeals for food regulation to the Prime Minister. The Women's Wartime Thrift Committee of Toronto, one such group whose motto was "Thrift for our country's sake," believed that "the people of Canada, and especially the women of Canada, are ready to submit to all proper restraints in connection with the consumption and work of food which may be imposed by the government speaking with Canada wide knowledge and adequate authority." Housewives, the committee believed, were unlikely to grasp the need to save food "whilst there is no restraint whatever in hotels, restaurants, dining cars, public dinners and the like where waste is largest and most public."[57] In a similar vein, the London Mothers' Club called for "a National Food Controller or National Food Commission." In a thoughtful petition, the group laid out a cogent plan which included several practical measures which would eventually be undertaken, or at least considered, by the federal government.[58] These petitions, only a small sample of the many that were sent to the Prime Minister, are a reflection of how severe the situation had become, and how the notion of 'food control' had taken root in the minds of Canadians. The issue of food and its cost and availability had thus become a touchstone of discontent that served to bind Canadians of all classes and regions in the spring of 1917. Most of these appeals came from middle-class groups and the ranks of skilled labour, and were sent in by average Canadians, with typical bourgeois conceptions of politics and the economy, who were attending meetings, exchanging concerns, and voting —

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56 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102355, Rev. Arthur St. James, St. Paul's Baptist Church to Borden, May 22, 1917.

57 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 81518, L.A. Gurnett, Corresponding Secretary, Women's Wartime Thrift Committee of Toronto to Borden, May 8, 1917.

58 NAC, Borden Papers, pp. 102405-102408, L. Hughes, President, London Mothers' Club to Borden, June 5, 1917. Their list of proposed duties for a food controller ran as follows: "1-- To fix and control food and fuel prices where desirable. 2-- To control the distribution of food and fuel where desirable. 3-- To encourage and protect the producers by guaranteeing minimum prices for food products. 4-- To compel holders of necessities to reduce them in amounts ensuring equitable distribution. 5-- To take immediate measures to ensure an adequate supply of seed of all kinds for 1918. 6-- To require railroads to give preference to the movement of necessities. 7-- To investigate the wholesale slaughter of calves and young lambs at present going on jeopardizing the future supply of beef and mutton. 8-- To impose limitations or possibilities upon the use of sugar and other foodstuffs in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages. 9-- To limit, if necessary as a war measure, the manufacture of ice cream in order to ensure an adequate supply of butter, milk and cheese at a reasonable price."

overwhelmingly in favour — for resolutions pleading with the government to take action, to accept that the time had come for greater state involvement. From this perspective, the issue of food had become politicized as it never had before in Canadian history.

These petitions are merely one way of gauging the extent to which this had become a vital issue for many Canadians of the time, but the clamor for food regulation emanated from other quarters as well, and took on a less parochial character. W.E. Rundle, of the Ontario Organization of Resources Committee, cited a recent report which showed that the world's grain supply was deficient by some 150 million bushels, concluding from this that it was in fact Canada's inescapable duty to appoint a Food Controller.[59] When asked by the *Globe* whether Canada would encounter difficulties in feeding its own population, Rundle replied that this notion was "absurd." "Canada's immediate duty," he contended, did "not end with supplying food to those within his own territory. We have a duty to see that our soldiers in France and England, as well as the civilian population of the Motherland and our Allies, do not want for food, and thus add hunger to the sacrifices they are making for us."[60] Voluntary rationing movements sprung up, another indication perhaps that Canadians were indeed ready for the imposition of state food control. These groups included one so-called 'League to Save Food,' whose members argued that "pies and pastry must go. Excessive eating must be fought and finished just as excessive drinking has been disposed of."[61] Clearly notions of patriotic obligation, rather than weight-loss, were behind these campaigns against immoderate eating — making sacrifices at the table was one way everyone could help the war effort. These exhortations, however, remained overshadowed by calls for food control that were based on more primal personal concerns, and out of the fear engendered by soaring expenses.

As May 1917 continued, calls demanding the government take decisive action grew daily. The government set forth no exceptionally cogent arguments against food policies rooted in *laissez-faire*, preferring, it seemed, to leave it to the more vocal academics to defend its inclination. The University of Toronto's James Mavor, a political economist of international repute, argued that the

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59 "Canada Should Have a Food Controller," *Canadian Grocer*, May 11, 1917, p. 34.

60 "Canada Should Have Food Controller at Once," *Toronto Globe*, May 7, 1917, p. 8.

61 "Ban Pies and Pastry — League to Save Food — One Man Makes Vow Against Pies," *Toronto Star*, May 8, 1917, p. 7. See also "Campaign Against Excessive Eating," *Toronto Globe*, May 8, 1917, p. 3.

three components fundamental to the proper functioning of food control (control of labour, rationing, and price regulation) were unfeasible in Canada.[62] Mavor was perhaps one of the few who could appear to offer arguments grounded in solid economic theory. On May 18, the *Toronto Star* nonetheless reported that the government was about to name a food controller, and the man reputedly set to be Canada's first 'food dictator' was, oddly enough, Joseph Flavelle.[63] These reports prompted Sanford Evans who, by his own admission, had spent the better part of two years studying the food issue, to offer his assistance.[64] Borden informed Evans that the press reports were "purely conjecture as 9/10 of such announcements are," and that the government had not in fact found the time to deal with the subject of food control.[65] Yet, in a telegram sent the day before to Colonial Secretary Walter Long, the government had stated that it had indeed been "considering the food situation and advanced prices in the Dominion."[66] Indications are that, while it was not the main object of government preoccupation, the issue of food was beginning to force its way up the legislative agenda.

Domestic appeals for food regulation, largely arising out of, and concerning homefront conditions, seemingly went unheeded. Would Borden, anxious to demonstrate Canada's worth and to strengthen the nation's place within the Empire, react differently to Imperial entreaties? In an era of total war, food had entered the lexicon of patriotism. Kennedy Jones, a member of the British Parliament and Director-General of Food Economy, told a *Toronto Star* correspondent that "Without mobilization of every available unit of Canada's food army, we here would have a very grim outlook. ... Every acre harvested will be a torpedo fired into German submarines."[67] Jones appealed to Canadians' sense of duty and patriotism, reminding those on the homefront that they, too, could make a difference in the war effort. "Those unable to join Canada's army whose

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62 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 363.

63 "Government Decided on Food Controller?," *Toronto Star*, May 18, 1917, p. 10. Flavelle, as director of the Imperial Munitions Board, and head of the William Davies meatpacking company, was unlikely to accept such a position, although he was widely rumoured to be up for the job.

64 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102359, Sanford Evans to Borden, May 22, 1917.

65 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102367, Borden to Evans, May 23, 1917.

66 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 166495, Duke of Devonshire to Walter Long, May 22, 1917.

67 "Every Acre of Grain Torpedo into Enemy," *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1917, p. 2.

deathless exploits in themselves added a glorious chapter to the history of the civilized world," Jones stated breathlessly, "can all do their bit by increasing production, or decreasing consumption." The militaristic language used by Jones reflects the extent to which food was rapidly becoming a critical weapon in the struggle between the Allies and the Central Powers; how much longer could the Canadian government wait before some attempt at regulation was made? The *Times* of London's Canadian correspondent reported, on May 21, that "it was doubtful if independent action by Canada [regarding food control] would be very effective." However, the same report also noted that feeling over "the enormous increase in prices of food products [was] intense."[68]

It can be argued that Borden needed to cultivate the broad goodwill of Canadians if conscription, the policy that most marked his prime ministership, was to be a success. Would war-weary Canadians, tired of inflation and angered by rumours of profiteering, be willing to accept a measure calling for further sacrifice of manpower without some *quid pro quo* on the domestic front? Securing public support meant that concessions would have to be made, and since the most pressing domestic issue just happened to be the question of food and food prices, it stands to reason that Borden just might make those concessions. Prevailing opinion seemed to suggest that firm movement on the cost of living issue would go a long way towards obtaining the needed support on the conscription front. Despite some divisiveness on the subject, voices coming from the labour ranks indicated a willingness to back conscription, but only if certain conditions were addressed. According to one press report, some of Toronto's "most prominent labour men" were quite ready to get behind conscription, but they also expressed their conviction that "conscription of men should be accompanied by the conscription of wealth," as well as "the stoppage of food profiteering."[69] The linkage of these two issues, of manpower and food concerns, was one of which Borden and his caucus must have been aware.

If Borden's reply to Sanford Evans, indicating that the government had not yet considered the issue, was ingenuous, then the Cabinet must have taken up the subject of food control shortly thereafter. On May 25, the Parliamentary Counsel, Francis Gisborne, sent a brief note to Borden

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68 "Canadian War Feeling," *Times* (London), June 16, 1917, p. 5.

69 "Conscript Wealth as Well as Men," *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1917, p. 2.

indicating that the draft of the Report to Council for the creation of a Food Controller was ready. Three days later, Finance Minister Thomas White expressed his approval of the proposed legislation, PC 1460, which in White's estimation would "fairly meet the situation."[70] Meanwhile, the press continued to speculate as to whether or not the government was about to act, and if so, who might be named to such a position. Flavelle's reputation and membership in the fraternity of food dealers made him an especially attractive candidate in the eyes of some. The *Canadian Grocer*, generally skeptical about the idea of a food controller, noted that

> Mr. Flavelle is a businessman. That at least assures that he would understand the machinery and will not be forever dropping a wrench among the whole as our other food officials have done without achieving any useful end. All the same it would be interesting just to know where the powers of a food controller would begin or end.[71]

Others were less sanguine about Flavelle. Joseph Gibbons, a Toronto city alderman and labour politician, did not think that Flavelle was the proper choice, perhaps because he was far too closely associated with the food industry.[72] Another prominent Torontonian mentioned as a possible candidate for the position was the city's chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. C. J. O. Hastings. Hastings, one of food control's most persistent advocates, had repeatedly called upon the federal government to name "a non-political and absolutely independent" individual to the post as the only means of keeping food prices down.[73] While rumours abounded that he had been offered the position, Hastings did not confirm or deny that he had been approached, stating only that he "was not in the field for it," and sagely added that "the man who takes it must be fair to the producer as well as the consumer."[74] Of all the potential candidates, the one most widely expected to take up the post was Sanford Evans, who as late as June 16 was the government's choice.

Evans, however, turned Borden down. The reason for his refusal lay in the differences that existed between how he and the government conceived of food control. Upon receiving a draft copy of the legislation creating the post of Food Controller, Evans suggested to Crothers that the

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70 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102390, Thomas White to Borden, May 28, 1917.

71 "What About a Food Controller?," (editorial) *Canadian Grocer*, May 25, 1917, p. 34.

72 *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1917, p. 2.

73 "24-Cent Bread Must Force Government to Act," *Ibid.*, May 14, 1917, p. 1.

74 "Says Borden Wanted M.O.H.," *Ibid.*, May 23, 1917, p. 1.

"nominal powers" it granted needed to be enlarged. Still, this was not Evans's main concern. He informed Borden that his major reservation lay in the fact the Food Controller apparently did not possess much freedom for independent action. Regulations could only be passed upon the approval of the Governor in Council, who would also retain control over staff appointments and salary. There was no set amount of money to be set aside for the department, only budgetary appropriations as necessary, leaving Evans with "no intimation of the scope of possible practical action the government might have in mind."[75] To Evans, the government had set the status of the Food Controller far too low, at the level of a "Deputy Minister" — he envisioned a position of cabinet-rank authority. In addition, he deemed the salary being offered ($500 per month) not commensurate with the responsibility attached to the office. He told Crothers that, while money was not the root of his concern, it served to reduce the status and prestige associated with the position. Crothers retorted that Hoover and Rhondda freely lent their services to their nations, which led Evans to reply that

> ...this was in every way an admirable, that if I were similarly situated I would be only too glad to do the same thing, and that the government should certainly consider for the position suitable men who were financially independent. If, however, a money value has to be put on the position it should be that of a first class commission or of members of the Cabinet and not that of the civil service.[76]

In the end, Evans concluded that the government was not giving the Food Controller the "scope, prestige, and support that could reasonably be asked," and without this, he felt, food control could not be effective. Evans's intuition would prove prescient.

Despite the fact that the government was drawing up plans for food control and actively searching for a suitable candidate to direct the initiative, in public and in Parliament the Tories remained reticent, which only fueled further speculation. Reports emerged that a food commission was to be instituted, rather than a food 'dictator.' The rumoured commission, said to include representatives from business, labour, agriculture, and manufacturing, would thus solicit input from several different sectors. The *Canadian Grocer* reacted cynically to the idea of a food control

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75 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 123308, Sanford Evans to Borden, June 16, 1917.

76 Ibid.

commission, deriding such a body's ability to reach any type of consensus. "What a harmonious gathering will be when this little coterie get together to discuss food prices each from his own angle, of course. If this suggestion has actually been considered, it is another instance of not too profound thinking."[77] In the House of Commons, MP George Graham of Renfrew unsuccessfully pressed the Minister of Labour to "set all this talk at rest by telling us what he is going to do." Graham wanted to know if the government was finally going to appoint some type of food regulator, either an individual or a commission, and if so, what the duties of such a body would be. Crothers insisted that while food was an issue that had received much attention, and that action would undoubtedly be taken shortly, the nature of any such action had not yet been determined. Alphonse Verville again referenced the plight of working-class Canadians struggling to cope with the high cost of living and demanded that the government fix maximum prices on food. He also noted that a keen demand for food control was being felt, not only from the urban areas, but from the smaller towns across the nation.[78] A frustrated Verville asked Crothers whether he would at least admit that "the necessity" for a food controller existed, but the minister replied that he was "not admitting anything of the sort just now."[79] On June 13, George Foster told Parliament that the cost of living was a thing beyond the control of the government, and that food control was not about to happen.[80] Such comments indicate that the issue of food control caught the Borden cabinet at ideological cross-purposes; public pressure for action was palpable but the government was still not wholly convinced of the need to supplant *laissez-faire* with intervention.

Despite Foster's qualms, six days later PC 1460, creating the post of Food Controller, was introduced in Parliament. Under the provisions of the legislation, the Food Controller was authorized to take stock of the nation's food resources, with the goal of determining how much food Canada would need for its own purposes, in order to facilitate as large a surplus as possible for shipment overseas. Thanks to the broad nature of the legislation, the food controller, theoretically, was armed with almost every conceivable power needed to regulate any aspect of the food supply.

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77 *Canadian Grocer*, June 8, 1917, p. 32.

78 *Debates of the House of Commons*, June 4, 1917, p. 1989.

79 Ibid., p. 1990.

80 "No Food Control or Price Legislation," *Toronto Globe*, June 14, 1917, p. 2.

This, however, did not mean that he would necessarily take advantage of all these powers — a subtle yet important point. The Food Controller was also given the right to inquire into the price of food as well as "the causes of such prices." The powers given were wide and all-encompassing, and included the right to pass regulations pertaining to the manufacturing, preparation, price, storage, distribution, transportation, sale and delivery of food. The Food Controller was also given the right to pass measures designed to encourage the conservation of food and the prevention of waste, and could limit the amount and type of food sold in eating places, both public and private.[81] . If that was not enough, should the need arise the Food Controller was also allowed to "purchase, requisition, store, sell and deliver food."[82] In introducing the legislation, Borden also took the opportunity to announce that William J. Hanna of Toronto, who Borden specified would accept no salary, had agreed to take up the post of Food Controller.[83] Canada's war effort up to this point had been considerable, but it had also had its limits. Overseas conditions, domestic concerns, and political considerations had converged to finally propel the Borden administration into uncharted waters. The war's front lines now, it seemed, extended into the kitchen, the barn yard, and the food plant. With this legislation, the government embarked upon a new phase of wartime mobilization that, without exception, would bring the struggle deeper into every Canadian household.

William J. Hanna and the Office of the Food Controller, June-August 1917

The man charged with regulating Canada's wartime food supply was well-known in Ontario, if not in other parts of the country. William John Hanna, a 56 year-old lawyer and former Provincial Secretary of Ontario, had, since 1905, been one of the most influential voices in Premier James Whitney's cabinet, and had been highly touted (along with Adam Beck) as the latter's successor upon Whitney's death in September 1914. Born in Adelaide, Ontario, Hanna had been educated at the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall, and had first been elected as a Conservative MLA for

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81 NAC, Canada Food Board Papers, P.C. 1460, Order in Council Appointing a Food Controller for Canada, June 16, 1917.

82 Ibid.

83 *Debates of the House of Commons*, June 19, 1917, pp. 2433-2434.

West Lambton (Sarnia) in 1902. Combining largely progressive ideas of social reform with traditional economic beliefs, his political accomplishments included the formulation of a series of popular prison reforms. Beyond public life, he had been a solicitor for Imperial Oil of Canada for many years. According to the *Toronto Star* he could "handle Sir James to better advantage than other members of the cabinet," and in little over a decade Hanna had thus become a significant force in Ontario Tory circles.[84] He was nonetheless greatly disheartened to discover that his strong ties to the corporate community, especially the distilleries, had a hand in prompting Whitney to favour Frank Cochrane or William Hearst as potential party leaders over him.[85] Hanna's business connections had been a useful asset for Whitney, but they could also act as a political liability should Hanna become premier in an era when prohibition still rode high in the province's political agenda. When Hearst was eventually chosen to lead the Ontario Conservatives, a loyal, if disgruntled, Hanna remained in the cabinet, but was not given responsibility for any particular portfolio.

While Hanna may have had "the confidence of many of the great corporate interests,"[86] having acted as one of Borden's most trusted political advisors, he also had the personal confidence of the Canadian prime minister. Immediately prior to his appointment as Food Controller, Hanna had been deliberating with Borden on the mooted formation of a coalition government, and had agreed to liaise with Ontario Liberal leader Newton Rowell and influential newspaperman Sir John Willison on the subject.[87] "He is a man of great ability and energy and has wide experience in organization," wrote Borden. "I consider the country fortunate in obtaining his services," he concluded.[88] In the matter of food control, he may not have been the prime minister's first choice, but his administrative abilities and personal charisma made him a worthwhile selection. He came with impeccable Tory credentials, and his partial alienation from the Ontario Conservatives meant that he was, in all likelihood, ready to devote himself fully to his new duties. He was also "a private

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84 "Hearst, Hanna, Beck: A Retrospect," *Toronto Star*, October 2, 1914, p. 5.

85 Peter Oliver, *Public and Private Persons: The Ontario Political Culture, 1914-1934* (Toronto, 1975), pp. 20-21.

86 Ibid., p. 20.

87 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. II, 1969, pp. 94-95.

88 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102431, Borden to the Duke of Devonshire, June 1917.

ownership, a company man" who "stood for the old and settled ways, as against Beck's new and untrodden paths."[89] Thus, Hanna could be expected to quote the supply and demand 'gospel' chapter and verse, but would his closeness to 'the interests' be a hindrance? To be effective, the Food Controller would have to objectively balance the needs of consumers, producers, business, and the Allies. News that food control was to be a reality was a pleasing development for many, but this favourable reaction hinged upon the widespread expectation that price control and not just hortative measures, would form a large part of the food controller's agenda. "The consumer is angry," editorialized the *Toronto Star*, "and inclined to scoff at those who warn against waste. ... The situation would be greatly improved by effective regulations."[90] As this new era of wartime control dawned, the question remained: would Hanna, with his links to big business and his Conservative fiscal beliefs, be willing to use his position and power to stop what observers described as the "plunder and theft of the consuming public in the purchase of foods?"[91]

The new Food Controller reportedly possessed a sterling sense of humour (he would need it) along with an affable personality; *Saturday Night* described him as "a genial, enlightened politician with a joke and kindly word for everybody."[92] In many ways, Hanna fit the pattern of the 'expert' enlisted into the Progressive campaign to regulate and often to reform the new urban-industrial world. While the foundation values of these experts were set in liberal capitalism, their credibility also drew from their exposure to the broad reach of the new society. While a liberal, W.L. Mackenzie King exuded the same appeal as Hanna — he was an expert who understood what made modern society 'tick' and what concessions and consensuses brought balance and stability to it. Hanna's corporate, legal and political *bona fides* fit him well for the challenge of food control in most Canadians' minds. He understood the 'interests' that constituted Canadian society. But could he 'balance' them effectively? As might be expected, there were those for whom Hanna's appointment was far less than satisfactory. The Tories' political opponents sneered at what they

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89 *Toronto Star*, October 2, 1914, p. 5.

90 "Regulation of Food Prices," (editorial) *Ibid.*, June 19, 1917, p. 6.

91 "Keeping Prices Up," (editorial) *Toronto Star*, June 14, 1917, p. 10.

92 "Canada's First Food Controller," *Saturday Night*, June 30, 1917, p. 3. See also "The Provincial Secretary," *Ibid.*, March 31, 1906, p. 10.

considered an unduly partisan appointment; George Graham wondered if "the agent of the Standard Oil Company in Canada" was the right individual to handle the regulation of "his fellow trust men."[93] The *Toronto Star,* registering their disappointment that Sanford Evans had not taken the job, felt that the position should have gone to someone who was "rather less a politician than Mr. Hanna."[94] Neither did Hanna's corporate ties endear him to small businessmen. The annual meeting of the Ontario branch of the Retail Merchants' Association gave rise to much discussion on the topic, prompted by a resolution put forth by vice-president D.W. Clark, disapproving of Hanna's appointment on the grounds that, as a lawyer, he was not qualified to regulate food. While many of the delegates shared Clark's opinion, most were resigned to what was, in essence, a *fait accompli.* One speaker noted that "now was not the time to quarrel with the appointment, but rather to make the best of the condition and cooperate;" another suggested that while "there were plenty of merchants capable of holding the position ... the Association was late in its protestation." Division on the issue was pronounced, forcing Clark to withdraw the motion.[95]

These pessimistic appraisals of Hanna's suitability were largely outweighed by more positive reactions. One RMA delegate pragmatically asserted that if Hanna "was worth $25,000 to the Standard Oil Co. he would be worth a good deal to the country."[96] In a telling statement, Hugh Blain, a Toronto wholesale grocer, expressed his approval of Hanna, noting that he and his colleagues would be more than willing to "cooperate with him in *keeping down prices.*"[97] Even food dealers fully expected (or dreaded?) that the Food Controller would act to control food prices. Food Control could also present food retailers with the opportunity to counter their negative image, "to free themselves from the stigma of thinking only of profit."[98] The large food processors were also in favour; E.C. Fox, manager of the William Davies Company, noted his approval of both food

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93 *Debates of the House of Commons,* June 22, 1917, p. 2580.

94 "Canada's Food Controller," *Toronto Star,* June 20, 1917, p. 6.

95 *Canadian Grocer,* June 22, 1917, p. 26.

96 *Ibid.*

97 "Selection of Hanna Popular in Toronto," *Toronto Star,* June 20, 1917, p. 5. Italics added.

98 "Conscription of Food — Is it Necessary," *Canadian Grocer,* July 13, 1917, pp. 28-29.

control and of Hanna as Food Controller.[99] Mayor Church and the Toronto Board of Control were pleased, and even sent Borden a note congratulating him on the move.[100] The *Toronto Daily News*, not surprisingly, came out strongly in favour of the appointment, and countered the opinion of George Graham by facetiously commenting that "To any who may say that he is identified with the 'interests' it may be remarked that coal oil is not a popular food on the average dinner table."[101] Yet another considerable segment of the population also expressed its approval. The National Council of Women conveyed to Borden "an expression of sincere thanks ... for the appointment of a Food Controller, and especially for the appointment of the Hon. Mr. Hanna to the office. ... We feel confident that the women of Canada will loyally endeavor to carry out whatever regulations the Food Controller may deem it expedient to make."[102] These favourable responses indicated that, in general, Canada's new food regulator could expect a considerable measure of cooperation and goodwill — but how long would the honeymoon last? Borden's political shift — some might say his gamble — to food control seemed to have brought political peace, for the time being.

In late June, 1917, all Canadians, whether or not they had been in favour of food regulation, found themselves in a poised state, anxiously awaiting Hanna's first move. With the food question out of the way, and a portion of the electorate seemingly satisfied, Borden could now concentrate on the larger question at hand — the formation of Union government and conscription. Public concern over high food prices, however, did not simply evaporate with the appointment of a food controller. On the same day that food control was announced in Parliament, Liberal MP Rodolph Lemieux stated that "the pressing duty of the hour is not the conscription of blood but the relief of the consumer, the control of food and the fixing of maximum prices."[103] Not long after his appointment, a *Globe* reporter asked Hanna point blank if he thought that he could "bring down the cost of living," a question which seemed to unsettle the new Controller, who in replying intimated that he had no answers yet, stating that he had to "sit down and think over the situation before I can do

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99 *Ibid.*

100 "Put City's OK on Hanna," *Toronto Star*, June 20, 1917, p. 4.

101 "Drastic Action," (editorial) *Toronto Daily News*, June 21, 1917, p. 6.

102 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102461, National Council of Women to Borden, June 30, 1917.

103 *Debates of the House of Commons*, June 19, 1917, p. 2471.

anything."[104] For Borden, the launching of food control served to deflect criticism for a brief period, as Hanna sought to come to grips with the parametres of the food problem, the wide scope of which would all too soon become evident. If Hanna was unaware of the obstacles that awaited him, *Saturday Night* gave an indication of what he could expect from "the unthinking public." The new Food Controller would be called upon to

> take responsibility for the weather, for sun spots, for the shortage of engines and freight cars, for all manifold things that effect food prices, and go to form that detested and encompassing enemy the H.C.L. No doubt many will expect to change the laws of supply and demand as with a wizard's wand. Though a man of remarkable capacity, it is unlikely that he will be able to accomplish this. It is not a part that the seeker of popularity could covet.[105]

Food regulation, which, as we have seen, meant 'price control' in the minds of numerous Canadians, was a many-sided affair, and one that was perhaps less straightforward than it appeared to be on the surface. The government, it can be argued, clearly did not see any value in what the *Globe* called "arbitrary interference with natural prices."[106] Hanna's job was to ensure, through regulation and exhortation, increased foodstuff production and decreased consumption, not to tackle the cost of living, which was ostensibly the function of the Cost of Living Commissioner. As one historian has noted, whereas both of these bodies were "concerned with food, their overlapping interest and authority confused any discussion of this topic in Canada during the war."[107] This, perhaps, was one factor that adversely affected the goals of food control from the outset.

British actions arguably served as a motivating factor in prompting similar Canadian measures, but American activity on the food front may also have played a part. While some commentators point proudly to the fact that, officially, "Canada had the honour of having the first Food Controller, so named," the United States had begun to take unofficial steps towards the mobilization of their food supply almost immediately upon its entry into the conflict.[108] One day after declaring war on Germany, Herbert Hoover had been asked by the U.S. Council of National

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104 "W.J. Hanna To Control Food," *Toronto Globe*, June 20, 1917, p. 6.

105 "Canada's First Food Controller," (editorial) *Saturday Night*, June 30, 1917, p. 3.

106 "The New Food Controller," *Toronto Globe*, June 20, 1917, p. 5.

107 David Edward Smith,"Emergency Government in Canada and Australia 1914-1919: A Comparison," p. 93.

108 "Food Control," *Canada in the Great World War, vol. III: Guarding the Channel Ports* (Toronto, 1921), p. 347.

Defense to take over a special committee dealing with the domestic food supply and food prices.[109] Once they, too, had adopted food control, Canadian co-operation with the U.S. made sense for several reasons. The two countries had much more in common with each other than with the warring nations of Europe. Both were producers and exporters, and both were among the world's most prominent wheat growers. The importance of U.S.-Canada cooperation in matters of food regulation was evident; upon his appointment as Food Controller, Hanna's first action was to travel to Washington, to consult with food officials from both the United States and Britain, a move that was hailed as "a very splendid idea," by George Graham.[110] The Canadian Food Controller found that Hoover was anxious to "cooperate in every possible way," and that both the Americans and the British had agreed that "united action on matters of common interest" was desirable.[111]

By his own admission, Hanna had little idea of the true implications of food control, nor of the difficulties that directing such a project entailed.[112] The Office of the Food Controller had to be assembled from scratch, quite literally, with furniture and carpets supplied by Public Works, and with staff similarly on loan from other government departments.[113] Ideologically, there was also no textbook from which the agency could base its policies; government regulation was still in its infancy in Canada with only a modicum of railway, utility and farm trade experience to draw upon. Significantly, Hanna's three most senior assistants were not federal public servants. Samuel E. Todd, appointed Chief of Staff, who was to remain with the food control department throughout its entire existence, was a "practical farmer" who had graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College, and who had spent the last several years acting as farm director for Ontario's "public institutions."[114] Walter Abraham Willison, who became Chief of the Educational Branch, was a journalist and son of influential newspaperman Sir John Willison. Rounding out the senior officials was Frederick W.

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109 Nash, pp. 4-5. A wealthy mining engineer, in 1914 Hoover had organized the Commission for Relief in Belgium, a huge humanitarian effort to help feed the occupied, and hungry, nation. This effort earned him international praise and led to his later appointment as U.S. Food Administrator.

110 *Debates of the House of Commons*, June 22, 1917, p. 2580.

111 "All Canada to Help New Food Commission," *Toronto Star*, June 26, 1917, p. 4.

112 Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p. 12.

113 *Debates of the House of Commons*, August 13, 1917, p. 4414.

114 Ibid., August 8, 1917, p. 4244.

French, who took charge of the Organization Branch of the Food Controller's Office.[115] The appointments raised some eyebrows, as the salaries attached to both Todd and Willison's positions were large, at $4500 per annum, prompting the *Canadian Grocer* to be the first of several critics expressing alarm over the "costly machinery" that was developing.[116] The public was quick to pick up on this; in a letter to the editor of the *Globe*, a "Soldier's Wife" railed against the high salaries being paid to Food Control staff.[117] In fact, displeasure over the amount of money expended on Food Control, as well as Hanna's 'noisy silence' on the issue, would develop into a recurrent theme.[118] Despite the criticism, putting together the department's physical space and gathering staff was a comparatively simple process; obtaining the information needed to make an accurate assessment of Canada's food capacity was far more complicated. Regulations could not be made until the study was completed, but in the meantime, the propaganda offensive, in the form of speeches, statements, and interviews, could certainly begin.

Many of those who had pushed for a food controller had put the domestic needs of the populace first, and thus were under the impression that food control would above all else address the rising cost of food, a notion that Hanna immediately sought to correct. Food control in his mind was *not* about price control but was about supply and consumption. On June 29, as part of his first official statement as Food Controller, Hanna bluntly pointed out that "The food problem of the Dominion is not measured by the domestic market but by the needs of the Allied armies and nations."[119] He called upon all Canadians to consider themselves a part of the greater struggle, "under direct obligation to assist in the rationing of the Allied forces," which could be done through "national self-denial and national cooperation."[120] Hanna announced that production, consumption of perishables, and the prevention of waste should be maximized, and that war menus should be

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115 NAC, RG13 Justice, Series A-2, Vol. 217, File 1917-2195, "Food Controller," P.C. 1844, July 3, 1917.

116 *Canadian Grocer*, July 27, 1917, p. 30.

117 "From Soldier's Wife," (letter to the editor) *Toronto Globe*, July 22, 1917, p. 6.

118 The Toronto Globe remarked that: "Mr. Hanna's silence on the subject of expensive salaries for his aides in the thrift campaign is making a noise in the country." *Ibid.*, August 2, 1917, p. 4.

119 "Must Conserve and Produce Food," *Toronto Star*, June 29, 1917, p. 5.

120 Ibid.

adopted. These ideas were echoed in his first public address, which was, somewhat tellingly, given to the Toronto Women's Press Club on July 6, 1917.[121] That women were to be on the front lines of food control was almost a given — women overwhelmingly controlled the bulk of household food expenditures and meal preparation. Food control without the cooperation and goodwill of Canada's women would be a certain failure. The home ("where things just naturally get wasted," according to the *Canadian Grocer*) was to be the fulcrum of food control efforts.[122] To this end, a Domestic Science section was among the many set up within the Food Controller's Office, a highly compartmentalized agency whose many branches, sections, and committees were headed by 'experts.' The provinces were to cooperate as well — Hanna asked each one to send representatives to work with the Food Controller's Office.[123]

The organization of the department reflected the multiplicity of issues encompassed by food control. In order to keep Hanna informed of the prices being asked for various foodstuffs, special correspondents were designated in each of Canada's main points of supply. In addition, a series of committees were appointed to investigate and report on various types of food products and food issues, such as fish, milk, fruit and vegetable, livestock, cold storage, milling, meatpacking, and public eating houses. As Hanna took pains to point out in his final report, most of the individuals serving on these committees ("acknowledged experts of wide experience") did so freely, without remuneration.[124] For example, the Fruit and Vegetable Committee included one R. Robertson, the General Manager of the Okanagan United Fruit Growers; J.R. Hastings, Manager of Winona Growers' Limited; and Donald Johnson, the Dominion Fruit Commissioner. Hanna and his three senior officials were assisted by an Advisory Council, comprised of the directors of all the assorted departments. Besides the Domestic Science section, the other main departments were Education and Publicity, and Production and Conservation. There were also smaller sections handling Provincial

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121 "Must All Unite, Save on Foods and Aid Allies," *Toronto Globe*, July 7, 1917, p. 1.

122 *Canadian Grocer*, July 13, 1917, p. 28.

123 "Canada Moves to Conserve Food," *New York Times*, July 12, 1917, p. 3.

124 Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, pp. 25-26.

and International Relations, and Exports.[125]

Under Hanna, food control emphasized voluntary compliance rather than compulsory enforcement. While the few regulations set down by the Food Controller were legal statutes, enforceable by law, it does not appear that these edicts were strictly policed. Indeed, the vastness of Canada's food system made it unlikely that this was even possible during the early stage of food control. Thus, the Education and Publicity section took on added importance — this department was charged with the significant task of conveying to Canadians the purpose and necessity of food control. W.A. Willison, who came from a prominent newspaper family, had served as a war correspondent for his father's paper, the *Toronto Daily News*, and, while overseas, had "made a special study of the educational and publicity work in connection with the food problem in Great Britain."[126] The Education department worked closely with the Canadian press, a group of individuals who, in the words of historian Jeff Keshen, were not "professionally averse towards doing their bit."[127] This connection would deepen and become more sophisticated over the next eighteen months, but under Willison's direction, the groundwork was laid for close cooperation between the food controller and the press.

In general, the type of publicity generated by the department fell into two categories: news items (which could be placed in the papers for free) and paid advertising. The news items were gathered together on a daily basis and sent to the Canadian Press, which in turn wired them off to each of Canada's 143 dailies. Other items, such as the war menus compiled by the Domestic Science section, editorials, and special articles detailing various aspects of the food situation were mailed out; periodicals and smaller weeklies received their food control propaganda in the same fashion. Different parts of the country were targeted by pieces that dealt specifically with issues relating to their situations; for example, the propaganda received by rural communities would differ from that directed to urban dailies.

In case Canada's duty to assist the Empire and her Allies was still unclear, Hanna's British

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125 Ibid., p. 26.

126 *Debates of the House of Commons*, August 8, 1917, p. 4244.

127 Keshen, p. 29.

counterpart, Lord Rhondda, suggested that a message from King George would help bring Canadians on board. The statement, which conveyed the King's "deep gratification," linked the performance of Canada's troops with the nation's food contributions. "I have no doubt," read the message, "that the ready sacrifice displayed on the battlefields of France by my heroic Canadian troops will find its counterpart in the efforts of those who, at home in the Dominion, are devoting themselves to this work. All those loyally engaged contribute in important measures towards victory."[128] This message was followed by another, longer statement by Lord Rhondda himself, who congratulated the citizens of the Dominion for 'permitting' food control, and told them that Britain looked "to the resources of Canada, and to the indomitable energy of Canadians for an answer that will shatter Germany's threat of starvation."[129]

As August began, the Food Consumption Control Committee, made up of the provincial representatives, convened in Ottawa to discuss the first issue to be tackled by the Controller's Office — the consumption of foodstuffs in public eating places.[130] The Committee's recommendations were duly embodied in the first regulation passed by the Cabinet on the advice of the Food Controller, P.C. 2190. Under the provisions of this legislation, any establishment which served 25 meals or more on a daily basis (i.e. restaurants, hotels, clubs, cafeterias, etc.) was not allowed to serve beef or bacon at more than one meal per day, and none was to be served on Tuesdays and Fridays, which became so-called 'meatless days.' As well, eating places were to offer to their customers substitutes for white bread, such as oat or corn bread, to economize on wheat use. In addition, the Order-in-Council stipulated that owners had to "prominently" display a notice stating that:

> All persons in ordering their food ought to consider the needs of Great Britain and her Allies and their armies for wheat, beef, and bacon, and that the Food Controller requires the public to do everything in their power to make these commodities available for export by eating as little as possible of them, and by making use of substitutes and avoiding waste.[131]

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128 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 167275, Walter Long to the Duke of Devonshire, July 17, 1917.

129 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 167273, Walter Long to the Duke of Devonshire, July 18, 1917; "England Expects — Historic Appeal to Canadian People," *Toronto Globe*, July 24, 1917, p. 1.

130 "Food Committee to Meet This Morning," *Ibid.*, August 1, 1917, p. 16.

131 NAC, RG 17 Canada Food Board Papers, P.C. 2190, "Regulations Applicable to Public Eating Places," August 9,

Meanwhile, Hanna continued to rally Canadians to the gravity of the food-saving cause, cautioning the nation that if it came down to a choice between shortages at home or at the front, the troops would not be the ones to experience hunger.[132]

In this early phase of food control, the consumer was exhorted to avoid waste, and to save on the foodstuffs needed for the war effort (white flour, bacon, beef, fats) by eating substitutes. But the consumer was not the only segment of the food system with which Hanna had to cope; those in the business of selling and processing food were also keys cogs in the food control machine. Both consumers and sellers were anxious to see if Hanna would in fact take advantage of his power to fix prices; he had recently intimated that he would not hesitate to do so should circumstances warrant.[133] He did not, however, want to interfere unduly with the workings of the free-market economy. As J.A. Corry noted, the government that Hanna served embodied "the conviction, almost universally held, that free enterprise was part of the order of nature. That the government should — or even could — direct the daily lives and activities of the people was scarcely dreamt of."[134] For example, after an early meeting with milling representatives to discuss the high price of flour and bread, Hanna admitted that while prices should come down, the millers were still "entitled to a fair profit."[135]

By mid-August, it was clear that the Food Controller's Office was concentrating more on publicity campaigns than on passing coercive regulations. Food control, in short, seemed to be an exercise of putting a government hand into what had hitherto been a very soft glove of exhortation and education. The message was still essentially the same but the thought was that the fist of the state might, at some point, in the future, be withdrawn and put to draconian use. In the interim, it was probably hoped that, if made sufficiently aware of the urgency of the situation, Canadians would voluntarily conserve food, rendering compulsory measures unnecessary. It was a situation

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1917.

132 "Two Beefless Days and Two Baconless," *Toronto Globe*, August 3, 1917.

133 Ibid.

134 Corry, p. 63.

135 "Hanna Says Bread Too High," *Canadian Grocer*, August 3, 1917, p. 36.

quite similar to early food control efforts in Britain, where Lord Devonport relied primarily on exhortation, voluntary restraint, and piecemeal regulations. One major initiative launched in August 1917 was the flashy 'Eat More Fish' campaign. The logic behind the fish drive was simple — seafood, which consumers in central Canada and on the prairies did not eat in any great quantity, could take the place of beef and pork, two commodities in great demand overseas. As Hanna later noted, the fishing industry in Canada had not even begun to approach its full potential, meaning that fish could play an important role in food conservation efforts.[136] To this end, the Fish Committee facilitated the rapid transport of freshly-caught fish from Nova Scotia to Winnipeg and points in between, in refrigerated rail cars known as the "Sea Food Special."[137] The use of refrigeration and the fact that the fish could be shipped from the Atlantic to Montreal in two days meant that it arrived in much better condition than it had in the past. This, however, was not the only obstacle that had to be overcome. Urban consumers, used to poor quality fish and "repelled by the unsanitary methods of handling and displaying," had to be convinced to try what was, essentially, an exotic and unfamiliar food.[138] The Food Controller responded to this by partially subsidizing the sale of 300 specially designed display cases, and by taking steps to keep the price of the fish down. But making the purchase of seafood more attractive was only part of the battle; housewives still had to be persuaded to prepare the alien fare, a matter that was resolved by the distribution of over 150,000 copies, in English and French, of a special seafood cookbook.[139] In the end, the first 'fish day,' (August 7, 1917), preceded by a raft of publicity, was a success. Women "enthusiastically supported" the initiative, with haddock and cod reportedly "selling like hot cakes" in Toronto.[140] In order to preserve the success of the 'Eat More Fish' campaign, and to ensure that the price of fish remained reasonable, Hanna showed that, in certain cases, he was not averse to stricter measures of control by requiring wholesale fish dealers to register with the Food Control Office.[141]

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136 Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p. 35.

137 Ibid., p. 36.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 "Big Fish Demand," *Toronto Globe*, August 8, 1917, p. 8.

141 "Wholesale Fish Men Required to Register," *Ibid.*, August 11, 1917, p. 4.

As previously mentioned, moral suasion was key to food control's success, even if its appeal was far less glorious than that of other branches of the war effort. The Canadian National Exhibition of 1917 boasted a state-of-the-art "flashing electronic announcement board" upon which inspirational messages, sent in by various politicians and officials, were shown to the crowds below. The Office of the Food Controller gamely tried to take advantage of the new technology — amidst the flowery, grandiose sentiments of duty and honour put forth by individuals such as Borden and Premier Hearst were these pithy statements submitted by Hanna: "Save wheat, bread, beef, and bacon." "Substitute oatmeal, barley, corn, rice, potatoes, fish." "Preserve and store fruits and vegetables." And, somewhat more dramatically, "Waste means defeat."[142] The age of pithy advertising had arrived; the same slogan-like appeals were made to sell war bonds. The electronic billboard was not the only high tech means through which Hanna sought to get his message across to exhibition-goers, as a film of him hard at work in his office was also shown to audiences at the fair, but not all viewers were moved. The *Toronto Star*, for one, was not impressed by the display, sarcastically remarking that

> Nothing at the fair excited more interest last night than the moving picture in front of the grand stand showing Hon. W.J. Hanna in the act of thinking. It is a caution the way he broods for a minute, hatches out a decision, writes it down, and tosses it across the corner of the table to some varlet who presumably rushes forth and enforces the edict in every kitchen in Canada.[143]

"Moving pictures of the Food Controller," remarked the *Globe*, "busily engaged in signing papers and opening letters do not enthuse the Exhibition crowds. They would prefer to see pictures of him 'busting' prices."[144] The Education and Publicity department clearly had to work a bit harder if the romance of food control was to capture the hearts and minds of Canadians.

Towards mid to late August it was becoming clear that the honeymoon period was fast approaching its close. The public was still feeling the strain of high prices, and Hanna's regulatory inaction was beginning to inspire criticism. Many felt that Hanna had not begun to approach the limits of his powers. "A compulsory diet of fish, brown bread and cornmeal once or twice a week is

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142 "Food Controller to Exhibition," *Ibid.*, August 10, 1917, p. 7.

143 "Note and Comment," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 5, 1917, p. 10.

144 "Notes and Comments," *Toronto Globe*, September 1, 1917, p. 6.

no great hardship," wrote the *Globe*. "The food controller can safely go farther than he has done."[145] The August 11 passage of the Lever Act in the United States, which formally bestowed the title and powers of U.S. Food Administrator upon Herbert Hoover, prompted unflattering comparisons between the two officials. Some of the strongest criticism against Hanna was embodied in an August 15 editorial in the *Globe*. Hoover had immediately taken steps to fix the price of bread and wheat, while nothing along these lines had yet been done in Canada. Hanna was admonished not to allow Hoover to dictate matters — the Canadian Food Controller was in real danger of having to play 'catch up' with his American counterpart. "Is Mr. Hanna willing to keep up with the Hoover pace?" asked the *Globe*. "If he is," it trenchantly continued, "are his Ottawa masters willing to let him?"[146] Hoover's fierce, resolute nature were unfavourably contrasted with Hanna's more restrained, conservative methods. Also questioned was Hanna's willingness to confront 'the Interests' — Hoover had thus far shown no such reluctance. Along with his regulations respecting public eating places, Hanna had also prohibited the use of wheat in the manufacture of alcohol — a matter that was ridiculed as "pitifully inadequate" in light of the small quantity of wheat actually used for distilling purposes. Perhaps Hanna's reputed ties to the liquor industry were of concern after all; the *Globe* worried that this spelled the beginning of a potentially disturbing trend. If "Mr. Hanna's hands are tied by liquor influence, will they be tied by other big business influence with a pull at headquarters?" it asked. What the food controller had to do, concluded the paper, was safeguard the consumer's interests by combating profiteers, and by "challenging powerful interests." In other words, Hanna had either to "control, or be controlled."[147]

The staunchly-Liberal *Globe* was one paper in particular which gave the Food Controller an especially difficult time, running a series of disparaging comments and editorials, increasing in both quantity and vituperation as the summer of 1917 wore on. The first meatless day in Toronto, falling on August 14, was treated with humourous contempt by the paper, whose reporters found that Torontonians had "refused to embrace vegetarianism even for one day." Instead, "the carnivourous

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145 "Notes and Comments," *Ibid.*, August 13, 1917, p. 4.

146 "Hanna and Hoover," (editorial) *Ibid.*, August 15, 1917, p. 4.

147 Ibid.

cravings of the populace were uncontrolled, and the city slaves returned to the flesh-pots rather than 'Follow the patriarch Hanna. And live in the wilds on Manna.'"[148] With unbridled amusement, the paper recounted the confusing scenes which its correspondents had witnessed in eating establishments throughout the city. According to the report, many restaurants failed to follow the regulations, with owners pleading ignorance of the newly-passed orders. One restrauranteur's gaze "wandered guiltily" when asked how the meatless day had been progressing. While the *Globe*'s inclination to scoff at food control may account for the dismissive tone of the piece, it still serves as an indication of the level of seriousness with which food regulation was initially received. Some Canadians still seemed to regard the initiative with a certain amount of cynicism. Conversely, the *New York Times*, which arguably did not have the same political motivations as the *Globe*, reported that in Ottawa eating places had overwhelmingly followed the regulations to the letter, with fish taking the place of beef and bacon, and with customers reacting with good humour to the changes.[149]

The high reliance of troops in the field on canned food led to a desire on the part of the Food Controller for Canadians to conserve preserved food items. This, coupled with a potential shortage in tin, prompted the passage of the second major food control regulation on August 24, 1917. P.C. 2352 prohibited the use of canned vegetables for as long as fresh ones were in season, which in turn caused a stir among grocers and canners.[150] Canned goods such as peas, beans, tomatoes, beets, and corn were not to be sold to the public until the Food Controller lifted the ban (scheduled for October 15 in Eastern Canada); isolated areas such as lumber camps were exempt.[151] For food dealers, generally unused to government interference, the decision to restrict the sale of canned foods came "like a bolt out of the blue."[152] It was, however, a pragmatic move that made sense — it would conserve preserved foods while at the same time encouraging the public to consume freshly-

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148 ."Food Dictator Doesn't Control — Meatless Day in Toronto, But Only After a Fashion," *Ibid.*, August 15, 1917, p. 6.

149 "Beefless, Baconless Day," *New York Times*, August 15, 1917, p. 3.

150 Much of Canada's tin sheet supply, which was imported largely from the U.S., was compromised due to the British embargo on tin exports, from whence the U.S. supply was drawn. Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p. 40.

151 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, P.C. 2352, "Regulations Governing the Sale of Canned Vegetables," August 24, 1917.

152 "Certain Foods Under the Ban," *Canadian Grocer*, August 31, 1917, p. 21.

harvested produce instead.

Inaction and high expenditures were the two most popular criticisms levelled at the Food Controller's Office during its short tenure, but the cost of living remained the underlying irritant. In parliament Charles Murphy, Liberal MP for Russell, noted that they heard "a good deal these days about the food controller making regulations, delivering speeches, attending public functions," but when was Hanna going to address the issue of high food prices? Borden vaguely replied that the Food Controller had already moved on the issue, and would take whatever actions he deemed advisable, a desultory response which prompted Murphy to remark that he was unaware of any actions thus far taken by Hanna to reduce prices.[153] Two days later William Pugsley remarked that many Canadians had expected that a food controller would bring about a decline in food prices, and asked George Foster if the appointment of such an official had so far made any difference in the cost of living. Foster replied that while the food controller had not been on the job very long, some positive improvements were visible, insofar as the prices of certain commodities would have increased further had Hanna not been appointed. The "two or three weeks work of the food controller" had been of an information gathering nature; price fixing was an immense undertaking and one that entailed "careful and prolonged investigation."[154] Foster's weak attempt to defend the work of the Food Controller's Office did not fool Pugsley, who shrewdly retorted that "The most that the minister is able to say is that possibly, if it had not been for the appointment of a food controller, prices would have been higher than they are to-day."[155]

The collision course between Hanna and the consuming public was inevitable, based on the Food Controller's conception of what constituted feasible economic measures, and the public's fixation on the high cost of living. In late August, Hanna stated that the price of food could not in fact be fixed without upsetting the principle of supply and demand.[156] Hanna's main concern was not prices — unless the government took control over primary production, he believed that price control was not workable, and would tend to compromise supply levels. To an extent, this was true

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153 *Debates of the House of Commons*, August 29, 1917, p. 5085.

154 Ibid., August 31, 1917, pp. 5206-5207.

155 Ibid., August 31, 1917, p. 5207.

156 "Canadian Food Problems," *Times* (London) August 30, 1917, p. 5.

— why would farmers seek to produce greater yields if there was no monetary incentive to do so? In a strongly worded editorial, the *Globe* responded to Hanna's statements on price fixing, indicating that the time had come for movement: Was Hanna going to be a food controller, or "an apologist for the food profiteer?"[157] There was little reason, concluded the paper, to have a food controller who was unwilling to control prices. The murky conflation of 'price control' with 'food control' had established itself as the most vexatious factor adversely affecting Hanna's attempts to increase Canada's available food surplus for Allied use.

Conclusion

For consumers, the vital issue was the cost of food and staying the course on the domestic front; for the Food Controller, it was Canada's overall ability to mobilize the nation's food resources for the war effort. The fact that the appointment of a food controller was preceded by a strong public demand for such a position proved detrimental, as the public's desire for food control was motivated by domestic concerns caused by inflation. The government's creation of such a position was prompted more by Allied needs. The cost of living issue at home, while of some concern, was subordinate to victory on the battlefield, which could be abetted by Canada's food contributions. Like other measures taken, such as the appointment of a fuel controller, the adoption of food control can be seen as an indication that the pressures of war finally pushed the Conservatives to abandon their traditional economic beliefs. One can, however, argue that the individual chosen to act as Food Controller, William J. Hanna, is evidence that Borden was not in any way ready to countenance radical departures in state fiscal policy. Hanna, an experienced politician, a strong Conservative with close ties to the corporate community, and a personal friend of the Prime Minister, could be relied upon not to push for drastic measures. Restless consumers (and those in Parliament who sought to capitalize on their anger) who had been heartened by the creation of food control soon became disillusioned with Hanna's inactivity; the amount of money being spent by the newly-created department was also a cause of some concern, especially when contrasted with the scanty results so far realized. As the late summer changed into fall, Hanna's main challenge was to

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157 "Food Controller Should Control," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, August 30, 1917, p. 6.

change the way Canadians *thought* about food control; they had to stop looking at it on a personal level, it had to be positioned on a much grander, wider, scale, one whose goals were fueled by duty and patriotism. The problem was that most Canadians framed their thinking about the wartime food supply by what they saw and paid for on the neighbourhood grocer's shelf. Hanna engaged the question on much higher grounds. "To feed the Allies," Hanna wrote, "is the paramount duty of North America. It is far greater than the necessity of production for home supply or the cost of living. Unless the war is won nothing matters."[158] This fundamental disjuncture of perspective would be the crux of the Food Controller's difficulties for the remainder of his term. In the fall of 1917, an increase in propaganda and special appeals to the women of Canada would become the primary means through which the Office of the Food Controller would seek to mobilize both Canadian food, and Canadian public opinion.

In the summer of 1917, Robert Borden thus gave Canadians both conscription and food control. Each marked a dramatic shift in Canadian values. Each was the product of a strange mixture of patriotism and the more mundane business of managing a total war. Canada, called upon by Britain to supply further numbers of men and amounts of food, needed to implement new methods in order to secure more of both. Conscription would give the nation almost 100,000 new soldiers, but would also, by December 1917, divide the nation along ethnic and class lines. Food control's effectiveness was less evident: it failed to satisfy the frustrations of 'average' Canadians over the spiralling cost of food. It acknowledged the failure of old policies and attitudes about how food was to be produced and shared in war but beyond an indication that the state must become more assertive in shaping how Canadians ate it did not define a new frontier. It failed to live up to its billing — most Canadians' eyes it did not 'control' — it was not aimed at the 'right' things. When the disjuncture between food control's dedication to managing the overall food supply and the public's expectation that the *price* of food would also be managed, Borden would do what he had done in the conscription question: he tried to enlist the support of Canadian women to tip the balance. In the end, W.L. Morton's assessment of 1917 as a 'critical year' was correct — the first tentative steps towards state intervention, of which food control was part, meant that the 'old world'

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158 Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p. 14.

in which Canadians had once lived, dominated by *laissez-faire* economic instincts and principles, was truly gone. In its place a new world, one governed by an entirely different approach to the role of the state had, whether the government liked it or not, arisen out of the chaos of war.

Chapter Five
'What's the Good of a Food Controller?': The Challenges of Wartime Food Regulation

"We do not mind a meatless day.
A wheatless day don't bother;
But if they start an eatless day,
Say, will we kick? Well, rather."

Introduction

As chapter four demonstrated, William J. Hanna enjoyed a brief 'honeymoon' after his appointment as Canada's first Food Controller, during which Canadians were generally disposed to support food control. That support, however, hinged on the department's willingness to control the price of food as well. When the anticipated decrease in the cost of living failed to materialize, Hanna's regulatory inactivity prompted public criticism, which was duly exploited by the Conservatives' political foes. Consumers in the summer and fall of 1917 soon discovered that while prices for foodstuffs remained alarmingly high, the message emanating from the Office of the Food Controller went no further than exhorting further sacrifices in the name of the war effort. Consequently, Hanna found himself daunted by what he termed "a very grave and mischievous misconception of the duties and powers of the Food Controller," namely, a persistent belief on the part of the public that the primary purpose of food control was to alleviate the inflationary pressures being felt by Canadians. This broad attitude flew in the face of repeated declarations by Hanna that food control was not designed to bring down prices, but rather to organize and regulate the production and consumption of foodstuffs in the service of war. In short, European needs, not those of Canada, were the proper focus of the Food Controller's efforts. For Hanna, the reasoning was inescapable, for had there been ample supplies of food in Britain and France, food control on this side of the Atlantic would not have been necessary. But for members of the public, domestic and budgetary concerns were just as pressing. Regulation -- both statutory and moral -- works only if all parties to that process conceive of its fundamental purpose in the same light. Caught in this trap of miscomprehension, from September 1917 to the time of his resignation in January 1918, Hanna struggled in vain to earn the confidence of Canadians, while overseas the food situation continued to worsen, making the success of Canada's food control efforts increasingly critical. During this

period, the Food Controller battled public opinion, launched a variety of publicity schemes, worked on improving the level of cooperation between Canada and the Allies, legalized oleomargarine, began licensing food dealers, and generally laid the groundwork for the more elaborate agency that would eventually succeed the Office of the Food Controller, namely, the Canada Food Board. Therefore, Hanna could hardly have been accused of inactivity; his Achilles' heel was that he failed to act on the one thing that the public had expected him to act upon — taming the inflation in food prices.

Food Control, Public Opinion, and Competing Interests

By the late summer of 1917, the debate over Hanna's failure to fix maximum prices on food had become increasingly unpleasant. The editorial pages of politically antagonistic newspapers had, for several weeks, been running sarcastic comments about food control, but these were now sporadically joined by satirical poems and other forms of ridicule that threatened to undermine Canadian efforts at food saving. The Food Controller's own vacillating nature was ripe for mockery. "Mr. Hanna says he will not hesitate to check prices," declared the *Halifax Chronicle*, "Surely in the name of fair play our Toronto contemporary does not expect Mr. Hanna to begin to start ceasing to hesitate while the war is on, does it?"[1] The *Globe* followed suit: "There are many things we cannot do,' says the Food Controller, and he proves it by not doing them."[2] Even the *Manitoba Free Press*, which generally numbered among Hanna's few defenders, ran the following bit of doggerel in September, 1917:

> *If Moses could only have had Mr. Hanna!*
> *To give him a hand as Controller of manna*
> *Mr. Hanna would deal with the discontent gaily*
> *By issuing excellent circulars daily.*
> *In one thousand these circulars daily would go forth*
> *'Fifty-Seven New Ways to Serve Manna,' and so forth*
> *'Food Values' 'Your Health — Don't You Want to Preserve It?'*
> *What! Manna monotonous! How do you serve it?*

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1 "A Poser for Mr. Hanna, *Halifax Chronicle*, September 1, 1917, p. 6.

2 "Notes and Comments," *Toronto Globe*, August 29, 1917, p. 6.

No troublesome problem he'd have as to price,
For the manna fell free, so he'd hand out advice.
And thus he will keep their attention engaged
And leave them no time sir, for feeling enraged.[3]

Hanna seemed prone to ironic coincidences; the fates did not favour a food controller whose name rhymed with 'manna.' Eight days after introducing restrictions on the serving of beef and bacon in public eating places, reports surfaced that the British were refusing to purchase any more Canadian bacon, on the grounds that it was far too expensive. Although Lord Rhondda cabled Hanna that these reports were "totally unfounded;" the British were indeed concerned with the prices they were paying for Canadian pork products.[4] Another problem, not entirely unforeseeable in a relatively unchecked free market economy, was that in many cases, whenever Hanna was rumoured to be 'considering' taking action on a particular article of food, that commodity frequently rose in price.[5] Given such circumstances, consumers could not be blamed for their animosity (or "Hannamosity," as the *Toronto Star* put it) towards Hanna and the entire concept of food control.[6]

Winning over public opinion was paramount if Hanna was to overcome his poor start. If Hanna was to convince all Canadians of the necessity of food conservation, he would have to make perhaps his strongest case to the women of Canada. They, in turn, could be expected to persuade recalcitrant family members of the need to keep a careful watch on the types and amounts of food consumed. This made practical sense as women, after all, were responsible for food preparation, and thus tended to control the family food budget. When ads for Cowans Cocoa asked women to "Enlist Your Kitchen in the War!," it was the same message that the Food Controller was also trying to convey. Into this traditionally private sphere the government now intruded, and a previously unchallenged area of female dominance was soon to be mobilized in the service of war. Prior to food control, food shopping and meal preparation had been constrained only by fiscal means, food availability, and the dietary preferences of her family. To these would soon be joined another, loftier consideration — feeding the Allies. As with other wartime measures, however, Canadians

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3 "If Moses Could Only Have Had Mr. Hanna!," *Manitoba Free Press*, September 11, 1917, p. 9.

4 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 167110, Lord Rhondda to Hanna, August 29, 1917.

5 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 366.

6 *Toronto Star*, October 3, 1917, p. 10.

would have to become acclimatized to this new food paradigm, one occasioned by wartime scarcity. But this extension of total war into the kitchen would not be automatic; it would have to be accepted by the women of Canada — and in the fall of 1917, Hanna's attention was turned to this vital task.

If Canada's food controllers had not been able to enlist the efforts of women, the entire enterprise would have been a non-starter. It would have been like "trying to make bricks without straw," as Henry B. Thomson, Canada's second Food Controller, once put it.[7] There was, however, little indication that the women of Canada would not support the initiative, despite the high price of food. Throughout the war, particularly in Anglo Canada, women's groups had been generally supportive of both the war and the government's policies. This is not to say that there would be no obstacles to overcome, for the cost of living issue had not disappeared, and as time passed, patience increasingly wore thin. "What is the use of a Food Controller," asked one exasperated "Citizen" in the *Toronto Star*, who wondered further that "If he cannot fix prices what use is there in having such a person?"[8] Hanna's verbose yet lethargic methods had thus far proved incapable of garnering much respect, for himself or his position. An editorial cartoon appearing in the *Globe* pictured Hanna sitting astride a pig (labelled 'food hog'), hitting it with a stick upon which was inscribed the phrase 'Lectures on Food Economy.' In the background, an amused-looking Uncle Sam remarked "Pardon me neighbour, but that ain't the way to butcher a hog!"[9] A concerted effort would be needed to bring the situation 'home' to Canadians, and in this Hanna was fortunate to have at his disposal a scheme that had been of service in Great Britain, and which would also find success in the U.S. — the Food Service Pledge drive.

Slated to begin the third week of September 1917, in eastern Canada the campaign fell under the direction of J.W. Robertson, the Chairman of the Central Advisory Committee, while in western Canada it was commanded by G.H. Clarke. Under their supervision, women's organizations, such as the Women's Auxillary of Ontario's Organization of Resources Committee, would distribute the pledge cards to local women's groups, whose members would conduct the actual canvass. The 'Food Pledge' read as follows:

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7 Henry B. Thomson, *Report of the Canada Food Board* (Ottawa, 1919), p. 64.

8 "What's the Good of a Food Controller," *Toronto Star*, September 5, 1917, p. 10.

9 "Speaking From Experience," (editorial cartoon) *Toronto Globe*, September 7, 1917, p. 3. See illustration.

> Realizing the gravity of the food situation and knowing that Great Britain and our Allies look to Canada to help shatter Germany's threat of starvation, I pledge myself and my household to carry out conscientiously the advice and direction of the food controller, that requested foodstuffs may be released for export to the Canadian divisions, the British forces and people, and the Allied armies and nations.[10]

The message was printed on two cards, which signers were directed to hang in their dining rooms and display in their front windows. At mealtimes, family members would thus be constantly reminded of the need to be abstemious in their eating habits, while placing the card in the front window made it easy to identify the neighbourhood food 'slackers' — publicity for the campaign called the window card "your Emblem of Honour."[11] Canvassers, however, did not merely distribute the cards; they also registered the names of those who agreed to sign the pledge, names that were used to compile a registry, kept at Food Control headquarters that provided a ready listing of willing participants.

Leading by example, pledge cards duly appeared in the front windows of Rideau Hall and the residences of both the Prime Minister and Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In a letter released to the press, Lady Borden told Hanna that she was honoured to sign the food pledge, having "for some time" attempted to put into practice the principles of food conservation.[12] The campaign was accompanied a series of patriotic advertisements that appeared in the press, stressing the profoundly 'maternal' nature of food conservation, and playing on the powerful (if misguided) image, so fundamental to the mythic construction of the Great War, that those on the homefront had built up of their warriors overseas.[13] "Vision Your Sons, Mothers of Canada!," ran one ad, "See your valiant boys — calm, grim, but cheerful — 'stand-to-arms' until the Hun's morning hate dies away."[14] It asked women to consider the consequences if the unthinkable should happen, "if, one morning there was no breakfast — no food to be had, and the word went down the lines that Canada had failed them." Here, food from Canada took on dual role, one practical, the other symbolic. It was only too true that, as the

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10 "Food Service Pledge Cards," *Ibid.*, August 4, 1917, p. 2. Note the similarity to the King's message of July 1917.

11 Toronto Star, September 11, 1917, p. 10.

12 "Sign Food Pledge — Duchess, Lady Borden Set Example," *Montreal Gazette*, September 17, p. 3.

13 The myth of the Great War, as constructed by Canadians, is examined by Jonathan Vance in *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the Great War* (Vancouver, 1997).

14 *Toronto Star*, September 11, 1917, p. 10. See illustration.

cliché goes, 'an army marches on its stomach,' but there was another, deeper meaning — an ample supply of food was a tangible indication that Canada was not 'breaking faith' with her troops, with her 'sons' overseas. In another ad, Canada was embodied by a genial female figure, standing tall between Canada's shores and the coast of Europe. With one hand she is receiving the sacrifices of food offered up to her by an endless line of Canadian housewives, and passing them, with the other hand, to eager Canadian soldiers, over whose heads shells are bursting. "Once More Canada Must Stand in the Gap," cried the ad, "Once More Must Hold the Lines of Communication."[15] It then compared the gallantry of Canadian troops in holding back "the Hunnish Hordes" to that of "Canada's Noble Women," who were "now called upon to Stand in the Gap and hold back the spectre of hunger from our troops." This powerful, if unsubtle, imagery sought to situate the food problem as a vital war question and a moral imperative. Sign the food pledge, conserve food, or else those shedding their blood for King and country, for an idealized Christian Civilization, would suffer, and what is worse, would do so in the knowledge that their mothers, sisters, and wives had refused to succor them. "Serve Our Heroes," the ad concluded, "Sign the Food Service Pledge."

With potent publicity such as this, the final results of the campaign were not surprising: well over one million pledge cards (936,000 in English, 143,000 in French) were distributed across the country throughout the fall of 1917, allowing the campaign to be judged, in the minds of many, a smashing success.[16] While, on the surface, these results are indeed impressive, and demonstrate that a good number of households did adopt the food saving pledge, it elides the fact that many canvassers met with opposition and objections that were rooted in two issues of major concern to women of the time: the ubiquitous cost of living debate, and the thorny question of prohibition.

Problems of interpretation had surfaced before the campaign had even begun. Days before the canvass was to begin, the Secretary of the Ontario Organization of Resources Committee, Dr. A. H. Abbott, was forced to issue a statement clarifying the nature of the pledge. It was not, as Dr. Abbott stated, a "thrift pledge," as some believed.[17] Spending less money on food was not the

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15 *Ibid.*, September 15, 1917, p. 16. See illustration.

16 Thomson, p. 64.

17 Abbott referred, in particular, to a statement made by a housewife who had informed the *Star* that she had no intention of signing the food pledge, as Mr. Hanna had "talked thrift from a $3,000 carpet." "Food Pledge Confusion," *Toronto*

objective, rather, it was to buy and serve the recommended substitutes for beef, bacon, and wheat, irrespective of price. If the substitutes proved to be more expensive, it remained the duty of Canadians to buy and eat the more expensive food.[18] As can be expected, this line of thinking provided anti-Hannanites with further opportunities to criticise the Food Controller. One correspondent to the *Toronto Star* suggested that Hanna should be forced to sign and live up to a pledge of his own, one in which he promised to finally "exercise the powers delegated to him" — i.e., price control.[19] Another pointed out that it was ludicrous to expect "the working people" to sign the pledge, as their wages, coupled with the high price of food, already forced them to economize to the maximum extent.[20] The editors of the *Globe* expressed similar concerns, wondering what the more hard-pressed consumers could possibly do to economize. At the same time, however, the reasons behind the campaign were based on irrefutable logic — the world shortage in food needed to be combated, lest hunger creep into the ranks of the Allies' fighting men. The *Globe* predicted, quite rightly, that there would be objections and protests, many based on Hanna's dismal performance and his refusal to fix prices. But all this, the *Globe* happily predicted, would not lead women to shirk their "further duty," for they would have the wisdom to see the greater picture, and to "do what is in their power to liberate more food for the armies of fighters, without which their cause and our cause may be lost."[21] In other words, despite their grievances, it was still the duty of consumers to save as much food as possible; the troops should not be allowed to suffer simply because Canada's Food Controller was proving to be a failure.

On September 18, over one thousand women spread out over the city of Toronto, while countless others took to the streets of smaller Ontario towns. In general, the first day of the campaign appeared to have gone relatively well, with most households agreeing to adopt the pledge. Still, there were a few "pro-Germans" uncovered, who, as the *Globe* somewhat chillingly related, were "reported to the proper authorities."[22] As the drive continued, more opposition was

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Star, September 13, 1917, p. 7.

18 Ibid.

19 "That Food Service Pledge," (letter to the editor) *Ibid.*, September 17, 1917, p. 8.

20 "Sign the Food Service Pledge," *Ibid.*, September 18, 1917, p. 8.

21 "Sign the Food Pledge," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, September 18, 1917, p. 4.

22 "Few refuse to Sign the Card," *Ibid.*, September 19, 1917, p. 1.

encountered, and canvassers began to report that a disturbing number of women were refusing to sign the pledge. While most of the householders approached were quite willing to cooperate, the *Star* reported that a good number were not quite so amenable. The eager band of largely middle-class women who had volunteered to conduct the canvass were plainly startled by the behaviour of some householders, perhaps of a lower social stratum. "In more than one instance," reported the *Star*, "women who opened the doors were positively rude to the distributors and ladies engaged in a patriotic work had doors slammed in their faces and had to listen to abuse when the cards were slipped through the letter boxes."[23] It also appeared that getting a signature did not guarantee total compliance, since not all who took the pledge actually placed the cards on display. Canvassers spoke of streets where few pledges were visible in front windows, despite the fact that many had been distributed in that locality. It is tempting to suggest that many accepted the cards simply to get the earnest ladies off their doorsteps. Overall, the objections that had been raised prior to pledge drive were repeated — that the high cost of living rendered further sacrifice impossible, and resistance was cemented by Hanna's failure to address this issue, vital to so many.

Some reasons for rejecting the pledge were somewhat colourful. One woman refused to sign because the government was, in her words, "no good." Another truculent housewife stated that she would not sign unless she could see Hanna's cellar, presumably to determine whether the rotund Food Controller was himself keeping to his own edicts. Many expressed their frustration over Hanna's actions (or inaction), protesting that if he was not going to do anything for them, then why should they do something for him? Even the threat that non-signers would be viewed as 'Huns' did not seem to work; when this argument was tried on one obstinate housewife, it backfired, as it "alone denied them her signature."[24] One canvasser reported that in three hours, she was able to call on thirty-nine homes, out of which seven refused to adopt the pledge. Thus, while most were willing to sign, it appears that an opinionated and not inconsiderable minority raised valid, and at times picturesque, objections.

The other main line of protest that emerged was based on an entirely different issue, one that was rooted in moral, rather than strictly economic, grounds. Various local branches of the Women's

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23 "Signing the Pledge," *Toronto Star*, September 20, 1917, p. 8.

24 "Wants to See Cellar," *Ibid.*, September 20, 1917, p. 8.

Christian Temperance Union passed resolutions calling on members to boycott the food pledge campaign, since the government had, so far, refused to prohibit the use of most grains in the making of alcoholic beverages. Food conservation, the Galt branch of the WCTU contended, should logically include a measure banning the manufacture of spirits, which generally involved the use of a considerable quantity of foodstuffs.[25] Other women's groups voiced similar objections. For example, in Listowel, Ontario, it was reported that, far from being distributed, the pledge cards were in fact sitting in the basement of the public library. The local Women's Patriotic League, whose job it had been to conduct the canvass, had recanted, passing a unanimous motion against circulating the pledge. The reason was simple, for when the group found out that over 50 million pounds of sugar had been employed, in Canada, for distillation purposes in the preceding year, they determined that for as long as food continued to be wasted in this sinful manner, it was not in fact "their duty to distribute and ask for the signing of the people of Canada. The general feeling," they asserted, "is that our women have been economizing and making sacrifices in every way possible to help win the war."[26] Until the government demonstrated its willingness to take tougher measures, temperence supporters were not about to extend their full cooperation.

It was quite clear that while generally successful, the campaign encountered resistance of some substance. Perhaps as a result of this, in late September, the Educational Department of the Food Controller's Office sent a telegram to the British Food Controller, asking them if it would be possible to secure a statement, from both the King of Belgium and the Premier of France, expressing their "appreciation of Canada's effort to conserve needed food for export to Allied armies and nations." This would, the telegram read, "help materially in Provincial Pledge signing campaign."[27] The British authorities were more than happy to comply, and helpfully sent along possible messages for their Canadian counterparts to consider, messages that received quick approval.[28] Canadians would soon hear that 'King Albert' had learned "with deep appreciation" of the endeavors currently underway in Canada to save the foodstuffs they vitally needed, while the 'French Premier' (whose

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25 "Galt WCTU Refuses to Sign Food Pledge," *Toronto Globe*, September 20, 1917, p. 14.

26 "Listowel Women Won't Circulate Cards," *Toronto Globe*, September 28, 1917, p. 3.

27 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102491, Walter Long, Colonial Secretary, to Duke of Devonshire, September 29, 1917.

28 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102492, Duke of Devonshire to Walter Long, September 29, 1917.

name was not even mentioned in the telegram) expressed his belief that Canada's "determination to spare no measure to ensure the supplies of wheat beef and bacon for the Allies is worthy of her magnificent soldiers who are today fighting on French soil." If this was not enough, Hanna himself received a vote of confidence from the 'French Premier,' who stated that "Food service as authorized by the Canadian Food Controller is a vital step in our progress to victory."[29] These types of messages from abroad (genuine or not), it was perhaps hoped, could shake Canadians out of their parochial-mindedness, making them aware of the higher stakes involved.

Eventually, the results of the campaign began to register. In London, Ontario, it was reported that seventy-five percent of householders had signed the pledge, a solid majority, but this also meant that fully one-quarter had not. Furthermore, of those who did sign, many signatures were reportedly received "under protest."[30] By October, the Ontario canvass was still far from complete; the *Toronto Star* reported that only one-third of rural districts had been covered, and the Food Controller's Office stated that it would be months before the final results would be known.[31] While it was clear that many women were more than willing to cooperate with the principles of food control, it had also become all too clear that many were disgruntled enough to refuse. As the Wartime Thrift Committee of Toronto discovered, in order to fully mobilize Canadian kitchens, "considerably more education" would be needed to bring the necessity of wartime food service "home to the average household."[32] Hanna still had a way to go to convince all the women of Canada to support his measures. Apart, perhaps, from the Wartime Elections Act of July 1917, this was the first time that the government had tried to muster the women of Canada in such a direct and explicitly gender-demarcated manner, and it may have been disheartening to find that opposition existed. As the basis of food conservation efforts, without their unqualified cooperation, food control had little chance of success.

Towards late September, reports began to circulate that Hanna was ready to make a firm and

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29 Long to Devonshire, pg. 102491.

30 "What Women Are Doing," *Toronto Globe*, October 4, 1917, p. 10.

31 *Toronto Star*, October 11, 1917, p. 19.

32 "Within a Woman's Vision," *Toronto Globe*, October 6, 1917, p. 4.

definite statement on the feasibility of price controls.[33] On September 26, he finally laid out the specific reasons why, in his opinion, price control was not workable. He noted that his entire purpose as Food Controller had been profoundly misunderstood by the people of Canada ("very grave and mischievous misconceptions"), provoked by the unthinking comments of certain members of the press. Price control, Hanna contended, would lead to the "disruption of all trades," a collapse in real estate values, and chaos in the labour market. Despite the difficulties caused by current high food prices, the disasters inherent to the imposition of price fixing made it impossible for the Food Controller to consider what he termed "radical measures."[34] In order to enlighten those unthinking citizens who still believed that food prices should indeed come within the grasp of the government, Hanna helpfully enumerated the "seven main factors" which regulated food prices. The number one reason was, of course, supply and demand, which, thanks to the growing agricultural labour shortage, was especially relevant at this time. Secondly, the great demand for, and purchase of, Canadian foodstuffs by overseas buyers also limited the supply available for domestic use, leading to higher prices. Third, inefficient distribution of foodstuffs within Canada allowed for disparate prices and uncertain supply levels of various commodities to prevail around the country. These first three reasons were, on some level, valid economic arguments; all of these factors, in some concrete way, had an effect on food prices. The next four reasons, however, were slightly less certain, and open to interpretation. The other factors governing the price of food in Canada, according to Hanna, were: "the food speculator ... the greedy middleman ... the supernumerary, unnecessary and inefficient middleman, and ... the waster."[35] Hanna placed most of the blame on number six: "the unnecessary and inefficient middleman," a scourge who was beyond the powers of the Food Controller, and whose removal was impossible anyway, as it would bring "disaster upon the whole country." The seemingly endless chain of distribution from wholesaler on down to retailer was, in Hanna's opinion, "one of the most serious economic wastes of the day." As for his own capabilities, Hanna again reminded Canadians that it was not his place to deal with the economic dislocations caused by the war, but rather to work to bring about a decrease in food consumption and an increase

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33 "Mr. Hanna to Fix Prices or Give the Reasons Why," *Ibid.*, September 24, 1917, p. 1.

34 "Regulation of Food Prices Not Feasible, Says Mr. Hanna," *Toronto Star*, September 26, 1917, p. 5.

35 Ibid.

in production. Prices, as high as they were, were not and could not come within his jurisdiction.

Hanna's statement was not what many had wanted to hear, and calls for his resignation began to be heard.[36] Consumers and their champions in the press were especially unimpressed with Hanna's arguments; even the relatively objective *Globe* registered its disappointment with the Food Controller's performance. "The consumer," it wrote, "asks for cheaper food and Mr. Hanna lectures him on basic economic laws."[37] Pointing to the seemingly enormous profits being made by the packing houses, the paper noted that the inefficient middleman was in fact less dangerous than the efficient one. Why, continued the editorial, was it possible for Lord Rhondda to protect consumers from the "predatory activities of middlemen and monopolists," but not Hanna? In Britain, prices had been controlled, and without the horrible consequences prophesied by Hanna. The paper argued that close relations between the government and "the Big Interests" prevailed in Canada and were the root of the problem — the state was willing to protect big business rather than its people. Ironically, the paper concluded that it was clear "that Mr. Hanna regards himself as more responsible for the supply of foodstuffs to the Allies overseas than for the protection of public interests in Canada." Hanna himself would have strongly endorsed that statement; it was the very thing he been trying to get Canadians to understand, and comments like this made it plainly evident that the very purpose of Food Control — its very reason for being — was that which Canadians disagreed with most. Canadians were willing to recognize that as an ally, Canada had a responsibility to assist its partners overseas in every way possible. "But," the *Globe* sagely declared, "the government of Canada has a duty also to its own citizens." Food control found itself stuck between the broader interest of winning the war, and the narrower, daily interests of its citizens — Hanna had thus far proven himself incapable of reconciling those divergent interests.

Hanna found unlikely allies in his stand against controlling food prices. Food dealers were not fans of the Food Controller, but they did applaud his resistance to price regulation. On almost every other matter, however, the two sides disagreed, leading to a state of antipathy that did not dissipate but which seemed to deepen with every regulation Hanna introduced. The canned goods embargo had caused anger, but this had arisen more out of the high-handed manner with which

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36 "Want a Man to Control Price," *Toronto Globe*, October 5, 1917, p. 8.

37 "The High Cost of Living," (editorial), *Ibid.*, September 27, 1917, p. 4.

Hanna had introduced it than with the substance of the legislation. Those in the food business were dismayed by the fact that Hanna did not appear to take their interests into account, and the lack of consultation irritated grocers, who shook their heads at the folly of having a food controller who possessed no experience in the food trade, and who, it appeared, had no interest in listening to those who did. Like the *Toronto Star*'s anonymous "Citizen," the *Canadian Grocer* also wondered "what's the good of a food controller?," concluding that they too had not yet "been able to land on an answer that entirely satisfies us."[38] Hanna's dramatic denunciation of the "unnecessary and inefficient middleman" did not improve his relations with food dealers, who again felt unfairly singled-out. The Food Controller, wrote the *Canadian Grocer*, had only gotten "part of the truth."[39] That 'part-truth' was the notion that price regulation was impossible, a stance with which the paper was in full agreement. "Drastic interference with marketing processes," stated the paper, "would bring the whole fabric of trade tumbling down like a house of cards and bury many of the howlers themselves in the landslide." The editors, however, also felt compelled to warn their readers that the "fallacies" into which Hanna had strayed would only lead to "further attacks on the derided 'middlemen' — the wholesalers and the retailers."[40] Hanna, it seemed, could satisfy no one. By the end of September, it appeared that Canadians on the home front, whether producers, dealers, or consumers, had not yet reached a point where they were willing to sacrifice their own personal comforts for a 'greater' cause — the necessary level of 'urgency' had not yet been reached.

They would soon be reminded that there was, in fact, a war on. In October, official circles in Canada were atwitter over the impending visit of Lord Northcliffe, the renowned press baron and head of the British War Ministry. His agenda included a conference with the embattled Canadian Food Controller, in order to discuss the food situation in Canada. In a speech given at the Canadian Club in Montreal, Northcliffe — a master of public persuasion — did his best to defend Hanna and to inculcate in his listeners the same sense of urgency that was being felt in Britain over the uncertain supply of foodstuffs. Northcliffe declared that, so far, he had seen "no signs of food

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38 *Canadian Grocer*, September 14, 1917, p. 26.

39 *Ibid.*, September 28, 1917, p. 21.

40 Ibid.

control as he had known it in England,"[41] and doubted that Canadians fully understood the "urgent insistence of strict food control."[42] As Northcliffe explained the increasingly rigid system of food regulation that was currently underway in Britain, the audience, according to the *Times*, reacted with "considerable surprise." References to the anti-profiteering work of Lord Rhondda elicited "loud applause," but unfortunately for Hanna, "references to the work of Canadian Food Controller did not excite much enthusiasm."[43] The attitude of the crowd that came to hear Northcliffe is emblematic of the overall reaction that Canadians at this time had to food control — the situation was simply not being taken seriously enough. Perhaps sensing this, Northcliffe bluntly told his listeners that unless Canadians responded to food control with as much spirit as had the British, soldiers' rations would inevitably suffer, and that the sacrifice had to be made by all the links in the food chain, including consumers.[44]

Besieged, it seemed, from all sides, Hanna continued to persevere throughout the fall, setting up a series of committees to consider matters such as the milk supply, the price of potatoes, and the possibility of a sugar shortage. Allied cooperation in food matters, at Hoover's insistence, had also progressed. In late August an agreement was reached that established the Inter-Allied Meats and Fats Executive, a buying agency that would take over all Allied purchases of meat from North America.[45] The policy of exhortation and tinkering with production continued. In Canada, the ever-increasing price of butter, the outcome of the shrinking of the milk supply, led to a strong popular demand for the legalization of oleomargarine, which took place on October 25, 1917. Hanna seemed to realize that keeping the public informed of his many activities would help garner support, and perhaps counter his 'inactive' reputation. Thus, in October he announced that henceforth a bulletin, later named the *Canadian Food Bulletin*, would be issued on a fortnightly basis. Drawn up by the Educational department, the newsletter was distributed to some 30,000 local luminaries, including clergymen, politicians, educators, doctors, union heads, financiers, and judicial representatives. It was also sent to various women's groups, clubs, professional

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41 "Saw No Signs of Food Control Here," *Montreal Gazette*, October 10, 1917, p. 5.

42 "Canada and Food Problems," *Times* (London), October 10, 1917, p. 5.

43 "Saw No Signs of Food Control Here," *Montreal Gazette*, October 10, 1917, p. 5.

44 "Canada and Food Problems," *Times* (London), October 10, 1917, p. 5.

45 Barnett, *British Food Policy*, p. 174.

associations, "6,000 of the leading business firms of Canada," and virtually every newspaper and magazine in the nation.[46] With the *Canadian Food Bulletin*, the Food Controller had at his disposal a powerful tool of persuasion and propaganda — it certainly informed citizens of the activities of the department, but it also included ample coverage of the food situation around the world, which was presented in stark and desperate terms, making the modest sacrifices of Canadians seem small, their complaints petty and self-serving.

Hanna's problematic relationship with the food dealers of Canada took an even more unfavorable turn with the passage of P.C. 2959, which made it illegal to sell "any foods known as breakfast foods, or cereals, or flour or other foods which are the products of wheat, oats, barley, rye, rice, peas, beans, buckwheat, Indian corn or lentils in original packages of less weight than *twenty pounds*."[47] Retailers were especially upset with this order, the purpose of which was to ensure that wheat flour substitutes (such as Graham flour) were available to consumers at a reasonable price. Reaction was not positive; the move was "foolish and futile," according to one grocer, and indicative of Hanna's lack of knowledge of just how the food business functioned.[48] They argued that it would add to the grocer's cost of doing business, and would not help food conservation in any way.[49] The order went against the idea of 'progressive' food marketing, of putting usefully packaged quantities of food in the consumer's hands, not to mention the sanitary issues that a return to the bulk barrel raised. Especially upsetting was the fact that Hanna's actions had apparently been prompted by reports that housewives were unable to purchase the suggested substitutes, or, as there had been less demand for them, that they were sold only in small packages, for steep prices. Hanna had once again acted without consulting those in the food business, who now asserted that, contrary to what consumers claimed, not only did they carry the substitutes in question, but that they also sold them in bulk. Instead, the paper sneered, the Food Controller had acted on information gleaned "from this or that housewife, or this or that women's club," rather than the statements furnished by

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46 Thomson, pp. 28-29.

47 NAC, RG17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, P.C. 2959, October 20, 1917.

48 *Canadian Grocer*, November 7, 1917, pp. 22-24.

49 *Ibid.*, October 26, 1917, p. 134.

those in the trade.[50] Grocers bitterly resented Hanna for placing more value on the opinions of housewives than on those of professional food retailers. The *Canadian Grocer* even printed a special reader response form in its November 2 issue, entitled "Is Mr. Hanna Right or Wrong?."

> Mr. Hanna states that grocers do not handle cereals in bulk. He claims that he has many letters to prove that when the housekeeper goes to the grocery store to buy Graham flour or cornmeal, she is told the grocer does not carry it, or is handed a brightly lithographed package, that actually costs more than white flour. Mr. Grocer! Is this true? Will you help us find out?[51]

The survey asked grocers whether or not they handled such products as Graham flour, cornmeal, whole wheat, rolled oats, and rice, and if they sold these goods in bulk. It also solicited the general opinions of readers on the regulation. The results of the survey revealed that over ninety percent of respondents sold at least some of the substitutes in bulk, and that readers registered "an almost unanimous opposition" to the regulation.[52]

Retailers were not the only ones upset by the regulation, as makers of breakfast cereals, for example, were similarly annoyed by what seemed to them to be a ridiculous regulation. W.F. Roome, of the Canadian branch of the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Co. (Kellogg's), took up his company's case with George Foster, the Minister of Trade and Commerce. Roome appealed to Foster on the grounds of public health — Cornflakes' airtight packaging ensured that the product was sanitary — the bulk sale of breakfast cereals would cause them "to deteriorate rapidly," and "would result in the waste of valuable and healthful foods."[53] Roome later wrote to Hanna that, as it pertained to his company's product, the regulation was "impractical and unworkable,"[54] and in a separate letter he pleaded with Foster to do something.[55] Foster took the matter up with Hanna; to the Food Controller he wrote that he knew Dr. Roome "very well" and hoped that Hanna "could give special consideration" to the case. This Hanna apparently did, for on December 6 Roome conveyed his thanks to Foster for assisting him in obtaining a special license to continue selling

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50 Ibid., November 2, 1917, p. 19.

51 Ibid., November 2, 1917, p. 24.

52 Ibid., November 16, 1917, pp. 19-21.

53 NAC, RG20 Industry, Trade and Commerce, vol. 45, file 18268, "Food Controller Regulations," W.F. Roome to George Foster, October 30, 1917.

54 NAC, RG20 Industry, Trade and Commerce, vol. 45, file 18268, Roome to Hanna, November 10, 1917.

55 NAC, RG20 Industry, Trade and Commerce, vol. 45, file 18268, Roome to Foster, November 12, 1917.

Corn Flakes in its normal packaging.[56] The breakfast food debacle furnishes one example of Hanna's weakness. As an outsider, he did not understand what a long and delicate system the modern food chain was in a cash society. Like any other attempt at regulation, you could not hope to influence it at just one link; the whole chain had to be consulted and regulated.

Another development in the fall of 1917 concerned ministerial supervision of the Food Control department. Borden, who had finally been able to cobble together a Union government, was about to embark upon an extremely crucial election campaign, and demands on his time would increase. On October 17 the Prime Minister, who as President of the Privy Council had been the ultimate authority in charge in Food Control, told Hanna that he could no longer devote enough attention to the department's activities. The restructuring of the government offered an excellent opportunity to make changes. Borden was of the opinion that since Hanna was "a prominent Conservative" it would be a good political move to place him "under the direction of one of the Liberal members," and thereby project the supposed non-partiality of the new government. When offered the choice of reporting either to Newton Rowell, the new President of the Privy Council, or Thomas Crerar, the new Minister of Agriculture, Hanna referenced his close relationship with the former Ontario Liberal leader, and intimated that he would "greatly prefer an assignment under which he would report to and confer to" Rowell.[57] Rowell, who was also a staunch temperance advocate, must have been pleased by the Food Controller's decision, reached in early November, to prohibit the use of grain in the distillation of liquor, beginning on December 1, 1917.[58] A victory too, for those women who had threatened the success of the Food Service Pledge drive with their 'intemperate' demands for prohibition.

The prohibition legislation was accompanied by another, curious Order-in-Council, one that either amplified, or merely specified more precisely, the extent of Hanna's powers. It stated that the Food Controller had the right to cancel licenses, prescribe sale weights, and importantly, could regulate "the maximum amount of any food or food product that may be bought or sold by any one person." Further, he could also fix the "maximum profits or price (or both) to be charged ... on any

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56 NAC, RG20 Industry, Trade and Commerce, vol. 45, file 18268 Roome to Foster, December 6, 1917.

57 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 102499, Borden to Newton Rowell, October 17, 1917.

58 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, P.C. 3116, November 2, 1917.

food."[59] At this point, compulsory rationing was not a practical policy, so propaganda and exhortation were used to curtail consumption levels amongst Canadians. Controlling the sales and profits of wholesalers and retailers, who were far fewer in number, was a more feasible approach. This order, giving the Food Controller "largely increased powers" did not impress the *Canadian Grocer*, which sniffed that "Whatever opinion the trade may have of Mr. Hanna's activities, he is evidently in high feather with the government."[60] The legislation may have been prompted by two factors: the Food Controller's Office was in the midst of its most ambitious project yet — developing a licensing system that would bring food dealers under the direct control of the department. Hanna may also have felt it necessary to reiterate the fact that he indeed possessed the right to regulate profits and the selling of food. Another problem had emerged in late October, after Hanna had announced that a sugar shortage was looming. Upon the release of this disturbing news, many consumers repeated the actions of August, 1914, and had begun hoarding sugar. It was perhaps prudent to have an order on the books specifically outlining the right of the Food Controller to limit the amount that any consumer could have of any commodity.[61] P.C. 1460, which had laid out the powers and duties of the Food Controller, had been sweeping, but vague; more precise wording might have been felt to be of some benefit.

The licensing system was devised by a special committee, chaired by P.B. Tustin, head of the Food and Dairy Department, Winnipeg, and included (significantly) E.M. Trowern, the Secretary of the Dominion Board of the Retail Merchants' Association. Hanna, it seemed, was at least learning from his mistakes. The regulations arrived at were, according to Hanna, such "as practically to render profiteering impossible, or at least, immediately discoverable and punishable."[62] Regular reports, on a monthly basis, were to be required of all licensees, who could find their right to do business revoked should they not live up to the standards as set out by the Office of the Food Controller. Hanna announced that this new system would not harm the "legitimate dealer," but rather would "force out the speculator and the parasite. The interests of the consumer shall be

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59 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, P.C. 3214, November 3, 1917.

60 "Further Powers for Food Controller," *Canadian Grocer*, November 23, 1917, p. 20.

61 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1917, p. 368.

62 Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller*, p. 45.

protected in every possible way."[63] Hanna proudly declared that his Office had already "licensed the milling and packing industries," and further, had "gained effective control over the refining and distribution of sugar." The increased regulation of their business activities may have engendered a new spirit of 'cooperation' within the souls of Canada's food dealers. Now that Hanna was requiring much fuller involvement from grocers (and, it appeared, actually consulting with them), the *Canadian Grocer* set about mending some fences. On December 7, the trade paper extended an olive branch to the Food Controller, by informing its readers that "This paper, and the merchants throughout the country, through its columns, have been handing out some pretty severe criticism to the Food Controller, in regard to some of his actions, directed as he believed toward the lowering of the cost of living. That is all destructive criticism, now we need something constructive."[64] Stricter measures, it appeared, would go a long way toward convincing people that the government was in fact serious when it came to food, a shift in approach which would become even more evident in the months ahead.

While Hanna may have failed to address the cost of living, the policies and regulations passed under his stewardship were not entirely ineffective. Fish, for instance, had become a legitimate food choice in many Canadian homes, and much less white flour was being consumed. The 'meatless' days in public eating houses had succeeded in saving a considerable amount of beef and bacon. Comparable restrictions on meat in private homes, it was argued, could result in much vaster amounts being conserved. This may have been so, but as *Maclean's* pointed out "what a system of spying it would require to keep the law enforced."[65] Exhorting the public to comply voluntarily with the principles of food conservation smacked much less of "German methods." Instead, consumers were bombarded with conservation messages, which began to land at every angle. Businesses began to insert food control messages into their ads; Toronto's Murray-Kay department store asked customers to eat one more potato per day, instead of another slice of bread.[66] An ad for Bovril advised Canadians that "taking" their product was an excellent way to replace the

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63 William J. Hanna, "The Prices of Food in Canada," *Saturday Night*, January 5, 1917, p. 11.

64 "Have You a Suggestion for the Food Controller,?" *Canadian Grocer*, December 7, 1917, p. 27.

65 Ethel M. Chapman, "Voluntary Rationing at Home," *Maclean's*, January, 1918, pp. 42-43, 62-63.

66 *Toronto Globe*, January 5, 1918, p. 10.

nourishment lost through food saving.[67] Readers of periodicals and newspapers became familiar with figures such as "Mrs. Oconomee,"[68] and visitors to Toronto's City Hall were no longer offered complimentary refreshments.[69] A window display at Simpson's preached "the gospel of the clean plate," and told shoppers that "We must lick the platter if we'd also lick the Kaiser."[70] As they had been in matters of drink and military manpower, churchgoers were not safe from the propaganda barrage; in December 1917, Hanna issued a letter to clergymen across the country, asking them to "make known to your congregations the desperate world shortage of food and the tremendous responsibility resting upon us in Canada to feed our soldiers overseas and to support the Allied cause with our food resources."[71] Food dealers were asked to refrain from using perishable food as part of their window displays, and in turn consumers were asked to "use their influence," and refrain from patronizing any shop that was not heeding this request.[72]

From the Food Controller's Office came advice on how every Canadian could make a difference merely by following a few simple food-saving principles. For example, pork consumption was discouraged, unless one was "engaged in heavy manual work." Meat was to be consumed at only one meal per day, and women were warned against 'displaying' the roast on the dinner table, which would only serve as a temptation to overeat. People were encouraged to avoid candy, for there were "other delicious confections sweetened with honey, molasses and dark sugars" which were just as satisfying. Bakers were urged to omit icing from cakes, and all were cautioned against indulgences such as sweetened beverages and ice cream.[73] While most of the advice furnished by the Food Controller's Office was, unsurprisingly, geared toward women, special encouragement was directed toward men as well. "Most men," noted *Maclean's*, "look at the food question as something that doesn't concern them, as something for the 'womenfolk' and the Food

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67 *Ibid.*, January 5, 1918, p. 14.

68 "Mrs. Oconomee Gives a Lesson," *Toronto Globe*, January 10, 1918, p. 8.

69 "Food Control at City Hall," *Ibid.*, January 8, 1918, p. 7.

70 *Canadian Grocer*, January 25, 1918, p. 21.

71 NAC, RG13 Justice, series A-2, volume 217, file 1917-2195, "Food Controller."

72 NAC, RG13 Justice, series A-2, volume 217, file 1917-2195, "Food Controller," Press release, Educational Department, Food Controller's Office, January 17, 1918.

73 "Voluntary Saving," *Maclean's*, January, 1918, p. 72.

Controller to look after. But this attitude is wrong."[74] Men, the periodical declared, could do many things to help in the food department, not the least of which was welcoming "frugal meals at home cheerfully." They could also eat light lunches, preferably at eating establishments that upheld the food regulations.

Despite modest successes and Hanna's own best efforts, the Food Controller was, by January 1918, none the less viewed with near unanimous disdain, his hesitant nature ridiculed, his actions judged a failure. Hanna however, did have his defenders. Two of Canada's major periodicals, *Saturday Night* and *Maclean's*, were both generally supportive of the Food Controller's endeavors, and of the man himself. In November, an article in *Maclean's* tried to portray Hanna in a light more sympathetic than that of others. It had reached a point, noted the author, that nothing positive was said about the Food Controller. The fact that his services were rendered on a volunteer basis served "only to heighten our suspicion."[75] Even his strong work ethic and 'frugal' lifestyle did not commend Hanna to the public, for "A Food Controller in the Dominion of Canada in the year 1917 can not fail to be a villain. If he were in England, or in the U.S., or Paraguay, he might be otherwise, but in Canada not the great Gabriel himself could keep his wings clean." The author reminded readers that Hanna had taken on a job that few others would want, and that "half a dozen Canadians of distinction had an opportunity to look over the Controllership before Hanna volunteered. They looked, they sniffed, and they turned their backs." Far from deserving the ignominy being heaped upon him, Hanna should be lauded for taking on such a difficult job. The article drew a melancholy picture of the man, whom it portrayed as "alone, distrusted, unsung and damned, the man who rashly volunteered to play butler to the Canadian family," who "boards a bob-tailed Ottawa streetcar and plods, absent-mindedly to his shabby offices in an old rat-trap across the business section of the town." But the criticism, at times personal, that had followed Hanna like a dark cloud for many months would not have to be been borne for much longer. As 1917 drew to a close, so too did the Food Controller's will to continue in his position. After discussing the matter with Borden on January 19, Hanna's formal resignation crossed the Prime Minister's desk on

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74 "What Men Must Do," *Ibid.*, February 1918, p. 8.

75 *Maclean's*, November 1917, p. 43.

January 24, 1918.[76]

The reasons for Hanna's departure are ambiguous. Officially, he felt that he could not continue to hold the post of Food Controller "without serious impairment to his private interests,"[77] but what, exactly he meant by 'private interests' is unclear. Shortly following his resignation, Hanna abandoned politics altogether, becoming the President of Imperial Oil, the company whom he had served for many years. As R.J. McFall, the Cost of Living Commissioner, later wrote, two factors in particular had made Hanna's term as Food Controller especially difficult: his strong corporate ties, which "did not render him popular with the masses," and his "strong party ties," which "injured the effectiveness of his work during the political campaign which was in progress."[78] Samuel Todd, who had worked closely with Hanna, believed that circumstances outside of the Food Controller's own control had worked against his success. In a 1919 letter to Arthur Meighen, Todd claimed that the "political chaos ... which resulted in the formation of Union government" had adversely affected Hanna's effectiveness.[79] Borden and his government were so preoccupied with other matters that they failed to take either a "strong stand themselves," or to arm Hanna with the necessary authority (or independence) to handle food control on his own terms. Another factor working against Hanna was the undeveloped nature of international food control measures. For most of 1917, Allied governments did not coordinate their purchases, meaning that competitive buying between agents (at times from the same country) drove up prices. Todd asserted that only after "much urging" from Hanna, and a "stern warning" by Hoover, did the European buyers agree to centralize their North American purchases.

Canada's future food controller would be in a much better position than Hanna, as the domestic foundation for food regulation had been laid, international food control had progressed, and the Canadian government seemed more settled, and considerably more willing to take food control seriously. Hanna's work, while not as dynamic or as smoothly-run as it could have been, had still been quite valuable in introducing Canadians to the complexion of regulation in a modern

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76 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. II, 1969, p. 116.

77 "New Canadian Food Chief," *New York Times*, January 25, 1918, p. 10.

78 McFall, p. 194. McFall also noted, somewhat cryptically, that Hanna had been "pushed aside when his back was turned."

79 NAC, Meighen Papers, p. 951-954, Samuel E. Todd to Arthur Meighen, September 18, 1919.

society. As Todd wrote, "neither the strong personality of Mr. Thomson" (Hanna's successor) "nor the radical tendencies of Mr. Crerar could enlarge upon or find weaknesses in the foundation already laid." For all his faults, Hanna and his staff had constructed a solid base on which future efforts would rest. He had also taken the food 'problem' in Canada as far as moral suasion and patriotism could carry it; beyond exhorting changed behaviour, Hanna discovered that actual intervention in the food system was fraught with difficulty. He seemed to be forever condemned to play the role of part policeman and part exhorter of patriotism in matters of national nutrition, and was constantly whipsawed between Canada's fixed international commitments on the food front and the much softer sphere of domestic food production and consumption. Also, one must not forget that Hanna was appointed by and served under Borden, a man that John English, in his book *The Decline of Politics*, argued expected far too much of human nature. Borden was convinced that the crisis of the war would 'elevate' Canadians' social consciousness, that they would gladly 'sacrifice' in the interests of a higher ideal — sacrifice as soldiers, as drinkers, and here as consumers. The Union Government was to be a higher form of government, one beyond venial considerations (such as profiteers versus the cost of living) and one dedicated to a higher good. Hanna, regrettably, discovered that most people left their higher purpose at the front door of the grocery store.

The Canada Food Board: The 'Entrenchment' of Food Control

For two-and-a-half weeks after Hanna's resignation, Canadians were unsure of the future of food regulation. Would the government continue with the *status quo*? Who would take over as Food Controller? The latter question was answered fairly quickly, with the naming of Henry B. Thomson as Hanna's successor. Then, on February 11, 1918, they awoke to the news that the Office of the Food Controller was no more, and that a new agency — the Canada Food Board — stood in its place. The new Food Board, wrote the *Toronto Star*, was in fact "the first step in the Government's campaign for greater food production."[80] Despite the extensive sowing of wheat and other crops that had taken place over the last few years, the yields in 1917 were below expectations, and an even greater effort was hoped for. Pressure on the Canadian harvest was building; Herbert

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80 "Canada Food Board Replaces Controller," *Toronto Star*, February 11, 1918, p. 1.

Hoover had earlier informed Hanna that "the military activity and participation of the United States depends upon the bread-stuff production in Canada and the U.S. in 1918."[81] In late January, a meeting between representatives of all the provincial departments of agriculture discussed ways in which production could be increased, and there were plans for a further conference (between the provincial premiers) to take place in February, which would also consider the question.[82] It was clear that a renewed emphasis on production was vitally needed, and it was also clear that the experiment with food control had thus far not lived up to expectations. The resignation of W.J. Hanna and the general reorganization of the government gave Borden the chance to expand the structure of Canadian food control, and to transform the Office of the Food Controller into a larger, more authoritative body that would tackle both production and conservation in a more aggressive manner.

Henry B. Thomson, the individual chosen to head the new regulatory agency, was unlike Hanna in many ways. Whereas Hanna came from the heart of Canada's industrial and political core (southern Ontario), Thomson hailed from one of the country's furthest western reaches, namely Victoria, British Columbia. Hanna was a longtime politician, who for a while had been one of the most influential Tories in Ontario. Prior to becoming Assistant Food Controller in September, and even then, Thomson was not well known, except in his home town of Victoria, were he was prominent, and which he had represented for three terms in the provincial legislature.[83] Hanna was a lawyer with close ties to big business, while Thomson was immersed in the world of small business, as a director of the Turner-Beeton Company, wholesale merchants. As such, he brought "a training in business systems and business needs," which the *Canadian Grocer* believed would serve as a "safeguard to the trade at large."[84] He was also, as R.J. McFall noted, "a man who delighted in doing things whether or not they were popular."[85] The two men also presented a stark physical contrast — Thomson's tall, broad-shouldered frame towered over Hanna's somewhat short and stocky build. It was as if the government wanted the second Food Controller to be as different from

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81 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 122738, Herbert Hoover to W.J. Hanna, January 9, 1918.

82 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 53397, T.A. Crerar to Borden, January 23, 1918.

83 "A Change in the Food Controllership," *Canadian Grocer*, February 1, 1918, p. 19.

84 Ibid.

85 McFall, p. 194.

the first as possible; perhaps it believed that this way, it could avoid the mistakes and missteps that had occurred under Hanna's regime. The two were identical, however, in one important respect — both were strong Conservatives. Thomson, who now took over "the hardest and most thankless task in the Dominion," would have a more elaborate framework at his disposal in the newly-created Canada Food Board.[86] Having been a part of the Food Controller's staff for several months, he knew the risks and challenges inherent to the task he was about to take on. Thus, *Saturday Night* decided that it was not in fact essential to "warn him that he takes his life into his hands."[87]

The new Food Board was a larger agency with much broader powers, which came under the direct authority of the federal department of agriculture. The historical record remains frustratingly silent as to why, exactly, Borden decided to create a stronger food control agency. Rumours in the press held that the alteration was "an effort to enlarge the scope of the activities of the department, to correlate the focus of production and conservation, and so to enable a broader scheme to be formulated."[88] One can speculate that straightened circumstances overseas prompted a more rigourous approach; perhaps the government became belatedly aware of the critical nature of the food situation; this was not something that could be 'played with,' as victory could very well hinge on Canada's efforts. Overall, the aim of the Food Board was broadly similar to that of the Office of the Food Controller, but its approach was slightly different, emphasizing production to a much greater extent. Perhaps recognizing that the work of food control was far too extensive for one individual to handle, the duties and responsibilities were divided amongst three offices. While Thomson took over as Food Controller and Director of Food Conservation, two other positions were also created — Director of Food Production, filled by the Hon. Charles A. Dunning, Provincial Treasurer of Saskatchewan, and Director of Agricultural Labour, taken up by James D. McGregor, who had also been the deputy Food Controller for the western provinces. This decentralization of power had the further benefit of avoiding the close public association of one individual with Food Control; while the new Food Board would come in for its fair share of criticism, it never reached the same *ad hominem* degree as that levelled at Hanna. The new 'Unionist' spirit prevailed here as well,

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86 "Hanna the Food Controller," *Saturday Night*, February 2, 1918, p. 9.

87 "Hanna Out and Thomson In," *Ibid.*, February 9, 1918, p. 2.

88 "Food Committee in Place of Food Controller," *Canadian Grocer*, February 24, 1918, p. 24.

for while Thomson was a firm Conservative, both Dunning and McGregor were strong Liberals, which, in Borden's words, made it obvious that assembling the Board "was dictated not by party but by national considerations."[89] Another important change was the fact that all three directors were from Western Canada; Dunning hailed from Regina, while McGregor was from Brandon. This, it was doubtlessly hoped, would assist them in their efforts to encourage increased production from the farmers on the prairies, upon whom most of the burden would be placed. In western Canada, as John Herd Thompson has pointed out, Hanna had been derided as the "Eastern Canadian Food Dictator," a man whose regulations seemed geared towards those living in central Canada. As could be expected in a country as regionally polarized as Canada, the new Board prompted criticism — voices from the east now complained that food control was "too definitely associated with the interests and needs of the west."[90]

Despite changes in leadership and authority, there was continuity elsewhere in the Food Control department. The capable Samuel Todd stayed on as secretary, the regulations promulgated by Hanna remained in force, and the policies that were currently being implemented, such as the licensing system, continued apace. As with the Food Controller, the Food Board's main objective was to find out just how much food Canada needed for its own purposes, and to take whatever steps were deemed necessary to increase the supply and to facilitate the movement of the remainder for Allied use. To do this, the Board was empowered to "generally direct the production, conservation, and distribution of food supplies" in Canada, and like its predecessor, considered wheat, meats, fats and sugar to be the food supplies most essential for shipment overseas.[91] The Board was given free rein to work closely with the provincial governments, as cooperation at the local level would be needed to actually implement and police the Food Board's regulations. Reflecting the new emphasis on production, the Board had a greater interest in the disposition of labour resources and agricultural activity in the Dominion. They were authorized to "mobilize and utilize on a voluntary basis the farm labour resources of Canada," and to eliminate the waste associated with "idle land" fit for agriculture. Under the Food Board, Canada's productive resources were to be maximized to the

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89 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. II, 1969, p. 122.

90 Ibid.

91 NAC, RG17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, O.C. 344, February 11, 1918; Thomson, p. 5.

greatest extent possible.

On February 14 and 15, 1918, soon after the creation of the Food Board, representatives from the dominion and provincial governments of Canada held a conference at which the food question was discussed at some length. Thomson and Dunning presented the dire situation facing the Allies, and outlined Canada's ability to help alleviate the problem. To this end, the Food Board had prepared a 'Memorandum of Proposals,' which outlined a plan of cooperation between the provinces and the dominion, in the hopes of realizing a greater food surplus in the coming year.[92] Approved by the conference, the plan presaged many of the initiatives and schemes that were later undertaken by the Canada Food Board. It also emphasized the fact that, in a country as vast as Canada, cooperation between various levels of government was critical to the success of food control. Perhaps mindful of the criticism that had emerged from the west under Hanna's reign, provincial committees were created that would act as liaisons between the federal Food Board and provincial authorities. The committees, such as the already-existing Ontario Organization of Resources Committee, were to inform the Board of local food needs and conditions, which they would glean from a series of municipal committees. This information would then be taken into account by the Food Board when formulating new regulations.[93]

It became clear early on that the aims of the Food Board were production-focused: "to plant this spring every possible acre of wheat, oats, barley and rye ... to bring into cultivation every acre possible of new land for crop in 1918 ... to increase cattle, hogs, and sheep to the greatest possible extent ... to secure cultivation of gardens and vacant lots in towns and cities ... encouraging every householder in small towns and villages to secure and raise one pig through the season."[94] In order to fulfill these goals, the provinces were asked to see to it that the necessary amount of seed was available, and to determine the type of assistance that their farmers would need in order to bring about the desired production levels. The provinces were also asked to forward to the Food Board

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92 Sessional Paper No. 55, "Minutes of the Conference of Dominion and Provincial Governments of Canada, February 15-16, 1918," *Sessional Papers*, vol. 14, 1918.

93 Thomson, p. 21.

94 Sessional Paper No. 55, "Memorandum of proposals made by the Canada Food Board to the Conference between the Dominion and Provincial Governments, February, 1918, respecting Provincial cooperation in the food production campaign of 1918," *Sessional Papers*, vol. 14, 1918.

the names of all those who were interested in obtaining tractors — an initiative was being developed that would furnish farmers with Ford tractors at cost. The demand for agricultural labour was to be addressed by several schemes designed to funnel all those available for farm work to those who needed assistance. Boys and young men were to be voluntarily mobilized as 'Soldiers of the Soil,' and all citizens were to be made aware, via "frank statements from time to time," of the gravity of the food situation, and of the need to direct all available energies towards food production and conservation. It was recognized that if food control was to be a success, the issue had to be kept "continuously before the public." To accomplish this, the press was to be 'enlisted,' and clergymen were to be asked to devote two of their March sermons to the food supply issue, "urging increased food production to save people who may otherwise starve." Later approved by the Privy Council, the provinces were each to receive an amount of money to help defray the costs of food control, ranging from $60,000 for Ontario and Quebec to $5000 for tiny Prince Edward Island.[95]

Farmers were again being encouraged to produce as much food as possible, only now the message was a bit different — instead of appeals based on self-interest and profitability, the call was now couched in patriotic and unmistakably moral terms. Unfortunately, despite promises made in 1917 to extend agricultural exemptions to farm labourers, many were still ultimately conscripted in the spring of 1918, a move that adversely affected the tractability and efficiency of farmers. The main problem was that farm work was still a labour-intensive pursuit; while mechanization was beginning to change the face of farming somewhat, most farmers did not employ the relatively unfamiliar tractor or other labour-saving devices that could increase productivity. Wars, however, have a tendency to hasten technological progress and social change, especially of trends already in motion prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Horses were not only less productive, they also required large amounts of fodder, feed that had to be raised on land that could be used for more pressing purposes. An ad for Ford tractors claimed that "five acres of land are required to maintain one horse for a year," acreage that could be used to grow food for human consumption. It further contended that if "50,000 Canadian farmers replaced one horse with a Ford," the amount of extra food produced would be enough for 100,000 people.[96] Supplying farmers with the technical means

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95 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 50092, Memo. Also, *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 19, 1918, p. 26.

96 Toronto Globe, March 16, 1918, p. 11.

available to break and sow more land was a logical step, and one that the Food Board believed was well worth attempting.

Entwined with this issue was the grievance, long held, that many farmers had against the government for continuing to apply steep tariff duties to imported farm equipment. Duties set up to protect Canadian manufacturers made better, cheaper American equipment far too expensive — there was no incentive to risk changing tried and true methods. Ploughing with tractors, it was reported, was "still a rarity" in Ontario as late as 1915, thanks both to the newness of the technology, as well as the twenty-five percent duty slapped on imported tractors.[97] The Food Board, however, attempted to harness the power of mechanized agriculture by encouraging their use, going so far as to purchase over 1,000 Fordsons at cost ($750 each, plus freight) and supply them to those who wanted them. Despite the fact that some Canadian companies, such as Massey-Harris, had recently begun producing tractors, the Food Board decided to purchase them in the U.S. The official reason given was that the Canadian firms, producing around 300 tractors per year, could not possibly meet the Food Board's demand.[98] The Americans certainly could; in 1917, Henry Ford had applied his mass-production methods to tractors, turning out the affordable 'Fordson.' In order to keep the Food Board's tractors as inexpensive as possible, the government abolished the tariff duties on American tractors costing under $1400, for a period of one year.[99] While some farmers saw this move a as a positive step towards further customs relief, John Herd Thompson argued that the measure itself actually did little to assist western farmers. The lightweight tractors, he noted, were not suited to prairie conditions, and many western farmers could ill-afford even the subsidized Fordsons.[100] Still, these obstacles did not prohibit the Food Board from disbursing hundreds of tractors out west; out of the 1,123 distributed across the country, the most (382) went to Saskatchewan, while Alberta and Manitoba received 334 and 149, respectively. A sizable number, 203, went to Ontario, with the remaining handful split between the remaining provinces.[101]

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97 Evans and Irwin, p. 101.

98 Thomson, p. 25.

99 Merrill Denison, *Harvest Triumphant: The Story of Massey-Harris* (Toronto, 1948), pp. 234-236. This move led to a considerable increase in tractor imports, but was disastrous for Canadian tractor-manufacturers.

100 Thompson, p. 154.

101 Ibid., p. 24. Of the remaining tractors, 21 went to British Columbia, 5 to New Brunswick, 14 to Nova Scotia, and 6 to

Having tackled the macroeconomic issue of producing food, the new Food Board turned its attention to the more microeconomic issue of managing food consumption. It may have seemed that little in the early 1918 remaking of food control was directed at this problem, but in the midst of the renewed campaign for production, conservation and consumer food 'control' were not forgotten. Keeping domestic food consumption as low as possible without affecting efficiency or morale was another of the Food Board's key goals. The methods were generally a continuation of those employed by the Food Controller's Office, and what would emerge was termed 'the middle way' in food control. The British model, responding to conditions that were the reverse of those in Canada, was not deemed a practical example to follow. The American situation was closer to that of Canada, but it too reflected a different reality. As the Food Board's final report put it: "The British system of food conservation became entirely mandatory, the American chiefly voluntary. The joining of the mandatory with the voluntary method constituted the distinctive character of food control in Canada."[102] This distinctly Canadian 'middle way' meant, basically, that foodstuffs were subject to regulation as they moved through the channels of distribution; as they made their way down the food chain from producer to wholesaler to retailer to consumer, the level of regulation and restriction would fluctuate, according to circumstances. Rationing, a system that the Food Board estimated would cost upwards of ten million dollars per year to administer, was consciously ruled out as impractical.[103] It would be logistically difficult, and perhaps less successful than voluntary conservation spurred by patriotism. The Food Board claimed that "the method which interfered least with personal freedom was the restriction of sale of food by dealers. This left the patriotic consumer free from needless disturbance of family life, while the less patriotic were controlled by an informed public opinion supported by anti-hoarding orders and other regulations."[104] This resulted in what the Food Board called 'a double system,' i.e. businesses that served or dealt in food would be subject to regulation, but the "request to the private family depended for effectiveness on

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Prince Edward Island. Only 9 went to Quebec.

102 Ibid., p. 4.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

an appeal to patriotism."[105] By the time the food got to the consumer, much of the control had already been 'built in' to the product. Profits were controlled, supplies, distribution, and access were also watched. The consumer could help further by consuming less, by watching waste, and by using the substitutes that the Board encouraged, and helped make available. Instructions on how to use these new, frequently unfamiliar products were disseminated by their staff of domestic science and bakery experts, turning up in the press, in pamphlets, and in the Canadian Food Bulletin.

If Canadians were hoping that their new Food Controller would be more willing to employ price regulation, they were quickly disappointed. In late February, Thomson declared that price-fixing, having had little success in the countries in which it had been tried, was not an option. The licensing method currently being pursued by the Food Board, he stated, would in fact be more productive.[106] Beginning in December, 1917, this system was gradually extended to cover all those dealing in food, and formed the main mechanism through which the Food Board controlled the domestic food trade. If you did not possess a license by the set deadlines, you could not legally operate your business. In March, the Food Board was projecting that by the middle of May, most of those in the food business (including wholesalers, brokers, retail grocers, butchers, fish, fruit and vegetable dealers) would have to hold a valid Food Board-issued license in order to operate.[107] Thanks to the various complaints and concerns raised by dealers, the process was repeatedly delayed, and new categories of licensees were created as circumstances dictated. In addition to those originally targeted by the measure, between mid-June and mid-July, canners, bakers, candy-makers, ice cream vendors, and restaurants were brought under license as well.[108] In all, over 78,000 licenses were issued by the Food Board, with almost half going to retail grocers; the fees collected totalled $366,261.[109]

Licensees were ordered to disclose, on a monthly basis, figures relating to inventory, prices, and profits. It was hoped that this information would alert the Board to any serious dislocations in either the supply of food or prices, and to ensure that food dealers were keeping to the regulations as

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105 Ibid., p. 5.

106 "Women Meet War Cabinet," *Toronto Globe*, March 1, 1918, pp. 1, 5.

107 "License Dates for Foodstuffs," *Ibid.*, March 5, 1918, p. 9.

108 Thomson, p. 39.

109 Ibid.

laid down by the Food Controller. The scheme struck a workable balance between the broad interests of the state and the liberties of the individual citizen; it was also beneficial in that it did not entail costly and possibly ineffective regulation. The overall effectiveness of the licensing system suffered from a lack of enforcement, a general problem that beset the Food Board in other matters as well. As J.A. Corry later noted, it was difficult for the Board to secure sufficient numbers of inspectors, as they were relying mainly "on cooperation from the existing agencies of law enforcement in the municipalities and the provinces," for whom policing food regulations was never a top priority.[110] R.J. McFall admitted that "the uninitiated" tended to view the license reports with some derision, despite the fact that they had proved quite useful in several circumstances.[111] There may, however, have been a certain amount of 'self-policing' done by food dealers themselves, for, as Corry further remarked, "the mere fact of being obliged to make returns had some deterrent effect upon those who were in a position to take full advantage of the continuously rising fair prices level."[112]

Reports that a William Davies packinghouse in Winnipeg had destroyed 8,000 pounds of chicken which had gone off in cold storage (and in which it had been kept for a year and half) fueled public anger. In mid-March, the Board announced that the "wilful waste" and hoarding of food products, by both private individuals and dealers, was now punishable by law.[113] This new measure served to "simplify and make more direct the machinery for enforcing the intent of the high cost of living regulation of 1916," by making it easier to enforce.[114] With this regulation, the Food Board reserved the right to determine what food, and in what amounts, people could have on hand at any one time. Municipal and provincial authorities were compelled to enforce this regulation, and perhaps as an added incentive, the government that prosecuted the offenders could also collect the fines, which ranged anywhere from $100 to $1000.[115] There was a problem, however, in that the order did not specify the length of time that food could be held in cold storage, rendering it, for the

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110 Corry, p. 69.

111 McFall, p. 194.

112 Ibid.

113 "Order is Now Passed to Rule Food Waste," *Toronto Star*, March 14, 1918, p. 1.

114 "Waste of Food Prohibited," *Toronto Globe*, March 14, 1918, p. 1.

115 Ibid.

time being, impossible to enforce.[116]

Urban Canadians could well be expected to cringe at the seemingly 'wanton' destruction of foodstuffs at a time when food prices continued to rise. Late-war inflation was biting deeply, as average food prices for 1918 were the highest they had ever been, with sirloin steak costing the consumer over 37 cents a pound. The price of bacon, averaging just under 29 cents, had risen over six cents a pound above the previous year's level. Lamb, soon to be very popular on reined-in restaurant menus largely wanting in beef and bacon, rose almost ten cents in 1918, to 48 cents a pound. A pound of butter, which had been sold at around 34 cents at the beginning of the war, now fetched an alarming 55 cents. The price of lard had almost doubled since 1914, and one dozen eggs were close to reaching the unprecedented 60 cent mark.[117] Urban consumers remained the hardest hit group of Canadians, for while farmers also had to deal with inflation, this was offset by the fact that they were able to grow or raise most of their own foodstuffs.[118] While Thomson had to deal with less cost of living-based criticism than had Hanna, there was still some conflict. Another irritant was the piling up of 'reserve stocks' of foodstuffs in eastern ports, stocks that some believed should have been used to reduce food prices in Canada. But the problematic nature of shipping space meant that these stocks had to be kept on hand, to take advantage of any odd space available in ships going overseas.[119]

On March 9, 1918, Borden was informed that Britain's food supply situation was still critical, and that "Canada [had] become [the] principal source within Empire of general food supplies" with "every vitally essential foodstuff being wanted."[120] Thanks to the added pressure of moving vast numbers of U.S. troops overseas, shipping became even scarcer, and Canada as "the nearest British colony to the Empire," had to handle the burden as best it could.[121] Such news only served to reemphasize the new Food Board focus on production and on restraining consumption. Faced with such overseas need, campaigns to promote Food Board measures, of varying degrees of

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116 "Food Hogs Safe, Order Has Joker," *Toronto Star*, March 25, 1918, p. 5.

117 *Urban Retail Food Prices*, pp. 9-27.

118 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1918, p. 497.

119 Thomson, p. 8.

120 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 74657, George Perley to Borden, March 9, 1918.

121 Thomson, p. 6.

effectiveness, began to proliferate in the late winter and early spring of 1918. With maple syrup season on the horizon, readers of the *Globe* were encouraged to "tap every maple tree — enough maple sugar could be produced to meet Canada's total needs."[122] Toronto's National Club had the (mis)fortune of hosting a Food Board publicity stunt, at which guests were acquainted with the joys of eating whale meat. ("tastes like venison," wrote the *Toronto* Star[123]) G. Frank Beer of the Canadian Fish Commission, and head of the Food Board's Fish Committee, stated that since August, fish consumption in Canada had increased by nearly half. Despite the fact that whale is not, in fact, a fish, he then "seized the occasion" and announced that March would see a ten-day campaign whose goal was to increase this further, by acquainting Canadians with other unfamiliar types of fish, such as hake and brill.[124] Whale was not the only exotic meat being offered to Torontonians. In April, Toronto's municipal abattoir received its first shipment of Algonquin Park beaver meat, to be sold to eager consumers at 17 to 18 cents a pound.[125] These new food offerings were sufficiently risible to prompt the *Globe*'s editors to note wryly that "Thus do food restrictions extend the acquaintance of the palate. In eating whale a man of delicate tastes may be conscious of making a particular sacrifice, but beaver meat is said to cause no gustatory misgivings. ... If the popular tastes confirm this praise of the beaver as an article of diet, that industrious rodent will be doubly prized."[126]

But the change in diet wrought by food regulation did not always include such strange fare. War bread had also made its Canadian debut in early March, with the passing of Food Board regulations governing the composition of flour and bread. Unfamiliar with the new recipes, the results were frequently less than satisfactory. "Mrs. Newbridge has made some real war bread," ran one contemporary joke. "The trouble is that she can't find a German to feed it to."[127] Those who did not have the time to fuss with war bread could purchase Canada Bread's 'Liberty Loaf,' which

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122 "Tap Every Maple Tree," *Toronto Globe*, March 6, 1918, p. 12.

123 "A Whale Lunch in Toronto," (editorial) *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1918, p. 10.

124 "Ate Whale Meat and Enjoyed It," *Toronto Globe*, March 1, 1918, p. 8.

125 "Look Out, People for Beaver Meat," *Ibid.*, April 3, 1918, p. 9.

126 "Adding to the Menu," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, April 4, 1918, p. 4.

127 "Humour of the Hour," *Ibid.*, March 14, 1918, p. 4.

was, according to the company, "the loaf that saved tons of white flour."[128] Culinary missteps aside, women were eager to show that their patriotism went beyond being merely 'kitchen soldiers,' but that they could also offer a valuable contribution to the production of foodstuffs as well.[129] Mrs. George Deeks, the President of the Toronto Womens' Liberal Association, stated that she "heartily advocated chicken raising," and suggested that the shortage of agricultural labour could be alleviated "by a reduction in city servants."[130] Other groups began to respond to the food service call; the Ottawa branch of the Boy Scouts decreed that troop suppers should not constitute an extra meal, but should take place at such times so as to coincide with regular mealtimes.[131] As Food Board orders proliferated, restaurant owners and operators became increasingly confused; by the end of March, the *Toronto Star* reported that restauranteurs were "staggered" by the new regulations severely restricting the types of foods that they could serve.[132] They were unsure of exactly how to remake their menus so that they complied with the Food Board orders (which were frequently confusing), while at the same time offering reasonable fare to their patrons. Sandwich vendors in particular were incensed at the regulation prohibiting the serving of wheat products (bread) at lunch time, and the restrictions on beef and bacon meant that lamb and chicken suddenly became very popular meal choices in public eating places. Canadians were at last performing the same "mental exercises" as their British counterparts, and restaurant owners who dodged the rules would soon find that the Food Board did in fact have more 'teeth' than the erstwhile Food Controller's Office.

While farmers were obviously at the forefront of the production offensive, urban dwellers did not escape conscription in the food production brigade. They too were encouraged to raise food, in backyard gardens and vacant lots, and boys were urged to form "pig clubs," and to enlist as 'Soldiers of the Soil.'[133] Municipalities did their part to stimulate this, in some cases going as far as altering bylaws. For example, Cobourg's town council decided, "for patriotic reasons," to rescind

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128 *Toronto Star*, February 20, 1918, p. 13. See illustration.

129 Gordon, pp. 61-87.

130 "Production is Prominent Aim," *Toronto Globe*, March 1, 1918, p. 8.

131 NAC, RG13 Justice, Series A-2, vol. 217, file 1917-2195, "Food Controller," "Canadian Food Control — Daily Office Bulletin," February 15, 1918.

132 "City Restaurant Men are Hard Hit by Order," *Toronto Star*, March 28, 1918, p. 17.

133 Thomson, p. 23.

the law forbidding the keeping of pigs "within 100 feet of residence." Cobourg residents who wished to raise hogs for the war effort could now do so "provided the pens are sanitary."[134] Slightly less odiforous than the 'Keep a Hog Campaign' was the drive for maximum garden production, led by the Food Board's Vacant Lot and Home Garden section. In the spring, the Food Board warned that canned vegetables were again to be periodically prohibited, so Canadians were urged to grow as much of their own produce as possible.[135] The term "Spring Offensive" took on a different meaning as the Board's gardening experts fanned out to address meetings and to drum up enthusiasm for home vegetable production.[136] One over-enthused municipal politician from Kitchener suggested that rather than growing flowers, the Provincial government should "set a good example by plowing up Queen's Park and planting it with potatoes."[137]

Persuasion came from all quarters, including the pulpit. Thomson later wrote that "the churches unquestionably proved one of the most potent means of influencing Canadian public opinion."[138] On March 24, clergymen of all denominations, as part of an organized campaign to bring the urgency of the issue before Canadians, were asked "to proclaim from their pulpits the terrible truths of the 1918 food situation."[139] Thomson later noted that as soon as the churches began to include Food Board messages in their sermons "there was a marked increase in public readiness to carry out the Board's orders."[140] During this period the Board also tried to secure the assistance of food retailers, with the creation of the Conservation Publicity Section. The "collective influence" of grocers was deemed useful, and to this end they were supplied with publicity and other forms of information "for display in every possible place and position."[141] The Board also sent representatives and speakers out to various establishments, where the staff were taught the ways of food control, and given tutelage that would "enable them to discuss intelligently with customers the

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134 "May Keep Pigs Anywhere," *Toronto Globe*, March 2, 1918, p. 2.

135 "Canned Vegetables Again to be Banned," *Ibid.*, March 14, 1918, p. 7.

136 "Notes and Comments," *Ibid.*, March 22, 1918, p. 6.

137 "Spuds, Not Bulbs, In Queen's Park," *Ibid.*, March 25, 1918, p. 4.

138 Thomson, p. 22.

139 *Toronto Globe*, March 22, 1918, p. 7.

140 Thomson, p. 22.

141 Ibid., p. 62.

why and the wherefore of regulations of the Food Board."[142]

This campaign also included the launch of the 'Soldiers of the Soil' movement, a Food Board initiative through which the provincial departments of agriculture sought to move urban youth to rural areas, in order to provide labour for farmers — an increasingly pressing need. Under the direction of Taylor Stratton, the National Superintendent-Executive of the S.O.S. campaign, and with the help of youth-oriented groups such as the YMCA and the Boy Scouts, boys and girls (but mainly boys) between the ages of 15 and 19 were encouraged to volunteer as summer farm help. Those who signed up during enrollment week (March 17 to 23, 1918) would later be shipped off to various farms throughout the Dominion, where for a minimum of three months the 'Soldiers' would assist farmers in any way they could. If they managed to satisfactorily complete their term in the country, they would earn a minimum of $15, and would also be publicly presented with a "Bronze Badge of Honour,"[143] and a handsome "Certificate of Service."[144]

Advertisements in the press and speakers in the schools tried desperately to make volunteer farm work sound both exciting and adventurous, consciously positioning farm service on the same level as that of front-line soldiers. One ad claimed that the Soldiers of the Soil would stand "Shoulder to shoulder with the boys in the trenches!," while another referred to their "brother soldiers overseas."[145] The language used was eerily reminiscent of the fervent appeals for military recruits. In bold letters phrases such as "Join Up! Join Up! Your Country's Calling You!," and "Boys, Your Country Needs You NOW!," were splashed across posters, a timeless, and for some, irresistible appeal to duty and patriotism.[146] Enlisting as a Soldier of the Soil was a chance for those too young to serve overseas to feel as though they too were contributing, in a meaningful way, to the war effort. Those in charge of the movement fostered other, more tangible parallels between combat and farm service, for example, the "standard uniform" for the Soldiers of the Soil was overtly paramilitary in its styling, and was certainly not suggestive of agricultural labour. The uniform consisted of a khaki shirt and pants ("with brass S.O.S. buttons") and a hat "pinned up on one side,

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142 Ibid.

143 *Toronto Star*, March 14, 1918, p. 15.

144 *Newsletter of the Osgoode Township Historical Society and Museum*, (June 2002), p. 3.

145 *Toronto Globe*, March 14, 1918, p. 15; and March 15, 1918, p. 6.

146 Ibid.

with a one inch red, white and blue band."[147] The recruit, or more likely, his or her parents, could purchase the uniform for under four dollars, at various retailers, upon presentation of the required enrollment card. Eaton's in Toronto was one store which carried the rig ("Soldiers of the Soil, Attention; Here is Your Regulation Uniform"), and like any good retailer they also tried to rope parents into purchasing other 'essentials' for their farm-bound boy, such as belts and handkerchiefs "at a remarkably low price."[148] Other retailers sought to cash in as well, and the Ryrie Brothers of Toronto were particularly bold. Heralding the virtues of the S.O.S. campaign, one ad ran: "Boy Farmers. The government is calling for 15,000 boys to do summer work on the farm. That's good." Good for sales, perhaps. The ad went on to inform the boys that they would eventually "feel the need for a watch for 'getting-up time,' 'meal-time,' and of course, 'in-between time." Ryrie Brothers had "just the watch," for only $7.00 (half the recruit's minimum wages). Of course, the boys would not have such funds up front, therefore, the store wisely told them to "ask father, mother or brother to advance you the money, pay it back out of your wages."[149] In the interests of gender equality, certainly, girls were not forgotten; Ryrie Brothers also had "a splendid little wrist watch" for "farmerettes" as well; one that cost a paltry $13.50. "Coax father to lend you the money," the ad concluded.[150]

As the days leading up to enrollment week continued, some of the publicity for the S.O.S. movement took on a more serious, slightly more ominous tone. One poster invited youth to identify with those in the trenches. "When mother says: 'Do you want to go, son? Think of the other Canadian boys, just a few years older, who are holding the line in France, exposed to shot and shells, rain and cold, mud and dust."[151] After causing the necessary chagrin on the part of the stay-at-home boys, the ad declared that unless they too "did something big — self-sacrificing — and difficult — to help win the war," they would not be able to face those who had. Another ad continued on this theme, asserting that "You couldn't look the boys who are going straight in the eye

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147 "Standard Uniform for a Soldier of the Soil," *Ibid.*, March 20, 1918, p. 13.

148 *Toronto Star*, April 23, 1918, p. 18.

149 *Toronto Globe*, March 23, 1918, p. 9.

150 *Ibid.*, April 4, 1918, p. 7.

151 *Ibid.*, March 20, 1918, p. 5.

if you proved a slacker in this emergency."[152] The message was unsubtle but also unquestionable, Canadians from all walks of life had been called upon to make some sort of sacrifice in the name of victory, and now city youth were being mobilized to do their part as well, as over 22,000 boys enrolled as Soldiers of the Soil.[153] The only question remaining was whether or not the work of the 'Soldiers' would prove as effective as the propaganda which had recruited them. Meanwhile, the mounting costs of such elaborate campaigns were prompting concern -- an issue that Borden's political opposition was all too ready to exploit.

'A Great Disappointment': The Laurier Liberals and the Canada Food Board

It was not long before the Canada Food Board, with its elaborate campaigns and ubiquitous publicity, came in for some criticism of its own, mostly relating to expenses. The Laurier Liberals were an obvious source of such denunciation, but the increasingly profligate spending of the Food Board had apparently caused some consternation amongst members of the cabinet as well.[154] In the Food Board's first seventeen days of existence, from February 11 to the 28th, it was calculated that the department's expenditures totalled some $168,374, of which $50,000 had been spent on "publicity of all kinds." Perhaps anticipating problems, barely a month after the Food Board's inception Samuel Todd briefed Thomson on ways that the Food Controller could justify the Board's expenditures. Todd argued that the money being spent was justified by the amount of food that could be saved, or produced, as a result of the propaganda offensive. Using hypothetical figures, he argued that if Canadians, persuaded by a mere half-a-million dollars worth of propaganda, could save 70,000,000 pounds of meat, five million bushels of wheat, and consume ten percent less sugar in one year, the savings would amount to some $31 million. In addition, if a paltry one million dollars was spent on production propaganda, Todd calculated that the increase in agricultural produce would amount to $122 million. "How reasonable it would be," wrote Todd, "to suppose that a properly organized propaganda would accomplish this purpose." Furthermore, what better

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152 *Ibid.*, March 22, 1918, p. 4.

153 Thomson, p. 25. The enrollment figures for each province ran as follows: B.C. 1,800; Alberta 1,218; Saskatchewan 1,925; Manitoba 1,650; Ontario 10,324; Quebec 1,560; New Brunswick 855; Nova Scotia 2,293; PEI 760.

154 NAC, Borden Papers, pp. 134701-03, Samuel E. Todd to Henry B. Thomson, March 14, 1918.

alternatives did the Food Board have? Direct loans to farmers, of both money and equipment, could result in the same accomplishments, but at a much higher price.[155] Thomson evidently thought Todd's arguments were cogent enough; on March 23 he forwarded the memo to Borden with the comment that it might prove useful should the matter be raised in Parliament.[156] The Food Controller may well have had an inkling that something of the sort was about to take place, for on March 20, L.A. Lapointe, member for St. James, had submitted a request for detailed information on the amounts thus far spent on food control.[157] On March 27, four days after Thomson had forwarded the memo to Borden, the Opposition Liberals launched an offensive in Parliament attacking the Food Board, its activities, and most importantly, the amount of money the department was draining from the public purse.

Laurier began the assault by moving for a copy of all documents relating to the creation of the Canada Food Board; he then referred to the uncertain state of the war, to the collapse of Russia as a combatant, and the likelihood that the conflict would continue as an exhausting war of attrition for some time. He agreed that the global food shortage was acute, and that "all possible efforts must be directed towards increasing the production of food."[158] This did not, however, excuse the government from its duty to provide for those on the home front.

> ... we have only to look at our own domestic condition to see another aspect of the case. The price of food products of all kinds has been soaring steadily until there is not a housewife in the land, even among those of ordinary average income, who does not spend anxious moments everyday in devising ways and means to supply the family table.

According to Laurier, the cause of such hardship was not the war, but rather "the hoardings of food by heartless speculators who are attempting to build up fortunes out of the hunger of the masses." The government's appointment of a Food Controller was an admission that this was indeed the case, but their subsequent performance had proven to be a failure, as nothing had been done to reduce the cost of food.[159] It is highly tempting to suggest that Laurier was trying to turn the spotlight back

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155 Ibid.

156 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 134704, Henry B. Thomson to Borden, March 23, 1918.

157 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 20, 1918, p. 52.

158 *Debates of the House of Commons*, March 27, 1918, p. 209.

159 Ibid., March 27, 1918, p. 210.

onto an issue that had crept out of public discourse in recent months, pushed out perhaps by other, more pressing topics, such as the 1917 general election, and the conscription debate. The cost of living had proven to be a fertile ground for the Liberals in the past, and as the situation was still acute, it made sense to renew the offensive.

The new Canada Food Board, Laurier argued, had not yet done anything to indicate that it would be a more proactive agency (with regards to price fixing) than the Food Controller's Office. Yet, as Laurier went on to demonstrate, it was an extensive department, with many if its officials receiving handsome salaries. Unlike Hanna, who had given his services free of charge, Thomson was paid an annual wage of $7,000, the same amount given to cabinet ministers.[160] In addition, there seemed to a be a plethora of officials receiving salaries of up to $5,000, officials whose duties and purpose were unclear. According to Laurier, since the creation of the Food Board, ninety-two new appointments had been made to the food control staff, with salaries totalling in excess of $200,000. These figures, he suggested, were "simply extravagant in the view of the work that has been done by the Food Board."[161] The salaries were worrisome enough, but the Leader of the Opposition also had a few words to say about the appointment of Thomson. Laurier questioned his selection, noting that "it was not sound policy to appoint to this position a man who was absolutely unknown. ... [Hanna's] appointment was a judicious one, but I cannot say the same with reference to Mr. Thomson's appointment."[162] As for Dunning and McGregor, Laurier drew attention to the fact that there was "no complete or definite information" relating to their powers or duties; he was, in essence, asking the government to provide a clear explanation of the costly changes that had taken place within Canada's food control organization. Laurier's rhetoric indicates a crucial shift in Liberal attitudes from prewar trust in unbridled market liberalism to some form of state intervention in the interest of a 'square deal' for all Canadians. Spending lavishly on moral suasion was simply not expedient.

Because of Borden's absence, the task of defending food control fell to a reluctant George

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160 Ibid., April 4, 1918, p. 335. Neither Dunning or McGregor received a salary for their services.

161 Ibid., p. 212.

162 Ibid. The statement that he had never heard mention of Thomson's name was a curious one, in view of Laurier's professed familiarity with the officials of the Food Controller's Office (not to mention their salaries). Thomson had, after all, been Assistant Food Controller for some months previous to Hanna's resignation.

Foster, who professed that he had "but a general idea ... of the duties of the Food Controller and of his operations."[163] Despite this handicap, Foster tried to address the subject and to offer an explanation for the manner in which food control had been handled. He had no objections to Laurier's comments on the urgency of the food situation, but he did, however, dispute the claim that supply and demand had little to do with rising food prices. Canada, he noted, had suffered less than other countries from advancing prices. Distance and assorted problems had made it virtually impossible to ship supplies from Australasia and Argentina, thus, Canada and the U.S. had to bear the burden of supplying the Allies with foodstuffs. This high demand for Canadian produce, along with "the awful waste of food which takes place in war time" were responsible for high prices in Canada. When Hanna had taken office, the public had erroneously believed that a magical fall in prices would result, but this was not his primary duty, rather he was appointed "to control food; to see, in the first place, that no food was wasted; to take hold of the question of the handling of food, after its primary production, in its several stages, and so to regulate it that the best methods of providing the most economical foods should be carried out."[164] Foster also tried to deflect complaints over salaries and Thomson's suitability. As for the high paid staff, Foster noted that "it would have been nothing less than stupid inefficiency to put low paid clerks in those positions which required the very best brains and the very best organizing capacity and experience that could be obtained."[165] The fact that Thomson was not well known was no strike against him, in fact, as Foster reasonably pointed out, if a man of a more 'political' character had been given the post (as with Hanna), cries of party bias would have been heard from across the floor. Foster remarked that

> Mr. Thomson was in Mr. Hanna's office almost from its inception. He was chosen by Mr. Hanna; he gave his services; his services approved themselves absolutely to Mr. Hanna, Mr. Thomson naturally, in the way of promotion, worked through that gradation; and that, added to his own well-known business abilities, signalized Mr. Thomson as the successor of Mr. Hanna, and in that way he came to be appointed.[166]

If Laurier held Hanna and his abilities in high esteem, it was implied, then he should also go so far

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163 Ibid., p. 212.

164 Ibid, p. 214.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid., p. 216.

as to have confidence in Hanna's ability to name a worthy successor.

Foster's want of detailed knowledge of food control was derided by MP E.B. Devlin of Wright, who found the minister's remarks somewhat lacking in substance. He commended the government for removing the tariff on tractors, but was puzzled as to why the tariff on other agricultural implements (such as ploughs and harrows) had not been removed as well; the point being that the government was not taking the practical measures needed to encourage farmers to increase production. Devlin was perhaps reacting to Dunning's recent suggestion that the government should indeed remove the duties from all imported farm equipment. The member from Wright declared that vacant lot and urban gardens were being overemphasized when the real production would take place on the farm. "Mr. Speaker," he facetiously remarked, "I should like you to see the crops that annually grow in the garden that I attempt to cultivate in the city. ... If we are to depend entirely upon the production from the back yards or gardens in the cities to help win the war, then God help Great Britain and her Allies."[167]

Food control, as a concept, as a moral and military necessity, was unassailable, but the Opposition was quite comfortable attacking the *way* in which food control was being carried out. Devlin did not dispute the fact that conditions overseas were critical, rather, it was the very seriousness of the situation that rendered the government's conduct unjustifiable. Scoffing at Foster's arguments, he remarked that, instead of "action," too much time was being spent "appointing captains of teams, taking considerable time increasing staffs in the Government, taking considerable time passing Orders in Council giving powers here, there and everywhere, and preaching doctrines that do not interest the people or the Allies in general."[168] After a bit of parrying with Crerar over the status of the Canadian Food Bulletin, Devlin concluded his remarks by laying out "a second means by which food production may be had at a cheaper rate." (The first had been the call to remove or reduce tariffs on agricultural implements). This second means "would be to lessen the debt upon the people of Canada, and especially upon the farmers ... by curtailing the extravagance of the Government."[169]

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167 Ibid., pp. 217-218.

168 Ibid., p. 220.

169 Ibid.

After Devlin had concluded, the unfortunate time had come for Thomas Crerar, the brand-new minister of agriculture, to make his first address to the House. After dismissing Devlin's remarks as "rambling" and "fault-finding," he embarked upon a defense of food control, noting that

> It is a new experience for a people such as we are to be regulated in these little every-day matters of life in which we have claimed the right to exercise the greatest freedom; and, consequently, anything that aims at restriction or control is new; the people have to become adjusted to it; they have to get their ideas adapted to it.[170]

Food regulation, in short, was an 'acquired taste.' As for the Opposition's complaints over the costs of food control, Crerar pointed out that in the U.S., Congress had earmarked over five million dollars for similar activities. Liberal MP Jauques Bureau interjected that the $200,000 figure for Canadian Food Control was for salaries alone, not the budget in total. Crerar stuck to the government's argument that they were, in essence, paying for talent. "It is true," he noted, "that they are getting salaries that may look large," but these individuals were "getting no higher salaries — in some cases not nearly as high — than they could get if they went out into the commercial world and sold their services in the usual way."[171]

Agricultural labour, not tariff reform, was the key ingredient in the Food Board's goal of increased production. Already, Crerar noted, results were being seen, with 25,000 boys currently being enrolled in the 'Soldiers of the Soil' program. MP Joseph Read of PEI asked why voluntary effort was being relied upon in this respect, why not simply "conscript them?"[172] Crerar replied that a move of this nature would not be as effective as a patriotic mobilization, and he was correct. It is hard to control individual behaviour, to compel them to work, and work effectively, on farms. This way at least, the farmers would be sure of obtaining somewhat willing hands. Overall, Crerar believed that the reality of the situation had not yet sunk in.

> I sometimes feel, Mr. Speaker, that we in Canada have not quite realized yet in many respects that we are at war; that is, the reality of it has not come home as closely to us as it has to the people who have lived under the very shadow of it for years.[173]

As for the question of conservation, Crerar believed that Canadians, "a rather extravagant people,"

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170 Ibid., p. 221.

171 Ibid., p. 222.

172 Ibid, p. 223.

173 Ibid.

had "not been as economical as they have been in the past."[174] Thus, it was up to the Food Board to change this attitude, to inculcate a sense of frugality within the people of Canada.

With Crerar's initial address to the Commons over, Liberal MP James Robb quite aptly remarked that the minister's comments were like those of a man "apologizing for a foundling which he and some of his friends had adopted."[175] Oddly, Robb then argued that part of the impetus for a Food Controller had derived in large part from the appointment of a similar post in the United States.

> Immediately there was started throughout Canada a newspaper campaign in favour of the appointment of a food controller in Canada. Friends of the inner circle could see in the appointment of a food controller in the United States another opportunity to secure place and profit for their friends if a similar office was established in this country.[176]

Thus, the implication was that the entire institution, as evidenced by the types of salaries doled out, was nothing more than a rich source of Tory patronage. Again, the question of salaries was brought up, as was the fact that the department kept getting larger and larger, to the point where new accommodations had to be repeatedly sought. Robb claimed that Food Control had already changed offices three times "in order to provide increased accommodation for it ever growing staff. First they were established on Bank Street, in a building of three or four stories — I remember visiting it. Then they moved to this building, and now they are on Rideau Street — ever moving to secure a larger building."[177] Robb was more than willing to agree with the oft-repeated refrain that 'price-fixing was a mistake,' 'a failure everywhere it has been tried.' He was unwilling, however, to look favourably upon the activities of the "Food Control Bureau," since, to his mind, they had in fact "very materially hindered additional production."[178] This had been done, he asserted, by restricting the importation of corn into Canada for the feeding of livestock; the "Bureau" had also unduly interfered with interprovincial trade by "prohibiting flour mills of western Canada from shipping

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174 Ibid.

175 Ibid., p. 224.

176 Ibid.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid., p. 225.

bran and shorts to eastern Canada."[179] He also attacked the licensing scheme, by pointing out that the revenue raised would be fine for the Food Board, but that the cost would in fact ultimately be passed back to the consumer, in the guise of even higher prices.

The line up of MPs eager to bloody their knuckles on the punch-drunk Food Board continued. Frank Cahill, whose Pontiac constituency was largely agricultural, asked that interests of farmers be taken as seriously, be dealt with as favourably, as those of the meatpackers. He also made a bid for more affordable farm machinery, adding a request for further reductions in tariffs upon agricultural implements. Lucien Pacaud of Megantic decried the fact that the Food Controller, and now the Food Board, seemingly ignored the "nefarious greed of the profiteers," and accused the authorities of deception, for "Instead of taking immediate steps to curtail this open exploitation of the public, the Government, though its commissioner, preferred to follow the easier course of preaching economy to the people."[180] New member Joseph Fontaine of Hull rose, somewhat timorously, to address the issue, noting that he had given his constituents his "solemn promise" to "seize upon every opportunity offered to protest against the exorbitant cost of living;" the current debate certainly offered the chance to do so.[181]

Those attacking food control outnumbered its defenders, but some MPs did try to temper the storm of criticism. Dr. Michael Clark, a farmer and a Unionist member for Red Deer, claimed that Crerar had in fact offered "a very strong plea of justification of, at any rate, some of the work of the Board."[182] Fixing prices, he argued, went "against the fundamental laws of economics," and would cause more problems than it would solve. But, disagreeing with his government's line of policy, he too suggested that placing all agricultural implements on the free list, not just tractors, would be an excellent way to stimulate production. With applause from the Opposition ringing through the chamber, this "free-trade Liberal of the British school" went even further, suggesting that all foodstuffs should be put on the free list as well.[183] Somewhat fittingly, the final speaker in this lengthy debate was William Cockshutt, who again reminded the House that he had been the first MP

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179 Ibid.

180 Ibid., p. 227.

181 Ibid., p. 228.

182 Ibid., p. 229.

183 "Tariff Hat Now's in the Ring, Thrown By a Unionist Hand," *Toronto Star*, March 28, 1918, p. 20.

to demand the appointment of a Food Controller, but he also defended the government by arguing against the removal of tariff duties on farm equipment and foodstuffs, a move he termed "a foolish step."[184] That Cockshutt would argue strongly against removal of the tariff was not surprising, for along with being "a protectionist to the back-bone," he was also a manufacturer of farm equipment himself.[185] As for the performance of food control, Cockshutt was positively glowing in his assessment. "The Food Board," he stated, "has done a lot of good;" they were succeeding in awakening Canadians to the crucial need to conserve and produce food.[186] As proof, Cockshutt offered the example of the Food Pledge cards, which had sprouted in the windows of "nearly all the houses" in the Dominion. "All this," he concluded, was "a matter of education, and the Food Board has done, and is doing, a splendid work in this direction."[187]

The debate in Parliament exposed the extent to which 'Union' government was still divided on many issues, not the least of which was the food question. Western members, aware of the problems faced by their agricultural constituents, tried vainly to raise their concerns in the House, but were perhaps daunted by the odd nature of the newly-formed government. The Department of Agriculture and the Canada Food Board were manned by westerners who, with the sole exception of Thomson, were all Liberals, albeit Liberals who had been 'tamed' for the time being. Canada's food-growing potential rested on the shoulders of these prairie farmers, whose lot was alleviated somewhat (but not entirely) by some of the measures undertaken by the Food Board. On March 30, three days after the big debate in the House of Commons, Borden issued an "appeal to the Canadian people," that presented the food crisis in stark terms, and again called upon everyone in the Dominion to "realize their individual duty" in conserving, and producing, foodstuffs.[188] Already Canada's production levels had increased dramatically. In 1917, Canada had exported $500 million worth of food, but by the end of the fiscal year on March 31, Canada's total agricultural exports for

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184 *Debates of the House of Commons*, p. 234.

185 *Toronto Star*, March 28, 1918, p. 20.

186 *Debates of the House of Commons*, p. 235.

187 Ibid., p. 236.

188 "Sir Robert Borden Issues Appeal to Canadian People," *Toronto Globe*, March 29, 1918, p. 3.

1918 were worth $750 million, with Britain's purchases alone accounting for $400 million.[189] More, however, was still needed, and all means possible were to be employed to grow and save as much food as possible. As the spring of 1918 began, the main issue that had concerned farmers, namely conscription's effect on agricultural labour, remained an unsettled irritant. Most draft-eligible farmers had applied for exemptions, with only around 12 percent being denied.[190] Still, the question remained: would the government, proselytizing ever greater production in the name of victory, back up the cause by respecting the promises made to the farmers of Canada, or would military need take precedence over foodstuff requirements? The government seemed unsure as to which need was greater -- military manpower or food production.

Conclusion

In little over six weeks the Canada Food Board had managed to accomplish more than the Office of the Food Controller had in six months, but the comparison is perhaps not fair, as Hanna and his staff had, after all, laid the groundwork for the Food Board. The Board was also favoured by the fact that the government had finally decided to approach food control with the seriousness which Sanford Evans had previously suggested, investing it with all the authority and standing (and money) deserved by a "first class-commission." The renewed emphasis on production was also key in garnering respect, a function of food control coming under the direct jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture which, in recent years, had been responsible for encouraging maximum effort to Canada's farmers. The expansion of food control to embrace both sides of the food issue may have contributed to the seemingly greater respect paid to it by the public, and the press. Still, the Food Board's elaborate (and expensive) organization did afford the Liberals plenty of opportunities for censure, as did the government's refusal to remove the tariff from agricultural equipment, seen by many as an important obstacle in the fight for greater production. By April 1918, the food question had touched the lives of all Canadians, both urban and rural, and all were

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189 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1918, p. 498.

190 Robert Craig Brown and Donald Loveridge, "Unrequited Faith: Recruiting the CEF 1914-1918," *International Review of Military History*, 54, p. 65.

expected to contribute to the cause in a meaningful way.

Chapter Six
'Economy in Consumption, Energy in Production': The Final Phase of Food Control

> *"I tell you frankly, I can't see a man eat a piece of white bread. I simply leave the table, because, after seeing the things that I have seen, I can't keep my mouth shut. All I would have to do is to take you over into your hospitals and let you see your own men; see a boy carried in around in a sack because he has no arms and no legs; and then you come back and find someone eating white bread!"*[1]
>
> — Hon. Everett Colby, U.S. Food Administration, to the Empire Club, Toronto, April 10, 1918.

Introduction

In an August, 1919 letter to Henry Thomson, Arthur Meighen declared that Canadians had no concept of what the Canada Food Board had achieved. Optimistically, however, he believed that "the time will come when its work will receive the appreciation it deserves."[2] In the spring of 1918, the success of the war effort, let alone the Food Board, was far from certain, still more challenges waited to be faced, and still more obstacles loomed. The Food Board, perhaps sensing that Canadians would respond to coercion, undertook a much firmer approach to food control in 1918, moving into the hitherto untouched realm of private consumption. The passage of prohibition and the adoption of conscription in 1917 had, in a sense, paved the way for these stricter, compulsory measures in the matter of food. The food rules were enforced with surprising vigor, and new anti-hoarding regulations placed limits on the amounts of certain commodities that could be kept on hand by any individual. The licensing system was gradually extended to virtually every food-related business under the sun, and in September, the first steps toward sugar rationing took place. Production remained a key focus in 1918, with the labour resources of the city being increasingly drawn upon to make up for the rural shortfall, a problem exacerbated (some believed) by the government's inconsistent policy on manpower. International cooperation progressed still further in the matter of food, and as circumstances outside of Canadian control shifted, so too did the Food

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1 "The Food Situation Overseas: An Address by the Hon. Everett Colby Before the Empire Club of Canada, April 10, 1918," *The Empire Club of Canada Speeches: 1917-1918* (Toronto, 1919): pp. 200-207.

2 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 72736-37, Arthur Meighen to Henry B. Thomson, August 8, 1919.

Board's response to wartime demands. At home, domestic pressures continued to do battle with overseas need — the spectre of price control returned to haunt Hanna's successors. The new emphasis on compulsion intensified the effect that food control had on everyday life, and women were especially influenced by this. From April 1918, until the Armistice in November, a continuous flow of new Food Board regulations actively sought to control a greater portion of Canadian foodstuffs, while its relentless propaganda and publicity campaigns strove to mobilize the collective psyche, and energies, of the nation. Finally, as the war abruptly shuddered to a halt, the process of decontrol began — and the legacy of wartime food regulation could be weighed. All of these events would have to pass before Arthur Meighen could write those hopeful words, words that, as it turned out, were perhaps a bit more sanguine than subsequent history would bear out.

Consumption Under Control: Regulating Canadian Food Habits

In April 1918, Everett Colby of the U.S. Food Administration embarked on a speaking tour of Canada. A lawyer and former Senator for the state of New Jersey, Colby's profile was not quite as high as that of Lord Northcliffe, but his remarks on the food situation were blunt and just as powerful. "Every time you touch one speck of white bread," he told Toronto's Empire Club, "you are stretching your ugly fingers across the sea and taking it from the plate of your own men or from the lips of the starving Belgian children."[3] Colby had recently been in France as part of a special Food Administration Commission to investigate food conditions, and had witnessed first hand "the heroic effort of the French people in reducing food consumption."[4] Upon his return to North America, Colby launched a campaign to encourage food conservation on this side of the Atlantic, a message he subsequently brought to Canada. In an unflattering comparison, he noted that Canadians (and Americans) were "slackers in the food line," as neither country was doing enough to assuage the food crisis currently raging overseas. The fault, it seemed, lay with the ordinary, largely still

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3 Colby, pp. 200-207.

4 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1918, p. 514.

unregulated consumer, who was unwilling to voluntarily change his or her personal food habits.[5] But even as Colby journeyed through eastern Canada, there were intimations that the authorities in Ottawa were moving towards a less 'volitional,' laissez-faire approach to food control and production.

In the spring of 1918, perceptive Canadians could detect obvious hints that the government's relatively 'casual' approach to food policy was about to change. In its April 5, 1918 edition, the *Toronto Globe* voiced the opinion that in terms of food control, not enough had been done; that stronger measures needed to be taken. Canadians, it argued, were in fact "prepared for greater restrictions than have yet been imposed."[6] Stronger measures were indeed in the offing. Whispers that the Food Board was about to extend many of its regulations to private households began to surface, and measures such as the infamous 'Loafer's Act,' which made idleness a crime, were unmistakable hints that the necessities of war were overtaking the government's traditional reliance on voluntary war service. As it stood, the food served in restaurants and other eating establishments was subject to limitations, and food dealers were licensed and forced to make monthly reports to the food authorities. But in general, Canadians had been left alone when it came to their own personal, private food habits. Up to this point, individual households were under few constraints, with no systematic attempts by the state to control the amount or type of food consumed within the home. Private residences, theoretically, *were* subject to certain limits,[7] but these were vague and lacked specific definition, and in the absence of effective enforcement, individuals were instead exhorted to follow the 'spirit' of food conservation — the application of food-saving principles to everyday life — and housewives were encouraged to adapt the public eating regulations to their own homes. The onus was placed squarely on the individual. For instance, citizens were asked to observe 'meatless' days,' but were under no compulsion to do so, and when

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5 Colby, pp. 200-207.

6 "Notes and Comments," *Toronto Globe*, April 5, 1918, p. 4.

7 Under the waste prevention order, for example, the Food Board had the right to prescribe "the amount of any kind or kinds of food that may be purchased or held by any person, whether such foods ... are purchased or held for sale exportation or *private consumption*." NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, P.C. 597, April 5, 1918 (March 12, 1918).

restaurants began apportioning sugar to patrons in envelopes containing a set amount (about two teaspoonfuls), housewives were asked to apply similar restrictions at home.[8] But with private consumption thus left to the discretion of individuals, the Food Board had to rely heavily on the goodwill of the public, as well as propaganda appealing to whatever patriotic zeal remained in a country fatigued by almost four years of wartime stress. Indeed, the difficulties inherent to policing private behaviour must have been daunting, and not without ideological implications as well. The irony of a democracy employing 'autocratic' methods to win a war against autocracy was not lost on Canadian authorities.

The Food Board's Director of Agricultural Labour, J.D. MacGregor, told the *Manitoba Free Press* that he expected the Food Board to ask housewives to "make the regulations regarding public eating houses apply to their own households as fully as possible."[9] Other papers echoed this opinion; the 'Women's Daily Interests' page of the *Toronto Star* reported that as soon as the public had become sufficiently familiar with the regulations as they applied to restaurants, they would then be extended to private homes as well.[10] But how could this be enforced? Inspection of garbage cans, it was suggested, might be one way that the government could snare food "slackers" who disregarded anti-waste orders. But what about rules such as the one ordering that bread be cut at the table, not in the kitchen? The most difficult rule to follow, according to the article, would be that restricting the serving of meat, a problem that many women felt was due to the obstinacy of their husbands. "I'm quite willing to do without beef,' said one housewife, expressing the troubles of her class, 'but when John says he wants beefsteak, I can't give him a dish of cheese, because it is a meatless day. I save as much as I can, and I see no difference between saving on Monday and saving on Tuesday."[11]

Conscription and labour shortages continued to place heavy burdens on Canada's domestic war effort, which of necessity affected food production. With voluntarism reaching its apex, and with the securing of adequate labour supplies rapidly becoming a national obsession, the

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8 "Sugar Rationing in Effect," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 2, 1918, p. 5.

9 *Manitoba Free Press*, April 2, 1918, p. 6.

10 "Every Housewife Will Be Her Own Food Controller," *Toronto Star*, April 3, 1918, p. 12.

11 Ibid.

government passed P.C. 815, known variously as the Anti-Loafing Act, the Loafer's Act, the 'Lazy Law,' and somewhat euphemistically, the 'Utilization of Human Energy' Act.[12] This legislation, which (some have argued) stemmed from a Canada Food Board suggestion, sought to eliminate wasteful idleness.[13] It became, in effect, a crime to be without productive employment, if you were an able-bodied man between the ages of sixteen and sixty. This draconian law was enforced, apparently with some effect in certain parts of the country. By the end of the month, for example, it was reported that there were no longer any "loafers" to be found on the streets of Calgary.[14] While debates still rage over the extent to which Canada fought a 'total war,' measures such as this one suggest that had the war gone beyond 1918, the nation would have overcome the mobilization 'gap;' the progression of food control shows that the reluctance of the state to employ force within its own borders was being steadily eroded by the length and intensity of the conflict.

The extension of food control to private homes and social functions began in earnest towards mid-April, when the Food Board initiated an anti-hoarding campaign featuring an appeal to householders. Individuals were asked to return, "through the ordinary channels of trade," all surplus amounts of flour and other commodities that they had on hand, which meant stocks in excess of those needed to meet their present food needs. Canadians were asked to return these surplus amounts of food to their grocers (if they had not deteriorated in any way), who had in turn been asked to take them back "as a patriotic duty," and to refund the purchase price.[15] While consumers may have been politely 'asked' to comply with the wishes of the Food Board, they were also reminded that those who failed to do so were subject to steep fines or even imprisonment. By the end of the month, the Food Board had placed strict limits on the amount of flour individuals could

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12 *Statutes of Canada*, 1918, vol. I-II, p. lxxxiii.

13 David Edward Smith, "Emergency Government in Canada and Australia 1914-1919: A Comparison," Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1964, p. 101. Here, Smith states that "the Board's extensive regulation resulted in an 'anti-loafing law." In his article "Emergency Government in Canada," Smith further states that the Board "recommended government action, which was later carried out under the War Measures Act, to require every male resident of Canada to be regularly employed in some useful occupation," p. 435. He does not cite his source for this information, nor, unfortunately, has this researcher uncovered the connection.

14 "No Loafers in Calgary," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 25, 1918, p. 5.

15 "Anti-Hoarding to Avoid Waste — Food Board Appeals for Return of Excessive Stocks," *Toronto Globe*, April 18, 1918, p. 3.

hold at one time — a fifteen day supply, and no more.[16] An order passed days before placed similar restrictions on sugar; taken together, these two regulations became known as the "Hoarding Orders," and they were among the first concrete indications that the playing field had changed, as women now had to adapt themselves, and their families' modes of consumption, to fit the edicts of the state.[17]

As with any policy-shift of this nature, dealing with a commodity as personal as food, the adjustment was not entirely smooth. The author of "Mrs. O'Conomee," a regular feature on household thrift appearing in the *Toronto Globe*'s "What Women Are Doing" pages, devoted the May 1 column to the difficulty many women were having in conforming to the new, stricter approach. "The middle-aged people, and, as they are fond of calling themselves, seasoned housekeepers, shouldn't find it easy to revolutionize all their ideas of thrift in a moment," wrote Mrs. O'Conomee.[18] Buying staples in large amounts had been one traditional way of saving time and money, but no more. The change would be most difficult for women of 'a certain age,' who had

> spent a good part of their lives, perhaps, living up to their own light and inculcating in the minds of their daughters a proper realization of the shiftlessness of running to the corner store for every quarter's worth of sugar or a few pounds of flour. Now they are introduced to a new manifestation of thrift that demands an entire reversal of all these old ideas.

'Old ideas,' time-tested ways of provisioning their homes and feeding their families were now, for the first time, subordinated to a greater cause, and Canadian women could be forgiven if they were having a bit of difficulty in making the necessary adjustments. The hoarding orders were really the first regulations to have a *direct* impact on the private food habits of Canadians, and women who had ignored the Food Board's 'polite requests' to return excessive stocks were now displeased to find themselves in a somewhat embarrassing position. A 'friend' of Mrs. O'Conomee noted that her mother, having ignored her warnings, now had "quite a bit of flour" to return to the grocer. Mrs. O'Conomee reported that she had had a similar battle with an aunt, who was now "humiliated over what she has to send back." Discernible within this column is a real sense that when faced with the

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16 "Forbidden to Hoard Flour," *Ibid.*, April 29, 1918, p. 5.

17 "Sugar Hoarding To Be Punished," *Ibid.*, April 27, 1918, p. 7. Also Thomson, p. 60.

18 "Housewives Ready to Observe Rules," *Toronto Globe*, May 1, 1918, p. 12.

unfamiliar intrusion of the state into their kitchens, it was the older generation who, not surprisingly, seemed to have the most difficulty accepting the changes. Still, despite the smugness with which the younger characters tut-tutted the 'foolish' actions of the older women, one can argue that wartime adjustments of this nature were not easy, regardless of age or social station.

For those who found themselves struggling with the food situation, there were ample opportunities to learn the rules and principles of food saving. In Toronto, for example, the Adam's Furniture Company, hoping, no doubt, to attract hordes of women to their store, presented an "exhibition of food products prepared in accordance with recent Orders in Council issued by the Canada Food Board."[19] Here, L.A. Gurnett of Ontario's Organization of Resources Committee gave "short talks on food conservation," and explained the rationing systems currently in place in other countries. "Every housewife," declared an ad for the event, "should try to attend this Exhibition and acquaint herself with the new food laws." Implicit here was the notion that food service was a woman's patriotic duty. In Winnipeg, the Canadian Northern Railway's downtown ticket office featured a window display of 'War Bread,' ("of fine texture and good colour") with the recipe available to all those who wanted it.[20] At the annual meeting of the Toronto Women's Patriotic League, women were exhorted to make food saving "a passion," and they asked that even more rigourous food regulations be enacted.[21] In public at least, there is every indication that among those disposed to support the war, food regulation was simply seen as yet another responsibility to be duly borne. If anything, support had risen since the Canada Food Board had supplanted the Office of the Food Controller; the complaints that had been widespread under Hanna were no longer heard in such numbers, despite the still continuous rise in food prices.

Women were not the only ones wrestling with Food Board orders. The food regulations, according to those whose businesses were affected by them, could be perplexing, and restaurant keepers in particular seem to have had an especially difficult time sorting out the rules. In April, after scrutinizing the recently toughened orders for public eating places, an assemblage of Toronto

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19 *Toronto Star*, April 12, 1918, p. 7.

20 "War Bread on Exhibition," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 26, 1918, p. 10.

21 *Toronto Globe*, April 30, 1918, p. 4; May 1, 1918, p. 6.

restauranteurs trooped to Ottawa to seek guidance from the Food Board. They were quite literally baffled by some of the laws — the main area of obfuscation surrounded the time of day that certain foods could (and could not) be served — and, like grocers, they were of the opinion that the Board had obviously not sought out the help of "experts" (i.e. themselves) in formulating them.[22] Other frustrated restaurant owners drew up a schedule, based on their own interpretation of the regulations, of which foods could be served when. This schedule was then sent to the Food Board for approval or correction, thus ensuring compliance and consistency in all eating establishments.[23] The confusing nature of the regulations was even used as a defense by some of the first restaurant keepers charged with violating the orders. For the heinous crime of serving beef twice in the same day, four London, Ontario, restauranteurs were each fined the sum of twenty-five dollars. All requested (and apparently were given) leniency as they had apparently "misunderstood the orders before them."[24] The first Torontonian convicted of breaking the food rules was a Chinese restaurant keeper named Jung Ket, whose transgression involved the serving of white bread without also providing a substitute.[25] A quick survey of the press of the time reveals that Chinese restaurant owners made up a seemingly disproportionate number of those charged with violations; in the Ontario towns of Colbalt, Brockville, and Guelph, several more Chinese proprietors were accused of breaking the food regulations.[26] Perhaps this was simply due to the fact that many restaurants were owned by Chinese immigrants, or, perhaps the authorities specifically targeted these establishments. Cultural differences may have led the owners to feel less inclined to observe the wartime regulations, or perhaps a simple language barrier was at fault. Whatever the answer, it still appears that more restaurants with 'foreign' owners were charged with violations.[27]

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22 "Food Measures are Puzzling," *Toronto Globe*, April 2, 1918, p. 9.

23 "Restaurant Men Try to Learn Regulations," *Ibid.*, April 9, 1918, p. 7.

24 "They Served Beef Twice in One Day," *Ibid.*, April 5, 1918, p. 4.

25 "Restaurant Man Fined Under New Food Law," *Ibid.*, April 27, 1918, p. 9.

26 "Violating Food Rules," *Ibid.*, May 4, 1918, p. 12; "Broke Food Regulations," May 7, 1918, p. 3; "Sold Pork on Friday," May 28, 1918, p. 5. Yet another Chinese restaurant keeper, from Souris, Manitoba, found himself $100 poorer after ending up on the wrong side of the food law (for serving roast pork on Sunday). "Pork Dinner Ends in Fine," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 24, 1918, p. 10.

27 In one colourful case, Gottleib Munger, convicted of serving beef on a Tuesday, declared that he was not aware that the

Like most laws, food regulations could only be effective if they were properly enforced — this was the main reasoning behind the decision not to adopt rationing in Canada. Strictly speaking, the Canada Food Board could not police its own orders, save for the suspension or revocation of licenses. While it did have a staff of inspectors, the Board depended on the cooperation of municipal, provincial, and federal police forces and judiciary to prosecute offenders. In order to better coordinate this collaborative effort, the Board on April 18, 1918 opened a section whose purpose was to direct the enforcement of Food Board orders.[28] Inspectors would investigate public eating places, dealers, cold storage establishments, and other food storehouses, and, if any evidence of wrong-doing was discovered, it would be turned over to the local authorities for further prosecution.[29] However, inducing these local authorities to pay attention to the food regulations, and to take violations seriously, was not easy. Shortly after the creation of the Enforcement Section, Thomson complained to Newton Rowell that, so far, the Food Board had only secured the cooperation of law enforcement officials "in a comparatively small measure and largely by request, almost in the way of looking to them for a favour."[30] In order to enlist their assistance, police forces and magistrates across the country were given copies of all food regulations, a manual of food laws was produced, and in June representatives from the Food Board spoke to a gathering of the Chief Constables Association of Canada, which took place in Hamilton.[31] In light of the cooperation the Food Board later received (the Chief Constables subsequently provided "prompt and generous assistance"), it was determined that this special effort to cultivate a good relationship with the police had indeed been beneficial.[32] Thus, it was not just the public who had to be convinced of the

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'Hamburg steak' he had served his patrons counted as 'beef.' Despite his assertions that he was in fact attempting to "save beef by transforming it into steak," the unimpressed magistrate imposed a $100 fine (or three months imprisonment) as punishment. "Fined for Serving Hamburg Steak Tuesday," *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1918, p. 10.

28 Thomson, p. 57.

29 Ibid., p. 19. Not all provinces offered equal cooperation; while no names are mentioned, the final report of the Canada Food Board noted that "in one or two of the provinces the Board failed absolutely to get any assistance from them," which was put down to a lack of resources. p. 59.

30 NAC, RG 13 Justice, Series A-2, Vol. 223, File 1918-1113, Thomson to Newton Rowell, April 25, 1918.

31 Thomson, p. 58.

32 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

seriousness of food control — even those responsible for enforcing it had to be persuaded to do so.

Being open to the public, restaurants were relatively easy to police. It was merely a matter of sending inspectors, or undercover police officers, into the restaurant and observing whether the regulations were adhered to.[33] By mid-May reports of convictions and fines for hoarding and wasting food began to surface in the press, joining reports of restaurant violations. Toronto fruit dealer R.J. Kidd was found guilty of "wistfully" permitting the waste of apples through negligent storage; he was fined the usual $100 plus costs.[34] As with the restaurant regulations, most punishments usually did not exceed a $100 fine, but one Niagara Falls man was singularly unlucky to be the first hoarder caught and convicted in that region. Perhaps the judge wanted to send a message, for Robert Wright was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for "unlawfully having eight sacks of flour and fifty-two cases of pork and beans" hidden inside his stable.[35] In Sault Ste. Marie, the brother of a failed baker was caught with ten-and-a-half bags of flour in his possession and fined $100, while in Stratford the first individual to convicted of hoarding was apprehended with much less contraband, only one and three-quarters of a bag.[36] To make the public aware that hoarding was indeed a serious and punishable offence, the Food Board issued a poster which asked "Are YOU breaking the law?" The poster art featured a worried-looking couple watching as the shadow of a policeman passed by their window. On the table between them lay several bags of "hoarded flour" and "hoarded sugar," explaining the couple's unease. The poster's tag line was direct and to the point: "Patriotic Canadians," it declared, "Will Not Hoard Food."[37]

As with all of those convicted of food offences, the fines, while sizable, may not have been

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33 For example, Archibald Langdon, proprietor of Langdon's Cafe on Ottawa's Metcalfe Street, was fined $102 after two constables, sent in by their inspector, "had a perfectly lovely feed of ham and eggs" at his establishment. Along with the prohibited pork, the officers were able to put "no less than seven spoonfuls of sugar in their tea." "Allege Infraction of Food Regulations," *Ottawa Citizen*, May 6, 1918, p. 11; "Costly to Ignore Food Regulations," May 8, 1918, p. 10.

34 "Kidd Sentenced for Food Waste," *Toronto Globe*, May 18, 1918, p. 9.

35 "A Hoarder of Food Gets Long Prison Term," *Ibid.*, May 18, 1918, p. 1.

36 "Had Too Much Flour," *Ibid.*, May 27, 1918, p. 7; May 28, 1918, p. 8. In Moose Jaw, a convicted hoarder who could not read or speak English (and who claimed to know nothing about the hoarding law) was sentenced to ten days' hard labour when he could not pay his fine. "Sentenced for Hoarding," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 1, 1918, p. 16

37 Marc Choko, *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918; 1939-1945*, p. 192.

as disturbing as being publicly branded as one who was not 'doing their bit,' which, in terms of an individual's reputation, could do greater damage than the loss of $100. In late June, the Food Board armed itself with even greater powers to investigate food slackers, by passing P.C. 1542, which made it legal for anyone with authorization from the Canada Food Board, who suspected hoarding or any other violation of the food rules, to enter and inspect any "building, vessel, vehicle, or recepticle" without warning, at any time.[38] Not surprisingly, the unfamiliarity of the situation persuaded some unscrupulous individuals to take advantage for personal gain. Communities in the Kitchener area reported that several "clever crooks," posing as Food Board inspectors, were 'fining' farmers for having excessive amounts of flour and sugar on hand. One Waterloo-area farmer was duped out of $25 by a traveller who had lodged at the farmer's home — after eating the eggs and bacon offered to him for breakfast, he 'fined' the farmer for failing to observe the 'meatless' day.[39] The ever-changing, frequently confusing nature of the food regulations undoubtedly helped the swindlers carry through their bluff; the *Canadian Grocer* warned its readers that legitimate Food Board inspectors carried official certificates which had to be produced upon request.[40]

Increasing Production: The Urban Answer?

The flip side to the Food Board's efforts to enforce conservation was the encouragement of production, an activity that according to J.D. MacGregor, "was even more important" than food saving.[41] Important perhaps, but not sufficiently so to warrant the continuation of agricultural exemptions, which were duly cancelled by the Union government on April 20, 1918, enraging farmers across the nation. As John H. Thompson has noted, western farmers seemed strangely resigned to this move, while Ontario farmers, seething with resentment and anger, descended upon Ottawa en masse in a futile attempt to be heard.[42] The timing could not have been poorer for the

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38 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2 P.C. 1542, June 29, 1918 (June 22, 1918).

39 "Had Breakfast Bacon, Then Fined His Host," *Toronto Globe*, July 3, 1918, p. 3.

40 "Watch Alleged Food Board Inspectors," *Canadian Grocers*, July 19, 1918, p. 34.

41 *Manitoba Free Press*, April 9, 1918, p. 1.

42 Thompson, *Harvests of War*, pp. 149-153.

Food Board, whose efforts to encourage maximum production were now in full swing; the S.O.S. boys were ready to be unleashed, and city dwellers were being exhorted to volunteer for farm work themselves. For farmers, the government's entire approach to the food production issue must have seemed at best contradictory, and, at worse, offensive. Their experienced sons and hired hands were deemed replaceable by city boys, office clerks, and even worse, 'farmerettes.' The notion that urban backyard gardens could subsidize the nation's food supply to any measurable degree may also have seemed a dubious, perhaps even arrogant, proposition to those who made their living tilling the fields. Canadians were continuously told that victory rested on Canada's ability to produce more food, yet the government was proposing to rely on the work of green farm hands and scraggly city plots to reach the level of production needed. The faulty logic would have been comical had the stakes not been so high, nor the consequences so dire.

To be fair, the military situation overseas was reaching perhaps its bleakest point of the war, as Germany's Spring Offensive, begun on March 21, 1918, left those on the homefront breathless with worry. Some Canadians, including perhaps, the Prime Minister, could not conceal a suspicion that farmers were shielding their sons from the front lines, while making unduly high profits on the fruits of their labour. On April 20, a neighbor of Lucy Maud Montgomery telephoned her in a state of sheer panic, asking the author if she had seen the paper. Montgomery, filled with wartime anxiety and anticipating the worst, assumed that the British line had been broken. Unable to make sense of her neighbor's hysterical prattling, she later discovered that her panic had not been brought about by the loss of Messines Ridge, but rather the announcement that farm exemptions from conscription were to be cancelled. "Mrs. Leask," wrote Montgomery, "has two strapping slackers of military age. Hence *her* upset."[43] Borden had reacted to the renewed German onslaught by moving at once to bolster the Canadian contingent, and an Order-in-Council was prepared removing exemptions. The Opposition argued against the move, noting that the production of foodstuffs was sufficiently important to warrant the retention of agricultural deferrals, but was soundly defeated. In his memoirs, Borden coldly characterized the reaction of farmers as

> not unnatural ... it was indeed inevitable that the farming population would greatly prefer to have

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43 Montgomery, *Selected Journals*, p. 246. Italics in original.

> their sons at home and engaged in producing large crops that could be sold at unusually high prices rather than that they should be placed on active service, proceed overseas, and take their place at the front.[44]

In an address to the farmers who had assembled in Ottawa, Borden firmly stated that the demand for military reinforcements was "infinitely greater" than that for larger food production.[45] The politics of military manpower and patriotic food production were thus sadly out of kilter.

The Prime Minister's admission that production was a lesser priority than military considerations could not have been welcomed by those whose business it was to direct and maximize Canada's food contributions. Despite this setback, or perhaps because of it, the work of the Food Board became increasingly urgent, as it appeared that the cancellation of exemptions meant that even more voluntary farm labour would have to be marshalled from the cities. "Work or Fight!" was the stark choice presented to the men of Canada in an April 23 ad for "Farm Week." Ontario's Organization of Resources Committee, in cooperation with the Food Board, had recently scoured Toronto, seeking firms willing to release employees for farm work. Now, with 500 additional men needed, the search continued. The ad consisted of two messages, one addressed to employers, the other to employees. Employers were asked to understand that "without help the farmers can't grow more food. We men of the city must supply that help, *not for the individual farmer's sake*, but because ample food production is vitally necessary to the prosecution of the war."[46] Note the effort to point out that volunteers would not be helping the farmers make more money, but would be serving a greater, nobler cause. Prospective farm hands were informed that, while they probably did not want to leave their jobs to perform manual farm labour, "the only way to look at this call for farm labour is: War Service." The men and women of Ottawa were encouraged to spend their summer vacations on eastern Ontario farms, where more help was sorely needed.[47] Federal civil servants were reminded that according to an Order in Council passed on January 19, 1918, they were permitted to take up to one month's paid leave to perform farm

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44 Borden, *Memoirs*, vol. II, 1969, p. 133.

45 Ibid.

46 *Toronto Star*, April 23, 1918, p. 9. Italics added.

47 *Ottawa Citizen*, July 6, 1918, p. 11.

service.[48] Initiatives like these intended to squeeze as much labour as possible out of already-pressed Canadians, an *ad hoc* response that was not one of the Borden government's more glowing achievements.

Adult males were obviously prized as farm help, but city youth were also called upon. Those who had signed up as 'Soldiers of the Soil' in March were now ready to be assigned to farms. In Toronto, thousands of S.O.S. recruits, giddy at their early release from school (and their exemption from exams), gathered at a mass meeting. "Exuberance Run Riot" was how the *Globe* characterized the assembly, at which speakers fought to be heard above the din and at which "interesting contests" were held.[49] All of this energy was soon to be placed at the disposal of farmers who, as they succumbed to the inescapable circumstances wrought by the conscription of their sons and farm hands, acquiesced, and began to request more S.O.S. help. After the first drafts were placed, progress reports began to filter in, with most relating few problems; there were some adjustments to be made by both the farmers and the recruits, but most accounts were positive. Farmers, however, were urged to "humanize the contact as far as possible," and warned not to deal with the boys as they would other farm labourers.[50] Still, some nagging doubts remained: Could inexperienced urban youth actually be of practical assistance on a farm? In an editorial, the *Globe* responded in the affirmative, noting that 'all' they could do was

> pick strawberries, raspberries, cherries, plums, apples and other fruit, hoe the early potatoes, clean out the stables, take a bill-hook and cut down the thistles and weeds from the fence corners, dig up the clarks around the growing patch, get out in the pasture and salt the cattle, split the kindling wood and do the household chores, spread the hay, rake the sticks out of the front yard, fetch the pail and pitcher of water from the well, and carry oatmeal-water to the farm hand, pick up the potatoes when they are ready, do the errands, go to the village store and post office, and carry all sorts of messages, drive the cows night and morning, get up the horse and put out the horse, feed the chickens, gather the eggs, and turn the grindstone to sharpen the scythes. If this little round of duties should leave him too much spare time he can always spend it in the garden, hoeing and

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48 "Civil Service Farm Work Holiday," *Ibid.*, July 15, 1918, p. 2. Toronto school teachers and administrators who wished to volunteer for farm work were assured that they would receive paid leave to do so. "May Work on Farms Without Salary Loss," *Ibid.*, April 11, 1918, p. 7. Later, in another move emblematic of the time, the London Board of Trade spearheaded an initiative to get local manufacturers to release non-essential workers for agricultural labour. "London Men to Help Farmers Save Crops," *Ibid.*, June 17, 1918, p. 3.

49 "Exuberance Run Riot at S.O.S. Mobilization," *Ibid.*, April 25, 1918, p. 4.

50 "Farmers Apply for S.O.S. Help," *Ibid.*, May 9, 1918, p. 6.

> weeding, and if he is big and strong enough to do a man's work there are other opportunities for usefulness which will counteract the tendency to fall into idle habits.[51]

Many S.O.S. recruits were, as the *Toronto Star* pointed out, "sturdy youths," who at the ages of 16 or 17 weighed "from 150 to 170 pounds."[52] Fourteen-year old Gerry Andrews of Winnipeg, a "typical" Soldier of the Soil, later described an experience much like that evoked by the *Globe*.[53] An urban youth with little farm experience, Andrews managed to overcome the sickening stench of manure and unfamiliar way of life to complete five-and-a-half months of service, much longer than he had originally planned. He would later come to view his term on the farm as life-enhancing, and there is little reason to believe that serving as a Soldier of the Soil or a land girl was an overly onerous experience. As with any endeavour, there were reports of boys abandoning their duties, and of farmers relating poorly to their new hands, but few of these stories made it into the jingoistic press.[54]

The experiences of individual Soldiers of the Soil could be very diverse. While many, like Andrews, ended up on traditional family farms, some, like those sent to work the sugar beet fields operated by the Dominion Sugar Company, near Chatham, Ontario, found themselves in a very different environment. Here, five separate S.O.S camps were set up, each one comprised of boys from different areas and social backgrounds. Along with one made up of local Chatham boys, and another consisting of boys from various other quarters of Ontario, the *Globe* reported that there was also "one of Jewish boys from Montreal, one of Jewish boys from Toronto, one of boys from Victoria Industrial School, one of boys from St. John's Catholic Industrial School."[55] Items like this suggest that some effort was made to keep the boys within familiar cohorts, and Soldiers of the Soil usually served relatively close to home. While farmers in general seemed to be satisfied with the assistance being provided, it had to be remembered that not every city boy or girl could excel at all aspects of farm work. One class of Ottawa farmerettes training at the Experimental Farm proved

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51 "The Boy on the Farm," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, June 6, 1918, p. 4.

52 "Thousands of Boys a Day Enroll for the Farm," *Toronto Star*, April 2, 1918.

53 Andrews, pp. 26-30.

54 *Toronto Globe*, May 9, 1918, p. 6.

55 "Boys Do Well in Beet Fields," *Toronto Globe*, June 20, 1918, p. 7.

eminently capable of ploughing, tree pruning, and tending to livestock, but they failed miserably at milking cows. "Evidently not their fate in life," declared the *Ottawa Citizen*.[56]

Another way in which the cities of Canada could contribute to the food situation was through home production. Under the aegis of the Food Board, gardening literally became a patriotic duty in the spring and summer of 1918. The Food Board confidently declared that these efforts would result in "millions of dollars" worth of extra production.[57] "Are you giving aid and comfort to the enemy?," asked one CFB ad, stating that all those who had a cultivable plot of land were bound by duty to raise something edible, or else they belonged in the same league as "the submarine commander who sinks an Allied ship laden with food."[58] Dog owners in Niagara Falls were disappointed to learn that in light of the newly-vital importance of war gardens, their pets would have to remain chained up from May to October. Rejecting a petition to allow dogs to run free (except in August), the town council decreed that the well-being of gardens came before that of dogs.[59] Curious dogs were also the bane of amateur livestock raisers. In July, Toronto's Rosedale Golf Club began raising hundreds of sheep on its course, a patriotic move with practical ramifications for, as the *Globe* put it: "the sheep do the work formerly done by lawn mowers and at the same time meat is being raised." Golfers, now contending with canine chaos along with several challenging new obstacles, testily felt that dog owners "should observe the laws and keep a closer watch on their animals."[60] In other venues, lectures and demonstrations by gardening experts from both Canada and the United States proliferated; those attending a public meeting in Kentville, Nova Scotia were induced to belt out, "with good effect," the song:

Johnny get your hoe, get your hoe, get your hoe.
Make your garden grow, make it grow, make it grow.
Plant your seeds from sea to sea,
Let them work, for Liberty.
Hurry right away, don't delay, start today,
Forward to the land with a right willing hand,

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56 "Ottawa Girls Not Good Milk Maids," *Ottawa Citizen*, July 9, 1918, p. 10.

57 "Waste Lands Make Money," *Toronto Globe*, July 9, 1918, p. 7.

58 *Toronto Star*, April 25, 1918, p. 12.

59 "Gardens are More Important than Dogs," *Toronto Globe*, April 6, 1918, p. 13.

60 "Rosedale Golf Club is Raising Sheep," *Ibid.*, July 11, 1918, p. 6.

So we'll help defeat the Hun
Now we've got them on the run
Over there, ever there
Send the food, send the food, over there
For our boys need it
Our brave boys need it
The calls are coming everywhere
So observe and preserve
Save the food, save the food and conserve
So we'll help win the cause of freedom
And we'll plant, save and send till it's
over, over there.[61]

Ads put out by the Ontario Organization of Resources Committee told Canadians to "Make your vegetable garden a family affair,"[62] while the city of Ottawa passed legislation enabling the municipality to seize any vacant lots that were laying idle — a measure of just how seriously the Food Board's campaign for urban production was being taken.[63] The zeal with which many now took up the spade and trowel did cause anxiety for some. A group called the 'Lord's Day Alliance' publicly protested against the fact that many were now using Sundays as a chance to work in their gardens. The group's spokesman, the Rev. W.M. Rochester, declared that "we need to emphasize the fact that a man shall not live by bread alone, nor a soldier fight only on his stomach. Our boys at the front know this too well, and testify to the sympathy and inspiring influence of prayer on their behalf."[64] A rare dissenting voice in the largely uncontentious realm of backyard gardening, Rochester, perhaps unhappy with the war's overall effect on social mores, spoke with the all the smug sang-froid of a non-combatant; however, his comments did not dissuade those who fervently believed in putting the gospel of food production ahead of other, less temporal considerations.

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61 "Johnny Get Your Hoe," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 29, 1918, p. 13.

62 *Maclean's*, May 1918, p. 101.

63 "Vacant Lots Will be Taken Over by City," *Ottawa Citizen*, May 6, 1918, p. 2.

64 "No Gardening for Sundays — Lord's Day Alliance Official Makes a Public Protest," *Toronto Globe*, May 4, 1918, p. 10.

A Part of Everyday Life: The Omnipresence of Food Control

In early May, with further cuts being made to British rations, Lord Rhondda let the Canadian authorities know of the nation's increasing food needs, and that further contributions from the Dominion were vitally needed. The timing of this appeal was fortuitous, as Henry Thomson was preparing to embark on a speaking tour through southern Ontario, which would include a massive public meeting on May 15 at Toronto's Massey Hall. Before leaving, Thomson took the opportunity to respond to some of his critics, and to exhort Canadians to not only observe the letter of food regulation, but also, importantly, the spirit, the evasion of which was "little less than treachery to our troops and Allies."[65] As for the allegation that the Food Board was not being rigorous enough, Thomson countered by expressing the difficulty of enforcing food regulations in such a vast and unevenly populated country, hence the reliance on Canadians to voluntarily make food service a part of their everyday modes of thought and action.

The May 15 assembly, which included the participation of dignitaries such as Ontario Premier William Hearst and Sir Robert Falconer (president of the University of Toronto), was designed to give women, food dealers, and restaurant owners "an opportunity to hear from the lips of the Chairman of the Canada Food Board the plain unvarnished facts as to the food situation in Canada and in Europe."[66] The meeting, which promised entertainment in the guise of "local vocal talent and the 48th Highlanders band," had been heavily publicized, and the Torontonians gathered that evening faced a somewhat crowded platform, which included a raft of ladies and gentlemen of distinction.[67] Falconer, in introducing the Food Controller, set the evening's tone by noting that "freedom not only means rights, it means duties." When Thomson, "the giant Westerner," finally spoke, he proceeded to paint a graphic picture of the food crisis overseas, and urged Canadians to go on 'voluntary' rations, as far too much beef and wheat was still being consumed in the country.[68]

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65 "Observe Spirit of Food Rules," *Ibid.*, May 14, 1918, p. 7.

66 "The Food Needs of Our Allies," *Toronto Globe*, May 14, 1918, p. 4. See illustration.

67 Among the ladies present were Mrs. Newton Rowell, Lady Hearst, L.A. Gurnett of the Organization of Resources Committee, and several others.

68 "Mr. Thomson's Big Job," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, May 17, 1918, p. 6.

Despite the fact that the Food Board and the government seemed to be edging more and more toward compulsion, voluntarism, noted Thomson, was the proper principle upon which to conduct food control in Canada, for "when we do things on a voluntary basis we throw ourselves into them and we accomplish them."[69] The evening was replete with pithy statements such as "Take care of the crumbs and the loaves will take care of themselves," "The waster is the traitor," "He who wastes helps the Germans win the war," and also featured a conservation film entitled "Waste Not, Want Not." The seriousness of the meeting may not have been conveyed as effectively as Thomson would have hoped; the *Globe* reported that the "female laughter" that could be heard during a demonstration of British food saving methods indicated that there were "still some doubters in our midst."[70] Whether or not the meeting succeeded in alerting the audience to the necessity of food saving is unknown, but the *Globe* summed up the assembly's ultimate significance when it wrote of food control that, with the regulation of the food business proceeding apace, "the success of the project" now rested on the consumer — all that remained was for citizens to alter their personal eating habits.[71] Left unsaid was the unconscious, yet mounting feeling that if this failed, the government would eventually have to step in even more firmly to ensure compliance.

If Canadians were having any difficulty in figuring out how, exactly, one went about eating in a sufficiently self-sacrificing manner, there were products on the market whose properties were, fortuitously enough, perfectly compatible with the new spirit of wartime food service, at least according to their advertisements. Ads for Grape-Nuts cereal were formed one particularly egregious example of using food conservation as a marketing gimmick; they spelled out, in bold letters, the fact that Grape-Nuts "NEED NO SUGAR," and were "well suited to these saving times."[72] Later, the company went even further, stating that in eating Grape-Nuts, you were in fact "conforming to the government's wishes in saving wheat."[73] The tightening of the sugar supply

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69 "Notes from Food Control Meeting," *Ibid.*, May 16, 1918, p. 8.

70 Ibid.

71 "Mr. Thomson's Big Job".

72 *Toronto Globe*, May 1, 1918, p. 11. Another ad agreed, reminding Canadians that "the program nowadays is to save! Grape-nuts food fits in fine with this idea." Ibid., May 6, 1918, p. 9.

73 *Ibid.*, May 20, 1918, p. 7.

prompted Canada Starch to promote its corn syrup as the perfect substitute, and it also invited consumers to write to the Food Board to request its pamphlet on using corn syrup.[74] Baker's Chocolate claimed that it increased the palatability of war cakes made with white flour substitutes.[75] The strictures against eating beef, as previously mentioned, led to an increase in the popularity of lamb, upon which Winnipeg grocers Gibson-Gage sought to capitalize. "Why not eat lamb?," they asked, "You cannot buy anything nicer. The war office is not buying lamb for the soldiers overseas, so that your conscience need not gnaw you."[76] Purchasers of Swift's Oleomargarine were assured of "Economy without sacrifice," while Instant Postum labelled itself "an economy drink — absolutely no waste ... saves fuel and sugar."[77] These types of ads were relatively harmless, as they gave food control a certain amount of free publicity. There were, however, certain firms that crossed the line. In July, the Food Board showed that it would not tolerate ads that could have an adverse effect on the food situation, by prohibiting the Truro, Nova Scotia retailer Ryan Brothers from selling sugar and flour for ten days. The store had run ads urging people to purchase sugar and flour in excess of the amounts allowed by Food Board regulations, asserting that the price of such commodities was about to go up. The Food Board warned the owners that if they continued to run ads along these lines, their license to operate would be revoked.[78] Overall, the inescapable presence of food control in the lives of Canadians was cemented by the sheer volume of references, in ads or otherwise, for it was encountered almost everywhere, and by mid-1918, was vitually unavoidable.[79]

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74 *Ibid.*, October 22, 1918, p. 5. See illustration.

75 *Ibid.*, December 7, 1918, p. 15.

76 *Manitoba Free Press*, April 5, 1918, p. 2. Another Winnipeg grocery store, A.F. Higgins Company, told its customers to "Be patriotic. Buy eggs and save bacon."

77 *Toronto Globe*, May 15, 1918, pp. 5, 7.

78 "Flour and Sugar Ads Must be Stopped," *Toronto Globe*, July 20, 1918, p. 11.

79 The patriotic 'back to the land movement' also offered a golden marketing opportunity. An ad for Fleet Foot shoes told country-bound farm volunteers that their product would "prevent the feet from becoming cramped and over-tired, when working in the field or garden." Another ad claimed that the "unusual work" performed by farmerettes (using "different muscles") necessitated a "good supply of pure red blood," obtainable by regular quaffing of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food. If the farmerettes, well shod and bolstered by patent medicines, still needed to unwind after a long day in the fields, farmers were invited to purchase a Brunswick Phonograph — to "give your S.O.S. boys and national service girls music on the farm." *Toronto Globe*, June 21, 1918, p. 7; September 7, 1918, p. 13; May 15, 1918, p. 14.

As 1918 continued, perceptive Canadians would have realized that whenever the Food Board 'encouraged' a certain course of action, it would usually follow this up with a regulation. On May 20, Thomson announced that Canadians should stop treating banquets and the refreshments served at meetings as 'extra meals,' but that they should instead arrange functions so that the food served coincided with mealtimes. This was an innocuous, but according to the *Globe*, a "common-sense" suggestion, as it was "good patriotism, good economics, and good health science. It will conserve food, prevent waste, and destroy dyspepsia."[80] To ensure that this suggestion was in fact taken seriously, the Food Board cemented it with Order 25, which amended the definition of 'public eating places' (and all the regulations pertaining to them) to include "all public entertainments, lawn socials, bazaars and tea meetings, public luncheons, dinners and picnics, fairs and exhibitions, lodge, clubs, and fraternal societies' meetings and all such places of a like or similar character."[81] In addition, private parties and dinners attended by 15 or more people (other than family members) also came under this heading. There were to be no exceptions. "Special permits to serve food contrary to the regulations," it was reported, "are being asked for, but such permits will not be given."[82] Not long after this regulation was passed, the 'Victory Bread' order was announced, a move that had some bakers "up in arms."[83] Canada Food Board Order 50 stipulated that henceforth bread would have to contain at least ten percent of substitutes, such as corn meal, oatmeal, rye, or potato. Furthermore, it decreed that "no person shall have in his possession any bread, rolls, pastry, ... which does not conform to the requirements of the Canada Food Board."[84] In Montreal however a group of French bakers who claimed that "the government had broken faith with them," was incensed at the order, and threatened to raise the price of bread to correspond with the high cost of substitutes.[85] W.P. Linn, head of the Food Board's Baking section, took to Ottawa bakeries to prove

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80 "Make Banquets Practical," (editorial) *Toronto Globe*, May 22, 1918, p. 6.

81 "Some Changes in Food Order," *Ibid.*, June 6, 1918, p. 2.

82 "Picnic Appetites Must Be Curbed," *Ibid.*, June 12, 1918, p. 10.

83 "Montreal Bakers Up in Arms," *Ibid.*, June 28, 1918, p. 5.

84 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, Canada Food Board Order no. 50, June 27, 1918.

85 *Toronto Globe*, June 28, 1918, p. 5.

that 'Victory Bread' was easy to make and resulted in a "satisfactory loaf."[86]

Wartime food service remained urgent in the summer of 1918, as urban dwellers across Canada struggled to coax vegetables out of their newly-undertaken war gardens, women strove to can as much of the home harvest as possible ("Can Until You Can't," was the title of one Food Board pamphlet), and church picnics and superfluous refreshments became casualties of war.[87] The Food Board, despite the scattered objections raised by its edicts, was proving to be a vastly different, and far more formidable agency than the Office of the Food Controller had ever been, and one whose stricter ordinances needed some getting used to. The new approach was necessary, as it appeared that not all Canadians had caught the infectious nature of food sacrifice — the effects of war were taking their toll, without the added burden of watching one's food consumption. On vacation in her native Prince Edward Island, Lucy Maud Montgomery discovered that "despite the howls of the Food Board," the "wonderful spreads which only Island people can — or do — get up" continued as normal. "In my own house," she noted, "we haven't had cake for a year, but since I've been on the Island I've seen heaps of it — and eaten heaps of it, too, I must admit."[88] As the war, and the summer, progressed, Canadians were feeling the pinch, and the guilt, brought on by food regulation as never before. It was also by now becoming quite evident that food regulation was not a tidy issue; a vortex of intricate pressures and effects belied food control's outwardly straightforward nature. Competing interests and issues relating to class, region, gender, and politics complicated matters, ensuring unexpected outcomes, and making the outwardly straightforward notion of food control into one fraught with complications and challenges.

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86 "Satisfactory Loaf Use of Substitutes," *Ottawa Citizen*, July 8, 1918, p. 4. Bread making is, at the best of times, a tricky proposition, requiring care and a knowledge of one's ingredients — the order changing the composition of bread would have been irritating for bakers. In late August, a bakery in St. Thomas, Ontario was investigated by the Food Board after its war bread made customers ill. The baker claimed to be following the standard recipe, but the bread which resulted was, according to the *Globe*, "glue-like in its appearance" with "a sour smell." The Food Board determined that the build up of 'rope,' a type of bacteria, in the baker's mixing troughs was the culprit. The trouble, noted the inspectors, was that bakers had "not yet become accustomed to the use of substitutes." "Too Much Rope," *Toronto Globe*, August 22, 1918, p. 3.

87 "Picnics and Food and Fuel Saving," *Halifax Chronicle*, June 21, 1918, p. 9; "What Women Are Doing — Not To Serve Cakes," *Toronto Globe*, June 10, 1918, p. 8.

88 Montgomery, *Selected Journals*, p. 258.

International and Domestic Pressures in the Summer of 1918

While this thesis has been primarily (and indeed, consciously) focused on the domestic ramifications of wartime food regulation in Canada, the summer of 1918 was marked by an important development in international food cooperation, and one that also reflects Canada's wartime position within the Empire. Food control in Canada had been precipitated by events overseas, and as these continued to unfold, Canadian authorities responded accordingly. The entry of the United States into the war had had a particularly noticeable impact in the area of food supply. Backed up by American financial and material might, U.S. Food Administrator Herbert Hoover gradually became the leading figure directing Allied food distribution. As L. Margaret Barnett has written, the entry of U.S. "gave the Americans an opportunity to use the weapon of finances and supply to bring about a total reorganization of the Allied trading arrangements with North America and to influence food policy within individual Allied countries."[89] In other words, as the U.S. was the main source of the Allies' food requirements, it naturally assumed a commanding role within the food sphere. Canada, precariously balanced as ever between the U.S. and Great Britain, had to accommodate the desires of both countries, while at the same time taking into account its own food needs, and the interests of its various food producing sectors.

While the Food Board had no permanent representative in Britain, it had sent Dr. J.W. Robertson to Europe on a "special mission," a visit that coincided with that of Sir Robert Borden. In early July, 1918 Robertson met with various British food officials, and later travelled to both France and Italy. In what was perhaps his last message to Canadians, Lord Rhondda wrote that Robertson's visit "proved most useful" and "confirmed the previous estimate which existed as to the magnificent work done by Canada towards enabling the Allied armies to face the German onslaught without fear of starvation."[90] Robertson had also been observing British food conditions, cabling to

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89 Barnett, pp. 162-163.

90 "Britain Thanks Canada for Food," *Toronto Globe*, July 3, 1918, p. 16. Rhondda died of pneumonia on July 3, 1918. According to the *Globe*, he had "adhered too closely to rations." He had also been aboard the *Lusitania* when that ill-fated vessel was sunk; British Chancellor Andrew Bonar Law attributed Rhondda's death to a weakened constitution dating from this mishap. See "Bonar Law's Tribute to Viscount Rhondda," *Ottawa Citizen*, July 4, 1918, p. 1. J.R. Clynes replaced

T.A. Crerar that the situation appeared "much easier and safer than last winter," and that, except for sugar, butter and fruit, supply levels looked good.[91] British war bread, he discovered, was not like that in Canada, since it was "wholesome but not attractive enough [to] cause anyone [to] eat one bite for pleasure." The Food Board's observer also noted that female farm labour was turning out to be a productive measure, and that farmers in Britain were more willing than those in Canada to use their profits to purchase war bonds.

The heartening news that food conditions in Britain were improving was positive, but the assessment may have been a tad premature, as predictions for that year's crop (in Britain) were not good. In a cable to the Food Board, the new British Food Controller, J.R. Clynes, stated that drought had damaged the wheat, barley and oats currently under seed, that colder than normal temperatures had adversely affected the potato crop, and that the fruit crop had suffered under an early frost. Britain was in need of cheese, and they had just begun rationing lard. "Generally," according to Clynes, "the food situation in the United Kingdom is improved, but the realm of anxiety is not yet over."[92] Strangely enough, a few days later he was contradicted by Herbert Hoover, who ebulliently declared that "all anxiety as to great essentials of food is now past."[93] Hoover was in London on a mission of his own — to increase the level of cooperation amongst the Allies in the vital area of food control. To this end, he convened a meeting with the other Allied Food Controllers, J.R. Clynes, Victor Boret of France, and Silvio Crespi of Italy. Hoover was in a perfect position to take command of the situation, something that did not sit well with British food officials.[94] Canada did not have a representative at the initial meeting, but Sir William Goode, a Hoover loyalist and Canadian-born liaison between the Ministry of Food and the U.S. Food Administration, suggested that a Canadian representative be appointed to attend the conference.[95] A meeting between Arthur Meighen, C.C. Ballantyne, and J.R. Clynes resulted in what Goode called

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Rhondda as British Food Controller on July 10, 1918. See Beveridge, p. 247.

91 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 137880, J.W. Robertson to T.A. Crerar, July 2, 1918.

92 "Food Controllers of Allies Confer in London July 22," *Ottawa Citizen*, July 17, 1918, p. 2.

93 "Allies' Food Problem Over," *Toronto Globe*, July 24, 1918, p. 1.

94 Nash, p. 352.

95 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 51680, Cable to Borden, July 25, 1918; Nash, pp. 29, 353.

"a cordial invitation on the part of the British Food Controller for a member of your government to attend the conference," which in the end turned out to be Ballantyne, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries.[96]

The conference, held over several days, succeeded in forming the Inter-Allied Food Council, consisting of the four Food Controllers (Hoover, Clynes, Crespi and Boret) who agreed to meet every three months. They would also direct the activities of a 'Committee of Representatives,' consisting of two delegates each from the U.S. and the Allied nations, whose task it would be to do the actual work — to study and harmonize the Allies' various food needs and programmes, and also to coordinate Allied purchasing and shipping.[97] Sir John Beale, the British former head of the Wheat Executive, was installed as independent chairman. Canada, despite the urgings of William Goode, did not have a representative on either the Council or the committee, a situation that Ballantyne found distressing — he believed Canada should push for a seat. "I shall think," he wrote to Borden, "that England should offer no objection, insomuch as she will have three representatives, counting the chairman, and could very easily dump one of these and have his place taken by a Canadian representative."[98] Both Goode and Ballantyne discussed the possibility with Borden, but in the end, no Canadian would sit on the newly-formed food executive; as in other matters, the country would instead have to rely on a more 'informal' link with the Food Council. In September, T.A. Crerar decided to appoint J.W. Robertson as the Food Board's permanent representative in London, to "confer and cooperate with the Allied Food Council in all matters affecting Canada's food interests."[99] While Canadian effort on the battlefield and Borden's impressive performance at the Imperial War Conference was winning new respect for the Dominion, in the end Canada had to take a back seat in Inter-Allied food matters, despite its contributions.[100]

Back in Canada, the summer brought more challenges to the Food Board, as well as

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96 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 51664, William Goode to Borden, July 25, 1918.

97 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 51693, "Inter-Allied Food Control," July 29, 1918; Beveridge, pp. 247-250; Nash, pp. 352-355.

98 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 51692. C.C. Ballantyne to Borden, July 30, 1918.

99 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 75425, Borden to Ballantyne, September 7, 1918.

100 Cook, pp. 385-386.

unwelcome echoes of past disappointments. In late July, the *Globe* resurrected the question of food prices and the cost of living, an issue that had been strangely quiescent ever since Hanna had resigned as Food Controller. Citing the cost of living as the main reason for the "growing industrial unrest and dissatisfaction" in the country, the paper urged the Food Board to re-examine the possibility of controlling the price of food.[101] Two days later, in another editorial, the paper posed the question: "Why should food prices in Canada — a country which carries a huge surplus of foodstuffs for export — be higher than they are in the importing British Isles?" Again, the middlemen (and the government's failure to curb them) were portrayed as villainous war profiteers. "There is," noted the paper, "a startling difference between what the farmer receives and what the consumer pays. What 'something' between the farmer and the consumer is fattening at the expense of both?"[102] Yet again, the example of Britain was held up as a model of how the Canadian government could and should deal with the problem. "The question of fixing food prices," concluded the paper, "should engage the attention of the Canada Food Board." Later, the paper pointed to what it felt was a glaring inconsistency in Food Board policy. While denouncing the principle and practice of price fixing, the Board allowed itself to set maximum prices for wheat substitutes, obviously a form of price control. Why then was this particular "interference with the law of supply and demand" permissible, when other forms of price fixing clearly were not?[103] The result of the Food Board's inaction, the paper would later imply, was that the producers and food dealers were indulging in a different, more insidious form of price fixing, one that the government was apparently willing to countenance. It was, of course, "heresy to suggest that it should be done in the interest of consumers."[104]

In the eyes of the Food Board, British and military consumers came ahead of those in Canada, a situation that some on this side of the ocean still found inexplicable. An official news item was released in early August informing Canadians that the cost of living in Britain had risen so precipitously that housewives could only acquire half as much food, for the same money, as before

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101 "Food Prices in Canada," (Editorial) *Toronto Globe*, July 25, 1918, p. 4.

102 "Control of Food Prices," (Editorial) *Ibid.*, July 27, 1918, p. 6.

103 "The Fixing of Prices," (Editorial) *Ibid.*, August 7, 1918, p. 4.

104 "Notes and Comments," *Ibid.*, September 3, 1918, p. 6.

the war. "Just why we should be officially informed of how bad things are in Britain is beyond comprehension," fumed the *Ottawa Citizen.*[105]

> What the British housewife has to put up with is of academic interest to us. However, for the instruction of the British public our hard-working director of public information might cable across that the cost of the average family's food and rent in this country has risen from a little over seven dollars a week in 1914 to over thirteen dollars in 1918, which compares favourably (or unfavourably) with the doubling of food prices in Britain.

The Food Board itself may have been partly to blame for the resurrection of this irritating issue; it had lately put out a pamphlet which in simple, almost condescending terms, outlined the Board's position on price control. "Why," it asked rhetorically, "can't the Food Board fix prices?

> Because no Board, no Government, can MAKE men do work that brings no profit. 'Money makes the mare go.'... The Allies need food. Price fixing cannot win a victory. The only remedy within reach today is in saving and economizing the present stocks of food, and in doubling, trebling, and possibly quadrupling, this season's crop. Prices will drop when there is enough for ourselves and the Allies.[106]

But what was 'enough?' Some simply could not understand why, with the large extension of production taking place, food prices in Canada continued to rise. In a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen*, one frustrated consumer complained that in spite of the "bumper crops being produced," the still-advancing cost of food would soon "make it hardly possible for the working man to get his daily bread, let alone a portion of meat for his well-earned meal."[107] It was up to the government, the author continued, to control the prices at which commodities were sold; food dealers were nothing more than "open-handed profiteers" from whom the public had to be protected. As the cost of living rose, grocers had little choice but to become inured to the constant stream of invective tossed their way by exasperated consumers. Much in the same vein, as the regulation of the Canada Food Board intensified, food dealers seemed to accept the inevitability of further controls; perhaps the changes made to the food control regime held out some hope that the interests of the food business would not be as ignored as they had been during Hanna's reign.

The *Canadian Grocer*, a font of criticism in 1917, became much more tolerant, almost

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105 "Comment," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 1, 1918, p. 12.

106 "The 'Why' in Price Fixing," *Canadian Grocer*, July 26, 1918, p. 54.

107 "Re. Food Prices," (Letter to the Editor) *Ottawa Citizen*, August 12, 1918, p. 12.

supportive of food control measures, as the events of 1918 unfolded. Indeed, by late May the trade paper found itself in the unfamiliar position of defending the work of the Board. "It is possible to differ at times with some of the methods of the food control office," it editorialized, "but in the larger aspects of the case this work is of vital importance and their large powers are being wisely used, and the merchant who does not live up to the spirit of the regulations is doing himself and the cause he believes in a great wrong."[108] Five weeks later, when the Windsor Consumers' Association called for the replacement of certain members of the Board with consumer representatives, an editorial in the *Canadian Grocer* took the group to task, stating that the world food shortage that had led to the current high prices was in no way within the control of the Food Board. "The best they can hope to do," the paper wrote, "is to alleviate conditions, and to conserve resources so that world conditions do not utterly break us."[109] In so doing, the editorial continued, the Food Board

> seems to have acted with wisdom and fair-mindedness. Probably they have made mistakes. That is only human. This much at least may be said that they have used large powers without undue severity, and that they have achieved some results that are of outstanding benefit to Canada as a whole, to the cause for which we are fighting, and to the merchants of the country.

This was certainly a far cry from the vitriol the paper had hurled at William Hanna. Perhaps the food trade had finally realized the futility of combating what had become an eventuality in all combatant nations; as with other wartime exigencies, food regulation was a new, hopefully temporary, reality that had to be accepted.

The licensing system added leverage to the Food Board's ability to enforce its regulations. Grocers and other food dealers were routinely fined, or had their licenses suspended, if found to be in breach of the food laws. For example, in Cornwall, Ontario, two grocery concerns (including one which had earlier endorsed the licensing scheme in the *Canadian Grocer*), were temporarily prohibited from selling flour, as a result of allowing illegal exports to the United States, a practice that the Food Board was particularly keen to stop.[110] Other food dealers around the country were

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108 Canadian Grocer, May 31, 1918, p. 30.

109 "No Need for a Change," (Editorial) *Ibid.*, July 5, 1918, p. 32.

110 "Prohibited From Dealing in Flour," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 2, 1918, p. 2. Also, Thomson, pp. 60-61. In September, the license of D.J. Long, a general merchant in New Brunswick, was cancelled for illegal sales of flour and sugar for export; other dealers were also under investigation. "Food License Cancelled," *Toronto Globe*, September 7, 1918, p. 7.

found guilty of breaking Food Board edicts, and many more were evading the 'spirit' of the law.[111] A lumber camp located near the Sliamon Indian Reserve in Powell River, British Columbia was, according to Field Matron Frances Marsden, selling large amounts of food to the natives who resided there, at elevated prices.[112] The grocery business evidently feared the impact that such unscrupulousness could have. With its preoccupation with ensuring a certain professional standard, a concern was that mercenary dealers would have an unfair advantage over those who followed the regulations.[113] It is, however, also interesting to note that overall, the *Canadian Grocer* itself seldom reported the many fines and license suspensions meted out to food dealers; there were occasional brief mentions, but as a rule the paper did not dwell on transgressions. Perhaps the paper did not want to find itself in an awkward position; reporting these cases could possibly foment further divisiveness within the trade, or even alienate readers. The paper may also have been read by those outside of the food business, and it was probably deemed unwise to add to the bad publicity that grocers had already received, thanks to the rising cost of food and the already contentious relationship that existed between the consumer and the grocer.

The first major food prohibition to be eased occurred in early August, when the huge supply of pork in the United States allowed for the lifting of restrictions on its consumption, thanks to "the successful efforts in production and conservation by the people in the Dominion of Canada and the United States of America."[114] While Canadian pork exports had increased tremendously (by 571 percent over a five year average), the removal of the restrictions had more to do with the large 'pork

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111 "Food Board Closes Up Several Firms — Halifax Flour Dealer, Montreal Restaurant, Quebec Bakery License Suspended," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 10, 1918, p. 2.

112 NAC, RG 10 Indian Affairs, vol. 6771, file 452-28 War 1914-1918 — Correspondence Regarding Canada Food Board and the Conservation of Food Frances Marsden to Food Controller, June 4, 1918. "[I]f the food regulations are to mean anything at all," wrote Marsden, "I feel that such a source of waste and greed cannot be looked into to quickly."

113 "Food Regulations Should Be Fully Enforced," *Canadian Grocer*, August 2, 1918, p. 24. One grocer maintained that his minding of the Food Board's rules had been detrimental to his business, citing a customer who, when told that they could not buy white flour without also purchasing one pound of substitutes, "had no trouble in getting it when he went to another dealer," and another who was asked by the grocer whether or not the amount of sugar she requested constituted a fifteen-day supply. As she replied in the negative, the grocer duly refused to sell her the requested amount, which she then obtained from a rival store.

114 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, CFB Order 58, August 1, 1918.

glut' in the United States. Overproduction and small consumption in the U.S. made Europe a necessary market for American pork — more competition from Canada was not needed.[115] This small 'victory' for the consumer was offset, however, by worsening conditions in other areas. For months, the Food Board had had a difficult time with sugar, which was about to undergo "the most intense control of any one food. The nearest approach to rationing," according to the *Report of the Canada Food Board*, "was made in the sugar distribution."[116] Thanks largely to a dearth of shipping capacity, Canada's sugar supply (controlled by the International Sugar Commission), had been shrinking steadily. In early August, a ISC review of the worldwide sugar situation had revealed a need for intense conservation, and the Food Board asked Canadians to limit themselves to one and a half pounds of sugar monthly.[117] An added complication loomed with the arrival of the canning season — it would have been disastrous to have the extra produce grown by the army of backyard gardeners go to waste through a lack of sugar for preserving. One month later, with sugar shortages occurring in both Montreal and Toronto, the Food Board again tightened its policy on sugar, placing further restrictions on sugar use in restaurants, and by confectioners.[118] This tightening of supply had already adversely affected Canadian refiners, but now confectioners and ice cream dealers were required to hold Food Board licenses, as well as to observe new restrictions. Nationwide, several of these businesses were shut down or otherwise punished for neglecting to obtain a license, or for utilizing too much sugar in their operations.[119] The situation was such that, in early September, the

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115 "Pork Restrictions Removed," *Manitoba Free Press*, August 1, 1918, p. 1; Beveridge, p. 131.

116 Thomson, p. 10.

117 "Ask Reduction in Sugar Consumption," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 5, 1918, p. 4.

118 *Canadian Grocer*, September 13, 1918, p. 25; "Sugar Expected Not Here Yet," *Toronto Globe*, September 2, 1918, p. 8; "Use of Sugar More Limited," September 4, 1918, p. 11.

119 "Food Board Rules Have To Be Obeyed," *Toronto Globe*, July 11, 1918, p. 3; "Another Candy Maker Ordered to Stop," July 27, 1918, p. 3; "Violates Regulations Respecting Ice Cream," August 14, 1918, p. 7. Restaurants that left sugar bowls on the tables instead of apportioning the sugar faced a week's closure, and private individuals were also prosecuted "Sugar on Tables Means Week Closed," *Ibid.*, August 9, 1918, p. 12. "Had Too Much Sugar," *Ibid.*, August 13, 1918, p. 7. Joseph Levinsky of Toronto was fined $100 and costs for having in his possession 200lbs of sugar, certainly a bit more than the 15-day supply permitted under the food regulations. In his defense, Levinsky argued that the sugar had been purchased prior to the Order's passage, in April. Magistrate Dennison replied that the unopened bag should still have been returned to the dealer.

Food Board placed households on an "honour ration" of two pounds of sugar per month, per person. While this was more than the earlier ration suggested in August, it was still somewhat disconcerting for consumers; a family of two was urged to use "not more than one-quarter of a level cupful of sugar per day for cooking, table use and all other purposes except preserving."[120]

Owing to the fact that food processors and canning companies were able to obtain larger quantities of sugar, a popular feeling arose that they were being unduly favoured over the public.[121] The *Montreal Gazette* pointed out that while some companies (such as canners and processors) were permitted to use large amounts of sugar, this was in fact necessary as "many of army supplies take the form of canned and bottled goods," upon which, the paper continued, "there can be no limitation."[122] At the end of September, the Food Board took the unprecedented step of placing wholesale grocers on sugar cards, beginning on October 15 — retailers feared that they would be next, and if this step was taken, that consumer rationing would not be far behind. "It is known," wrote the *Canadian Grocer*, "that the Canada Food Board is seriously considering such a move, but owing to the difficulty of enforcing such a regulation once it was imposed, they have hesitated to act."[123] Consumer rationing, the next logical step, would have been fraught with dangers. By this point, it was clear that regulation did not always bring about the desired or expected results; often, the actual outcomes of the regulatory process were unforeseen and unpredictable, and even in war, one could not take public compliance for granted — it had to be won, brokered, bought, or enforced.

Women and the Canada Food Board

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120 "Sugar Rationing in Homes Asked by Food Board," *Montreal Gazette*, September 7, 1918, p. 11.

121 M.C. Smith, a wholesale fruit dealer in Burlington, Ontario, wrote to Borden about the fact that his sales of plums and pears were suffering thanks to the inability of consumers to get enough sugar to can them. Complaining that his business had suffered heavily, he noted that producers had been urged to produce to the limit, and now, there appeared to be "no market for their production." NAC, Borden Papers, p. 130986, M.C. Smith to Borden, September 19, 1918. Fruit growers, Smith asserted, were "just as loyal and patriotic as any in the British Empire and just as willing to stand their losses as anyone," but the was a suspicion afoot that some large firms had access to as much sugar as they needed, while "the public cannot get it." In response, a Food Board inspector in Burlington was dispatched to look into the situation, but Thomson was confident that Smith's declarations were not tenable.

122 "The Sugar Situation," (Editorial) *Montreal Gazette*, September 21, 1918, p. 10.

123 "Wholesale Grocers on Sugar Cards October 15," *Canadian Grocer*, September 27, 1918, p. 22.

Food regulation had magnified the position of food dealers within society — it demonstrated the extent to which grocers and consumers vied with each other on a daily basis, each guarding their own interests in a time of flux and crisis. The control of food also acted as a social barometer when it came to the place of women in Canadian society, whose traditional roles as mother, wife and homemaker were explicitly highlighted (and reinforced) by the new regulatory climate. Undoubtedly, the physical and psychological effects of war fell heaviest on those who served in the frontlines, but those who stayed behind had their own burdens to bear. Regarding working class London in peacetime, Ellen Ross has written that "A woman's responsibility for producing regular meals of a certain kind meant that her emotional equilibrium was on the line at every mealtime."[124] "[H]ere is Mr. Jones, who pays the freight" wrote Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1917, "and Mrs. Jones, whose business it is to cook the steak as he likes it, to make apple pie or angel cake as he prefers; and here are the little Joneses, conservative of taste as children are, merciless in criticism, and — always there. No other worker," she concluded, "has *to live with his market* as must the housekeeper with hers."[125] One could argue that this kind of daily pressure also affected Canadian women as well — food regulation, by its very nature, reached into the home and added to women's already disrupted wartime lives. While it was a further complication, it also gave Canada's women a means to demonstrate their patriotism on a daily basis. For those disposed to upholding the regulations, food control could be an empowering way for those on the home front, male or female, to assist the war effort in a concrete manner. The pledge card in the window was the most visible sign that those inside were at least aware of the need to conserve; whether or not the residents actually heeded the food laws and conservation principles was less easily determined. As with other aspects of the war, women were pulled between the needs of their family and a broader duty to 'King and country.' Judging from the way in which food control-related material saturated the woman's pages of Canada's larger newspapers, it is clear that the message, and its attendant pressures, was unavoidable.

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124 Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London*, (New York, 1993), p. 28.

125 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Housekeeper and the Food Problem," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November 1917), p. 125.

From these pages women strove to learn the secrets of the "wheatless menu;" on this day lucky (and finicky) family members could look forward to such delicacies as crushed barley with shredded dates and potato turnovers filled with creamed salt pork (for breakfast), cheese soufflé, buckwheat nut bread and fruit salad (for lunch), and finally, vegetable soup, braised fowl, potato puff, green peas, celery and oatmeal pudding (for dinner).[126] Women of some 'distinction' were not shy in sharing their own food saving suggestions with those less luminous. In May the subcommittee on food conservation of the Women's Patriotic League held a meeting at which Mrs. J.S. McLennan (wife of Senator John S. McLennan of Sydney, Nova Scotia) treated the assembled ladies to an "object lesson in food conservation."[127] Remarking that "food control is entirely a question of mental attitude," Mrs. McLennan claimed that in her house meat had not been served at dinner for nine months, and that despite holding to an entirely wheatless menu, she was nevertheless "bringing up three perfectly healthy children." The Food Board itself had an in-house domestic science expert, Jean Muldrew. On loan from the Alberta Department of Agriculture, Muldrew was head of the Board's Domestic Economy Section, and as such addressed meetings and gatherings held by various women's organizations. The Board was assisted in this educational work by speakers and lecturers from other bodies, such as the Women's Institutes, who in 1918 planned to give almost 700 presentations focusing on "conservation, greater production and wartime cookery."[128] Experts from various government agencies also circulated advice designed to assist homemakers in food planning. For example, in June, 1918, the Ontario Department of Agriculture put together a list of food supplies sufficient to feed a family of five for one week, and in July, a Mrs. Woeland demonstrated to members of Toronto's Women's Patriotic League "scientific canning methods."[129] In another example, a class of graduating dietitians presented a luncheon that was

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126 "A Page for the Housekeeper — Katherine Kent's Own Column," *Toronto Globe*, May 16, 1918, p. 9.

127 "What Women Are Doing — Wheat Flour Saving Urged," *Ibid.*, May 22, 1918, p. 10. Mrs. McLennan also claimed that the "three great enemies of food control" were "cooks, husbands, and digestion."

128 "Women Lecturers in Rural Ontario," *Toronto Globe*, May 30, 1918, p. 9.

129 "A Page for the Homemaker — Katherine Kent's Own Column — Housewife's Weekly Supply," *Toronto Globe*, June 6, 1918, p. 9; "Within a Women's Sphere — Modern Methods of Preserving," July 18, 1918, p. 8.

entirely "wheatless, meatless, sugarless and butterless."[130]

The Food Board recognized that encouraging the use of substitutes meant that women would be coping with unfamiliar ingredients. To circumvent this, a number of pamphlets and cook books were prepared and issued which contained suitable wartime recipes, designed to encourage conservation.[131] Demonstrations illustrating the proper use of wheat substitutes, similar to those teaching Canadians the joys of fish cookery, were held.[132] A major opportunity for women to improve their food conservation skills also came with the opening of the Canadian National Exhibition in August, 1918. Here again, the Food Conservation Building was the scene of many demonstrations, exhibits, and even moving pictures dealing with food control. Visitors could peruse an assortment of "fifty up-to-date books on domestic economy, household science, cooking, canning" which were provided by the Toronto Public Library, while another exhibit purported to teach women how to prepare "dainty dishes from waste food."[133] But teaching women how to use substitutes did not address the problem of prices, which were high. In August the Food Board officially warned grocers not to drive up the prices on these articles, and they followed this up by issuing a schedule of 'suggested' prices for substitutes.[134] It was essential that women, the flashpoint of food control, be given every opportunity to 'educate' themselves, as they were the ones upon whom the success of food regulation in the home depended -- the Board, as with Hanna, was well aware that substitutes needed to be understood, available, and importantly, affordable.

The Beginning of the End and the Process of Decontrol

In the fall of 1918, as ever, overseas need dictated the activities of the Food Board. The military situation may have been improving, but no news, even good news, could be taken for granted — vigilance had to be maintained. When reports of a serious butter shortage in Britain

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130 "What Women Are Doing — 'Less' Meal Appetizing," *Ibid.*, May 28, 1918, p. 8.

131 "Within a Woman's Sphere — Food Controller's Booklets," *Ibid.*, July 4, 1918, p. 8.

132 Ibid., July 6, 1918, p. 9.

133 "Exhibit Books on Food," *Toronto Globe*, August 24, 1918, p. 8; "What Women Are Doing," August 27, 1918, p. 10.

134 "Warning Against Exorbitant Prices," *Manitoba Free Press*, August 2, 1918, p. 2.

reached Canada, the authorities responded to the crisis with impressive speed. On September 30, P.C. 2402, "pursuant to an urgent request from the British Ministry of Food for increased shipments of butter owing to the scarcity in Great Britain permitting of only two ounces of butter or oleomargarine to each person a week," decreed that all creamery butter manufactured in Ontario, Quebec, and the three prairie provinces between September 30 and November 9, 1918, was to be sold, at prices fixed by the government, to the Dairy Produce Commission, for shipment overseas.[135] The order, whose basis (according to the *Globe*) was "the principle of the common table for all forces fighting the Huns," also placed all Canadians on a strict monthly allowance of 2 pounds of butter, per person.[136] The fact that the purchase price was duly fixed by the government was not lost on the *Globe*, which remarked that "The policy of price control seems to be necessary to protect consumers, unless they are Canadians."[137] The *Montreal Gazette* was less critical, observing that while the action could lead to higher prices for consumers in Canada, even if it did "Canadians will not be worse off than their neighbours and will accept the situation as part of the home stayer's contribution to the great cause."[138] The action, according to a December cable from J.W. Robertson, was a success, one which met with "the most cordial appreciation from the British authorities and the public generally."[139] Canadians were no doubt cheered to learn that their efforts, amounting to some six and a half million pounds, had enabled the British to maintain adequate butter rations through to the war's end.[140]

While the price of butter may have been threatened, one commodity that the Food Board had been attempting to keep affordable was fish. Amidst reports that the British meat ration had once again been reduced, Canadians went about preparing for Thursday, October 31, 1918, set to be the nation's third 'National Fish Day,' upon which Canadians were urged to eat fish at two meals.[141]

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135 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, P.C. 2402, September 30, 1918.

136 "Asked to Eat Less Butter," *Toronto Globe*, October 1, 1918, p. 2.

137 "Notes and Comments," *Toronto Globe*, October 3, 1918, p. 4.

138 "The Butter Order," (Editorial) *Montreal Gazette*, October 2, 1918, p. 8.

139 "Canada Kept Britain in Butter Two Months," *Toronto Globe*, December 5, 1918, p. 3.

140 Thomson, p. 10.

141 "Meat Ration Cut to the British Public," *Toronto Globe*, October 29, 1918, p. 1.

One promotional ad called upon every housewife to "fall in line tomorrow and keep this day. It is important! Why? Because Great Britain's meat rations have again been cut down. Because for at least two years after the war is won we will need to save meats. Because Canada has the finest fish in the whole world and needs your help to use them."[142] The war was going well, but as the *Globe* noted, even if the war ended now, the world shortage of meats would not magically disappear.[143] "A fish dinner on the table and a Victory Bond in the pocket," noted the paper, "will make a patriotic combination."[144] On this particular day, Montreal led the nation in fish consumption, with over 350,000 pounds sold (and one assumes, eaten); the Food Board was pleased with the results, estimating that consumption levels exceeded those of Good Friday by fifty to sixty percent.[145]

By early November, the ongoing Armistice negotiations left little doubt that the Allies would prevail, but while the fighting would cease in an instant, the food situation would not improve overnight. At a National Fish Day dinner at Montreal's Windsor Hotel (sponsored by the Canadian Fisheries Association), guest of honour Henry Thomson noted that while there was "talk of peace proposals,"

> so far as the future is concerned the food situation will demand greater sacrifice than has yet been made. When peace is made we cannot see the women and children of the European nations starve, and not only of the present enemy nations, but several of the neutral nations are badly off for food to such an extent that they have been compelled to use all sorts of substitutes.[146]

All was not at an end; with the long-awaited cessation of hostilities on November 11, 1918, the food problems of war immediately became "the food emergencies of peace."[147] Four brutal years of war had led to a disruption in normal food production and distribution channels of enormous proportions, with millions of Europeans left scrambling for adequate provisions. Another spectre, no less terrifying to those in command, was the possibility that food shortages could lead to political (i.e. Bolshevik) upheaval in several straightened nations. "Famine," Hoover asserted one day after

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142 Ibid., October 30, 1918, p. 3.

143 "National Fish for the Whole Country," *Toronto Globe*, October 30, 1918, p. 10.

144 "Notes and Comments," *Ibid.*, October 31, 1918, p. 6.

145 "Montreal Led in Fish Eating," *Montreal Gazette*, November 5, 1918, p. 5.

146 "Demand for Food After the War Greater Than Now," *Ibid.*, November 1, 1918, p. 6.

147 "Food Control Still Needed," *Toronto Globe*, November 14, 1918, p. 13.

the Armistice, "is the mother of anarchy. From the inability of governments to secure food for their people grows revolution and chaos."[148] Food was still viewed as a weapon of war, only now the enemy was transformed, from the concrete reality of the Central Powers into a far more amorphous creature.

Amidst the exuberant celebrations that marked the end of the war, the food crisis, Canadians were informed, was far from over, and as a result it was forecast that rationing would continue in Allied countries at least until the spring. Britain had just issued new six-month ration books, and was not about to dismantle her food control programme.[149] In light of this, the Food Controller tried to prepare Canadians for the indefinite continuation of food restrictions. Thomson crowed that food had been "the final factor which brought about the submission in turn of Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Germany."[150] The *Globe* echoed this sentiment, commenting that sending food alone to Europe, rather than both men and food, would be far easier. For, it continued, "unless Canada and the United States had sent both men and food what would have been their fate today, to say nothing of Europe?"[151] The notion was that Canada still had a duty to those overseas, as victory had, if anything, added to the urgency, with the neutral nations now open to receive humanitarian aid. Keeping the public aware of this seemed to be of particular concern to the Food Board, but they also recognized that as conditions changed, Canadians had the right to have the food regulations lifted, eased, or at least re-evaluated as quickly as possible. To that end, the Board pledged that it would repeal as many regulations as they could, and as promptly as circumstances permitted.[152]

The end of the war meant that more ships were available to transport food, and the reserve stocks of wheat being held in Australasia, India, and Argentina were now on their way to grain-starved Europe. Thanks to this development, on November 15 all Food Board rules dealing with

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148 Nash, pp. 490-491.

149 "Stay on Rations Until the Spring," *Ibid.*, November 14, 1918, p. 18. Indeed, the British Ministry of Food would not cease operations until March 31, 1921.

150 Ibid.

151 "Notes and Comments," *Ibid.*, November 16, 1918, p. 6.

152 "Wheat Substitutes Ruling Repealed," *Ibid.*, November 15, 1918, p. 5.

substitutes were lifted, the first restriction to be rescinded.[153] The use of substitutes was no longer mandatory, for both commercial bakers and in private homes, but the *Globe* kept preaching the message of conservation. "Relaxing of food restrictions does not invite extravagance," it wrote, and enjoined Canadians to "Save the extra slice. The world still needs food as sorely now as before the Armistice was signed."[154] Still, one by one, the regulations were lifted, and Canadians began to crawl out from underneath the Food Board's controlling hand. To ensure that citizens were well apprised of the situation, on December 2 the Food Board issued a statement reviewing the changes to the food laws that had so far been made. There were no longer any limitations on the amount of flour that dealers or private individuals could have on hand, or in storage, and customers were no longer forced to buy a certain amount of substitutes with white flour. To the delight of many, sandwiches were now available for lunch, and there were no longer any limits on the serving of bread in restaurants. Sugar restrictions were eased as well, as bakers could now produce such items as "doughnuts, biscuits, crullers, Scottish shortbread or cake, and French pastry," as long as they did not use more than forty pounds of sugar for every one hundred pounds of flour. Icing reappeared on cakes and cookies, and all orders pertaining to breakfast foods (cereals) had gone by the board. Still in effect, however, were all regulations concerning the consumption of beef, butter, and fats, and sugar, while not as closely rationed, was still being controlled as well.[155]

Even as the process of decontrol went ahead, the Food Board continued to use its influence to shape Canadian consumption. The intensive campaign to increase the eating of fish had been successful, but with the end of the war and the attendant loosening of food control, there remained a large stock on hand, which had to used, and a booming fisheries sector which needed to be nurtured. To the pleasure, no doubt, of the Canadian Fisheries Association, the Food Board proclaimed the week of December 3, 1918, to be yet another 'Codfish Week,' during which "every housekeeper [was] expected to buy and serve at least three meals of cod."[156] Not every industry, however, benefited from this kind of attention; there was no "Rolled Oats Week," to help millers dispose of

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153 Ibid.; "Wheat Substitutes May Still be Used, But Their Use is Not Compulsory," November 18, 1918, p. 9.

154 "Notes and Comments," *Ibid.*, November 16, 1918, p. 6; November 26, 1918, p. 6.

155 "Flour Rule is Rescinded," *Toronto Globe*, December 3, 1918, p. 3.

156 Ibid., December 3, 1918, p. 5.

their now "excessively large stocks" of these substitutes.[157] But as painful as the transition from a wartime footing to a peacetime one could be for some, the financial opportunities of war soon gave way to thoughts of the financial opportunities of peace. As Europeans began considering the labourious process of reconstruction, Canadian manufacturers and producers soon had a new government agency created specifically to secure more business overseas. On December 11, Thomson, Sir Charles Gordon, and C.B. McNaught of the War Trade Board, were all appointed to the Canadian Trade Commission, a body that was, somewhat obliquely, an amalgamation of the Canada Food Board and the War Trade Board. Liasing with the Canadian Mission in Britain, its mandate, according to the *Globe*, was to obtain, "for Canadian producers a share of the business arising out of the reconstruction work in France and Belgium and other war-devastated parts of Europe."[158] The appointment of Thomson, still head of the Canada Food Board, gave rise to speculation that food control would either cease to exist, or was undergoing yet another transformation geared to the changing circumstances. The Food Board was still a functioning entity, but events seemed to indicate that this would not be the case for much longer.

As the first peacetime Christmas in four years approached, more regulations came off the books. Thanks to an "unexpected improvement" in the supply of sugar, on December 14, children and candy-makers across the country were happy to learn that all formal sugar restrictions had been, or would soon be, lifted.[159] The Food Board, however, reminded Canadians that they should be "reasonably restrained," and avoid extravagance, since it would still be a while before prewar levels of normalcy in the food supply would be reached. Preaching moderation to a nation giddy at the prospect of a peaceful holiday season may have been slightly unrealistic; an ad for Abbey's Effervescent Salt was far more pragmatic, stating that: "You'll Eat More This X-Mas. Everybody

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157 As in the case of the Metcalfe Milling Company, who complained in February, 1919 that the Board's removal of the substitute order had left them with a large amount of rolled oats and oatmeal on hand, disposal of which would "entail a heavy loss." Thomson was not sympathetic; he replied that since such products were "regularly handled by all millers and dealers in Canada in peace times," companies should have no problems in dispensing of their excess stocks. NAC, Meighen Papers, p. 001366, Metcalfe Milling Company to Arthur Meighen, February 18, 1919; NAC, Meighen Papers, p. 001373, H.B. Thomson to Meighen, February 27, 1919.

158 "To Secure More Export," *Toronto Globe*, December 11, 1918, p. 9.

159 "Sugar Restrictions Are All Removed," *Toronto Globe*, December 14, 1918, p. 5.

feels that its all right to enjoy 'a real old-time Christmas dinner' this year. And there will be every temptation to eat too much."[160] Those who did, the ad concluded, could assuage the aftereffects with a hearty dose of their product. But surely, after such a long and brutal conflict, one which had insinuated itself into the very warp and weave of the social fabric, Canadians richly deserved an opportunity to indulge themselves, for once unmindful of food rules, regulations, and wartime privations.

As 1919 began, those in the food business began to wonder about the future of food control, and not unreasonably, when they too could expect to be 'de-regulated.' In Britain, as E.M.H. Lloyd has written, the end of the war brought about conflicting views on the pace of decontrol, as some believed that regulation should continue, while "the immense majority of bakers, manufacturers, traders and shopkeepers desired above all things an immediate removal of the restrictions which hampered their free activities and reduced them to cogs in a vast and cumbrous machine."[161] Food control in Canada had been less severe than in Britain, but food dealers still chafed under the unfamiliar regulation that had been imposed, and they too desired a rapid return to normal conditions. In early January, reports surfaced that the Food Board's tenure was rapidly drawing to a close, a move cheered by the *Canadian Grocer*. They admitted that a "useful purpose" had been served by food control, but this had been done "by means of autocratic power that could only be justified by very exceptional circumstances" — the ending of such conditions should therefore signal the end of control.[162] The impending demise of the Food Board was seemingly confirmed by the dismissal of fifty of its employees, and it was reported that soon only a handful of staff members would remain.[163] In a previous editorial, the paper had conceded that food control had "probably" been a necessary step, that it had handled the situation as well as anyone could expect, and that the mistakes made were balanced by the successes it had achieved. The necessity that had dictated the measure, however, was now gone, and "the continuance of the system one moment after its direct need was past," the paper contended, "would be an unwarranted and unjustifiable infringement of

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160 Ibid., December 18, 1918, p. 7.

161 Lloyd, p. 388.

162 "Food Board Nears End of Reign," (Editorial) *Canadian Grocer*, January 10, 1919, p. 24.

163 "Food Board Will Soon Be No More," *Toronto Globe*, January 11, 1919, p. 2.

public rights."[164] Grocers could not have been pleased when, one week later, rumours surfaced that food control in Canada, in some form, could in fact continue for another year.[165] This was confirmed when the Food Board announced that the licensing system would in fact remain in place. Then, on January 30, the Board abruptly cancelled these plans, and instead announced that the licensing system was being completely removed.[166] The breathless twists and turns left grocers reeling, but no doubt pleased to finally be out from under the dead hand of state regulation. Food control was now hurtling towards its conclusion with increasing speed, as the last of the 'major' regulations restricting beef, butter, sugar, flour and other fats had been lifted on January 22, 1919.[167]

Once the shackles had been removed, it became possible to look back on what had been an unprecedented experiment. In many ways, the *Canadian Grocer*'s reaction to food control had mirrored that of the public, moving through several distinct phases. A state of initial wariness and skepticism had developed into outright hostility, which then transformed itself into grudging acceptance; as the war ended, the paper (as well as most Canadians) adopted the general post-war feeling that while the measures had 'probably' been justified, a quick return to the prewar *status quo* was now in order. Eventually, the conviction grew that food saving and production had been a critical component to Canada's war effort, and that the nation's contributions in this area were perhaps as important as its contributions on the battlefield. But what, exactly had wartime food regulation accomplished? On an empirical level, thanks to imports of Canadian and American wheat, the British government's aim of not having to resort to bread rationing was successful, and there is no question that Canada's increased food exports helped to keep the Allied populations more comfortable than they would have been otherwise. It is far beyond the scope and focus of this thesis to measure, quantitatively or otherwise, the level to which Canada's food contributions influenced the outcome of the war, but the increase in domestic food exports is clearly evident.

The *Canadian Grocer* reported that during the war Canada sold almost a quarter of a million

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164 "Peace and Food Control," (Editorial) *Canadian Grocer*, January 3, 1919, p. 52.

165 "Food Control May Last Another Year," *Ibid.*, January 17, 1919, p. 23.

166 "No More Licensing for the Trade," *Ibid.*, February 7, 1919, p. 30.

167 NAC, RG 17 Agriculture, Canada Food Board Papers, file 2, Canada Food Board Order 78, January 22, 1919; "Food Board Removes Many Restrictions," *Toronto Globe*, January 23, 1919, p. 2.

tons of meat products to the British Ministry of Food, and a further 80,632 tons of foodstuffs was purchased by the Dairy Produce Commission.[168] The value of manufactured (processed) food products produced during the war doubled between 1915 and 1917, going from $388,815,362 to $755,245,185.[169] The milling industry, despite the Food Board's close scrutiny of its profits and prices, had its best year in 1918, with "every active mill in Canada participat[ing] in the prosperous times."[170] For the period between 1909-1914, Canada had produced, on average, 167.5 million bushels of wheat per year, of which average exports stood at 95.4 million bushels. Wartime conditions caused these figures to rise steeply; between 1914-1919, Canada's average wheat yield reached 248.1 million bushels, and of this an average 158.7 million bushels were exported.[171] Not surprisingly, the increase was most striking in the west, where prairie crop acreage, thanks in part to the cultivation of so-called 'marginal lands,' grew by some eighty percent during the war. In other provinces, such as Ontario and Quebec, the raising of wheat on land once considered unsuitable also contributed to the increase. In 1914, western farmland devoted to this crop stood at 9.3 million acres; by 1918 this had risen to 16.1 million acres. Unfortunately, despite the increase in acreage, climatic conditions and labour shortages meant that actual production fell from a peak of over 360 million bushels in 1915 to 164.4 million bushels in 1918.[172] Fish was not consumed in large amounts until food control's fish popularization scheme introduced cheap, freshly-caught fish to the urban consumers of Central Canada. The amount of fish caught increased enormously; the value of fish landed in Canada also grew, almost doubling between 1915 and 1919.[173] This range of figures, while small, is typical of the broader picture — a general expansion in both production and exports. As impressive as these gains may seem, for many in the food economy the benefits were only short-term. Canadian farmers, as Carl Solberg has noted, experienced "only fleeting prosperity," and the

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168 "Canada's Enormous Export of Food Products," *Canadian Grocer*, January 10, 1919, p. 24.

169 "Canadian Food Manufactures Double in Two Years," *Ibid.*, December 6, 1918, pp. 26-27.

170 "Millers Share in Prosperity," *Toronto Globe*, January 2, 1919, p. 8.

171 Solberg, p. 36.

172 Britnell and Fowke, p. 444.

173 Urquhart and Buckley, p. 393.

depression in postwar agricultural prices would lead to a ferment of agrarian discontent.[174] Furthermore, the cost of living continued to rise in the postwar years, with the prices of some food products reaching unheard of heights. Those who made their living within Canada's food system, along with consumers, would have to make the adjustment to peace as surely as they had made the adjustment to war.

In eulogizing the Food Board, the *Canadian Grocer* was almost magnanimous. "It would be a hard and ungrateful thing if the Canada Food Board should go out of being unwept, unloved, and unsung. It has been the target of more criticism than, and as much abuse as, any public institution ever created in Canada," and furthermore, "the position of the Controller was the most unpopular public office ever undertaken by any man in Canada, with more kicks than half-pence for the reward." The unfortunate William J. Hanna, despite good intentions, had "had to bear the first brunt of the storm which arose. Just what was the psychological strain which caused him to resign it is impossible to say." According to the paper, the hostile reaction he had encountered was explained by the simple yet correct fact that "We are a democratic people in Canada and therefore impatient of control."[175] On March 19, 1919, those controls disappeared when O.C. 1919-553, formally dissolving the Food Board, confirmed in law what had been true in fact for several weeks, that Canada's first tumultuous experiment with wartime food control had come to an end.

Epilogue: The Unheralded Food Board

In the summer of 1919, Arthur Meighen read for the first time the final report of the Canada Food Board. The document was so impressive that he dashed off an effusive letter to Henry Thomson, congratulating him on the "really extraordinary work performed by the Food Board." Meighen, Minister of the Interior and Solicitor-General of Canada, seemed especially surprised at the scope and extent of food control's operations. The final report, he argued, was so well done that he considered it "one of the most valuable documentary evidence of the very general success with which Canadian affairs were conducted through the recent trying years, and the government, as well

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174 Solberg, p. 156.

175 "Canada Food Board, RIP," *Canadian Grocer*, February 7, 1919, pp. 33, 45.

as the nation, owe you a debt of gratitude." In other words, the manner though which Canada had mobilized its food resources embodied the nation's war efforts as whole. The standard by which Meighen, and his contemporaries, measured 'success' was quite simply victory: winning the war and demonstrating the country's abilities on an international audience. Unfortunately, most Canadians had already consigned food control to the back recesses of collective memory, where, save for a few rare souls such as Meighen, it would stay buried until a new global conflict forced its uninvited remembrance.

For his part, Thomson seemed delighted to receive such compliments, for apparently they had been all too rare indeed. In his reply, Thomson noted that Meighen letter's was "all the more welcome as it is the *first and only appreciation* that I have received from any Cabinet Minister, perhaps," he continued, "I may draw the conclusion that you are the only Minister who had read, or even possibly seen the report."[176] The former Food Controller bitterly decried those who had attacked the Food Board, who had engaged in what he called "abuse without facts, knowledge, or understanding." These individuals, he argued, had emerged from the same "shrunken school of thought" popular among the "would-be statesmen" he termed "Canadiensis Minores," or "Little Canadians,' whose pride of country reaches no further than the efforts of the parish pump."[177]

Thomson's pleasure at receiving such uncommon praise was evident — he forwarded Meighen's letter to Samuel Todd, who had been with the food control department from its beginning to its end. Later, Todd wrote a letter of his own to Meighen in which he made several revealing comments. Todd agreed with Thomson's opinion that Meighen was probably among the very few Ministers who were even aware of the report's existence. No one, it seemed, wanted to recall the food control experience. "... do you not consider it astounding," wrote Todd,

> that when the Cost of Living Committee of the House of Commons was studying this question, the Food Board was never called upon for information of any kind; that today, no one is making any attempt to take advantage of the tremendous amount of experience that has been gathered by the Board, and that even yet the Board is nearly always referred to in slighting terms.

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176 NAC, Borden Papers, p. 72738, H.B. Thomson to Meighen, August 23, 1919.

177 Something in Thomson's words may have struck Meighen, either with guilt or a sincere wish to give the man his due, for on September 10 he asked George Yeats, Borden's private secretary, to write Thomson a letter expressing the Prime Minister's appreciation for his work. NAC, Borden Papers, p. 72742, Meighen to George Yeats, September 10, 1919.

While less bitter than Thomson, Todd could also be corrosive in his denunciations, deriding the "timidity with which anyone took up the defence of the Board." He also noted that "it was painfully evident during the whole of the experience of the Food Controller and the Food Board that the government had practically no idea of the huge task which was being undertaken."[178] The work of Hanna, much maligned, had actually been of the greatest benefit.

Todd himself was now Secretary-Treasurer of the Industrial and Development Council of Canadian Meatpackers, and Thomson, as previously mentioned, was now serving on the Canadian Trade Commission. As for the man who started it all, William J. Hanna's post-food control life was less fortunate; after his resignation and abandonment of politics, personal tragedy seemed to dog the former Food Controller. On April 23, 1918 his eighteen-year old nephew Harold, who had lived with the Hannas in Toronto, was killed in an airplane accident while training in Salisbury, England, only two months after enlisting.[179] On November 20, their only son, Flight-Lieutenant Neil Hanna, was accidentally killed in Italy.[180] Hanna's own life met an early end on March 20, 1919 (ironically, one day after the formal dissolution of the Canada Food Board), when he died suddenly while vacationing in the United States. *Saturday Night*, one of Hanna's few defenders while he was Food Controller, noted that "similar duties in Great Britain made Lord Devonport an invalid, and killed Lord Rhondda, and perhaps," the periodical mused, "they had helped to shorten Mr. Hanna's life."[181]

Conclusion

The final year of wartime food regulation was thus one of breathtaking twists and turns. In the first part of the year, the military situation indicated a need to 'buckle down,' as the war entered its most desperate and critical phase. Within this heightened atmosphere, Canadians evinced an increased willingness to cooperate with food control efforts, helped along by the more stringent

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178 NAC, Meighen Papers, pp. 951-954, Samuel E. Todd to Meighen, September 18, 1919.

179 "Lieut. Hanna Killed in Airplane Accident," *Toronto Globe*, April 27, 1918, p. 9.

180 "The Late Hon. W.J. Hanna," *Saturday Night*, March 29, 1919, p. 3.

181 Ibid.

character of food regulation under the Food Board, which, unlike Hanna, succeeded in obtaining this cooperation. While voices of dissent were still heard, they never reached the same level of disdain as had those heard on Hanna's watch. Perhaps, as Sanford Evans believed, a large measure of food control's success did in fact depend on the 'prestige' and authoritativeness bestowed upon the agency — Canadians seemingly had more respect for the Food Board, when contrasted with that given the Office of the Food Controller. The Food Board, it seemed, was everywhere in 1918, it was an omnipresent indication of the need for further sacrifice, and with the extension of regulation to private consumption, one which could not be ignored. Indeed, food control was like no other wartime regulation — Canadians were faced with the ethical decision to follow, or not follow, the rules at least three times a day. As the year progressed, Canadians either finally accepted the need to show abstemiousness in their consumption habits, to put the greater cause ahead of personal concerns, or, they realized that with the toughness shown by the Food Board, they had no choice but to comply. Still, it remained apparent that the Canadian government was highly uncomfortable with intervention on such a scale, as evidenced by the alacrity with which the entire system was dismantled (and forgotten) after the war. A quick return to normal channels of food production, distribution, and consumption was perhaps an appropriate reward for a nation who had 'seen it through,' one way or another. But it may have been too late. On another level, it could also be argued that food control led to an important shift in the Canadian attitude towards the regulatory power of the state. Despite the strong desire for a return to normality in 1919, that which had been 'normal' in 1913 had vanished -- the government may not have wanted to admit it, but food regulation had taken Canadians over an important psychological watershed, as the idea that the state could regulate the food sector not only existed, but now had a moral and social credibility that could not be denied.

Conclusion
'A Back Stage Episode':
Food Regulation in Canada During the First World War

Given the wealth of scholarship on the First World War, it is, at first glace, difficult to find questions that have not already been asked, or issues that have not already been thoroughly explored. If, however, there are areas that have yet to be fully investigated, they must surely be found amongst the myriad ways in which the war affected those on the Canadian home front. A superb example of this is food regulation. While not something that springs immediately to mind when considering Canada's role in the First World War, as this thesis has tried to demonstrate, food became a critical part of the nation's contribution to the Allied cause, and at the same time it functioned as a litmus test of the fabric of society in a time of crisis. The regulation of the food supply was one state response that affected civilians on a deeply personal level. Next to conscription, which entailed the removal of the better part of an individual's freedom of movement, food control was probably the most importunate of wartime measures. Thus, in studying this neglected subject the goal has also been to use food regulation as a means of looking into the lives of the Canadians who remained on the home front. This is an important exercise, as recapturing the experience of those remote from the battlefield is crucial if we are ever to obtain a full understanding of the impact of this war (and perhaps of war in general) on Canadian society. While certainly unconscious of the exact nature of the slaughter (or perhaps more aware of it than even they would care to admit), civilians were nevertheless engaged in struggles of their own, every bit as important to them as similar struggles would be to Canadians today. Much of a civilian's war experience hinged on the actions of others, on the soldiers who fought the battles, on the political leaders who made decisions, and on the unseen and obscure forces that somehow shaped economic realities. Part of food control's significance lay in the fact that it allowed everyone, if so disposed, to contribute to the cause of winning the war. Nevertheless, it also brought out some of the tensions that emerged in Canada during the war. The government's attempt at food regulation revealed that

public support for war measures, in light of these tensions, did have certain limits. Food control was marred by what appears to have been a real sense, on the part of Canadians, they that were 'entitled' to reasonably- priced foodstuffs; the war effort came a distant second to these personal concerns.

That being said, in the eyes of those directing the war effort, food regulation was a necessary expedient. The First World War marked the first time that food became a global weapon of war; controlling or disrupting the enemy's access to food supplies was not a new tactic, but now whole nations and entire populations were placed on the same level as combatants. As J.A. Corry wrote in 1940 (when the nation was engaged in yet another world war), the Great War, which had begun as a military conflict, all too quickly became an economic one as well.[1] Home fronts and civilians were dragged into the fighting, willingly or otherwise, as the domestic war effort took on an urgent importance. In the Atlantic, the Allied blockade ran up hard against German submarines, and the reverberations were felt as far as every Canadian kitchen, farm, and food market. After it became clear that generally undirected, voluntary efforts would not meet the Allies' food supply shortfall, the new realities of war finally forced Canada's government into compulsory measures that would have been unimaginable in 1914. Government regulation, hitherto a relatively unfamiliar concept in Canada, grew and intensified along with the conditions overseas. The notion that this had been an aberration was reflected in the speed with which deregulation took place immediately after the war had ended. Finally, while there was probably little initial change in the ideas that Canadians held about the proper role of the state, in both war and peace, the experience would establish a crucial precedent; more than anything else, food regulation was important in that it revealed the extent to which a government can extend itself and its powers when circumstances dictate. It also revealed the dangers inherent in such a move.

The intense commodification of food that resulted from the world disruption had different consequences for the various groups affected by food policy. The rapid, alarming rise in food prices and the cost of living hurt Canadian consumers, which in turn contributed to a vituperative atmosphere in which 'profiteers' were excoriated, and the government bitterly assailed, an anger which seriously threatened food control efforts, and by extension, the war effort as a whole.

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[1] Corry, p. 63.

Inflation deepened the already adversarial relationship between food dealers and consumers, and those in the food business were forced to contend with regulations and rules that had seldom before been a part of the free enterprise system. Women, who through the war had made some limited gains in areas outside of the home (suffrage, prohibition, employment) were constrained within the home by rising food prices and increasing restrictions. In the case of gender roles, food control is probably best seen as a barometer of social attitudes; traditional roles were elasticized somewhat (as with farmerettes, for example), but in the end, were largely reinforced by the campaign. Farmers benefited from high prices and almost unlimited markets for their produce, but they were also hampered by the government's inconsistent and slightly incoherent stand on labour and conscription. In the end, difficult economic times meant that Canada's food controllers found themselves snared dangerously between the public's expectation of their role, and the reality of their mandate, which, as we have seen, differed widely. The process of food control revealed that regulation of this nature hinges upon the proper balancing of competing interests; it also revealed for perhaps the first time just how intricate the modern food system had become. As Samuel Todd wrote in 1919: "The main thing that came out of Food Board work was the necessity of a fuller understanding by the people generally of the relations of one industry to another. We found throughout our work that no one was intentionally wicked — that any abuses which occurred were not due to the individuals, whatever, but were due to the system."[2] That system — complex and interconnected in unforeseen ways — needed to be grasped properly in order for any future stab at regulation (especially peacetime regulation) to function as intended. The experience of war was a learning process, one that, in a grim unavoidable way, would prove useful in the difficult decades ahead.

The lessons learned during the First World War were many. It was discovered that while the state may have the power (and at times the duty) to step into the lives of its citizens, it nevertheless requires that those same citizens respond with a 'willingness' to be controlled; to this end they must be made aware of the motives behind the regulation. Regulation must have a moral and social credibility. Similarly, society also must be convinced of the state's ability to enforce it —

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[2] NAC, Meighen Papers, pp. 966-967, Samuel Todd to Arthur Meighen, October 14, 1919.

regulation without enforcement is pointless, a lesson that Canada's Food Controllers learned all too well. The argument might be made that the extreme circumstances of the time, namely war, somehow detracts from the conclusions that can be drawn. That this 'experiment' occurred in wartime, however, only heightens the argument that in order for regulation to function properly, a willingness to be regulated must exist on the part of the governed. That the state had a difficult time in getting food control's ultimate mandate across to Canadians shows how delicately peacetime regulation must be handled. One would expect that in the heightened, jingoistic atmosphere of the Great War, the government could have counted on the support of its citizens, who were already in a more 'malleable' frame of mind, predisposed to accept the measures necessary to achieve victory, to ensure the return of 'normalcy.' In reality, this overwhelming support for food control proved to be somewhat elusive — until the state accepted the necessity of compulsion, narrower interests came first in the minds of many Canadians. Every Canadian, or at least every Canadian interest group, had a somewhat different threshold of participation and sacrifice when it came to food control. Each had its legitimacy; the knack for the state lay in learning how to broker these differences.

The same theme kept recurring during and after the war regarding food regulation — it was almost a mantra — that this type of control was an initiative without any precedent, and that those in charge were doing the best they could with no previous experience to guide them. While it was used almost in a defensive manner (perhaps as a subtle way of warding off criticism), it was also undoubtedly true. When the Second World War erupted, those in charge of food policy *did* have an important precedent to draw upon, looking as they could to the First World War for direction. The availability of such a precedent allowed the authorities to take into account, and actively seek to avoid, the problems encountered by the first Food Controllers. Potential pitfalls such as inflation, profiteering, hoarding, the feasibility of rationing, the critical need for international cooperation, and the importance of properly managing public opinion all stood out as areas of concern. Certainly, the abrupt end of the First World War inexorably leads one to speculate as to how food regulation in Canada would have progressed had the war not finished in November 1918 — it seems accurate to suggest that the pattern of increasingly strict regulation, compulsion and the intensification of enforcement, as well as the further refinement of inter-Allied cooperation, would have continued. In one sense, then, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that food control in Canada during the Second

World War might be seen as a direct continuation of this pattern, and that the food authorities of 1939 may have merely been picking up where the policy makers of 1918 had left off. Certainly in 1939 and 1940, government planners and public opinion almost automatically converged on the proposition that food control -- rationing -- was unavoidably necessary.

Finally, when approaching a study of this nature, one should bear in mind the words of Sir William Beveridge, who warned his readers that British food control was "a back stage episode in the world's tragedy which limelight would make laughable."[3] As a wartime event, it certainly did lack what Beveridge called "the glamour of dominant personalities or decisive events or heroic suffering." This same sentiment could equally apply to Canadian food control, a prosaic slice of the nation's war effort that failed to capture either the admiration of contemporaries or the curiosity of future scholars. In another sense, however, the opposite could also hold true. It was a back stage episode that was nevertheless at the forefront of everyday human experience; the work of food control may have taken place in the shadows, but its implications were of the most immediate and personal sort. Food regulation did not initiate 'decisive events,' if anything it merely (but necessarily) responded to them. Moreover, while no dominant personality emerged in Canada to embody the spirit of food sacrifice, such as Herbert Hoover in the United States, one could argue that the vilification of William J. Hanna, along with the subsequent disregard paid to Henry Thomson, *did* contain certain elements of tragedy, if not of overly 'heroic' proportions. In the end, one can conclude that the government of Canada undertook food control for the same reasons that drove it to war in the first place, motives that, tenable or not, were nevertheless a part of the dominating Anglo-Canadian, Imperial culture of the time. The people of Canada eventually responded to the call for food sacrifice in the same manner, as yet another way in which they could display their patriotism, regardless of gender, age, or capabilities. Thus, perhaps the ultimate significance of wartime food regulation lies not in what it accomplished, but rather in what it reveals to us about the socio-cultural mindset of Canadians. Those on the homefront who conserved, preserved, and produced did so because this was one practical way in which they *could* make a difference; small gestures that could transcend feelings of helplessness in the face of overpowering

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[3] Beveridge, p. 333.

events. In the end, the story of food control is a reminder that the war, brutal and inescapable, drove deeply into the lives of all Canadians, pushing them towards their 'great transformation.'

Note on Sources and Methodology

The primary sources used for this study fall into two categories: first, those generated by government departments, agencies and officials, and, second, the press. Most of the government documents relating to food regulation were found scattered throughout the Borden Papers, held at the National Archives of Canada. Their existence is fortunate -- the records of the Canada Food Board were disappointingly small, and apart from containing an almost complete set of Orders-in-Council passed by the Food Controllers, did not prove to be overly helpful. The small amount of documentation apparently held in the fonds of the Office of the Food Controller proved to be inaccessible to this researcher, due to their being misplaced at the NAC. An effort was made to locate them, but as of July 2003, they have yet to surface. The files of other government departments contained documents relating to food control, but many dealt with routine matters; some of the most useful (from mainly External Affairs, Justice, and Agriculture) were used in this thesis, and appear in the footnotes. The Borden Papers, as previously mentioned, proved to contain many valuable documents, although they did not shed much light on the behind-the-scenes decision-making process. As a result, several inferences had to be made in the absence of hard evidence.

The official side of food regulation is, however, but one-half of the story. The relationship between state and citizen -- between the formulators of policy and the public -- formed a large part of this investigation. It is one thing to look at the reasons behind regulation, another to gauge the effects that such a move had on the daily lives of Canadians. In order to help do this, a survey of the press was undertaken, a move that proved invaluable. Two large urban dailies (both from Toronto), the *Star* and the *Globe*, were chosen, for several reasons. During the First World War, Toronto was one of Canada's largest cities, and the heart of the Anglo-Canadian social, cultural, and political mindset of the time. Both papers provided regular, in-depth coverage of food control and related issues, which was quite helpful in filling some of the gaps left in the official record. In addition, they tended to cross swords with the Borden Conservatives, something that the war may have dampened, but did not eradicate. The pulse of food control, as it affected ordinary Canadians, can in a sense be taken from the press. The reactions and concerns that were felt over food control, and the

debates that were sparked, are reflected in pages of these Anglo, urban papers. Toronto functioned as a sort of microcosm, but an attempt was made to include other parts of the country as well. For example, the *Manitoba Free Press* was used to capture something of the prairie attitude towards food control. When consulting other papers, an obstacle arose in that, unlike the two Toronto papers, they did not appear to cover food control with the same regularity -- apart from the articles and propaganda that food control's educational department 'planted' in the press. Finally, readers of this thesis might legitimately wonder how food control affected other Canadian groups -- French Canadians, in particular. Such questions are indeed compelling and deserve to be answered, but lie beyond the scope of this investigation. It must also be noted that the sources used in this thesis represent but a portion of the total amount that exists. Given extra time (and space), a wider scope could have included more of this fascinating material, incorporating a broader swath of Canadian life.

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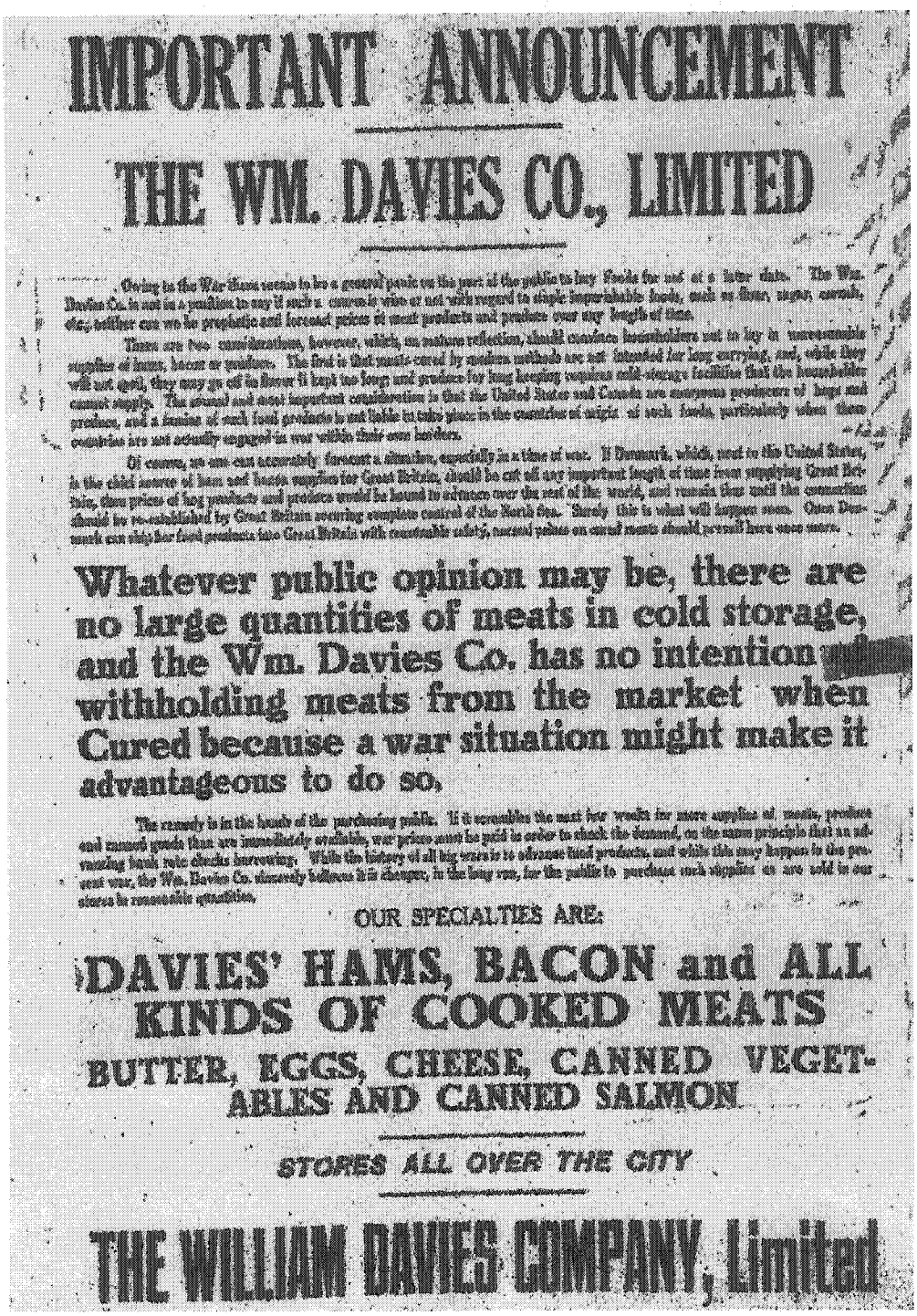


IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

THE WM. DAVIES CO., LIMITED

Owing to the War there seems to be a general panic on the part of the public to buy foods for use at a later date. The Wm. Davies Co. is not in a position to say if such a course is wise or not with regard to staple imperishable foods, such as flour, sugar, cereals, etc., neither can we be prophetic and forecast prices at most products and produce over any length of time.

There are two considerations, however, which, on mature reflection, should reassure householders not to lay in unreasonable supplies of meats, bacon or produce. The first is that meats cured by modern methods are not intended for long carrying, and, while they will not spoil, they may go off in flavor if kept too long and produce for long keeping requires cold-storage facilities that the householder cannot supply. The second and most important consideration is that the United States and Canada are enormous producers of hogs and produce, and a famine of such food products is not liable to take place in the countries of origin of such foods, particularly when these countries are not actually engaged in war within their own borders.

Of course, no one can accurately forecast a situation, especially in a time of war. If Denmark, which, next to the United States, is the chief source of bacon and hams supplies for Great Britain, should be cut off for any important length of time from supplying Great Britain, then prices of hog products and produce would be bound to advance over the rest of the world, and remain thus until the connection should be re-established by Great Britain securing complete control of the North Sea. Surely this is what will happen soon. Once Denmark can ship her food products into Great Britain with reasonable safety, normal prices on cured meats should prevail here once more.

Whatever public opinion may be, there are no large quantities of meats in cold storage, and the Wm. Davies Co. has no intention of withholding meats from the market when Cured because a war situation might make it advantageous to do so.

The remedy is in the hands of the purchasing public. If it resembles the most low wants for more supplies of meats, produce and canned goods than are immediately available, war prices must be paid in order to check the demand, on the same principle that an advancing bank rate checks borrowing. While the history of all big wars is to advance food products, and while this may happen in the present war, the Wm. Davies Co. sincerely believes it is cheaper, in the long run, for the public to purchase such supplies as are sold in our stores in reasonable quantities.

OUR SPECIALTIES ARE:

DAVIES' HAMS, BACON and ALL KINDS OF COOKED MEATS

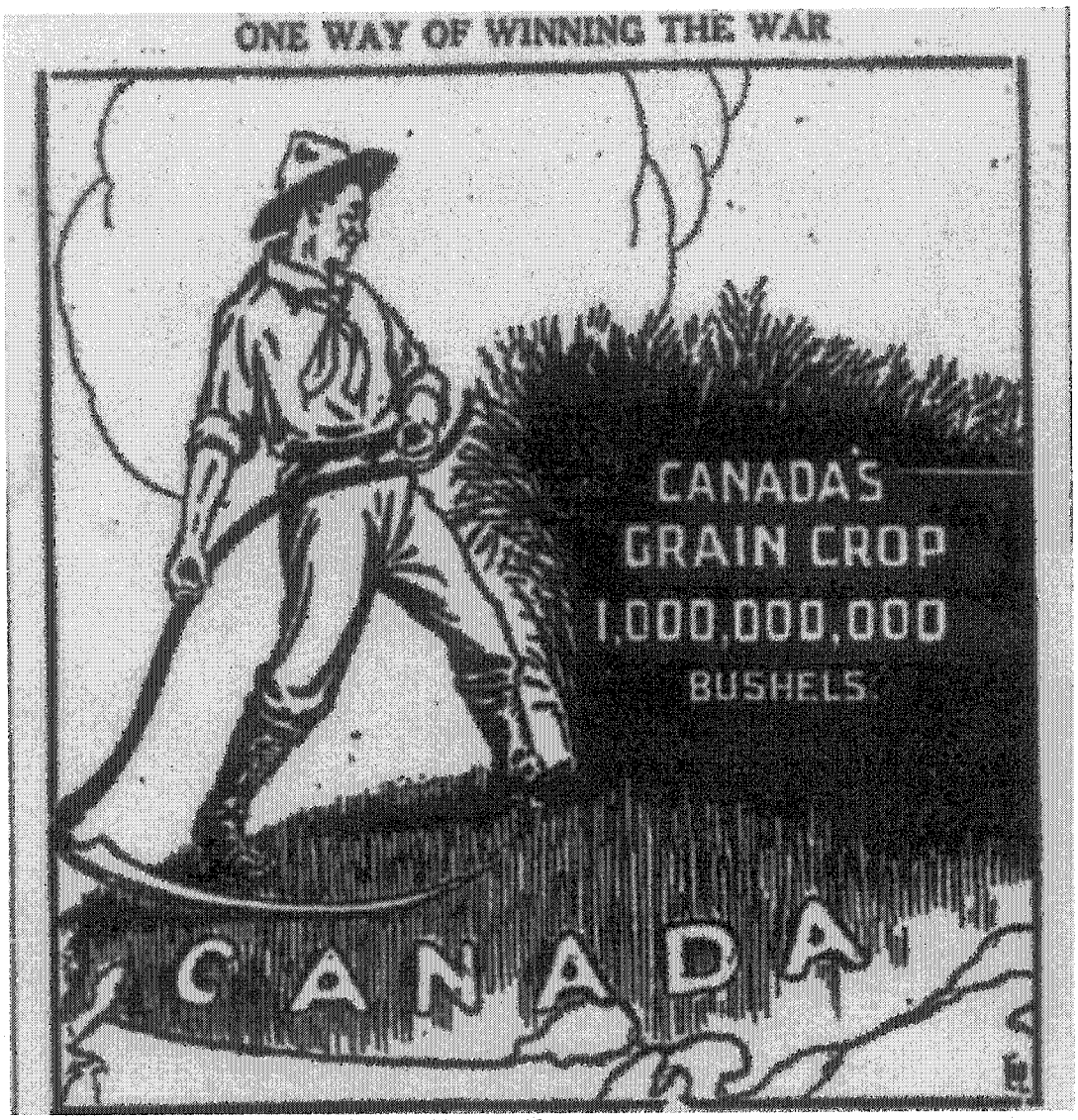
BUTTER, EGGS, CHEESE, CANNED VEGETABLES AND CANNED SALMON

STORES ALL OVER THE CITY

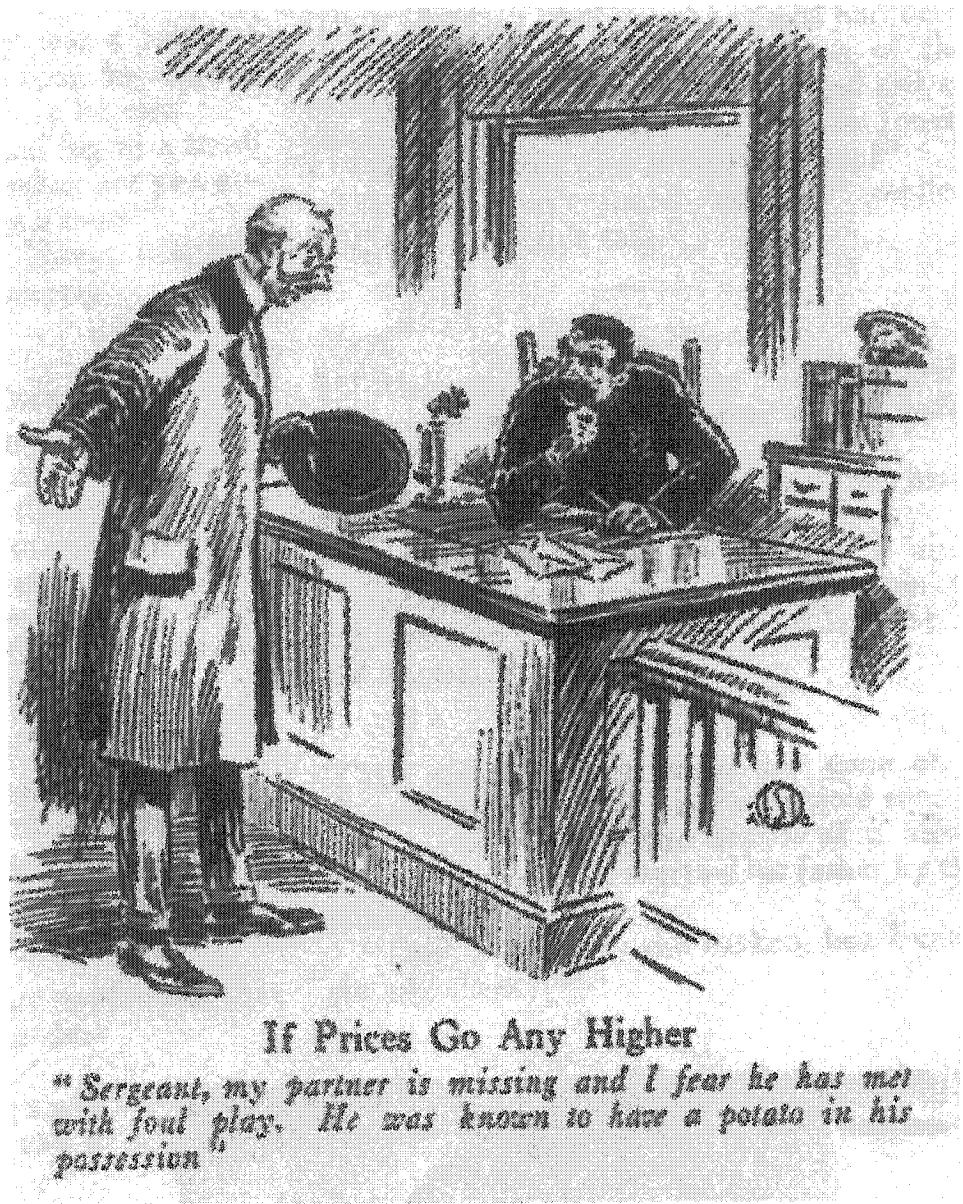
THE WILLIAM DAVIES COMPANY, Limited

Source: *Toronto Star*, August 10, 1914, p. 7.

The brief wave of 'panic' buying that accompanied the outbreak of war prompted this response from the William Davies Company.



Source: *Toronto Globe*, September 12, 1917, p. 13.



Source: *Harper's*, May 1918, p. 918.

Food prices in North America rose steadily during the war, turning everyday commodities into precious assets.

Source: *Toronto Globe*, July 9, 1917, p. 4.

Canadians, like Americans, knew exactly what they wanted their new government controllers to do -- lower soaring prices.

Source: *Toronto Globe*, September 7, 1917, p. 8.

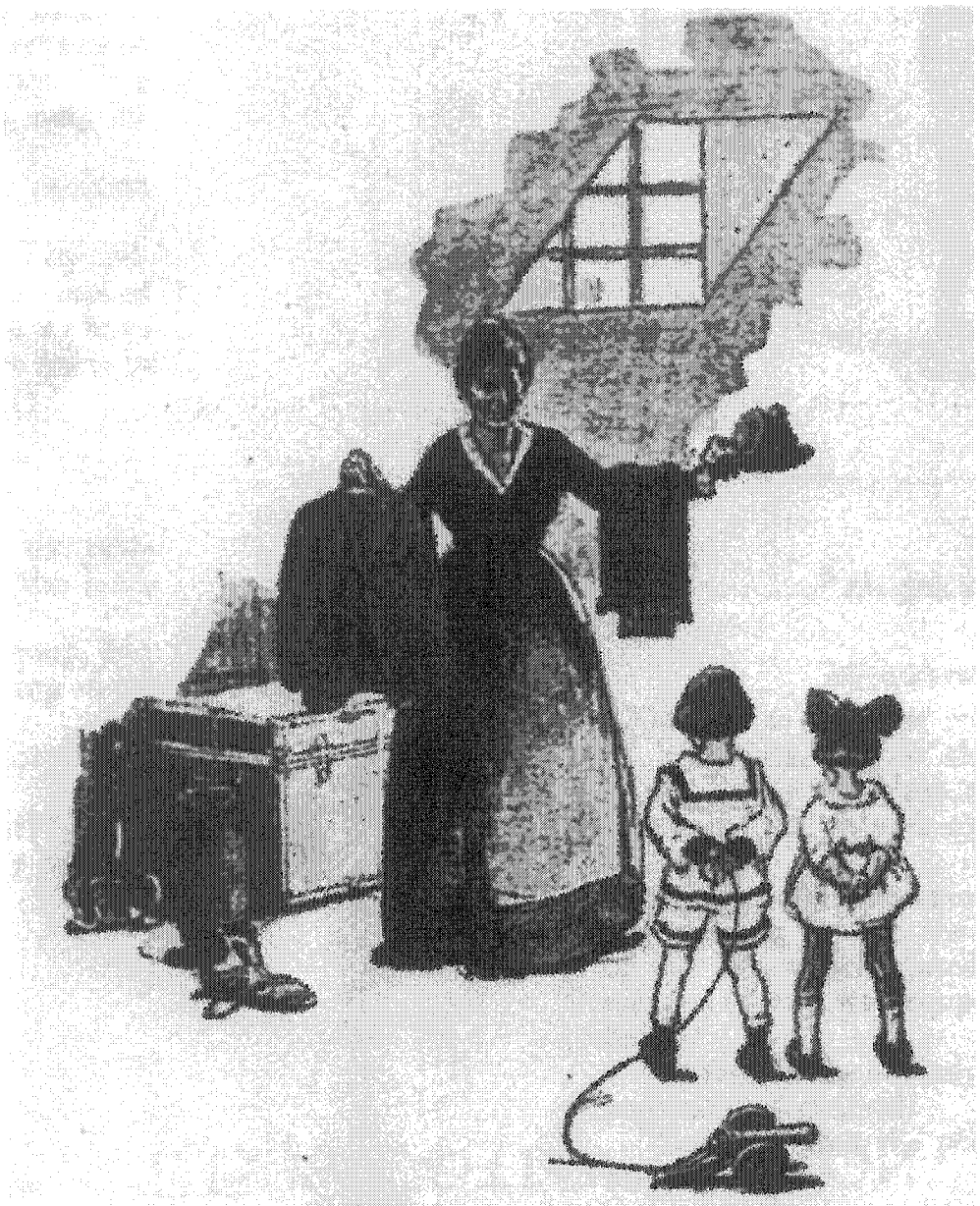
By September 1917, it was becoming clear that Hanna's restraint was not winning the confidence of Canadians.

Source: *Toronto Globe*, September 22, 1917, p. 9

Many Canadians were convinced that their food supply was in fact controlled by profiteers in the food business.

Source: *Toronto Globe*, May 7, 1918, p. 16.

Sensing a marketing opportunity, Eaton's offered a series of "sturdy and serviceable" outfits for the farm-bound land girl.



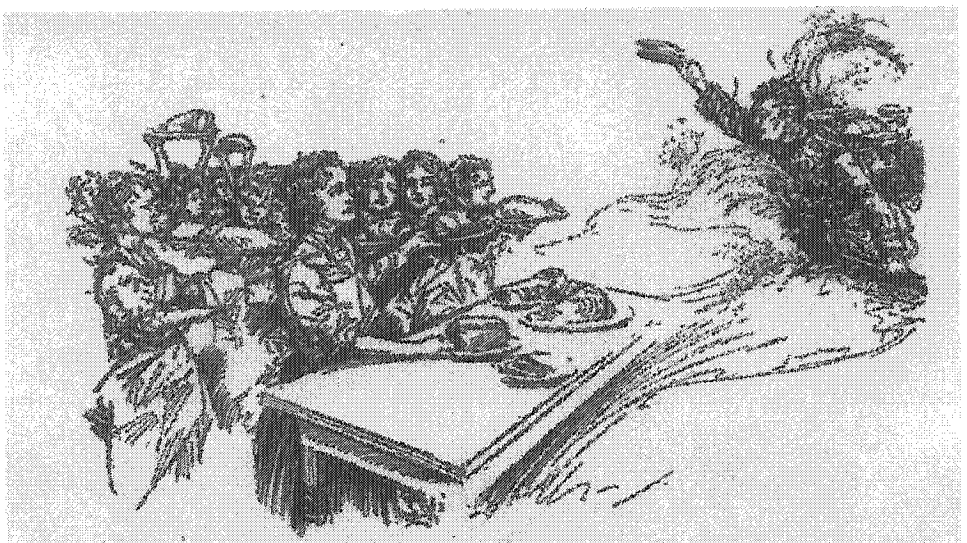
An Unforgotten Hero

"And these, my dears, are the very clothes your Grandfather wore during the Great War when he gave up meat twice a week and took only two lumps of sugar in his coffee."

Source: *Harper's*, March 1918, p. 614.

Source: *Harper's*, January 1918, p. 311.

Food control depended upon the self-sacrificing efforts of civilians of all ages.



Vision Your Sons, Mothers of Canada!

Vision them at early morning when through rising mists, there bursts a hurricane of fire—

See your valiant boys—calm, grim, but cheerful—"stand-to-arms" until the Hun's "morning hate" dies away.

Picture them at breakfast, the meal that must bring them the bodily sustenance to carry them through the strain of another day.

Then think of what might happen if, one morning, there was no breakfast—no food to be had, and the word went down the lines that Canada had failed them.

Vision all these things, and then—As Women of Canada—Mothers of Men—Answer this Call to Service.

Canada must send to Her Own, and to the Allies Fighting Forces, more wheat, more beef, more bacon, and more of such other foods as are nonperishable and easily exported.

Canada can do this, without depriving her own population of a fair share of any of these foods if You Women will but help.

All we ask of you is, that instead of buying as much white flour (if you do your own baking) you vary your baking by using one-third oatmeal, corn, barley or rye flour. Or, if you buy your bread, that you order a certain proportion of brown bread each day.

Second, instead of using as much beef and bacon as formerly, you vary your family's diet, by substituting for beef and bacon such equally nutritious foods as fish, peas, lentils, potatoes, nuts, bananas, etc.

Third, and this is most important—positively prevent the waste of a single ounce of food in your household.

They Must Be Fed

Statistics show that, everyday, in Canada, sufficient food is thrown into garbage cans, to feed the entire Canadian Overseas Army.

Travellers have often remarked that many a European family would live well upon the quantity and quality of food wasted in some Canadian homes.

Such waste is shameful at any time; but in these times it is criminal.

Our only hope is that with these truths before you, and in view of the vital issues at stake, we may count upon your earnest co-operation in stopping this appalling waste; and in substituting other foods for the wheat, beef and bacon that must be sent overseas.

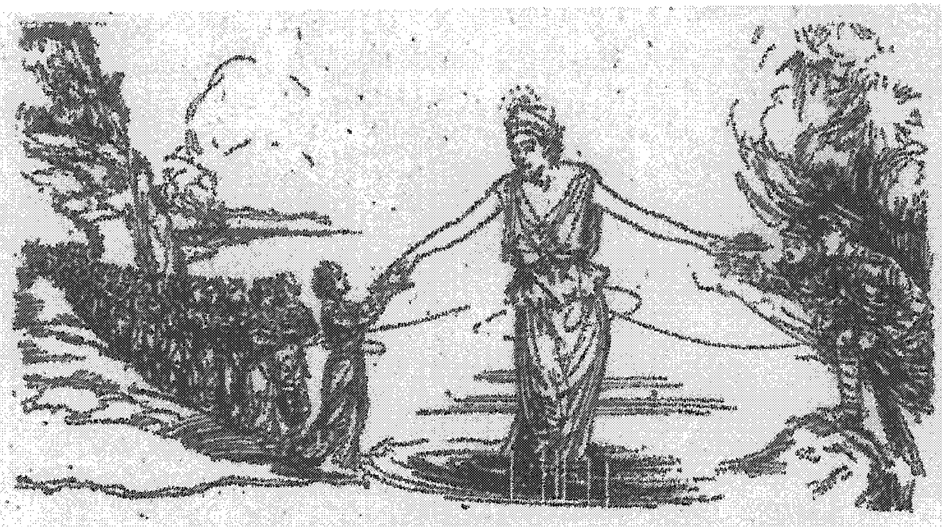
Next week a Food Service Pledge and Window Card will be delivered to you. The Pledge is your Dedication to War Service. The Window Card your Emblem of Honour.

Women's Auxiliary, Department of Patriotic Committee, In Co-operation with the Hon. W. J. Hanna, Food Controller.

Sign the Food Service Pledge

Source: *Toronto Star*, September 11, 1917, p. 10.

The Food Service Pledge campaign employed traditional images of women in its propaganda ads. Here, the 'mothers of Canada' present food to their 'sons' overseas.



Once More Canada Must Stand in the Gap. Once More Must Hold the Lines of Communication

As, when at Ypres, Canada's Gallant Sons stood in the Gap and held back the Hunnish Hordes—and shed Immortal Glory on Canada's fair name—

So, in their homes, Canada's Noble Women are now called upon to Stand in the Gap and hold back the spectre of hunger from our troops.

The men "out there" must have sufficient food. Only certain kinds of food are suitable for export.

And so we ask you to Pledge yourself and your family to eat less of these foods, so that there may be sufficient of them for export.

For example—if you do your own baking use one-third oatmeal, corn, barley or rye flour with your white flour. If you buy from a baker, order some brown bread each day.

Substitute for beef and bacon such equally nutritious foods as fish, peas, lentils, potatoes, nuts, bananas, etc.

And—this is most important—positively prevent the waste of a single ounce of food in your household.

Next week a Food Service Pledge and Window Card will be delivered to you. The Pledge is your Dedication to War Service—The Window Card is your Emblem of Honour.

Woman's Auxiliary, Organization of Resources Committee, in Cooperation with The Hon. W. J. Hanna, Food Controller.

Practical Housekeeping Hints

THE FOOD VALUE OF FISH

[illegible]

PURCHASING

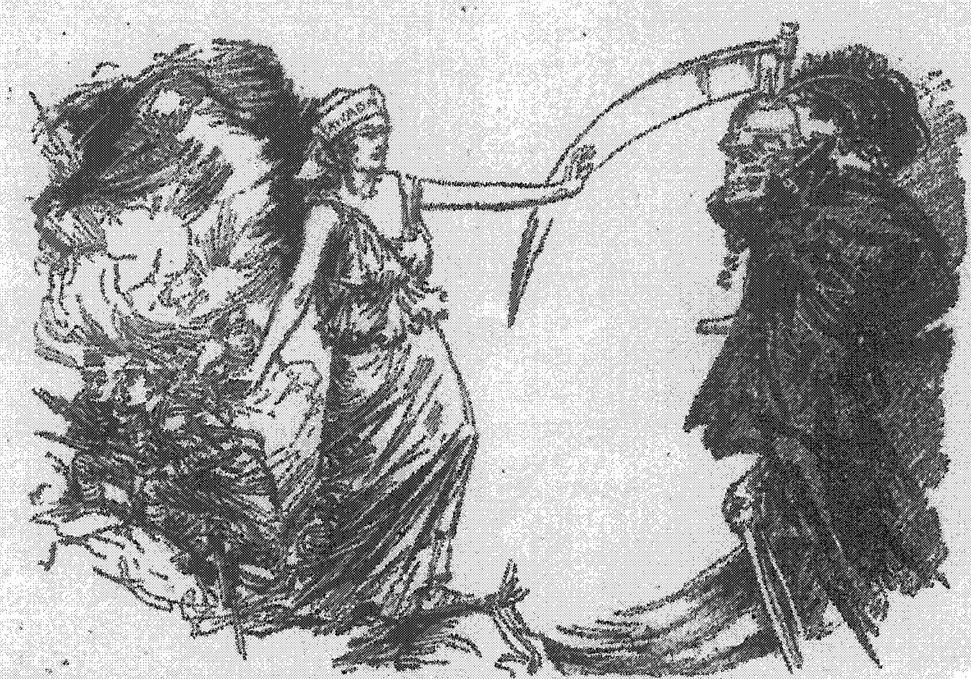
[illegible]

PREPARATION

[illegible]

Serve Our Heroes—Sign the Food Service Pledge

Source: *Toronto Star*, September 15, 1917, p. 16.



They Shall Not Pass

The Immortal Cry of Canada at the Second Battle of Ypres.

The defence of Ypres following the first ghastly gas attack April 22, 1915, exalts all history. By it our men were transfigured and the undying, imperishable Soul of Canada revealed.

In the name of these Heroes of Ypres, Festubert, Givenchy, Vimy Ridge, Lens, The Somme, Verdun—aye and the Deathless "Old Contemptibles"—we beseech you, Women of Canada, to Dedicate Yourselves and Your Families to War Service by signing the Food Service Pledge.

The sacrifice is not great. We merely want you to substitute other foods for part of the white bread, beef and bacon your family now eat.

The Stand of the Canadians

Thou Shalt Not Want

The Undying Pledge of Canada's Mothers to Her Sons.

When baking use one-third oatmeal, corn, barley or rye flour. Or, order some brown bread from your baker each day.

Substitute for beef and bacon such equally nutritious foods as fish, peas, lentils, potatoes, nuts, bananas, etc.

Third, and this is most important — positively prevent the waste of a single ounce of food in your home.

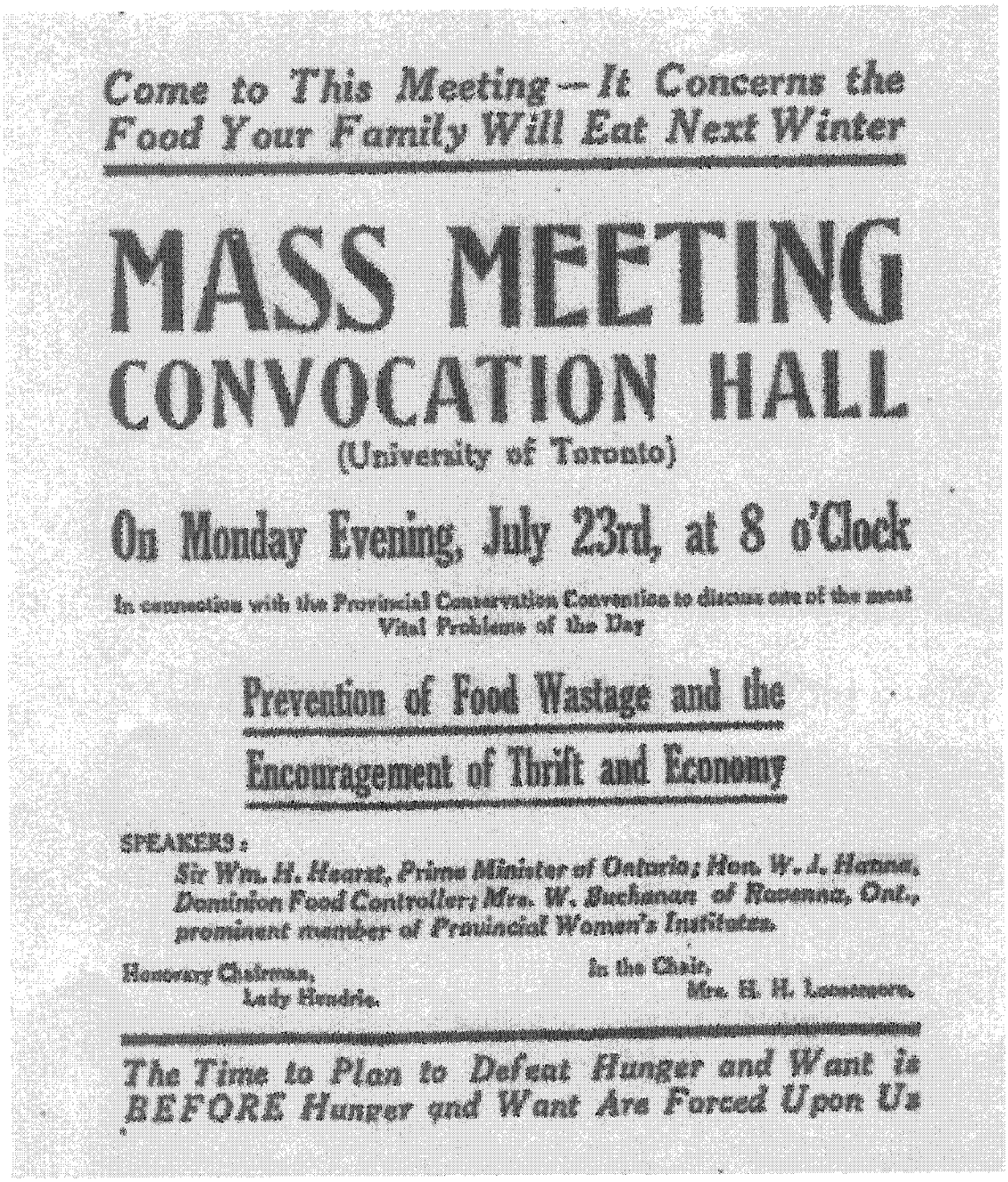
Next week a Food Service Pledge and Window Card will be delivered to you. The Pledge is your Dedication to War Service—The Window Card is your Emblem of Honour.

Sign the one and display the other.

WOMAN'S AUXILIARY, ORGANIZATION OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE, IN COOPERATION WITH THE HON. W. J. HANNA, FOOD CONTROLLER.

Sign and Live Up To Your Food Service Pledge

Source: *Toronto Star*, September 13, 1917, p. 9.



Come to This Meeting—It Concerns the Food Your Family Will Eat Next Winter

MASS MEETING

CONVOCATION HALL

(University of Toronto)

On Monday Evening, July 23rd, at 8 o'Clock

In connection with the Provincial Conservation Convention to discuss one of the most Vital Problems of the Day

Prevention of Food Wastage and the Encouragement of Thrift and Economy

SPEAKERS:

Sir Wm. H. Hearst, Prime Minister of Ontario; Hon. W. J. Hanna, Dominion Food Controller; Mrs. W. Buchanan of Ravenna, Ont., prominent member of Provincial Women's Institutes.

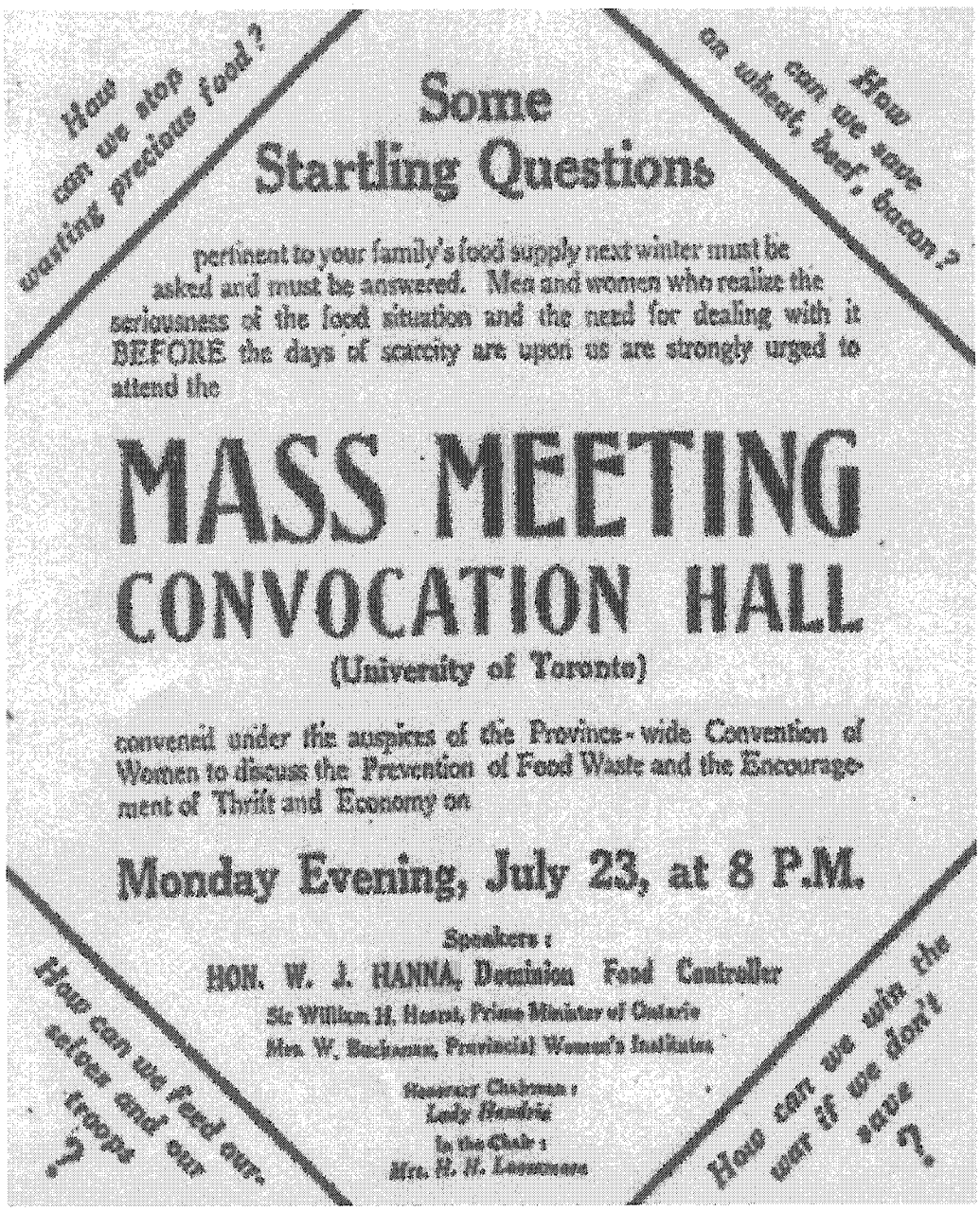
Honorary Chairman, Lady Hendrie.

In the Chair, Mrs. H. H. Lowsmore.

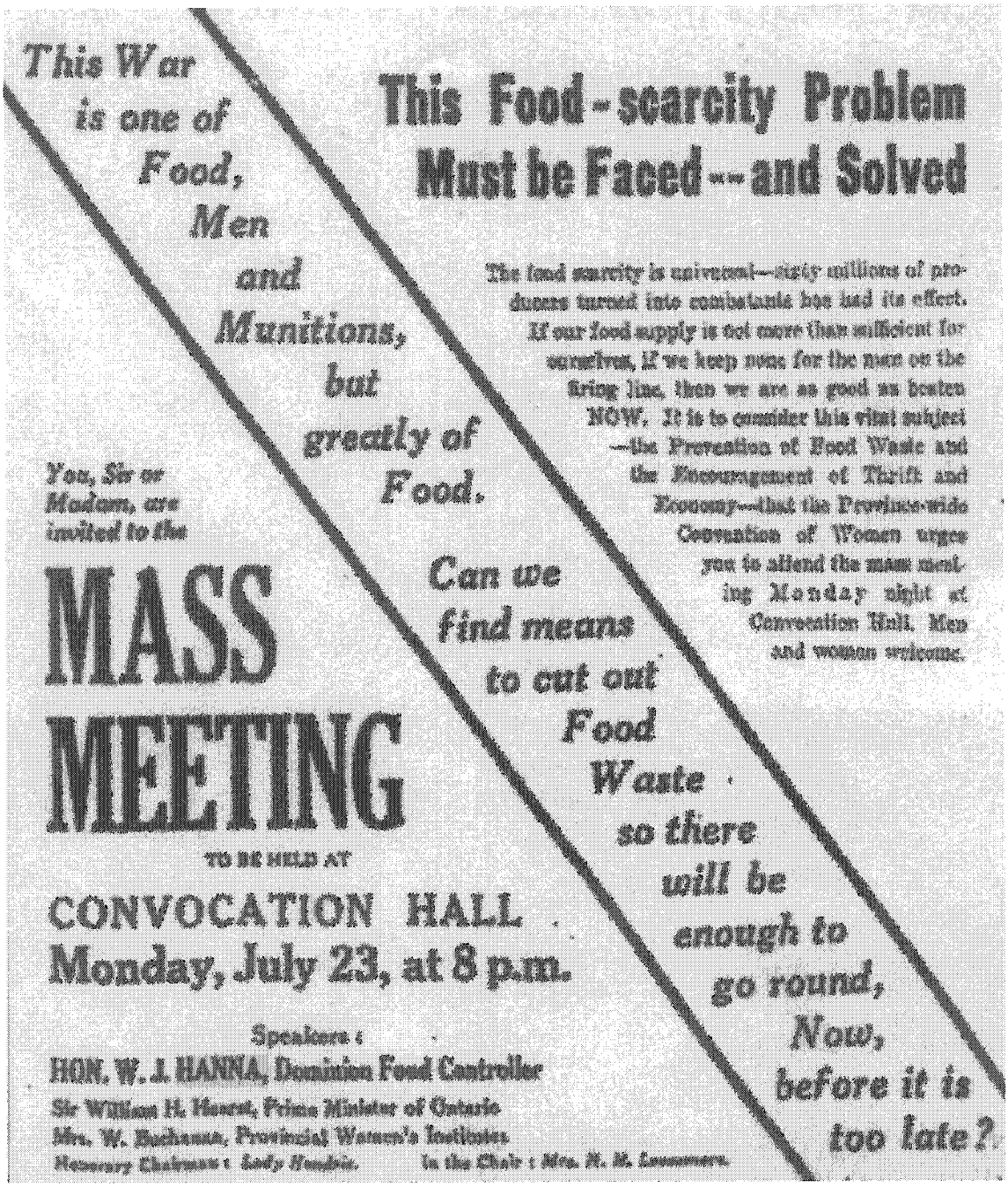
The Time to Plan to Defeat Hunger and Want is BEFORE Hunger and Want Are Forced Upon Us

Source: *Toronto Globe*, July 19, 1917, p. 2.

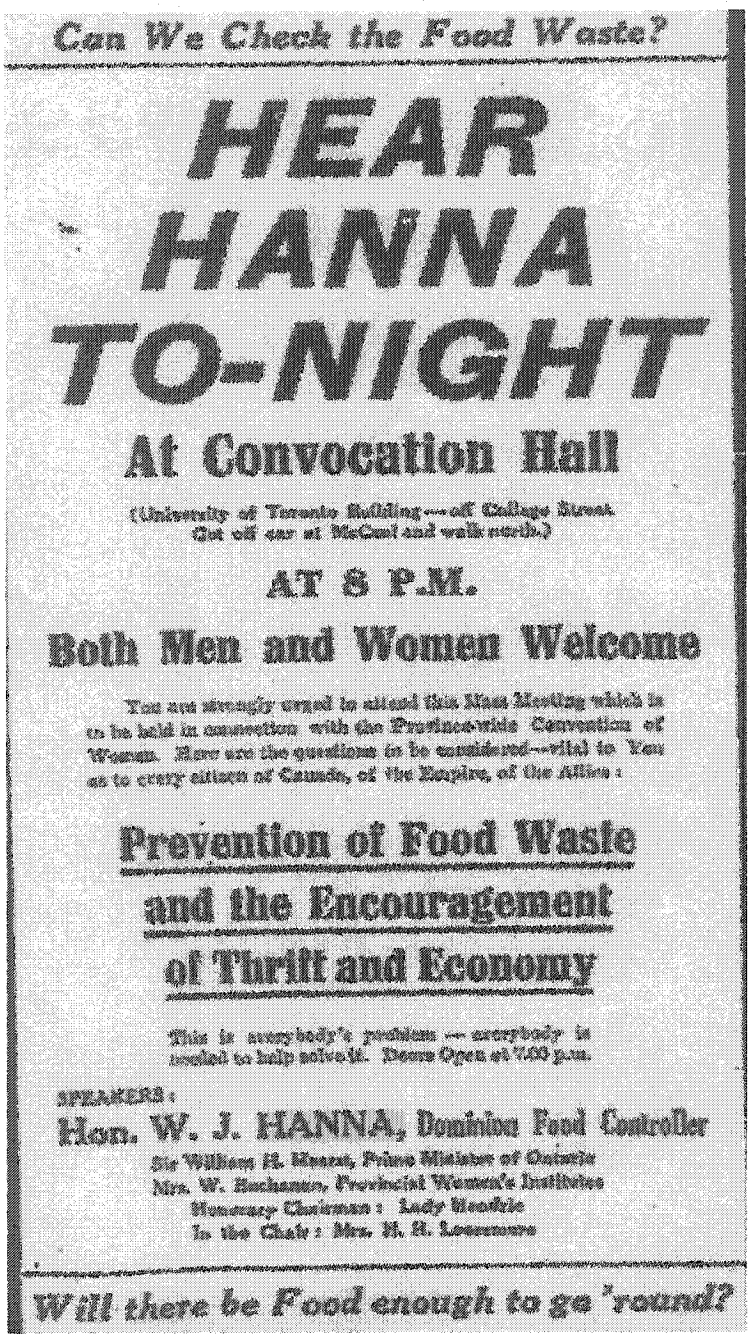
Public meetings allowed the Food Controller to get his message out to the people. They were heavily publicized.



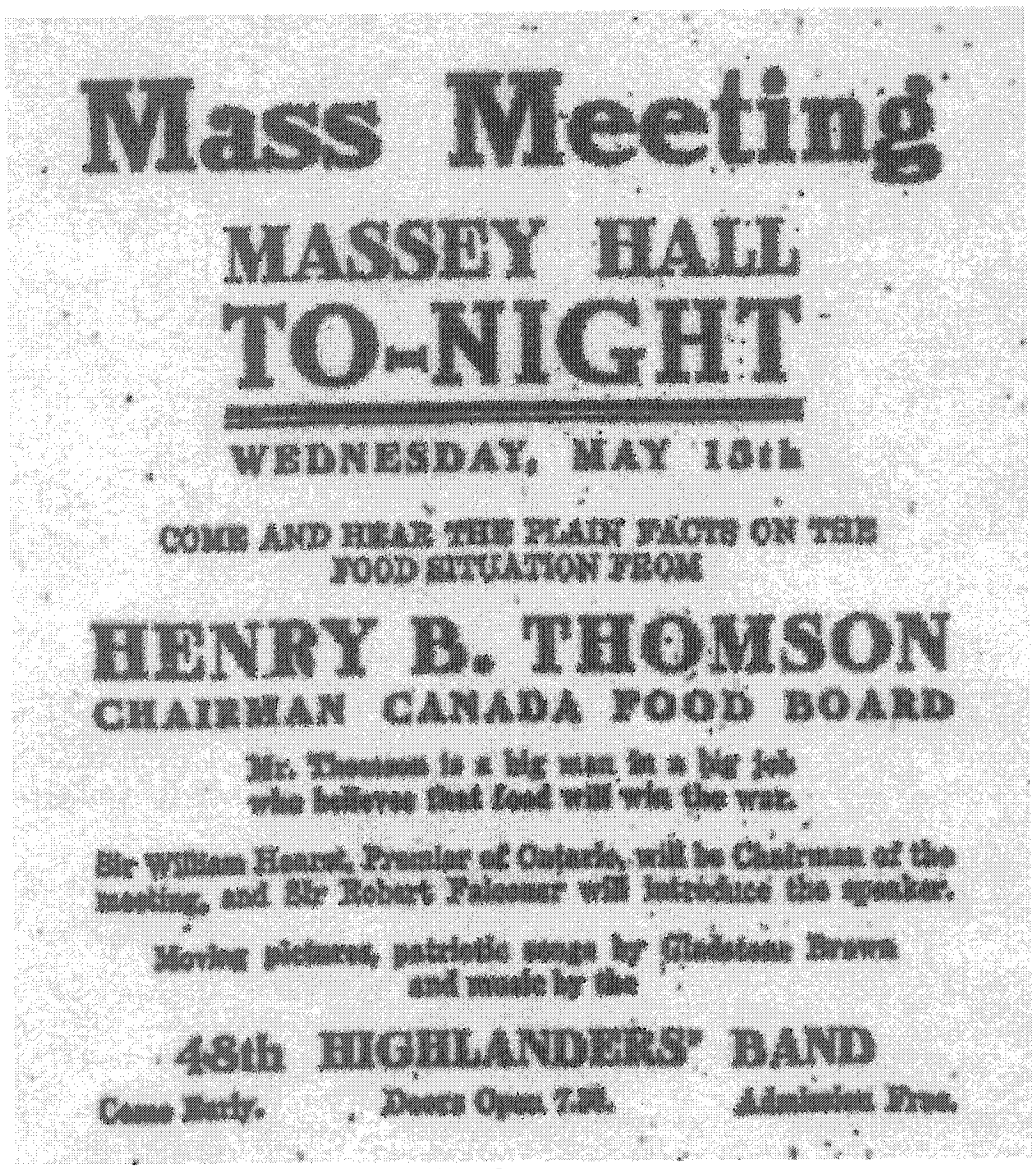
Source: *Toronto Globe*, July 20, 1917, p. 2.



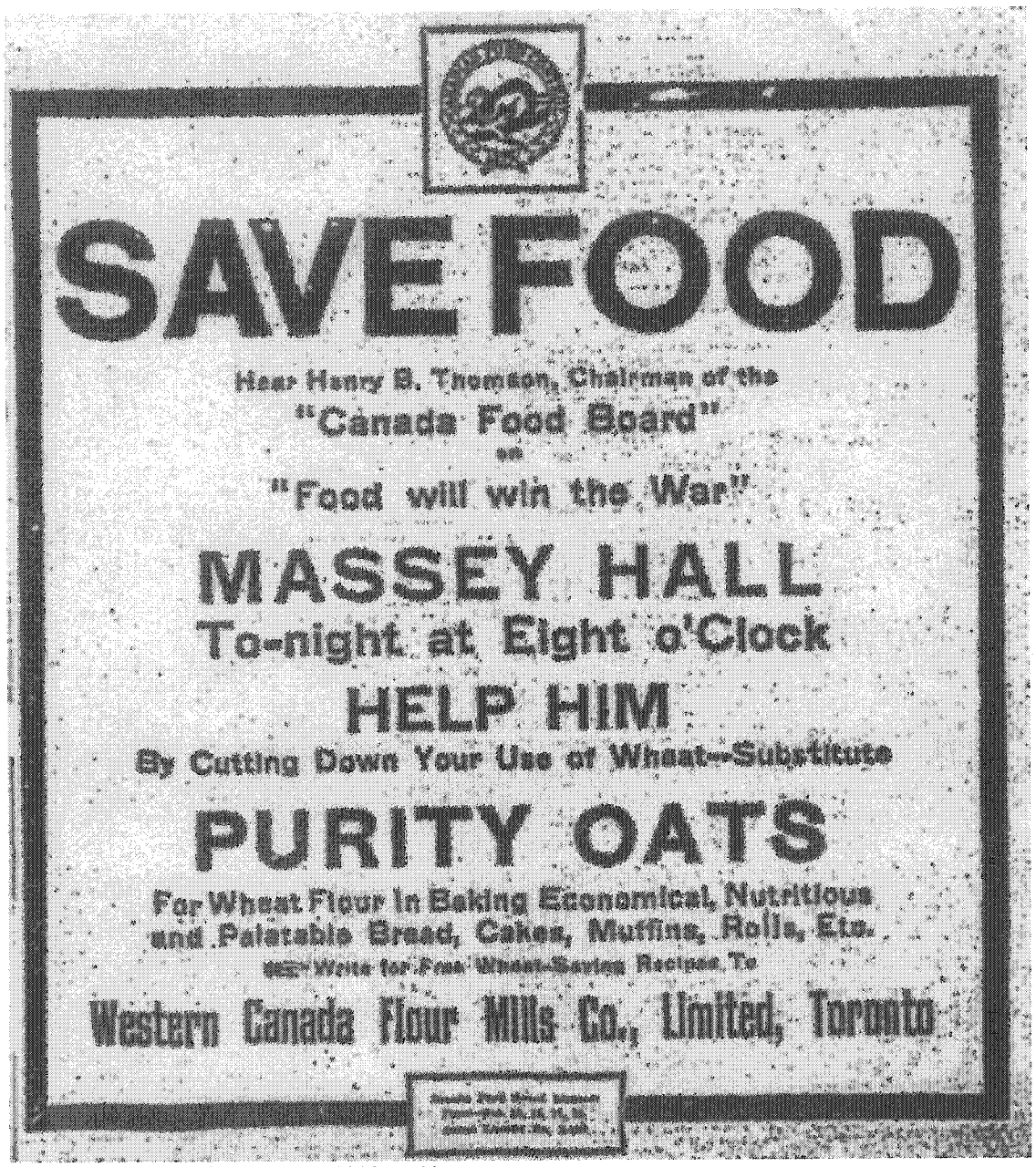
Source: *Toronto Globe*, July 21, 1917, p. 2.



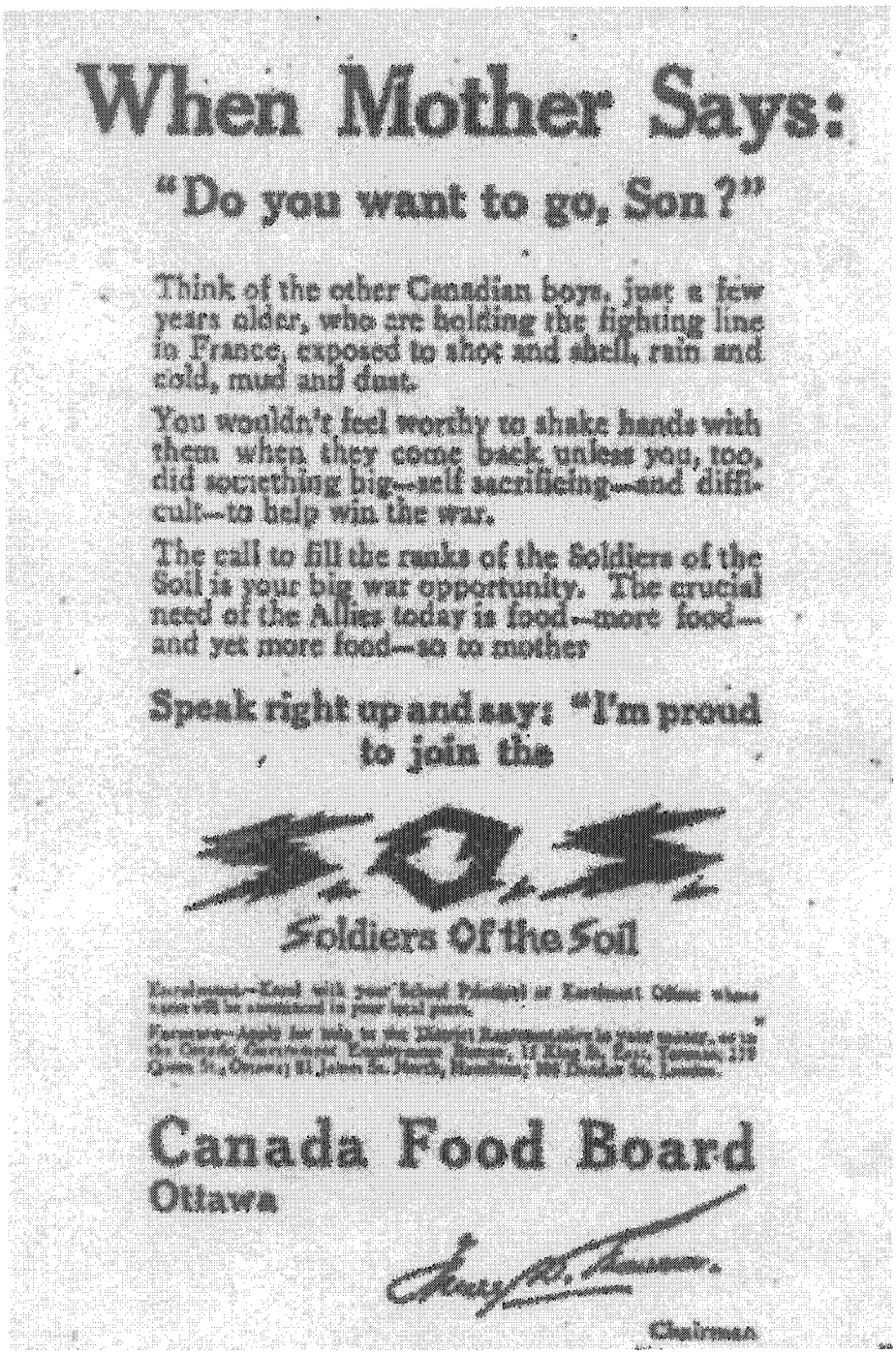
Source: *Toronto Globe*, July 23, 1917, p. 2



Source: *Toronto Globe*, May 15, 1918, p. 2.



Source: *Toronto Globe*, May 15, 1918, p. 10.



When Mother Says:

"Do you want to go, Son?"

Think of the other Canadian boys, just a few years older, who are holding the fighting line in France, exposed to shot and shell, rain and cold, mud and dust.

You wouldn't feel worthy to shake hands with them when they come back unless you, too, did something big—self sacrificing—and difficult—to help win the war.

The call to fill the ranks of the Soldiers of the Soil is your big war opportunity. The crucial need of the Allies today is food—more food—and yet more food—so to mother

Speak right up and say: "I'm proud to join the

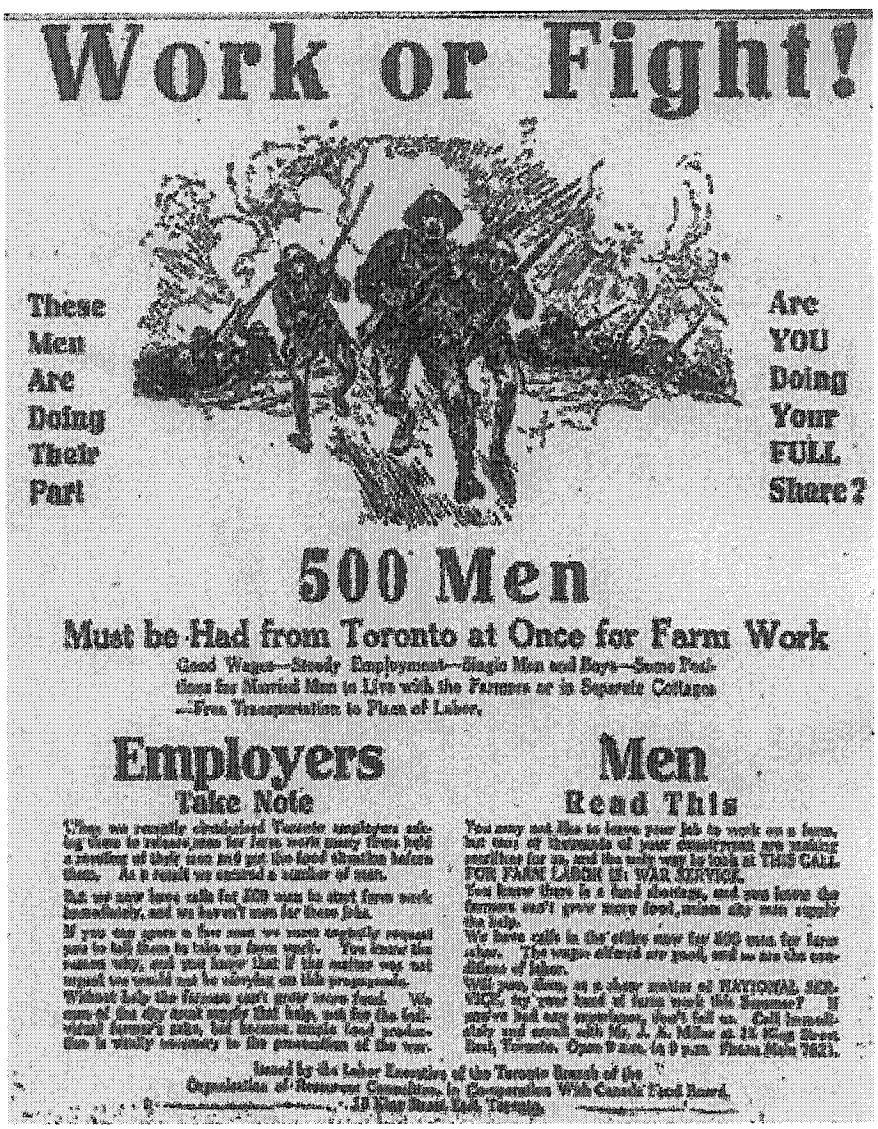
Soldiers of the Soil

Canada Food Board

Ottawa

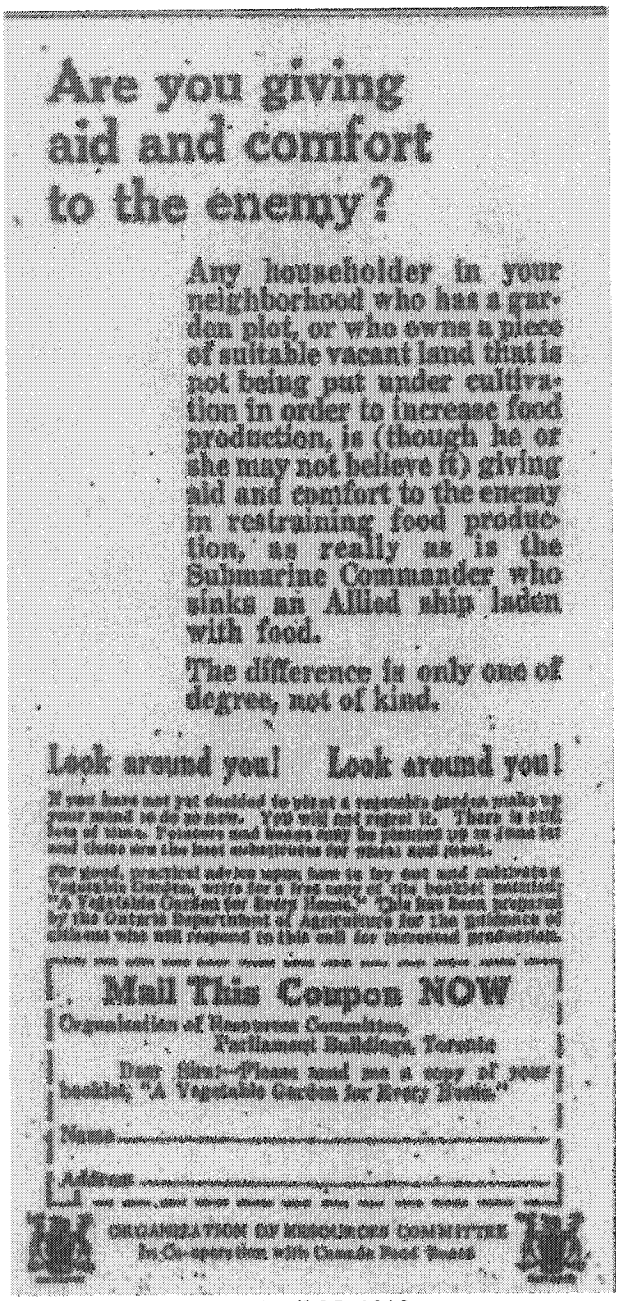
Chairman

Source: *Toronto Globe*, March 20, 1918, p. 5.



Source: *Toronto Star*, April 23, 1918

Ads like this one left little doubt that idleness was not to be tolerated.



Are you giving aid and comfort to the enemy?

Any householder in your neighborhood who has a garden plot, or who owns a piece of suitable vacant land that is not being put under cultivation in order to increase food production, is (though he or she may not believe it) giving aid and comfort to the enemy in restraining food production, as really as is the Submarine Commander who sinks an Allied ship laden with food.

The difference is only one of degree, not of kind.

Look around you! Look around you!

If your home unit has not yet decided to plant a vegetable garden make up your mind to do so now. You will not regret it. There is still lots of time. Potatoes and beans only in pinches up to June 1st and these are the best substitutes for meats and cereals.

For sound, practical advice upon how to lay out and cultivate a Vegetable Garden, write for a free copy of the booklet, entitled "A Vegetable Garden for Every Home." This has been prepared by the Ontario Department of Agriculture for the guidance of citizens who will respond to this call for increased production.

Mail This Coupon NOW

Organization of Home-grown Committee,
Parliament Buildings, Toronto

Dear Sirs:—Please send me a copy of your booklet, "A Vegetable Garden for Every Home."

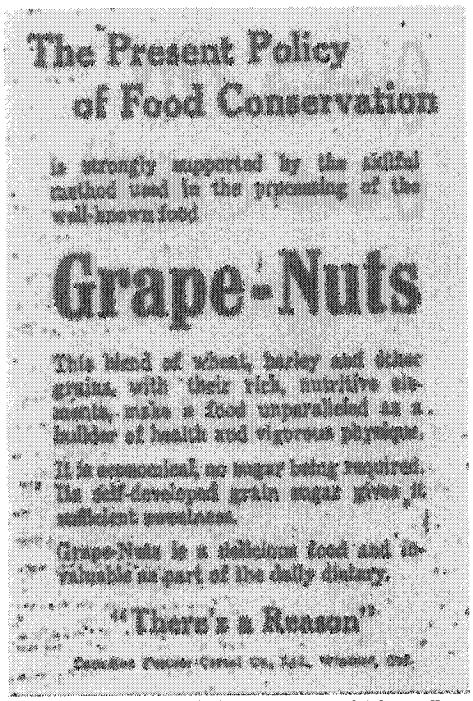
Name .....

Address .....

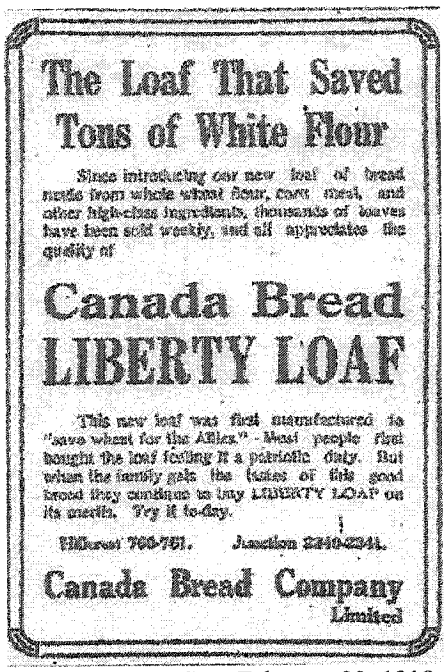
ORGANIZED FROM BY HOME-GROWN COMMITTEE
In Co-operation with Canada Food Board

Source: *Toronto Star*, April 25, 1918

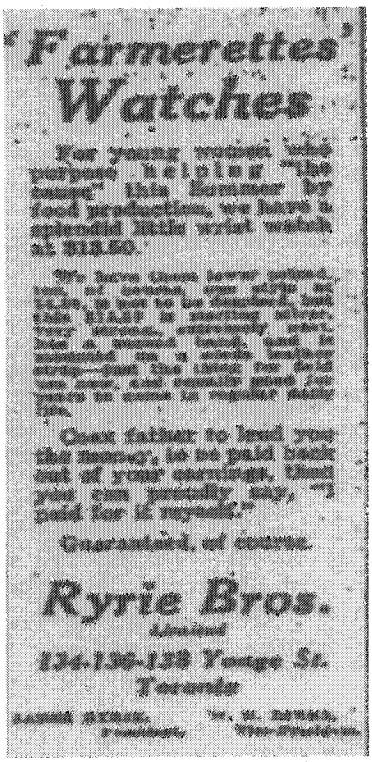
Vegetable gardening became a pressing patriotic duty in 1918.



Source: *Toronto Globe*, June 3, 1918, p. 7.



Source: *Toronto Star*, February 20, 1918, p. 13.

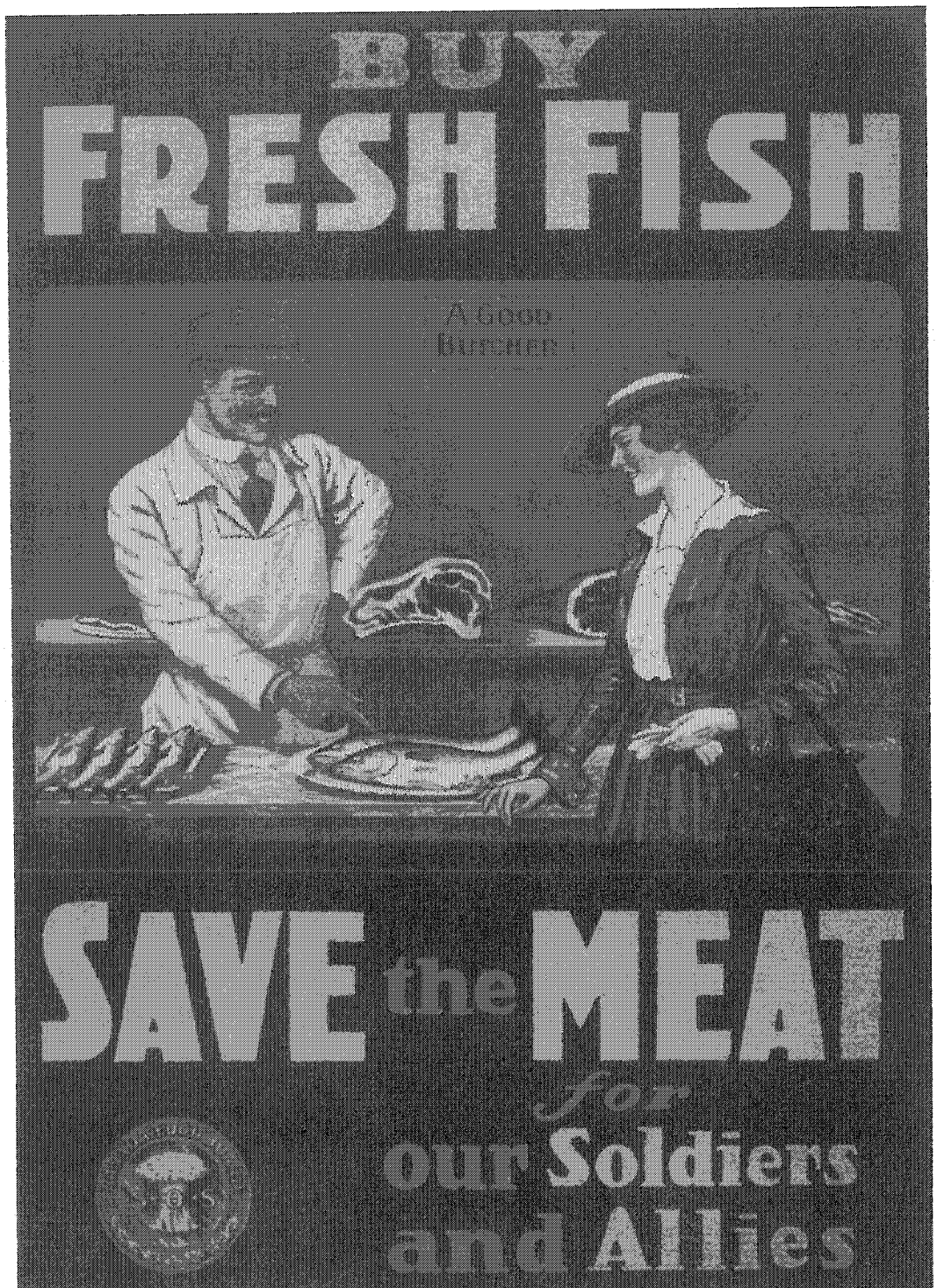


Source: *Toronto Globe*, April 4, 1918, p. 7.

Many in the food business were understandably eager to turn the situation to their own benefit.

Source: *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*, p. 192. (NAC C-95280)

Under the Canada Food Board, punishments awaited those who were caught breaking the food regulations.



Source: *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*, p. 131. (McGill University)

Canada's food controllers strove to increase the amount of fish eaten in this country.

Source: *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*, p. 81. (The Carson Collection)

Meatpackers like Joseph Flavelle were quick to take advantage of the renewed demand for Canadian pork.

Source: *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*, p. 59. (NAC C-95289)

The Soldiers of the Soil movement, with all its military trappings, gave city youth a chance to assist the in the cause of food production.

Source: *Canadian War Posters, 1914-1918, 1939-1945*, p. 56. (NAC C-95282)

The flip side to home vegetable production was preserving.