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Stacey Jo-Anne Barker

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

Ph.D. (History)

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FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

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Jeffrey Keshen

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS (EXAMINATRICES) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS EXAMINERS

Duncan McDowall

Galen Perras

Serge Durflinger

Vasilis Vourkoutiotis

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

**Feeding the Hungry Allies:
Canadian Food and Agriculture during the Second World War**

by

Stacey J. Barker

**Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Ph.D. degree in History**

**Department of History
Faculty of Arts
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Canada

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Abstract

Feeding the Hungry Allies: Canadian Food and Agriculture during the Second World War

Stacey J. Barker
University of Ottawa, 2008

Supervisor:
Prof. Jeff Keshen

Food is a vital component of modern warfare and during the Second World War Canada used its agricultural capacity to help feed the Allied cause. State direction and the application of new regulatory protocols led to increased production and modified food habits. Canada's food exports increased and farm incomes climbed. Nutritional health was maintained, while economic controls enacted by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) kept Canadian food prices from soaring. The nation's military contributions overshadowed this portion of the Canadian war effort, but food production proved to be a major theme throughout the war and into the peace.

Still, feeding the hungry allies was not a painless process. This dissertation examines how the main actors within Canada's food system responded to the exigencies of war in relation to the state policies that sought to maximize the amount of food available. Farmers, hampered by a significantly depleted labour force and lower commodity prices, had to adjust to meet war needs. The war fostered the development of the modern farm lobby in Canada, as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture emerged as a strong campaigner for the nation's farm interests. Consumers enjoyed stable prices but reduced supplies, and experienced a variety of consumption restrictions, including rationing. Called upon to uphold the rules set out by the WPTB, they were enjoined to

re-conceptualize food as a communal ‘weapon of war’ and thus to tailor their eating habits to fit ‘patriotic’ standards. The majority accepted these codes of behaviour, but obedience co-existed alongside activities such as panic buying, hoarding, and patronizing the black market.

This study argues that while Canadians largely accepted and supported wartime food policies, they were also willing to demonstrate their unhappiness with moves that seemed to favour one set of interests over theirs. For the state, navigating this minefield of contending factions was necessary to ensure that Canada’s bigger wartime objectives could be realized.

Acknowledgements

This project could not have been completed without the support of several individuals and organizations. First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Professor Jeffrey Keshen, for his expertise and tireless assistance. His congenial guidance and unswerving encouragement helped make this an extremely rewarding experience. The faculty, staff, and fellow students at the Department of History provided a collegial and stimulating atmosphere. I would also like to thank Serge Durflinger, Galen Perras, and Vasilis Vourkoutiotis from the University of Ottawa, and Duncan McDowall from Carleton University. It was a privilege for me to have these scholars serve as thesis examiners, and I thank them.

I was fortunate to receive a generous amount of financial support over the course of my studies. Three years of research were funded by a CGS Doctoral Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and one year by an Ontario Graduate Scholarship. The University of Ottawa provided additional support through an Excellence Scholarship. I must also single out the staff at the Library and Archives Canada for special praise, for assisting me in so many ways. Research such as this depends upon the 'behind-the-scenes' work that takes place at this institution, and others like it. Further, I must commend the individuals who staff the Interlibrary Loans department at the University of Ottawa Library for tracking down so much of the material that I required in a timely fashion.

I must also thank the people closest to me. My parents, Myrna and Neil, and my siblings Robert, Shawn and Angela, provided unstinting encouragement, each spurring me on in their own idiosyncratic manner. My cats, Dewey and Tango, offered invaluable clerical assistance as feline paperweights. They also exhibited the uncanny ability to know just which pile of books or papers to knock over and re-sort, leading to new discoveries. Of course, my deepest and undying thanks go to my 'rock,' Roxanne Thomas, who supported (and at times, suffered through) my endeavours with endless patience and grace.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all those Canadians who lived, worked, and served during the Second World War, whether on the home front or in the armed forces. This includes my grandparents, to whom I am particularly indebted. It is also dedicated to my brand-new niece, Abigail, whose arrival during the latter stages of my work provided new inspiration and hope for the future.

Glossary A: Organizations

AAC (Agricultural Advisory Committee)	Established in 1943 as part of the jurisdictional readjustment between the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) and the Department of Agriculture. The AAC was made up of provincial representatives and members from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). It was intended to serve as a link between the Department of Agriculture and farmers. Herbert H. Hannam served as its first Chair.
ACN (Advisory Committee on Nutrition)	A consulting body created by the WPTB in 1942, it included prominent nutrition expert Dr. L.B. Pett. Formed as the move to coupon rationing was made, the group's advice was used to determine ration amounts commensurate with maintaining national health.
AFB (Agricultural Food Board)	Created at the same time as the AAC, the AFB was made up of officials from the Department of Agriculture and commodity supply boards. The AFB acted as a central directing body in the development of policies relating to wartime food production.
APSB (Agricultural Prices Support Board)	The body through which the <i>Agricultural Prices Support Act</i> (1944) was implemented. The

APSB had the authority to ensure that farm commodities met a minimum set price.

ASC (Agricultural Supplies Committee)

Established in September 1939 and comprised of Department of Agriculture officials, the ASC issued directives and advice to those responsible for formulating food production policies. Its mandate was broadened in 1940 when it became the Agricultural Supplies Board.

CFA (Canadian Federation of Agriculture)

Established in 1935 as the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture and renamed in 1940, the CFA was an umbrella group of affiliated provincial farm organizations whose main goal was to provide a unified voice for Canadian agriculture.

CFB (Combined Food Board)

One of several inter-Allied combined planning boards set up in 1942. Initially, membership was limited to the United States and Great Britain, but in 1943 Canada was added. The CFB made policy recommendations relating to food allocation and supply.

CPSC (Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation)

A subsidiary of the WPTB, the CPSC paid out subsidies to bridge the gap between the costs of agricultural production and the

prices received by farmers under the WPTB ceiling.

CWB (Canadian Wheat Board)

Government marketing board for Canadian grain established in 1935. War demands prompted the federal government to make farmer participation compulsory in 1943.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)

Formed by the United Nations in 1945, the FAO was established to improve diets and worldwide access to food. Famed British nutrition researcher Sir John Boyd Orr served as its first Chair.

FIC (Food Information Committee)

Established in 1946 in the wake of the world food crisis, the FIC was responsible for encouraging and directing Canadians to follow the government's food conservation programme.

NSS (National Selective Service)

Established in 1942 to oversee labour utilization in Canada. An Agricultural Division was created to deal with farm labour, and each province set up a dominion-provincial farm labour committee to liaise with the NSS.

OFSF (Ontario Farm Service Force)

Provincial emergency farm labour scheme established in 1941 under the auspices of the Ontario

Departments of Agriculture,
Education and Labour.

UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation
Administration)

UN agency established in 1943,
UNRRA provided food and other
relief to war-ravaged populations.
UNRRA ran out of funds in 1947,
whereupon most of its duties were
taken over by the UN's
International Refugee Organization
and the Economic Cooperation
Administration.

WPTB (Wartime Prices and Trade Board)

Established in September 1939, the
WPTB's main objectives were to
keep a lid on inflation and to ensure
the fair and efficient distribution of
consumer goods.

Glossary B: List of Names

Aitken, Kate	Popular cooking expert and broadcaster, author of <i>Kate Aitken's Canadian Cookbook</i> (1945).
Barton, Dr. G.S.H.	Former Dean of McGill University's MacDonald College; Gardiner's long-serving Deputy Minister of Agriculture.
Boyd Orr, Sir John	Noted British nutritional researcher; first Chair of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.
Brand, R.H.	British banker and civil servant; head of the British food mission in Washington, D.C., 1941-1944; Britain's representative on the Combined Food Board.
Campbell, Sir Gerald	British High Commissioner to Canada, 1938-1941.
Christie, Loring	Canadian Minister to the United States, 1939-1941.
Crerar, T.A.	Minister of Agriculture, 1917-1919; Minister of Mines and Resources, 1936-1945.
Dewan, P.M.	Ontario's Minister of Agriculture, 1937-1943.
Dexter, Grant	Highly connected journalist. During the war served as Ottawa correspondent for the <i>Winnipeg Free Press</i> .
Floud, Sir Francis	British High Commissioner to Canada, 1934-1938.

French, Sir Henry	Director of Britain's Food (Defence Plans) Department, 1936-1939; served as permanent secretary in the Ministry of Food during the war.
Gardiner, James G.	Federal Minister of Agriculture, 1935-1957; Minister of National War Services, 1940-1941.
Gordon, Donald	Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, 1939-1941; Chair of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB), 1941-1947.
Hanna, William J.	Canada's First World War Food Controller, 1917-1918.
Hannam, Herbert H.	Prominent spokesman for Canadian agriculture; President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, 1939-1963; Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee, 1943-1958.
Haskins, W.E.	Secretary of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.
Hipel, Norman	Ontario's Minister of Labour, 1938-1941.
Illesley, J.L.	Minister of Finance, 1940-1946.
Inskip, Thomas	Britain's Minister for Coordination of Defence, 1935-1939.
King, William Lyon Mackenzie	Prime Minister of Canada, 1921-1926, 1926-1930, 1935-1948.
Lloyd, E.M.H.	Assistant to Sir Henry French, 1936-1942.

Mackenzie, Ian	Minister of Pensions and National Health, 1939-1944.
MacKinnon, James	Minister of Trade and Commerce, 1940-1948.
Maclaren, Alex	Director of the Ontario Farm Service Force (OFSF).
MacNamara, Arthur	Deputy Minister of Labour, 1943-1945; took over as head of National Selective Service (NSS) in 1942.
Macphail, Agnes	Social reformer and farm spokesperson, active in the United Farmers of Ontario; elected in 1921 as first female MP in Canadian history; columnist for the <i>Globe and Mail</i> , 1941-1942.
Massey, Vincent	Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, 1935-1946.
McDonald, Malcolm	British High Commissioner to Canada, 1941-1946.
McGregor, Fred (F.A.)	Former secretary to Mackenzie King; Commissioner of the Combines Investigation Act; Head of the WPTB's Enforcement Division.
McIvor, George	Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board, 1937-1958.
McKinnon, Hector	Chair of the WPTB, 1939-1941.
Mitchell, Humphrey	Minister of Labour, 1941-1950.
Morrison, William	Britain's Minister of Food, 1939-1940.

- Osborne, J.A.C. Official with the Bank of England; served as Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, 1935-1938.
- Pearson, Lester Secretary to the Canadian High Commission in Britain, 1935-1941; joined Canadian Legation in Washington in 1942; Ambassador to United States, 1945-1946; Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1945-1948.
- Pett, Dr. L.B. Nutrition expert and head of the Department of Pensions and National Health's Nutrition Division; member of the WPTB's Advisory Committee on Nutrition (ACN).
- Robertson, Norman Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1941-1946.
- Sanders, Byrne Hope Director of the WPTB's Consumer Branch, 1942-1947; editor of *Chatelaine*, 1929-1942, 1947-1952.
- Shaw, A.M. Director of the Marketing Service of the Department of Agriculture; Chair of the Agricultural Supplies Committee (ASC).
- Skelton, O.D. Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1925-1941.
- Taggart, J.G. (James) Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture, 1934-1944; WPTB Foods Administrator until 1943; Chair of the Bacon (Meat) Board.
- Taylor, Kenneth Academic and economist; Secretary of the WPTB, 1939-1943; Foods Administrator, 1943-1947; Chair of the WPTB, 1947-1951.

Towers, Graham	Governor of the Bank of Canada, 1934-1954.
Unwin, L.B.	Administrator of Consumer Rationing, WPTB.
White, Christine	Labour liaison for the WPTB's Consumer Branch.
Wickard, Claude	American Secretary of Agriculture, 1940-1945.

Chapter One

Introduction: Feeding the Hungry Allies

Even in peace time, one of the greatest assets any nation can have is a plentiful supply of food. In these critical days, its importance is multiplied many times because food is a munition of war. And it has no substitutes. Either you have it or you don't. Without it – planes and tanks and ships alone cannot win. The battle for food is being fought on every front – in every part of the world. Food abundance will help decide the outcome.¹

– Herbert H. Hannam, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, 1942

Introduction

The world wars of the twentieth century were invasive and profoundly disruptive events, forcing changes that went far beyond the front lines, extending into the everyday lives of civilians. Many of those changes had lasting effects. Writing in the early 1950s, legendary food writer M.F.K. Fisher declared that the Second World War had wrought a profound impact on how people approached their food. “There are very few men and women, I suspect, who cooked and marketed their way through the past war without losing forever some of the nonchalant extravagance of the twenties,” Fisher asserted. The deprivations of war, she believed, had taught renewed respect for the food people ate, and a greater understanding, perhaps, of the complex chain of events that led from seed to plate:

They will feel, until their final days on earth, a kind of culinary caution: butter, no matter how unlimited, is a precious substance not lightly to be wasted; meats, too, and eggs, and all the far-brought spices of the world, take on a new significance, having once been so rare. And that is good, for there can be no

¹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG28 I66, (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), vol. 131, file H.H. Hannam, Speeches, 1933 to 1942, “The Farmer Looks at Price Control: An Address on National Farm Radio Forum over CBC Network, June 1st, 1942, by H.H. Hannam, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture.”

more shameful carelessness than with the food we eat for life itself. When we exist without thought or thanksgiving we are not men, but beasts.²

Implicit to Fisher's reasoning is the fact that in a modern, urban-industrial society, the food we eat is easily taken for granted. As most of us live far from the sites of production and are thus alienated from the world of the farm and the field, it generally takes exceptional events such as economic dislocations, epidemics or wars to highlight the inherently fragile nature of the food system. In September 1939, Canadians who were once again contemplating the upheavals of war needed to look no further than recent history to furnish examples of a food system under duress. The First World War and the Great Depression provided vivid illustrations of what could happen when forces individuals could not control upset the quotidian. While the harsh lessons of both of these global crises were many, one of the harshest was that to lose sight of food's importance is to tempt destruction.

Fisher was reflecting upon the American experience, but her sentiments are equally applicable to Canadians who, in general, also entered the Second World War as an abundantly fed people. Much of the nation's prosperity had been founded on farming, and the bygone days of the 'wheat boom' still exerted a strong pull on imaginations. The days of agriculture's dominance within the domestic economy were numbered, and urbanization continued apace, but in 1939 the image of Canada as a land of agricultural richness still went a long way towards informing Canadians' perceptions of themselves and their nation. When Canada marched off to battle by Britain's side, it went as a food arsenal, as much, if not more, as one of men and munitions. The troops

² M.F.K. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf* (New York: North Point Press, 1988), pp. x-xi. Originally published in 1942, this quote comes from Fisher's introduction to the revised edition, published in 1954.

would garner the majority of headlines over the next five years, but ‘feeding the hungry allies’ from overstocked cupboards would also prove to be a major theme throughout the war and into the peace.

Keeping those cupboards stocked would rest upon the efforts of two disparate, yet interconnected, groups of Canadians: producers and consumers. Farmers, obviously, were called upon to raise as much of the ‘right food’ as possible, while consumers were asked to reduce or otherwise modify their usual modes of consumption for the conflict’s duration. As in the First World War, Britain once again found its food supply threatened, and once again Canadian food, thanks to increased production and consumer restraint, was a primary part of the war effort, helping to feed British civilians, Allied forces, and a domestic population made hungrier by the strains of war. After the war, Canadian food aid could very well help pave the way toward a lasting peace by supplying war-ravaged populations abroad, bridging the gap until Europe’s devastated agricultural sector could be rehabilitated. A low-key yet vital component, Canada’s food played a significant role in the war that has yet to receive its fair share of the scholarly spotlight. In a broad sense, this dissertation will consider the question of how food producers and food consumers – interlocking parts of Canada’s food system – coped with and responded to the exigencies of war in relation to the range of state policies that sought to maximize the amount of food available for export and domestic consumption.

Historically, food and war have always been inseparable; soldiers engaged in combat depend on strength and stamina, and need to be properly fed. The twentieth century, however, saw a fundamental shift in the character of warfare, a shift that

heightened the importance of food even further. As technology evolved, modern war became 'total war,' with entire societies being enveloped within its grip. The definition of 'enemy' was broadened to include civilians toiling away on the home front to supply the sinews of war, a group that also needed to be adequately provisioned to ensure health and efficiency. "Food," observed Dillon O'Leary of the *Hamilton Spectator*, "as well as ideology, determines the ability and willingness of a nation to fight."³ Despite the technological advances that allowed humans to kill each other in new and ever more terrifying ways, starvation remained a basic tactic of war, disrupting food supplies in an effort to weaken the enemy's physical and psychological resolve. A sustainer of life in peacetime, in modern war food quickly became a potent weapon.

Canadians had been made keenly aware of this fact during the First World War, when it became clear that maintaining the vigour of civilians might be the ultimate tipping point in achieving victory. To sustain the war effort, Canadian food was sent overseas in vast quantities, eventually necessitating a system of state-directed 'food control.'⁴ In 1917, William J. Hanna, a relatively obscure provincial politician from Sarnia, Ontario, vaulted onto the national stage when, after accepting the federal office of Food Controller, he was entrusted with the hefty task of managing Canada's food supply. Unfortunately, the energetic and eager Hanna was not given the powers commensurate with carrying out such a responsibility, and was forced to rely largely on exhortation and propaganda to get Canadians to produce more and consume less. Since the most pressing domestic issue of the day (aside from the conscription debate) was the

³ Canadian War Museum (CWM), "Canada to Supply the Food," *Hamilton Spectator*, April 15, 1940, in *Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War* (hereafter cited as CWM).

⁴ William J. Hanna, *Report of the Food Controller* (Ottawa, 1918); *Report of the Canada Food Board* (Ottawa, 1919).

skyrocketing cost of living caused by the Borden government's inability to control inflationary tendencies, Hanna was assailed by a Canadian public labouring under the misapprehension that his job was to bring food prices down. They did not come down, and Hanna resigned under a cloud of fierce public criticism. He was replaced by the Canada Food Board, a larger and more powerful body. Under the Food Board, the regulations governing food multiplied, and their nature moved from largely voluntary to compulsory. This body did not have much time to operate, and in 1919 Canada's first foray into wartime food control came to an end. The experiment did, however, provide the authorities with an important precedent, one to which they could turn when another global conflict threatened Canada's food supply. The First World War experience also supplied ordinary Canadians with a frame of reference to which they too would turn in future. Living in a nation where food was plentiful and mainly untouched by government regulation, this was the first time that Canadians were subjected to state intervention of this type. Never before had the government taken such an interest in the food people ate, and when the Second World War erupted, Canadians knew full well that the impact of war would eventually reach into every home, and indeed into every kitchen.

But how useful would those lessons of the past prove? The parameters of the two wars were, on the surface at least, broadly similar. There was little reason to doubt that food would once again be a central factor in determining the outcome. But while the contours seemed almost identical, history never repeats itself in the detail. In the First World War, for example, the threat to the British food supply had come in the form of the U-boat, but the Germans had only embarked upon unrestricted submarine warfare

in early 1917. In 1939, it was highly unlikely that Germany would wait very long before launching attacks on the ships bearing vital provisions. Britain, too, would engage in tactics designed to disrupt the German food supply. Canadian agriculture had possessed unfulfilled potential in 1914; the agricultural frontier, while filling up fast, had room to expand. The foods that Canada was asked to contribute to the war effort – wheat and pork – were already being produced and exported in significant quantities, so farmers were well placed to respond to British demands for ‘more of the same.’ When war again broke out, Canadian agriculture – already, by virtue of climate, confined to a relatively small portion of the nation’s total landmass – had reached its spatial limits; any growth would have to come from increased yields. Most importantly, in 1939 Canadian farmers were still recovering from the ravages of the Great Depression – would they, possessing large debt loads and second-rate equipment, be in a position to produce the extra food needed to support the war effort? And what, exactly, would that food be? What place would Canadian agriculture occupy in British food plans? The questions were many, but another key lesson farmers had learned was that war could offer financial opportunities. This may not have been uppermost in farmers’ minds, but coming out of the devastating economic conditions of the 1930s, producers could be forgiven if the thought of profits sometimes reinforced their patriotism.

Farmers were not the only ones with questions and concerns. On the other end of the food chain, the memory of the wartime inflation that had gripped Canada during and after the First World War was strong; would the government be able (or willing) to control food prices this time around? How would supplies of various foods be affected, especially of imported commodities? Would another food controller or food board be

appointed? If so, would they be armed with the powers necessary to effectively manage both the distribution and price of food? What kinds of regulations would they employ, and how would they be enforced? During the First World War, Robert Borden's government was reluctant to overturn the sacred notions of *laissez-faire* by intervening in the economy to any great extent. By the time the Second World War broke out, while the state's ultimate objective was virtually the same – to produce enough food to meet wartime demands without adversely affecting diets or morale on the Canadian home front – it was accepted that high inflation could not be tolerated. Managing the war effort had to be a state-directed enterprise, one that entailed sweeping, albeit temporary, modifications to the classic liberal-democratic values upon which Canadian society was based. In order to facilitate this process, the state employed various regulatory controls at both the macro- and microeconomic level.

By any objective standard, those controls were a success. During the war Canada's food exports to Britain increased dramatically, and farm incomes, after a slow start, climbed as well. Adequate diets on both sides of the Atlantic were maintained, and in some cases, improved, while extensive controls kept Canadian food prices from soaring. Still, the regulations put into place to direct the food supply, while successful, were not perfect, and as this dissertation will demonstrate, provoked no small amount of criticism from a public struggling to re-conceptualize food as a weapon of war. Far from the battlefield yet confronted with countless reminders that Canada was indeed at war, the conflict was simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, a fact that might go a long way towards explaining the somewhat contradictory attitudes that Canadians displayed when it came to food and wartime food policy.

Directing the wartime food supply entailed considerable compromise between the main groups that made up the food system in Canada. Farmers had to alter their agricultural objectives and in some cases practices, while consumers had to tailor their expectations and their eating habits to fit the fluctuating circumstances of a world at war. Producers had to accept lower prices in exchange for guaranteed markets, while consumers enjoyed stable prices but faced reduced supply and consumption restrictions. Both groups accepted the general thrust of the policies governing food, but both were willing to demonstrate their unhappiness with any move that seemed to favour one set of interests over theirs. Food production and food consumption are, in economic terms, flatly incompatible. A higher price for farmers generally means a higher price for consumers, a situation that led the inflation-shy Canadian government to favour food buyers over food producers. One result of this was the emergence of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) as a strong campaigner for the nation's farm interests. Coming out of the Depression, wartime farmers pressed hard for fair prices, clear government guidelines, a seat at the policy-making table, and, perhaps most of all, respect for agriculture as a both a key cog in the war machine and as a fundamental part of Canadian society. Indeed, the war years coincided with what historian Ian MacPherson has identified as the transition period from an ideologically-based agrarian protest movement to an economically-oriented farm lobby.⁵ The wartime efforts of the CFA proved beneficial, undoubtedly playing a part in the establishment of a wide range of subventions and other financial inducements paid out by the state in order to stimulate production and make up for lower prices.

⁵ Ian MacPherson, "An Authoritative Voice: The Reorientation of the Canadian Farmers' Movement, 1935 to 1945," *Historical Papers* (1979): 164-181.

In the main, Canadians within the food system were able to merge their own self-interest with broader collective concerns, while openly and tacitly negotiating the limits of their ‘sacrifice’ with a state that was ever mindful of the damaging political impact of a disenchanting citizenry. The government was not going to allow public opinion to dictate wartime policy, but the importance of that opinion to what was, after all, a government dependent on the support of the electorate, is clearly discernable in the evolution of wartime food and farm policy. It was, ultimately, the state’s task to forge a course through this minefield of contending factions, so that Canada’s bigger wartime objectives could be realized.

Structure, Objectives, and Methodology

The goal of this dissertation is to examine a segment of Canada’s Second World War experience that has not benefited from extensive historical study. It will approach the production, distribution and consumption of food in Canada during the war as an integrated whole, in a manner similar to that suggested by historian Peter Coclanis. In addressing the decline of agricultural history as a field of study, Coclanis argues that part of the reason for this is methodological – a lack of innovation in how historians approach the topic. Instead of continuing to apply the same old lines of attack, Coclanis advocates a “food system” approach which looks at “all activities involved directly or indirectly in the production, storage, processing, financing, distribution, consumption, and final disposition of outputs produced in the ‘farm’ sector per se.”⁶ Given the scope of this study, it is impossible to be as detailed as Coclanis suggests; however, what this dissertation will do is consider the food system from the perspective of three main

participants: farmers, consumers, and the government. A fourth category, that of the ‘middlemen’ who processed and/or distributed the food, will also be considered as needed.

A study of this nature serves to broaden our understanding of the war on the home front. The willingness shown by farmers, dealers and consumers to take issue with the government’s handling of the wartime food supply is intriguing, and exploring this subject in depth can help conceptualize the war as a ‘lived experience.’ As scholars such as Angus Calder, Donald Thomas, Paul Fussell, and, in Canada, Jeffrey Keshen remind us, the reality of civilian life during war is complex.⁷ When it came to food, farmers and consumers were not as tractable as popular notions of the home front would have us believe; they remained vigilant in pursuing their group interests. The major question driving this investigation centres on the extent to which Canadians tailored their needs and conduct in order to make them compatible with expected wartime modes of behaviour, and it pivots on the relationship that Canadians – as farmers and food consumers – had with the government.

Another impression that needs some correction is the image of the home front as primarily urban and industrial. When it comes to war, it is as though rural issues, to co-opt a phrase from R.W. Sandwell, are “rendered invisible by the obsessive modern gaze on the city.”⁸ Too frequently ignored by historians is the fact that the wartime bustle

⁶ Peter Coclanis, “Breaking New Ground: From the History of Agriculture to the History of Food Systems,” *Historical Methods*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Winter 2005), p. 5.

⁷ See Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain, 1935-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969); Donald Thomas, *The Enemy Within: Hucksters, Racketeers, Deserters & Civilians During the Second World War* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

⁸ R.W. Sandwell, “Introduction,” in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), p. 5.

went on in rural areas as well as farmers worked frantically to fill wartime food demands while facing serious shortages of both labour and equipment. In addition, the war, as David Smith has alluded, “aggravated the contrast between farming and non-farming sectors of the economy.”⁹ The wartime divisions between Canada’s two founding European cultures are well-known, but the tensions that arose between rural producer and urban consumer, as exemplified in the struggle that underlay Canada’s economic controls, need to be addressed. The years of armed conflict completed Canada’s shift from a mainly rural agricultural society to that of urban-industrial modernity. Once the dominant economic sector, after the Second World War agriculture no longer occupied that position. In the postwar years, the trend toward fewer, yet larger, more mechanized and more specialized farms continued, the rural population continued to decrease, and the gap between town and country continued to widen.

The primary sources upon which this work is based are located mainly at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and include a broad range of government documents from the Department of Agriculture, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, the Wartime Information Board, the William Lyon Mackenzie King papers, the Privy Council, the Department of External Affairs, the Department of Labour, and others. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture fonds proved extremely valuable in tracing the emerging wartime relationship between the group and the federal government. Another major source was contemporary media, such as newspapers, periodicals, and trade publications. While most of the press reports used in this study were also accessed at

⁹ David E. Smith, “James G. Gardiner: Political Leadership in the Agrarian Community,” *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Spring 1987), p. 52.

LAC, some of the newspaper articles were gleaned from the Canadian War Museum's excellent and extensive digitized collection of press clippings derived from the *Hamilton Spectator* archives, "Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War."

While this study is not about *how* the press covered food and farm issues during the war, one of the major themes within the thesis concerns civilians receiving and reacting to information pertaining to a vital part of their daily lives – the food supply. A main objective, in other words, was to try and capture the *zeitgeist* that surrounded food during the war; to unearth the attitudes of Canadians towards the policies that shaped their livelihoods as producers and their habits as consumers. It is true that wartime media was subject to the informal protocols of patriotism and the formal strictures of 'information management,' but press sources, if used judiciously, reflect to a surprising degree the responses that greeted each new twist and turn in the wartime food story. Newspapers, in offering a glimpse as to what was considered 'important' in the public discourse of the time, can give us a sense of how various political and social-economic classes reacted to food policy. The *Globe and Mail* was employed as Canada's 'national paper of record,' but many other papers and periodicals, espousing a cross-section of ideological viewpoints, were also consulted. Papers from across Canada, ranging from small-town weeklies to large urban dailies, were sampled to provide regional balance. In addition, the dissertation includes a number of illustrations, advertisements, editorial cartoons and visual propaganda, all providing important contextual information that can help us determine the 'frame' through which Canadians on the home front approached issues surrounding food and war.

This study unfolds chronologically, except for Chapter Two which outlines the topic's historiographical framework, situating it within the broader scholarly contexts of Canada and the Second World War, the history of Canadian agriculture and farm movements, and the history of food as a consumer commodity. Relevant international literature will also be discussed as this is a rich field that can help inform our understanding of the Canadian experience of food and war. Chapter Three deals with agriculture during the early period of the war, a time of uncertainty and growing unrest among Canadian farmers. Farmer expectations on the outbreak of war are examined, as are the messages they received from the state, both explicit and implicit, about their role in the conflict. As the chapter demonstrates, the unrest was connected to the fact that the government went into the war without adequate food plans and without having a clear sense of what the British would require in the event of war. When war did break out, the authorities in charge of marketing Canadian food abroad experienced difficulty in getting the British to 'buy Canadian,' be it wheat, pork or fruit. Tensions between farmers and the state were further exacerbated by the manpower problems that began to appear on Canadian farms, an issue that would prove contentious throughout the war. The upshot of this friction between farmers and the state was greater influence for organized agriculture, as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, under its lead spokesman Herbert H. Hannam, took on a national leadership role in lobbying the government for increased farmer participation in formulating wartime agricultural policy.

Chapter Four, beginning with the outbreak of war and moving to 1942's end, shifts the focus from farmers to consumers, examining the effects of the first half of the

war on food buying, selling, and consumption. Taking as its starting point the panicky early days of the war which saw the first of several food hoarding drives, the chapter also considers the role of the state in reconfiguring the manner in which Canadians approached their food. While the Canadian diet was never substantially threatened, several commodities became scarce, eventually forcing the state to intervene. The chapter traces the early wartime evolution of food control and regulation through the mechanisms of the WPTB. During this period, voluntary or 'honour' rationing was applied to food for the first time, and debates quickly arose as to the appropriateness of this policy. Unlike those who believed that compulsory rationing would be more equitable, the government hoped that moral suasion would be enough to curb consumption. These hopes proved to be in vain, and as supply difficulties worsened, coupon rationing was introduced. As in other belligerent nations, black markets soon emerged, ready to fill the wants and needs of Canadians who had more money to spend, and less to (legally) spend it on. Nutrition took centre stage in a way Canadians had never seen, with state-sponsored initiatives designed to improve the dietary health of the home front. Paying attention to the food they ate became an important task for every civilian, faced with rationing, shortages, and the physical and psychological demands of the war effort.

Chapter Five returns to agriculture, and picks up the themes begun in chapter two, following them up to the beginning of 1945. During this period farmers continued, through their spokespeople, to agitate for fairer prices, more help for their farms, and a larger say in agricultural policy decisions. Dissatisfaction with the way agriculture was being handled at the federal level, along with serious friction between the Department of

Agriculture and the WPTB, resulted in a jurisdictional reorganization in 1943, a move that brought Herbert Hannam and the CFA to the policy-making table. The farm fight for a stronger voice was paralleled, somewhat ironically, by a concurrent campaign on the part of the Canadian government for a greater say in inter-Allied food policy, which it too realized by gaining a seat on the Combined Food Board (CFB). As the latter war period unfolded, thoughts began to turn toward peacetime, with farmers expressing hope that the plethora of programs and subsidies that had been built up would not simply disappear, but perhaps be transformed into a permanent feature of Canadian agriculture. Chapter Six covers the consumer experience from 1943 to 1945, examining Canada's so-called 'era of shortages.' While the food sacrifices the war entailed on Canadians were not large, this period was arguably the most difficult. Meat, a significant part of the Canadian diet and the foodstuff that caused the most headaches for all involved, was rationed for the first time. As the war dragged on and as the state endeavoured to move as much food as possible overseas, civilians were encouraged to produce their own food as through the cultivation of Victory Gardens. The emphasis on nutrition expanded and despite constraints the average Canadian enjoyed a better diet than they had before the war.

Chapter Seven considers Canada's food system in the immediate postwar era. The end of the war removed many of the imperatives the government had employed to ensure support and compliance in matters relating to food regulation. But for all that, the core message of 'feeding the hungry allies' remained; only now the motives for doing so were less immediate. The problems of regulating food consumption during peacetime became clear in the debate over meat rationing. In the wake of mass hunger

overseas, the re-imposition of meat rationing was hampered by weary dealers, wary farmers, and unenthusiastic consumers. The period was marked by the same dualism that was seen during the war as many Canadians participated in campaigns to help those in need by donating food, ration coupons, and money, while at the same time continued government food regulation was questioned by various groups until it finally came to an end in 1947. The peacetime sentiments of farmers were also mixed. Thanks to the CFA, farmers secured a voice in agricultural policy-making. Out west, however, members of more radical farm organizations remained unsatisfied and, as did many other occupational groups, took to the picket lines to protest. Meanwhile, as Britain struggled to pull itself out of the morass of war, it became clear that the disposition of Canada's food exports would be significantly altered in the postwar years, with the lure of American markets looming ever stronger. Chapter Eight offers some conclusions about Canada's food system during the Second World War, putting the experience in a wider perspective, and attempting to disentangle the somewhat nebulous legacy left by the war on food production and consumption.

Chapter Two

A Fertile but Fallow Field: Studying Canadian Food in Wartime

Armies travel on their stomachs, to be sure, as Napoleon ruefully learned in his Russian campaign, but the need for food, for condiments to flavor or preserve it; for access to crops and to markets has always driven history, politics, and economics.¹

– Albert Sonnenfeld, from his preface to *Food: A Culinary History*, 2000

Introduction

The Second World War formed a significant watershed in Canada's national experience. In Canadian historiography, however, military aspects still overshadow the war on the home front, an unfortunate state of affairs given that civilian participation was crucial, in many ways, to Allied success. The battlefield depended on the efforts of civilians to produce the materials of war, and Canada's food contributions were central to the war effort. Physical health and morale, on both sides of the Atlantic, rested upon the effective management of Canadian food supplies. Yet this remains an underappreciated reality; with a few notable exceptions, Canadian historians have not turned their sights to this critical part of the nation's war experience.

The neglect is puzzling, as food factored into the outcome of the war in the most elemental of ways. It kept bellies full, minds alert, and psyches attuned to the necessities of victory. In addition, Canadians have a seemingly endless appetite for books about the Second World War if the crowded military history shelves in bookstores and libraries are any indication. The majority of this work, both popular and

¹Albert Sonnenfeld, "Preface," in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Penguin, 2000), p. xvi.

academic, tends to focus on rather more exalted topics: on battles, tactics, dramatic stories of heroes and villains, the 'guts and glory' side of the war. Even the political drama of the King government has received its share of attention. But this neglect of food is unsurprising when viewed as part of a wider trend; in Second World War scholarship the home front is generally less well served than the battle front, although this is changing. Another factor that must be taken into account is that the management of Canada's wartime food supply, whether in the form of production, distribution, or consumption, was a success. Had Canadian farmers failed to keep up with wartime demand, had the price ceiling or rationing policies put in place by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) failed, or had the Canadian diet suffered as a result of the war, this topic would no doubt have been the subject of numerous academic tomes.

Another reason for the lack of scholarship in the area of wartime food supply, perhaps, is that the general history of food and agriculture in Canada is, in relative terms, an underdeveloped field. It is true that more Canadians now live in cities than in the countryside, but considering the importance of agriculture in the nation's history, the relative paucity of material, especially on 20th century agriculture, is hard to understand. Nor has the Canadian diet been studied to any significant extent. Very little investigation has been done on the subject of what Canadians eat and how this has changed over time. The recently published *Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, for example, does not contain any entries for 'food' or 'diet.' Internationally, however, the history of food is a thriving sub-discipline, and in recent years some interest in the development of the Canadian diet has finally begun to emerge.² When taken together,

² In 2006, the annual conference of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada centered on the theme of Canadian food habits, and in February 2007 the Institute's journal *Canadian Issues* published a selection

the relative neglect of the home front, assumptions about the ‘success’ of wartime food policy, the underdevelopment of agricultural history, and the still-unrealized potential of food as a category of historical analysis in Canada, all help to explain the lack of attention paid to the nation’s wartime food experience.

This is not to say that there is a complete dearth of literature on this topic. Besides the ‘classic’ work on wartime agriculture, George Britnell and V.C. Fowke’s *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950*, a number of scholars have addressed issues pertinent to the food system and the Second World War. But while this existing scholarship cuts across several disciplines there is no synthesis, and certainly no work that addresses the food system as a whole, from field to fork. This chapter’s main objective is to make sense of the widely scattered literature that addresses themes relevant to Canada’s food and the Second World War. It will look at how historians of the war have treated food and agriculture and, conversely, how scholars of food and agriculture have approached Canada’s war experience. Finally, an array of international literature dealing with the same general themes will be examined. The work that has been done on the wartime food experiences of other nations furnishes rich theoretical and methodological models that could be applied to Canada. Focusing on work from each of these categories, it is hoped, will introduce some of the broader issues that confronted producers and consumers of food during the war.

of essays from the conference. See also the Classic Canadian Cookbook series published by Whitecap Books, Elizabeth Driver’s *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), or Dorothy Duncan’s *Canadians at Table: Food, Fellowship, and Folklore: A Culinary History of Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2006).

A Fertile Beginning: The 'Saskatchewan School' and Wartime Agriculture

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the natural tendency of governments and scholars was to 'document' the event. Thus, official and quasi-official histories were compiled, taking as their focus various aspects of the war.³ Given the important role that food supply had played in the conflict, it would have been surprising if agriculture had not come under this type of postwar scrutiny. The first wave of scholarship to address the topic fell under this rubric, if somewhat loosely.

Appropriately it emerged from the province known as 'Canada's Breadbasket,' as scholars associated with the University of Saskatchewan were the forerunners in this field. Understandably, their work reflects the dominant focus of Canadian history at the time, namely political economy.⁴ The first sustained and analytical study was Charles M. Chesney's 1952 Master's thesis, "Wartime Agricultural Policy in Canada."⁵

Working under the guidance of noted economic historians George Britnell and V.C.

³ In the military realm, Tim Cook has examined the impact that these 'official histories' had on interpretations of Canada's war experience. See his *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

⁴ A wide range of work on topics relating to agriculture, food, and price controls (and almost exclusively the work of political economists), had also appeared during the war. Some of the key articles include: John D. Black, "The Effect of the War on Agriculture," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (January 1940): 54-60; George Britnell, "The War and Canadian Wheat," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (August 1941): 397-413; A.F.W. Plumtre, "Price and Wage Control in Canada," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (May 1942): 23-34; J.F. Booth, "The Economic Problems of Canadian Agriculture in the War and Post-War Period," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (August 1942): 446-459; H.S. Patton, "Wartime Wheat Policy in Canada," *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (November 1942): 772-791; J. Coke, "Farm Labour Situation in Canada," *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (February 1943): 287-294; G.V. Haythorne, "Agricultural Man-Power," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (August 1943): 366-383; Frank Shefrin, "Administration of Canadian Wartime Agricultural Policies," *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May 1945): 167-180; and V.C. Fowke, "Economic Effects of the War on the Prairie Economy," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (August 1945): 373-387.

⁵ Charles M. Chesney, "Wartime Agricultural Policy in Canada: An Analysis of Agricultural Adjustment to Wartime Demand with Particular Reference to State Intervention and Control in the Second World War," M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1952.

Fowke, Chesney adhered to the historiographical paradigm of the day. The questions he asked focused on the impact that the war had had on Canada's agricultural economy, with specific reference to economic conditions within the sector, broad structural changes, the orientation of wartime exports, and the stewardship of the state in managing the upheaval. Given that the war had ended less than a decade earlier, Chesney was fortunate in that he was able to use the then-unpublished work of Francis Hedley Auld, Chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan. Auld had produced a detailed overview entitled *Canadian Agriculture and World War II: A History of the Wartime Activities of the Canadian Department of Agriculture and its Wartime Boards and Agencies*, a report commissioned by the federal Department of Agriculture that would appear in 1953.

Auld, an agrologist, was well-placed to complete such a task, having served as Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan from 1916 to 1946. Looking at agricultural output on a commodity-by-commodity basis, *Canadian Agriculture in World War II* is a highly descriptive account. Its nature is easily discerned from the author's stated purpose to "show what was accomplished and to show the production partnership in which so many agencies were associated in high achievement."⁶ The overriding emphasis of Auld's report is on the successes of Canadian agriculture during the war. He does not omit mention of the obstacles encountered, but they only serve to magnify the achievements. Regarding agricultural officials' sometimes difficult relations with the WPTB, Auld does fault the Board for not paying attention to "the galaxy of expert advisors" that "should have enabled the Prices Board to steer a course

⁶ Francis Hedley Auld, *Canadian Agriculture and World War II: A History of the Wartime Activities of the Canadian Department of Agriculture and its Wartime Boards and Agencies* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1953).

safely between the difficulties of supply and price control.”⁷ Auld, however, glosses over the conflicts that marked agriculture’s relationship with the WPTB. The rising tensions and ongoing quarrels between the officials charged with keeping prices stable and those who sought fair profits for farmers are hardly addressed. Of particular interest is the fact that Auld includes a chapter on the policies of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). The wartime interplay between the CFA and the government is briefly traced, supporting the conclusion that the war served to improve the relationship between those who constructed agricultural policy and the farm advocates who sought to influence their decisions. This is noteworthy, as subsequent work on agriculture and the war would, in general, not take this process into account.

Chesney and Auld carved the subject’s contours, but it would be up to Britnell and Fowke, key members of what Robin Neill has termed the “Saskatchewan school” of economic history to provide a detailed, critical analysis of Canada’s wartime food contributions.⁸ Both scholars were well qualified. Fowke was already one of Canada’s foremost historians of the agricultural economy, having written such seminal works as *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (1946) and *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (1957). Britnell, author of *The Wheat Economy* (1939), served as head of the University of Saskatchewan’s Department of Economics and Political Science from 1938 to 1961 and during the war had worked for the WPTB as an

⁷ Ibid, p. 136.

⁸ Robin Neill, “Economic Historiography in the 1950s: The Saskatchewan School,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Fall 1999): 243-260. See also Shirley Spafford, *No Ordinary Academics: Economics and Political Science at the University of Saskatchewan, 1910-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

economic adviser.⁹ He was also a member of the Canadian delegation to the United Nations conference at Hot Springs, Virginia, out of which the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was formed. The two colleagues joined together to produce *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (1962), an exhaustive account of the war's impact on the farm sector, and the policies adopted by the state to cope with the demands of war. The work was part of an ambitious series entitled "Studies on Food, Agriculture, and World War II" published by Stanford University's Food Research Institute between 1951 and 1962.¹⁰ Unlike Auld's work, Britnell and Fowke did not undertake their project at the behest of the Canadian government, but the great measure of bureaucratic cooperation upon which the authors depended for access to the relevant documents infuses the book with an unmistakable whiff of 'official history.'

'Definitive' histories are rare, but *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace* comes perilously close, a point made in several reviews of the publication.¹¹ Indeed,

⁹ V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946); *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957); George Britnell, *The Wheat Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939).

¹⁰ George Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962). Stanford University's Food Research Institute was established in 1921, in the wake of the First World War. The war had served to highlight the importance of food policy, and the founders of the Institute (who included American director of food relief and future President Herbert Hoover) believed that this should be carried over into peacetime and be fostered through scientific study. Other books in the "Studies on Food, Agriculture, and World War II" series include: Vernon D. Wickizer, *Coffee, Tea, and Cocoa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951); Bruce F. Johnston, *Japanese Food Management in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953); Sir John Grenfell Crawford, *Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand, 1939-50* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954); James Madison Tinley, *South African Food and Agriculture in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954); R.J. Hammond, *Food and Agriculture in Britain, 1939-45: Aspects of Wartime Control* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954); Sir Henry Knight, *Food Administration in India, 1939-47* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954); E.M.H. Lloyd, *Food and Inflation in the Middle East, 1940-45* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956); Sir Eric Roll, *The Combined Food Board: A Study in Wartime International Planning* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956); Vladimir P. Timoshenko, *The World's Sugar: Progress and Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957); Mirko Lamer, *The World Fertilizer Economy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

¹¹ John J. Madden, "Review: *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950*," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 1963), p. 93; David L. MacFarlane, "Review: *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950*," *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (February 1963), p. 229.

one reviewer argued that Britnell and Fowke's study was so thorough that it was "unlikely that the subject will ever have to be done again."¹² In a sense this is true. Their painstaking reconstruction of policy decisions, their careful analysis, commodity by commodity, of the impact of war remains a valuable resource, and this work does not have to be duplicated. Some of the work's comprehensiveness may stem from the fact that the authors did not confine themselves to the war years. Both Britnell and Fowke had been influenced by Harold Innis, to whom the book is dedicated, and vestiges of Innis' methodology remain in how they approached their subject. Rather than study the effects of the war in isolation, the authors situated the period within the wider swath of Canadian agricultural and economic history, and drew conclusions in light of these broader patterns. The first scholars to provide an in-depth, broad-based study of Canadian agriculture during the Second World War offer enough evidence to suggest that while agricultural conditions improved, the gains made by farmers during the war years were perhaps less than they might have been due to several interlocking factors. First, Canada's staggering wheat surplus at the war's start caused the King government to impose acreage reduction policies. Canada managed to have enough wheat to help fill postwar demand only because in 1944 farmers went against government guidelines and increased the amount of wheat acreage by six million acres.¹³ Second, while the price of farm products were allowed to advance, carefully, during the first two years of war, the price control system imposed to keep a lid on inflation after December 1941 placed, perforce, a ceiling on what farmers could charge for their products. Finally, the farm labour shortage was severe enough to have a deleterious effect on productivity.

¹² Robert L. Jones, "Review: *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950*," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (April 1963), p. 116.

¹³ Britnell and Fowke, p. 217.

While subsidies and other economic incentives were employed to stimulate the production of needed foodstuffs, farm profits were held back in order to benefit the economy as a whole. Government agricultural policy was certainly not a failure, but it succeeded despite serious obstacles that undoubtedly hampered production.

In a manner similar to those works produced by Chesney and Auld, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace* is very much a product of its time, a work of political economy that only occasionally peeks behind the veil of numbers to consider the human dimensions. Social and cultural history may now be common approaches, but in 1962 the revolution that would rise to complement the ‘old’ history had yet to take place. One area that Britnell and Fowke largely ignore is the role played by farmers themselves in shaping wartime agricultural policy. The CFA makes only a few brief appearances in their massive work, and they said little about the relations between farmers, their advocates, and the state. Occasional references *are* made to the actions of farmers in influencing policy, but despite their work’s sweeping nature, Britnell and Fowke do not offer any assessment of their role nor of the battles they fought on the political front. Consumers and their needs are also not considered to any great degree, something the authors admit to in their preface, noting that “dietary considerations” were “subordinated to the analysis of agricultural supply.”¹⁴ The authors do devote a chapter to the management of the domestic food supply, though, in keeping with the overall tone of the book, it is mainly an outline of policy and the various factors that went into its formulation. It is very much history from the ‘rationers’ perspective, not that of the ‘rationees.’ Britnell and Fowke were, however, writing very soon after the events had taken place, and their approach, as well as their results, reflects that immediacy.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. vii.

Despite the commanding nature of Britnell and Fowke's work, there is a need to revisit the topic. Since Britnell and Fowke's study first appeared, Canadian historiography has undergone a dramatic transformation. The approach taken by these two scholars was fitting given their interests, backgrounds, and the time in which they wrote. But there was another, no less crucial side to the food question, one that cannot be arrived at through statistical tables and minute descriptions of bacon agreements. For example, while rationing and other controls are dealt with in passing, no attempts are made to probe the consumer viewpoint. How did farmers respond to the policies affecting their livelihood? What role did the farm lobby play during the war? What was it *actually like* to be on the consumer end of food control? How compliant were consumers when it came to food regulations? How pronounced was the rural/urban divide in the realm of food? And what methods went into changing the culture of food consumption in Canada? The present study will delve into these unasked questions.

The Sinews of War? Food and Agriculture in Second World War Historiography

To call the studies that came out of Saskatchewan the 'first wave' of scholarship on the subject is somewhat disingenuous for there were really no subsequent 'waves' of which to speak. Whether the subject simply held few attractions for historians in succeeding decades, or whether the definitiveness of Britnell and Fowke left little to say, is difficult to judge. Since then only a few scholars have seriously considered issues surrounding Canadian food and the Second World War, mostly on a regional basis. This is a glaring omission when contrasted with the mass of material produced on other aspects of Canada's wartime experience, and is compounded by the fact that in the decades after

Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace appeared, historians broadened their view of the war to encompass more than the battlefield. Indeed, in the years since the Second World War, the conflict's impact on Canada has been filtered through the lenses of countless historians, each seeking to squeeze new meaning out of the war experience, and the issue of food fits rather snugly into this much broader interpretive structure. But while subjects pertinent to the domestic side of the war have become far more common, food and farmers still remain largely fallow subjects for historians of the war.

In 1970, C.P. Stacey's authoritative *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* provided a sweeping examination of Canada's war effort, through the prism of domestic politics and foreign policy. Despite this, Stacey's bias remains largely military; the food question does not form an explicit part of his analysis. Stacey briefly addresses Canada's struggle to gain a seat on the Combined Food Board (CFB), within a broader discussion of Canada's role in inter-Allied planning, and he also devotes some space to the farm labour shortage, describing some of the programs that employed soldiers as emergency farm help. In 1975, J.L. Granatstein shifted the focus with his book *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government*. As his subtitle suggests, the work traces the political factors involved in the conduct of the war, and posits that Canada's participation allowed it to fully mature as an independent nation. Like Stacey, Granatstein does not examine the food question in any sustained manner, though the subject does make brief appearances in the expected places, such as his discussions of trade with Britain, economic controls, and the quest for a CFB seat. Other topics such as rationing and farm labour are not considered. Later, Granatstein and co-author Desmond Morton put

a popular spin on Canada's war experience in *A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War, 1939-1945* (1989). Much of the work deals with subjects of a military nature, but the authors do pay some attention to the home front. Issues related to food and agriculture, such as the farm labour shortage, rationing, and Canadian participation on the CFB are dealt with only in passing.¹⁵

As the years progressed, other historians offered fuller explorations of the home front, probing the daily concerns and routines of civilians, analyzing the fundamental ways in which the war altered the lives of those who did not don a uniform. The inspiration for this can be traced to 1969, when the landmark corrective to the 'mythical version of the war,' as it pertained, at least, to the British experience, appeared. Angus Calder's *The People's War: Britain, 1939-1945* emerged in an era of new concerns, new questions, and new histories, detonating many a cherished notion.¹⁶ Gone was the comfortable but increasingly unsatisfying version of British wartime solidarity, as Calder instead posited the radical notion that perhaps not all the sacrifice had been 'equal.' 'Fair shares for all' had really been 'more than fair shares for some,' and that maybe, just maybe, the reality of the war had been more nuanced and less monolithic than the standard accounts would have us believe. Calder's version of the home front included class division, the underground economy, labour unrest, social tension, and dogged self-interest, all the while preserving the essential dignity of the British people and their undoubtedly courageous efforts to repel fascism.

¹⁵ C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970); J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975); J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989).

¹⁶ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 1992).

While Calder's work was influential, it was several decades before Canada's 'mythic version' was seriously challenged by historians. In 2004, historian Jeffrey Keshen published *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War*, in which the author demonstrates the profound impact that the war had on all levels of Canadian society.¹⁷ Following in Calder's footsteps, Keshen countered the popular and rather superficial view of civilians, arguing that the war at home had a darker side – not everyone put the collective good ahead of personal gain or comfort. In the realm of food consumption this included everything from hoarding to ration infractions to buying on the black market, activities that the government, through the WPTB, tried to combat. Calder's version of the war was not whitewashed; part of its genius lies in the fact that he presented the seamier aspects of home front existence without any accompanying loss of respect for those who did fight 'a people's,' if not 'the people's' war.' This is exactly what Keshen accomplished for the Canadian home front. In painting a complex picture of civilian behaviour, these scholars forged an historical interpretation that more accurately reflects the reality of life on the home front.

Narrower studies focusing on rationing, price controls, or consumption in wartime are few. Controlling food prices and supply was the task of the aforementioned WPTB, a body that has been the subject, either wholly or in part, of only a handful of studies. Donald Gordon, who as chairman of the WPTB held considerable sway over Canadian food consumption, was the subject of Joseph Schull's *The Great Scot: A*

¹⁷ Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2004). See also Keshen's article: "One for All or All for One: Government Controls, Black Marketing and the Limits of Patriotism, 1939-1947," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter 1994): 111-143.

Biography of Donald Gordon (1979).¹⁸ The chapters that deal with Gordon's wartime experiences offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the complex world of price and supply controls. Schull also provides some insight into the conflict that erupted between Gordon and Minister of Agriculture James Gardiner, King's Saskatchewan 'lieutenant' who was charged with steering farm policy during the war.¹⁹ The promoters of different, at times flatly incompatible goals, the clashes between the two were aggravated by their stubborn and fiery personalities. Their battles were frequent, voluble, and to King's chagrin, at times dragged into the public view. Scholars have not completely ignored the bureaucratic behemoth that Gordon oversaw. The most comprehensive work on the WPTB remains Christopher Waddell's 1981 Ph.D. dissertation, "The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War II."²⁰ Waddell's expansive analysis of the Board does not ignore food and farm questions. Obviously, the author details the rationing of food products, but he also devotes a gratifying amount of space to the tempestuous relationship between the WPTB, the Department of Agriculture, and farmers.

But what of those whose lives were affected by the regulations handed down by Gordon and the WPTB? What was the role of the 'citizen-consumer' in the war? Mirroring an international trend, in recent years the consumer has become an

¹⁸ Joseph Schull, *The Great Scot: A Biography of Donald Gordon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

¹⁹ Similar problems arose in the United States. See Barton J. Bernstein, "Clash of Interests: The Postwar Battle Between the Office of Price Administration and the Department of Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 1967): 45-57.

²⁰ Christopher Robb Waddell, "The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War II," Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, 1981. Other key works dealing with the WPTB include Ken Taylor, "Canadian War-Time Price Controls, 1941-46," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 1947): 81-98; Pauline Jewett, "The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: A Case Study in Canadian Public Administration," Ph.D. Dissertation, Radcliffe, 1950.

increasingly popular focus of historical inquiry in Canada.²¹ The war years have, so far at least, proven less attractive than the postwar period, which saw Canadians expend their pent-up purchasing power.²² Magda Fahrni's recent work, however, posits that a rise in postwar consumer awareness was a direct result of the wartime experience.²³ That experience led many of the women who had been involved in wartime price-watching to form the Consumers' Association of Canada, the history of which has been briefly addressed by Jonah Goldstein.²⁴

Agriculture and the Second World War: Region or Nation?

Because of Canada's geographic and climactic diversity, the nation's agriculture is marked by regional differentiation, and in many ways this parallels the regionalism to which the nation is prone. This regionalist tendency also marks Canadian history in general, and inexorably bleeds into the historiography surrounding the topic of food and the Second World War. As a result, few works addressing themes relevant to agriculture and the war consider the subject from a national perspective. Even *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace* is unquestionably weighted towards the Prairie provinces. This is not a flaw so much as recognition of the fact that when it came to

²¹ See Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Donica Belisle, "Toward a Canadian Consumer History," *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 52 (Fall 2003): 181-206; "Exploring Postwar Consumption: The Campaign to Unionize Eaton's in Toronto, 1948-1952," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (December 2005): 641-672.

²² One exception is Graham Broad's work on the wartime consumer. See "Shopping for Victory," *The Beaver*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (April/May 2005): 40-45.

²³ Magda Fahrni, *Household Politics: Montreal Families and Postwar Reconstruction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); "Counting the Costs of Living: Gender, Citizenship, and a Politics of Prices in 1940s Montreal," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (December 2002): 483-504; "Under Reconstruction: The Family and the Public in Postwar Montreal, 1944-1949," Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, 2001. The British experience was rather more dramatic. See James Hinton, "'The Tale of Sammy Spree': Gender and the Secret Dynamics of 1940s British Corporatism," *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 58 (2004): 86-109.

²⁴ Jonah Goldstein, "Public Interest Groups and Public Policy: The Case of the Consumers' Association of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 1979): 137-155.

wartime food production, much of the 'heavy lifting' was done in the west. It should therefore surprise no one that most of the subsequent literature centred on Prairie themes.

John Herd Thompson and Ian MacPherson's 1984 article, "An Orderly Reconstruction: Prairie Agriculture in World War Two," concludes that the war was "more of a catalyst than a definitive event."²⁵ They argue that the changes war brought to western agriculture, namely the draining of labour from farms, the concurrent rise in mechanization, the reduced status of wheat, and the increased importance of the farm lobby, were either continuations of pre-existing trends or simply bound to occur, with or without the war. As a result, the impact of war was tidily managed. This dovetails nicely with the broader debate over the extent to which the war can be viewed as a 'watershed' moment: namely, did it cause a revolution in Canadian society or merely hasten along changes that were already on the horizon? Also, while Thompson and MacPherson's study centres on the western provinces, many of their conclusions can be applied to the farm community in general. For example, they make the point that "during the Second World War attempts at persuasion did not stop with propaganda; the government made an appeal to farmer's pocketbooks as well as to their patriotism."²⁶ As well as being applicable on a national level, this also connects to MacPherson's argument, made in a 1979 article, that the farmers' movement took on a pragmatic character during this period, pursuing frankly economic objectives.²⁷ Having to balance Allied and consumer needs with that of agriculture meant that the government's policies

²⁵ John Herd Thompson and Ian MacPherson, "An Orderly Reconstruction: Prairie Agriculture in World War Two," *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. 4 (1984), p. 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷ Ian MacPherson, "An Authoritative Voice: The Reorientation of the Canadian Farmers' Movement, 1935 to 1945," *Historical Papers* (1979), p. 164.

were not always in the farmers' best interests. However, the state understood that the best way to get farmers to produce needed commodities was by offering monetary and other bottom-line incentives, and this was pushed along by the increasing strength of the CFA.

The most significant shift that Canadian farmers had to make during the war was from wheat to meat. During the First World War pressure had been placed on Canada to produce as much wheat as possible, but the main demand during the Second World War was for animal protein, specifically pork products, cheese, eggs and later beef.²⁸ Britain's demand for pork led to higher domestic consumption of beef, and the west was viewed as the most logical source of this commodity. Alberta was already home to a developing beef cattle industry, the history of which Max Foran has explored in several works. In his book *Trails and Trials: Markets and Land Use in the Alberta Beef Cattle Industry, 1881-1948* (2003), Foran details the various challenges that beef producers faced during the war years.²⁹ Wartime demand prompted the implementation of government programs designed to de-emphasise wheat and increase the amount of feed grains available in order to encourage the production of livestock. Foran reveals that despite the problems caused by price controls and marketing curbs, the Second World War saw considerable growth in Alberta's beef trade, so much so that by 1948 the industry was well positioned for the even greater expansion that took place in the latter half of the 20th century. Foran also makes the point that the most pressing matter for

²⁸ The standard work on the effects of the First World War on Prairie agriculture is John Herd Thompson, *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978). See also Thompson's article "Permanently Wasteful but Immediately Profitable: Prairie Agriculture and the Great War," *Historical Papers* (1976): 193-206.

²⁹ Max Foran, *Trails and Trials: Markets and Land Use in the Alberta Beef Cattle Industry, 1881-1948* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003).

beef producers during the war was less a matter of price than that of continued access to the American market. The Canadian government's long-standing preference for the British market over the American had been a source of anger among cattlemen, a battle that came to a head in the 1940s.³⁰

Managing Canada's wartime wheat surplus proved to be one of the greatest challenges for government officials. The story of Canadian wheat policy, including the war years, has been told (in somewhat agonizing detail), by C.F. Wilson in *A Century of Canadian Grain: Government Policy to 1951* (1978) and less exhaustively by William Morriss in *Chosen Instrument: A History of the Canadian Wheat Board, The McIvor Years* (1987).³¹ As its title suggests, Wilson's immense volume concentrates on the development of federal wheat policy, and his section on the war years ably reconstructs the twists and turns taken by the government to manage Canada's over-abundant wheat production. One needs to look no further for a demonstration of the intricacies that make up the management of a major agricultural commodity.³² Of course, farmers themselves played a role in the formulation of wheat policy, a factor that Christopher J. Adams explores in his 1995 Ph.D. dissertation "Interest Groups in the Canadian Grain Sector: Twentieth Century Developments at the National Level."³³

³⁰ Max Foran, "The Price of Patriotism: Alberta Cattlemen and the Loss of the American Market, 1942-48," *Great Plains Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 2001): 17-28 and "Crucial and Contentious: The American Market and the Development of the Western Canadian Beef Cattle Industry to 1948," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn 2002): 451-476.

³¹ C.F. Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain: Government Policy to 1951* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978); William Morriss, *Chosen Instrument: A History of the Canadian Wheat Board, The McIvor Years* (Canadian Wheat Board, 1987).

³² For rather more analytical treatments of the wheat trade that graze the war years, see Robert Ankli and Gregory Owen, "The Decline of the Winnipeg Futures Market," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January 1982): 272-286; Robert Irwin, "Farmers and 'Orderly Marketing': The Making of the Canadian Wheat Board," *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 2001): 85-105.

³³ Christopher J. Adams, "Interest Groups in the Canadian Grain Sector: Twentieth Century Developments at the National Level," Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 1995. Adams pays particular attention to the role of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. See also Christopher Adams,

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by farmers during the war was the shortage of labour, a situation that cut across all sectors and regions and that was exacerbated by the lack of a coherent federal manpower policy. It is therefore disappointing that one of the few historians to tackle the mobilization of Canadian civilians fails to devote much space to the topic of agricultural labour. In *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources during World War II*, Michael D. Stevenson studies the impact of the government's flawed approach on war industry, coal mining, longshoremen, meatpackers, women, students, and native Canadians, but not farmers.³⁴ This is regrettable as labour shortages were the cause of considerable distress within the farming community and could have had serious consequences for food production. An *ad hoc* jumble of alternative labour sources, greater use of technology, and a basic willingness to work harder was what kept the farm sector from faltering. Non-farmers from urban areas made up most of the volunteer farm help, with young people making a significant contribution through various local and provincial agencies. The Ontario Farm Service Force (OFSF), the largest such organization, forms the subject of Sheila Hanlon's Master's thesis.³⁵ Other sources of farm labour were slightly less 'voluntary.' Stephanie Cepuch's 1994 article posits that while Canadians had strong misgivings about having enemy soldiers working on the back forty, sheer necessity impelled the government to use POWs as emergency

"Crumpled Globalization and Policy Innovation in Canadian Grain Politics: The Wartime Economy of the 1940s," *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (July-November 2001), <http://www.innovation.cc/discussion-papers/crumpled-globalization.htm> [accessed February 25, 2008].

³⁴ Michael D. Stevenson, *Canada's Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources during World War II* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

³⁵ Sheila Hanlon, "'Fair Soldiers of the Soil': Expressions of Gender Ideology within the Women's Division of the Ontario Farm Service Force," M.A. Thesis, University of Guelph, 2001.

farm labour.³⁶ Necessity was also behind the use of evacuated Japanese-Canadians as agricultural workers, and their experience in Ontario is documented by Stephanie Bangarth.³⁷

No work on food and agriculture during the war can avoid the long shadow cast by Minister of Agriculture James G. Gardiner. Gardiner obviously had significant influence over the direction taken by Canadian agriculture during the war, power that was reinforced by Prime Minister Mackenzie King's disinterest in farm issues. While King retained the final say on matters of high policy, he was content to leave the general course of farm policy to his trusted colleague who, as Robert Wardhaugh has argued, embodied many of the tensions that have traditionally dominated Canadian politics.³⁸ While indisputably a western politician, Gardiner was also a staunch federalist who shared King's abhorrence of anything that could undermine national unity. Yet, he himself was a polarizing figure. Many of the positions he struck (and to which he tenaciously held, despite at times fierce opposition) went against the prevailing desires of other government members and at times against the farmers of Canada. Despite his complex ideology and legacy, general scholarship on James Gardiner remains relatively sparse, and work dealing specifically with his activities during the war years is even leaner. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to his relations with the farm community or the performance of Canadian agriculture under his direction.³⁹ Norman Ward and David Smith's biography, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal*, remains the

³⁶ Stephanie Cepuch, "The Public and the POWs: Reaction to the Release of German Prisoners of War for Agricultural Labour," *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. 9 (1994): 323-335.

³⁷ Stephanie Bangarth, "The Long, Wet Summer of 1942: The Ontario Farm Service Force, Small-Town Ontario and the Nisei," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2005): 40-62.

³⁸ Robert A. Wardhaugh, "Region and Nation: The Politics of Jimmy Gardiner," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Fall 1993), p. 24.

³⁹ One exception, however, is David Smith, "James G. Gardiner: Political Leadership in the Agrarian Community," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Spring 1987): 47-61.

most comprehensive study done on the controversial politician, with much of the remaining work focusing on the formidable party machine built in Saskatchewan by Gardiner.⁴⁰

One area of agricultural history that has received a fair amount of attention surrounds the propensity of farmers to organize, and the political uses of such groups. Several historians have traced the evolution of farm organizations in Canada, paying particular attention to their methods and ideologies.⁴¹ During the war years the Canadian farm movement moved towards becoming a politically neutral and sectoral lobby. Ian MacPherson characterized the era as the “fourth major turning point” in the history of Canadian agriculture, and perhaps the least studied. From 1935 to 1945, MacPherson argues, the farmers’ movement took on a straightforward, practical character that was “limited in purpose, frankly economic in outlook, and pragmatic in its methods.” This contrasted with previous incarnations inextricably linked with various ‘isms,’ such as Progressivism or agrarianism. As MacPherson noted, this particular period “produced no semi-secret societies; it was not characterized by an overpowering defence of the farm based on rural myth; and it was not entwined with numerous causes such as prohibition, feminism, and the Social Gospel.”⁴² Instead, during this ten-year period of economic instability and war, Canadian farmers demanded state economic

⁴⁰ Norman Ward and David Smith, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Robert Wardhaugh, “Cogs in the Machine: The Charles Dunning-Jimmy Gardiner Feud,” *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (1996): 20-29; Norman Ward, “Oppositions and Coalitions: James Gardiner and Saskatchewan Provincial Politics, 1929 to 1934,” *Historical Papers* (1979): 147-163; “The Politics of Patronage: James Gardiner and the Federal Appointments in the West, 1935-57,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (September 1977): 294-310; “Hon. James Gardiner and the Liberal Party of Alberta, 1935-40,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (1975): 303-322.

⁴¹ See Darren Ferry, ““Severing the Connections in a Complex Community”: The Grange, the Patrons of Industry, and Construction/Contestation of a Late 19th-Century Agrarian Identity in Ontario,” *Labour*, Vol. 54 (Fall 2004): 9-47.

⁴² MacPherson, “An Authoritative Voice,” p. 164.

regulation in order to secure fair prices for their produce. The general elements of traditional agrarian unrest were present – farmers were unhappy with their incomes, with the federal government’s attitude towards agriculture and with the possibility that they might be unfairly exploited in the name of the war effort. But paradoxically, the war years, as David Monod reminds us, also coincided with “the end of agrarianism.”⁴³ Faced with problems, this time farmers sought to use their own stature as a vital part of the economy, and the war effort, as a lever. Following in the wake of MacPherson and Monod, Terry Crowley argues that this period saw the farm movement abandon “the public political arena to become one of the most influential lobbies in twentieth-century Canada.” In the postwar era, farmers did not enter the political sphere as they had done after the First World War. They instead engaged in the same type of “special interest politics” that had served them well during the war.⁴⁴

As this dissertation will demonstrate, the transition is evident in the way in which farmers and their leaders battled to keep their interests on the political front-burner during the war years. After the war began, the basic call from the farm movement was for ‘parity.’ This older concept had several dimensions, but it basically referred to a price that covered production costs and allowed the farmer a fair amount of profit. It was frequently entwined with a desire to bring farm incomes back to pre-Depression levels. Parity also referred to farmers’ general wish to be treated on equal

⁴³ David Monod, “The End of Agrarianism: The Fight for Farm Parity in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1935-1948,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 16 (Fall 1985): 117-143. See also J.F. Conway, “The Prairie Agrarian Movement: Beginnings to World War II,” *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Fall 2004): 145-176. Also useful are Grace Skogstad, “Agrarian Protest in Alberta,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1980): 55-73; Ian MacPherson, *Each for All: A History of the Co-operative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979).

⁴⁴ Terry Crowley, “J.J. Morrison and the Transition in Canadian Farm Movements During the Early Twentieth Century,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 330, 356.

terms. The industrial sector was making a tremendous amount of money out of the war; why, farmers asked, were industrialists allowed to 'profiteer' but not them?

Two articles appeared in 1985 that dealt with the issue of parity and Prairie farm conditions in the 1930s and 1940s. In "Parity Prices and the Farmers' Strike," D'Arcy Hande contends that the 1946 western farm strike was the last stand for farmers frustrated by the government's unwillingness to set a fair (parity) price for wheat.⁴⁵ David Monod maintains that mainly smaller and poorer farmers, willing to act radically to make their case known, took up the fight.⁴⁶ They belonged to groups such as the militant Alberta Farmers' Union, which was made up of producers on the edge of economic survival, alienated from the more moderate, middle-class organizations such as the CFA.

The desire to represent all farmers was and still is the CFA's greatest challenge. 'Canadian agriculture' is an inclusive term that masks the starkly heterogeneous character of the nation's farm sector. It is difficult in a country so large and so geographically diverse for farmers to unite since shared interests beyond the most general of goals are hard to find. Policies that are good for the beef industry may be disastrous for dairy producers, making it hard, if not impossible, for one organization to speak for all farmers. During the war and after however, the CFA tried to do just that. Their ambitious efforts have not been the subject of much historical study, and other scholarly literature on the CFA itself is thin. Political scientist Helen Jones Dawson's

⁴⁵ D'Arcy Hande, "Parity Prices and the Farmers' Strike," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Autumn 1985): 81-96.

⁴⁶ Monod, "The End of Agrarianism: The Fight for Farm Parity in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1935-1948," *Labour/Le Travail* 16 (Fall 1985): 117-143.

1954 Ph.D. thesis and 1960 article remain two of the few attempts to study the group's origin and efficacy as a lobby organization.⁴⁷

Finally, there is a subset of literature dealing with the Anglo-Canadian trade relationship. Selling food to Britain – during the war and immediately after – was fraught with obstacles as the Canadians and the British negotiated with different short- and long-term goals in mind. While this was important to the Canadian economy in general terms, British policies could have an acute impact on producers. For example, exports of Canadian apples were compromised by the war, an issue that J.L. Granatstein argued “was not of profound significance.”⁴⁸ For fruit growers dependent on the British market, however, this was a matter of the utmost importance. In 1987 Dianne Newell looked at the impact of the war on Canada's Pacific fish industry, demonstrating that, despite the efforts of Canadian authorities, the prosperity of the war years did not extend

⁴⁷ Helen Jones, “Canadian Federation of Agriculture,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Queen's University, 1954; Helen Jones Dawson, “An Interest Group: The Canadian Federation of Agriculture,” *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 3 (June 1960): 134-149. Other works by Dawson that touch on the CFA and related issues include “Relations Between Farm Organizations and the Civil Service in Canada and Great Britain,” *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 10 (Winter 1967): 450-470; and “Canadian and Australian Farm Interest Groups,” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (November 1982): 10-20. See also Coleridge Westerman Orr, “Pressure Group Activity: The Canadian Federation of Agriculture,” M.A. Research Essay, Carleton University, 1962; W. Blair Williams, “Canadian Federation of Agriculture: The Problems of a General Political Interest Group,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 1974. There are few historical studies that look at farm interest groups and agricultural policy, but some that consider the topic from a contemporary perspective include varying amounts of historical background. See, for example, Grace Skogstad, “The Uphill Struggle to Prevail: National Farm Organizations in Canada,” in *Surviving Global Change? Agricultural Interest Groups in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Darren Halpin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005): 189-212; J.D. Forbes, *Institutions and Influence Groups in Canadian Farm and Food Policy* (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1985). Also useful is Barry K. Wilson, *Farming the System: How Politicians and Producers Shape Canadian Agricultural Policy* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990). On the history of Canadian agricultural policy in general, see V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946) and W.M. Drummond, W.J. Anderson, and T.C. Kerr, *A Review of Agricultural Policy in Canada* (Ottawa: Agriculture Economics Research Council of Canada, 1966).

⁴⁸ Granatstein, *Canada's War*, p. 62.

into peacetime, as Britain inexorably turned to cheaper sources of canned fish.⁴⁹ A few years later, Bruce Muirhead surveyed similar, if broader, territory in “The Politics of Food and the Disintegration of the Anglo-Canadian Trade Relationship, 1947-1948” (1991). Stepping into the debate surrounding the re-orientation of Canadian trade from the U.K. to the U.S., Muirhead uses the food negotiations of 1947-48 to argue that the shift in Canada’s postwar trade from Britain to the United States was a practical necessity, not, as some have charged, a “sell-out.”⁵⁰

The Second World War and Food: International Literature

Those nations where the food story was rather more dramatic have produced a variety of studies.⁵¹ Alan S. Milward and Bernd Martin edited *Agriculture and Food Supply in World War II* (1985), a collection of conference papers covering the wartime agrarian experience in nations such as Japan, Germany, France, Belgium, the USSR, and China.⁵²

Paula Schwartz examined the theme of food scarcity and female political action in “The Politics of Food and Gender in Occupied Paris,” and more broadly in the recent article

⁴⁹ Dianne Newell, “The Politics of Food in World War II: Great Britain’s Grip on Canada’s Pacific Fishery,” *Historical Papers*, Vol. 22 (1987): 178-197.

⁵⁰ B.W. Muirhead, “The Politics of Food and the Disintegration of the Anglo-Canadian Trade Relationship, 1947-1948,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, Vol. 2 (1991): 215-230. The postwar re-orientation of Canada’s exports (and attendant ramifications) has been well documented. See R.D. Cuff and J.L. Granatstein, *American Dollars – Canadian Prosperity: Canadian-American Economic Relations 1945-1950* (Toronto: Samuel-Stevens, 1978); Tim Rooth, “Britain’s Other Dollar Problem: Economic Relations with Canada, 1945-50,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 1999): 81-108; “Debts, Deficits and Disenchantment: Anglo-Canadian Economic Relations, 1945-50,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1991): 339-351.

⁵¹ See, for example: *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in South-East Asia*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Peter Gunst, “Agriculture and Provisioning in Hungary during World War II,” *Acta Historica*, Vol. 30, No. 1-2 (1984): 129-150; Clifford R. Lovin, “Farm Women in the Third Reich,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer 1986): 105-123; Deborah Montgomerie, “Men’s Jobs and Women’s Work: The New Zealand Women’s Land Service in World War II,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Summer 1989): 1-13; Violetta Hionidou, “Black Market, Hyperinflation, and Hunger: Greece, 1941-1944,” *Food and Foodways*, Vol. 12, No. 2-3 (April 2004): 81-106, and *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵² *Agriculture and Food Supply in World War II*, ed. Alan S. Milward and Bernd Martin (Ostfildern: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1985).

“On Vit Mal: Food Shortages and Popular Culture in Occupied France.”⁵³ The Russian experience has been documented by William Moskoff in his book *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR during World War II* (1991).⁵⁴ Britain’s wartime food experience is particularly well documented. For many Britons, life during the Second World War was an exercise in sheer endurance. Bombings, casualties, and the threat of a Nazi invasion may have been more extreme examples of wartime fears, but the grimness of the blackout, fatigue, and unpalatable food also took its toll. Arguably, one of the most invasive effects of the war was that the British diet (not the most exciting at the best of times) became increasingly austere. As supplies and shipping capacity dwindled, the government, through the efforts of the Ministry of Food, sought to keep stomachs, if not appetites, satisfied. Despite the odds, the British diet actually *improved* in many respects, an accomplishment that behooved study once the war had ended.

An examination of the historiography of British food during the Second World War must begin with R.J. Hammond’s three-volume *Food*, still the standard resource for anyone seeking information on this subject. Written as part of Britain’s official Civil Histories series, *Food* is an exhaustively detailed study of state efforts to secure and

⁵³ Paula Schwartz, “The Politics of Food and Gender in Occupied Paris,” *Modern and Contemporary France*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1999): 35-45; Kenneth Mouré and Paula Schwartz, “On Vit Mal: Food Shortages and Popular Culture in Occupied France,” *Food, Culture & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2007): 261-295. Another perspective on wartime food riots in France can be found in Lynne Taylor, “Food Riots Revisited,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 483-496, and “Collective Action in Northern France, 1940-44,” *French History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1997): 190-214. See also Donna F. Ryan, “Ordinary Acts and Resistance: Women in Street Demonstrations and Food Riots in Vichy France,” *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, Vol. 16 (1989): 400-407.

⁵⁴ William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR during World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Roger Munting looks at the important role Allied food contributions played in keeping the Soviet war effort afloat in “Soviet Food Supply and Allied Aid in the War, 1941-45,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (October 1984): 582-593.

control British food supplies in war.⁵⁵ In terms of approach, Hammond's work (which one reviewer accurately describes as "monumental"⁵⁶) covers the topic from an overwhelmingly 'top-down' perspective, unsurprising perhaps, in light of its status as 'official' history. As John Martin notes, the civil histories were not intended for mass public consumption – they were designed to provide future civil servants with information in the event of another war.⁵⁷ By his own admission, Hammond approaches the subject as though he were "writing military history;" the food front is seen as a campaign on the part of food officials, though the notion of what exactly comprises the 'enemy' is not quite clear.⁵⁸ While the tone of the work cannot escape a certain 'triumphal' character, Hammond exhibits a surprising willingness to critique government planning.⁵⁹

In 2000, historian Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska published *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955*, a book that "explores the connections between government policy, consumption, gender, and party politics in the

⁵⁵ R.J. Hammond, *Food: Volume One: The Growth of Policy* (London: HMSO, 1951); *Food: Volume Two: Studies in Administration and Control* (London: HMSO, 1956); *Food: Volume Three: Studies in Administration and Control* (London: HMSO, 1962). The Civil Histories series, published mainly in the decade-and-a-half after the end of the war, was an ambitious attempt to document various aspects of Britain's wartime experience. The volumes, penned by acknowledged experts in each field, included topics such as the British War Economy (W.K. Hancock and M.M. Gowing), British War Production (M.M. Postan), Financial Policy (Richard Sayers), Manpower (Henry Parker), Civil Industry (Eric Hargreaves), Civil Defence (Terence O'Brien), Inland Transport (Christopher Savage), Merchant Shipping (Catherine Behrens), Social Policy (Richard Titmuss), and Social Services (Sheila Ferguson). Besides food, other commodities such as oil (D.J. Payton-Smith) and coal (William Court) were covered in their own volumes. Hammond does not discuss domestic agricultural policies, as this was deemed worthy of its own volume (Keith Murray).

⁵⁶ E.H. Whetham, "Review of *Food. Vol. III. Studies in Administration and Control. History of the Second World War*," *Economic History Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1962), p. 385.

⁵⁷ John Martin, "British Agricultural Archives: Lying Fallow," *Archives*, Vol. 25, No. 103 (October 2000), p. 124.

⁵⁸ Hammond, Vol. I, p. xii.

⁵⁹ He does not, for example, gloss over the problems and confusion that occurred over points rationing. Hammond, Vol. I, pp. 204-206.

exceptional circumstances of the 1940s and early 1950s.”⁶⁰ The idea of “fair shares,” the author notes, is of central importance to the understanding of British society during the war but also one that has been curiously ignored by scholars. Looking at the issue with considerably more distance than Hammond, Zweiniger-Bargielowska’s research “qualifies the myth of the home front characterized by universal sacrifice, egalitarianism, and common purpose.”⁶¹ While politics plays a large role in Zweiniger-Bargielowska’s study, it is politics with the public and the force of their opinion in mind. What were people’s attitudes towards austerity policies, and how did their reactions influence future government actions? What the author found was that Britons embraced a surprising degree of discontent over the relative levels of “fairness” and “sacrifice.” The author also connects the domestic with the political, arguing that Clement Atlee’s Labour government fell from power in 1951 largely because of the public’s weariness with postwar austerity conditions.⁶² The subject, from this point of view, takes on a far more complex social character than one could ever glean from Hammond’s work alone. Alan F. Wilt considers the place of food in Britain’s pre-war defence plans in his 2001 book, *Food for War: Agriculture and Rearmament in Britain Before the Second World War*.⁶³ Going somewhat against the prevailing view that British prewar food plans were inadequate, Wilt argues that the issue of food was linked

⁶⁰ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 1. Zweiniger-Bargielowska does not mention Canadian food imports. She does, however, note that Canadian (and American) food consumption rose during the war.

⁶¹ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 2.

⁶² See also Zweiniger-Bargielowska’s essay “Explaining the Gender Gap: The Conservative Party and the Women’s Vote, 1945-1964,” in *The Conservatives and British Society, 1880-1990*, ed. Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

⁶³ Alan F. Wilt, *Food for War: Agriculture and Rearmament in Britain Before the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

early on to British rearmament, and that plans laid down in the 1930s go a long way towards explaining the success of British food policy during the war.⁶⁴

During the war, the struggle to produce as much food as possible took on a more drastic character, and few sources of potential farm labour were left unexploited. In “The Call to the Land: British and European Adult Voluntary Farm Labour, 1939-49,” R.J. Moore-Colyer looks at British efforts to raise food with a ragtag army of helpers, and queries the extent to which this fostered understanding between volunteers from divergent backgrounds. The author also questions whether the experience served to bridge the gap between city and country or simply cemented pre-existing attitudes.⁶⁵ In 2006, the British Agricultural History Society published *The Frontline of Freedom: British Farming in the Second World War*, a collection of essays that goes a long way toward fulfilling editor John Martin’s contention that more attention needs to be paid to food production during the war.⁶⁶ While the usual themes of labour and agricultural technology are present, many of the chapters deal with the implications of state involvement in wartime agriculture. Impelled by obvious motives, the state took a much greater interest in food production, exerted a fair amount of control over the sector, and went so far as to evict farmers who did not meet efficient production standards. The editors argue that one of the major legacies of the war was the postwar shift to a

⁶⁴ Britain was not the only nation linking food to broader eventualities. Carol Helstosky argues that food was at the heart of the Italian drive for *autarky* in the interwar years. See “Fascist Food Policies: Mussolini’s Policy of Alimentary Sovereignty,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2004): 1-26. Helstosky expands on her analysis in her book *Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy* (New York: Berg, 2004).

⁶⁵ R.J. Moore-Colyer, “The Call to the Land: British and European Adult Voluntary Farm Labour, 1939-49,” *Rural History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (April 2006): 83-101. See also Moore-Colyer’s article “The County War Agricultural Executive Committees: The Welsh Experience, 1939-1945,” *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2005): 558-587.

⁶⁶ *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in the Second World War*, eds. Brian Short, Charles Watkins, John Martin (British Agricultural History Society, 2006). See also Graham Neville, “Eviction and Reclamation in World War II: The Case of a Worcestershire Farm,” *Local Historian*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1999): 76-90.

production-driven and highly protected agricultural sector. Farming took on a higher stature within state planning, and farmers themselves displayed an attitudinal change that came as a direct result their wartime achievements, modifications that can be seen, in varying degrees, in Canadian agriculture as well.⁶⁷

The impact of the war on agriculture in the United States was outlined early on by Walter W. Wilcox in *The Farmer in the Second World War* (1947). Still, mirroring the situation in Canadian historiography, surprisingly little scholarship focusses on the American wartime food experience.⁶⁸ Securing enough labour to keep wartime farms producing was a problem in the U.S. as well as in Canada and Britain, and Stephanie Carpenter examines the subject from a gendered point of view in her 2003 book *On the Farm Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II*.⁶⁹ As wartime demands

⁶⁷ Brian Short, Charles Watkins, and John Martin, "The Front Line of Freedom: State-Led Agricultural Revolution in Britain, 1939-45," in *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming and the Second World War*, pp. 1-15.

⁶⁸ Walter W. Wilcox, *The Farmer in the Second World War* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State College Press, 1947). See Roger W. Lotchin, "The Historians' War or the Home Front's War? Some Thoughts for Western Historians," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 186. See also Alan Clive, "The Michigan Farmer in World War II," *Michigan History*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (1976): 291-314; Michael J. Grant, "'Food Will Win the War and Write the Peace': The Federal Government and Kansas Farmers during World War II," *Kansas History*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1997-98): 242-257; Steven F. Huss, "Milkweed, Machine Guns and Cows: Jefferson Country Farmers in World War II," *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (1992): 265-281; John Hammond Moore, "No Room, No Rice, No Grits: Charleston's 'Time of Trouble,' 1942-1944," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (1986): 23-31; Chester M. Morgan, "At the Crossroads: World War II, Delta Agriculture, and Modernization in Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (1995): 353-371.

⁶⁹ Stephanie Carpenter, *On the Farm Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003). This was based on Carpenter's Ph.D. dissertation, "At the Agricultural Front: The Women's Land Army during World War II," Iowa State University, 1997. See also her article, "Regular Farm Girl': The Women's Land Army in World War II," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (Spring 1997): 162-185. Other work on farm labour programs in the U.S. include: Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labour and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'To the Rescue of the Crops': The Women's Land Army in World War II," *Prologue*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1993): 347-361; Louis Fiset, "Thinning, Topping, and Loading: Japanese-Americans and Beet Sugar in World War II," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (1999): 123-139; Wendi N. Manuel-Scott, "Soldiers of the Field: Jamaican Farm Workers in the United States During World War II," Ph.D. Dissertation, Howard University, 2003; Barbara M. Tucker, "Agricultural Workers in World War Two: The Reserve Army of Children, Black Americans, and Jamaicans," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Winter 1994): 54-73; Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, "Pick or

escalated, food was also produced in non-traditional environments, such as urban backyards and vacant lots, a topic addressed by Char Miller in a 2003 article.⁷⁰

Something of the way in which the war altered eating American habits can be gleaned from contemporary food writers such as M.F.K. Fisher.⁷¹ Amy Bentley's *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (1998) takes a cultural approach to themes surrounding wartime food regulation, focusing on gender, race and class.⁷² Bentley reveals that for American authorities, one of the fundamental dilemmas attached to food supply management was how to ensure public compliance without causing upheaval. Conventional gender roles were reinforced by food controls and the propaganda that swirled around them. Linking the function of 'homemaker' to national security and the war effort imbued the role with a far greater significance, but also firmly cemented women within their traditional sphere. Boundaries were not broken down, but rather reinforced. Unlike in Canada, scholarship on consumers in wartime is becoming a crowded field in the United States. In 2003, Tawnya Adkins Covert studied wartime advertising campaigns and concluded that despite the restrictions of war and the prevalent rhetoric of 'sacrifice,' consumption and spending continued apace. Dannagal Goldthwaite Young uses wartime advertisements to probe

Fight: The Emergency Farm Labour Program in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas during World War II," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Spring 1990): 74-85.

⁷⁰ Char Miller, "In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice during World War II – Victory Gardens," *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 2003): 395-409.

⁷¹ See, especially, Fisher's *How to Cook a Wolf*.

⁷² Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998); "Islands of Serenity: Gender, Race, and Ordered Meals during World War II," *Food and Foodways*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1996): 131-156.

the links between the consumer and the rhetoric of sacrifice in the United States, a theme that Terrence H. Witkowski also explores.⁷³

In his excellent work on American eating habits, historian Harvey Levenstein devotes two chapters to the war years, highlighting the fact that Americans had difficulty accepting wartime food restrictions and regulations, and in several cases resisted their imposition.⁷⁴ This, Levenstein argues, was due to the suspicion with which Americans tend to view their government. The need to mobilize the food system “seemed to bring out the worst in Americans,” who hoarded and patronized the black market in droves.⁷⁵ This forced the U.S. government to abandon rationing fairly quickly after the end of the war despite the great worldwide need for food aid, something to which Amy Bentley also draws attention in her work. These are all intriguing subjects, and given the recent rise of food and consumption history, it is reasonable to suggest that more work will be completed on these topics in the future.

Conclusion

The historian of food and war faces a paradox. While food supply is a fundamental component of modern warfare, the actual relationship between the two is often

⁷³ Tawna Adkins Covert, “Consumption and Citizenship during the Second World War: Product Advertising in Women’s Magazines,” *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (November 2003): 315-342; Dannagal Goldthwaite Young, “Sacrifice, Consumption, and the American Way of Life: Advertising and Domestic Propaganda During World War II,” *Communication Review*, Vol. 8 (2005): 27-52; Terrence H. Witkowski, “World War II Poster Campaigns: Preaching Frugality to American Consumers,” *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 69-82. See also Mei-ling Yang, “Creating the Kitchen Patriot: Media Promotion of Food Rationing and Nutrition Campaigns on the American Home Front During World War II,” *American Journalism*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Summer 2005): 55-75.

⁷⁴ Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁷⁵ Levenstein, p. 81. On the broader uses of ‘sacrifice’ on the American home front, see Mark Leff, “The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (March 1991): 1296-1318.

overlooked. General scholarship on the history of Second World War tends to ignore or gloss over the vital nature of food as a sinew of war, but the subject fares a little better in scholarship focusing on the home front. Syntheses of the subject are relatively few, but there exists a not insubstantial body of literature dealing with tangential issues, such as economic controls, regulation, consumption politics, agricultural policy, lobby groups, and commodity- and region-specific studies, all of which are valuable in any attempt to reconstruct the Canadian wartime food experience. A review of the international literature reveals that this experience fell, rather unsurprisingly, somewhere between the American and the British. Agricultural production was stressed in all three nations, with the British exhibiting far greater controls over farmers than either North American government. As in the United States, some Canadians found it difficult to reconcile the nation's abundance with the need to impose strict regulations on the consumption of food. Unlike the Americans, however, Canadians still felt strong, patriotic ties to Britain, making the 'selling' of the necessary sacrifice far easier.

When it came to food, Canada's wartime role really was that of 'feeding the hungry allies.' But as this dissertation will show, the domestic ramifications of this role reverberated throughout the Canadian food system, as farmers, dealers and consumers coped with state policies and regulations that sought to maximize food production while maintaining overall economic stability.

Chapter Three
***'One Branch in Which Canada Will Serve Well': Food,
Agriculture and the Building of the War Effort, 1937-1941***

No less important than munitions in the conduct of a war is that the food supply be assured and ample. The farmers of Canada can be relied upon to do their part of course. That goes without saying. But like everything else in a war economy it is necessary that the effort be directed along most advantageous lines and that nothing be permitted to interfere with the efficient functioning of the farms.¹

– *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1939

Introduction

On September 6, 1939, Ontario's Minister of Agriculture P.M. Dewan took to the podium at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. It was 'Agriculturalists' Day' at the fair, and as the assembled farmers stood in the cool late summer rain, Dewan rallied the troops on the food front, reminding them the recent outbreak of war meant that Canadians would "go through a testing time for many months to come." Dewan's rhetoric appealed heavily to farmer patriotism and loyalty to Great Britain, but he also made a point to appeal to their pocketbooks as well. Farmers, he stressed, could see tangible benefits as a result of the war. While the conflict lasted, Dewan observed, it was "not improbable that there may be economic gains" for agriculture.² But he also warned that sacrifices would be in order; one could not exist without the other. Neither Dewan nor his audience was aware of the fact, but the minister had just summed up the

¹ "Agriculture in the War" (Editorial), *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, September 22, 1939, p. 11.

² "Farmers' Day Boosts 'Gate' at Exhibition," *Globe and Mail*, September 7, 1939, p. 4.

moral dilemma that would beset Canadian farmers for the next several years: how to balance the sacrifices of war with the undeniable benefits that could accrue as a result.

That food would form a major part of Canada's overall contribution to the British cause was never in doubt; it was rightly assumed that the nation would be called upon to supply vast quantities of foodstuffs to meet the demands of war. For an agricultural sector still feeling the devastating effects of the Great Depression, this was the proverbial silver lining in the otherwise dark cloud of war. No one cheered the prospect of another global conflict, but at the same time war offered farmers a golden opportunity to repair some of the damage wrought by the turmoil of the 1930s. The First World War, many remembered, had been very good for Canadian agriculture, especially on the Prairies, whose wheat, after all, 'had won the war.' Western farmers, the hardest hit segment of the Canadian population during the Depression, remembered fondly this "wheat bonanza," and thus could be forgiven if they smiled rather too broadly at the prospect of more wartime prosperity.³ Coming off a decade of hardship and mindful of the experience of the previous war, it was only natural for farmers to feel hopeful in the midst of such sorrow. But total war also carried with it the indelible notion of 'sacrifice,' of doing one's part by subjugating individual needs and desires in favour of the broader goal of winning the war. For Canadian farmers, the issue would be one of safeguarding their own interests within a wartime atmosphere fraught with the rhetoric of sacrifice and duty. How to ensure prosperity without seeming to profit on the blood of others was the task now facing Canadian farmers.

³ Kenneth Norrie and Douglas Owsam, *A History of the Canadian Economy* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), p. 274.

Yet farm fortunes, so hurt by the Depression, did not rise appreciably in the early war period. Canadian authorities did not play a very distinguished role in the formation of prewar British food planning. When war was finally declared, wartime circumstances slowed British food purchasing in Canada, which made it difficult for the Department of Agriculture to articulate a clear program for farmers to follow. Thus circumscribed, the federal government found it hard to make specific demands on the agricultural sector, which gave rise to complaints from farmers, who not unreasonably wanted to know what crops or products would be most needed. When the British did begin to buy large quantities of food from Canada, the contract prices negotiated by the government were assailed by many farmers as being far too low, at times below the cost of production. Also in this period, the siphoning off of farm labour by military recruiting and the defence industry began to have a discernable effect on the countryside. While farmers were repeatedly told that their efforts were vital to the war effort, the government's attitude seemed to belie that importance, bringing Canadian farmers to the brink of revolt by 1941. A tenacious campaign by farm groups, led by the recently-formed Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and its key spokesman Herbert H. Hannam, strove to push farm concerns to a more prominent position on the public agenda. By the end of 1941, an improvement in external circumstances boded well for farmers, but new internal obstacles in the form of economic controls imposed by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) had by then appeared.

Both the farm movement and government authorities tried to mould agriculture's response to the war, but they were frequently at odds over the direction this should take. Two major actors framed the debate over wartime agricultural policy: the state, through

the federal Department of Agriculture; and the farmers themselves through organizations such as the CFA. Farmers fought to bring their interests to both government and public attention, while also making clear their unswerving support for the war effort. At the same time, Minister of Agriculture James Gardiner was trying desperately to construct an agricultural policy that would balance the wartime needs of Canada and the Allies with the demands of long-suffering Canadian farmers. On the economic front, the first two years of the conflict were undoubtedly the lowest point in the war for agriculture, prompting conflict and rural unrest. But it was also an important transitional period, indicating the end of 'old school' agrarian protest and, despite the war, the entry of farmers into a more powerful, modern form of interest-based lobbying. Thus, for farmers, the early part of the war was marked by a parallel drive to further their own interests while simultaneously serving the war effort, a process they had to negotiate without appearing overly unmindful of the common cause.

Into the Abyss: Canadian Agriculture, Food Exports, and Planning for War in the 1930s

The First World War had been good for Canadian farmers, but it had also accelerated the twin processes of urbanization and industrialization. These developments lessened the degree to which Canadians depended upon agriculture for income, although the farm sector still remained a significant part of the economy. Agricultural fortunes peaked between 1926 and 1929, a period that later took on an almost mythic character among farmers who later pointed to the era as the *ne plus ultra* of farm prosperity and commodity prices. But the Depression that began to ravage the global economy as the decade drew to a close sapped the energies and aspirations of Canadians from all walks

of life, including farmers. Agriculture, with its strong dependency on external markets, was particularly hard hit as global demand for Canadian staples fell off sharply in the face of increasingly protectionist policies as many countries sought to isolate their economies by implementing a variety of tariffs, import quotas, and subsidies for domestic produce.⁴ Canada's farm exports to the United States were seriously curtailed by the implementation of the infamous Smoot-Hawley tariff in 1930, and Canada itself was drawn into the protectionist fray (under the aegis of imperial preference) with the Ottawa Trade Agreements of 1932.⁵ There were other problems as well; the fact that the iconic image of the Depression years in Canada is of the great Prairie drought, the 'dustbowl' of popular memory, is not coincidental. This "best-remembered horror," as John Herd Thompson put it, had dramatic effects, and came to epitomize the damage that the Great Depression wrought on farmers across the nation.⁶ That image, however, is somewhat misleading. As Thompson continues, the main problem for Canadian agriculture in the 1930s (specifically wheat, but also other sectors) was not a dearth but rather a surplus of food that saturated the market and had a negative effect on prices.⁷ The raft of trade barriers that bloomed in the 1930s hurt export-dependent Canadian farmers, resulting in unmarketable surpluses and low commodity prices.⁸ Thanks to the effects of the economic downturn, the value of the nation's farm capital declined

⁴ Norrie and O'ram, pp. 263-264.

⁵ Judith A. McDonald, Anthony Patrick O'Brien and Colleen M. Callahan, "Trade Wars: Canada's Reaction to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 1997): 802-826.

⁶ John Herd Thompson, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 195.

⁷ This paradox of the Depression was succinctly captured in the title of Janet Poppendieck's book on the American experience, *Breadlines Knee-Deep in Wheat: Food Assistance in the Great Depression* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

⁸ For details, see George Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 62-81.

precipitously between 1926 and 1940. Cash income from farm products, which had peaked just prior to the 1929 crash, fell by more than half before it again approached pre-Depression levels in 1942.⁹

By the middle part of the decade, there had emerged other good reasons to decrease a nation's dependence on foreign sources of food. Economic protectionism is, at its very heart, a nationally-oriented ideology. But the trade barriers enacted by Britain and the United States looked positively benign next to the aggressive nationalist regimes that blossomed in various countries, notably Germany, Italy, Spain, and Japan, where economic policies were closer to *autarky* and imperialist expansion. Beginning in 1936, the Nazi regime implemented a four-year plan designed to make Germany as self-reliant as possible in food. Maintaining consumption levels, it was recognized, would lessen the potential for social unrest, and rationing was begun in late August 1939.¹⁰ In Italy, Benito Mussolini's fascist government pursued what historian Carol Helstosky terms "alimentary sovereignty," a food and agriculture policy encouraging ascetic food habits that promoted the consumption of domestically-produced foodstuffs, while minimizing imports.¹¹

The political instability of the decade forced Britain to renew the emphasis on defence, and that included preparations in food and agriculture. A nation overwhelmingly dependent on food imports – two-thirds of its total supply – Britain

⁹ *Supplement to Handbook of Farming Statistics: Trends in Canadian Agriculture* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1964), pp. 21-22.

¹⁰ R.J. Overy, "Mobilization for Total War in Germany, 1939-1941," *English Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 408 (July 1988), p. 619; Jill Stephenson, "War and Society in Wurttemberg, 1939-1945: Beating the System," *German Studies Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (February 1985), p. 89; Manfred J. Enssle, "The Harsh Discipline of Food Scarcity in Postwar Stuttgart, 1945-1948," *German Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (October 1987), p. 482.

¹¹ Carol Helstosky, "Fascist Food Politics: Mussolini's Policy of Alimentary Sovereignty," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2004): 1-26.

could not afford to ignore the subject any longer.¹² In addition, the issues of national health, nutrition, food and defence met in a rather dramatic fashion after the findings of Sir John Boyd Orr were made public in 1936. Boyd Orr, a nutritional scientist and director of the Rowett Research Institute at Aberdeen College, had published a study, *Food, Health, and Income*, in which he and his researchers laid bare the serious nutritional deficiencies that plagued the British working class. Boyd Orr's conclusion that at least one-third of Britons suffered from some form of malnutrition was an inconvenient bombshell that the government at first tried desperately to ignore.¹³ But as the study grew in notoriety and as German foreign policy grew more sinister in nature, uncomfortable questions about the fitness of the British citizenry began to manifest. The importance of food in warfare, a lesson learned during the First World War, had not been entirely forgotten. With another war looming, the British had to establish just how they would provision their nation in the next war, and the Dominions, including Canada, naturally factored into those plans.¹⁴

As the next few years would show, getting Canada to take concrete steps of its own in this matter was not easy. The need to discuss food defence with the Dominions was recognized relatively early. British rearmament was accompanied by a coterminous

¹² Dianne Newell, "The Politics of Food in World War II: Great Britain's Grip on Canada's Pacific Fishery," *Historical Papers*, Vol. 22 (1987), p. 181.

¹³ Amy L.S. Staples, "To Win the Peace: The Food and Agriculture Organization, Sir John Boyd Orr, and the World Food Board Proposals," *Peace & Change*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (October 2003), p. 497.

¹⁴ There remains a debate among historians as to the actual level of prewar food and agriculture planning in Britain. Recently, Derek J. Oddy debunked what he termed "the myth of a planned diet." Despite various committees and sub-committees, he charged that the government still "had no national food policy when war was declared." Historian Alan Wilt argues the just the opposite, that the government's plans for food and agriculture were in fact "relatively well advanced when the war broke out." See Derek J. Oddy, *From Plain Fare to Fusion Food: British Diet from the 1890s to the 1990s* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), p. 133 and Alan F. Wilt, *Food for War: Agriculture and Rearmament in Britain Before the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 230.

desire to consult with the Dominions on the subject of defence.¹⁵ For various logistical reasons this was put off until the Imperial Conference of 1937. In the meantime, Britain set up the Food (Defence Plans) Department within its Board of Trade. Formed in 1936, its purpose was, in essence, to “ready the food sector for war should that eventuality come about.”¹⁶ The Canadian authorities were ostensibly aware of the existence of this department. In mid-March 1937, Britain ‘drew the attention’ of its Dominions to the purpose behind the Food (Defence Plans) Department, and made it known that food supply in the event of war would be one of the items on the upcoming Imperial Conference agenda.¹⁷

In May 1937, the long-awaited conference finally convened in conjunction with the coronation of King George VI. It did not prove, to contemporary observers at least, to be a very productive gathering. H.V. Hodson, a British diplomat and scholar, judged it to have “produced, in the public eye, scarcely any results at all,” while Robert R. Wilson, a Professor of Political Science at Duke University, commented that it was “not marked by any very spectacular achievement.”¹⁸ Formally led by Prime Minister King, the Canadian delegation included O.D. Skelton, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, and two of his colleagues, Loring Christie and Norman Robertson. As promised, the agenda dealt mainly with economic issues and foreign policy (including

¹⁵ Rainer Tamchina, “In Search of Common Causes: The Imperial Conference of 1937,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1972), p. 79.

¹⁶ Wilt, p. 75.

¹⁷ Francis Floud, British High Commissioner to Ernest Lapointe, Acting Prime Minister, March 16, 1937, *Documents on Canadian External Relations, vol. 6, 1936-1939* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer), pp. 236-237. See also Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG26 J4, (William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers), volume 180, file Memoranda and Notes, reel C-4268, “Imperial Conference, 1937 – Export of Foodstuffs in Time of War From the Dominions and India – Memorandum from His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom,” May 13, 1937.

¹⁸ H.V. Hodson, “The Imperial Conference,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (September 1937), p. 659; Robert R. Wilson, “The Imperial Conference of 1937,” *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April 1938), p. 335. See also R. MacGregor Dawson, “The Imperial Conference,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February 1937): 23-39.

defence), but one prime objective, from Britain's point of view at least, was to open up a dialogue with Dominions in order to gain a sense of the support it could count on in the event of war, and this included food plans. In April a British memorandum outlining what the Canadian delegates could expect summed up the meeting's objectives thusly: "The agenda, in brief, will be – the United Kingdom and the Empire are facing a troubled and dangerous world, what are you going to do in the way of helping in defence?"¹⁹ Certainly the setting of the conference, amidst the pomp and splendour of the coronation, was an excellent backdrop, establishing, it was hoped, a propitious mood for imperial cooperation.

Once begun, the conference devolved into various sub-committees, one of which was the Committee of Munitions and Food Supplies, chaired by Sir Thomas Inskip, Britain's Minister of Defence.²⁰ As a point of departure, on May 13 British officials circulated a memorandum entitled "Export of Foodstuffs in Time of War from the Dominions and India," in which they laid out the broad principles that would govern the provisioning of the nation if a conflict did break out. Dominion delegates learned that the Food (Defence Plans) Department was already liaising with food importers, and that plans for extensive control of Britain's food supply was in the works. Food control during the First World War provided the important precedent. "The broad principle ... on which these defence plans are being prepared," according to the memorandum, were "the same as were actually followed in the last years of the Great War when importing and buying on private account were prohibited and importing firms operated as agents on Government account." The British suggested that with this effective disappearance

¹⁹ "Memorandum, Imperial Conference 1937," April, 1937, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 137.

²⁰ Canadian representatives on this committee included Ian MacKenzie, C.A. Dunning, Loring Christie, L.R. Lafèche, E.C. Ashton, Percy Nelles, G.M. Croil, and H.D.G. Crerar.

of the “free market in the United Kingdom,” the Dominion governments should implement certain state controls as well, particularly over food exports. British officials helpfully provided Dominion representatives with a list of key foods, indicating that most staples, including wheat and grains, meat, sugar, butter, cheese, eggs, oilseeds and nuts, fish, and tea would fall under state command. Again using the First World War as a model, the British stated that they would either buy “the whole of the exportable surplus of a particular product for a certain period,” or else they would enter into bulk contracts as the war progressed, depending on supply and demand.²¹ Reminding Dominion officials that Britain was “largely dependent for foodstuffs on supplies from the Dominions and India,” Inskip said “he was anxious that some general understanding ... should be established as to the manner in which [they] would be willing to help in the event of war...”²² The British, in other words, wanted some indication of what they could expect from Canada, in terms of food, should war come. They were to be disappointed. The committee’s final report simply made the recommendation that regarding food, “in the course of the next few months information should be exchanged” between the various governments.²³

During the conference, Canadian officials also held direct discussions with the Food (Defence Plans) Department. On June 3, Lt.-Col. L.R. Laflèche, Deputy Minister of National Defence, and Norman Robertson of External Affairs conferred with Sir Henry French, Director of Food (Defence Plans), and his Assistant Director, E.M.H.

²¹ LAC, MG26 J4, vol. 180, file Memoranda and Notes, reel C-4268, “Imperial Conference, 1937 – Export of Foodstuffs in Time of War From the Dominions and India – Memorandum from His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom,” May 13, 1937.

²² LAC, MG26 J4, vol. 180, file Memoranda and Notes, reel C-4268, “Imperial Conference, 1937 – Draft Notes of the Second Meeting of the Committee of Munitions and Food Supplies,” June 3, 1937.

²³ LAC, MG26 J4, vol. 180, file Memoranda and Notes, reel C-4268, “Imperial Conference, 1937 – Committee of Munitions and Food Supplies’ Report,” June 9, 1937.

Lloyd. The goal of the meeting, according to French, was to “establish contact and if possible to ensure that machinery would be available to facilitate negotiations on a purely voluntary basis when war broke out.” French was a bit more frank in this bilateral meeting. He told the Canadians that the Department was drawing up plans to control Britain’s food supplies should war break out, and that if war came, the British state would become “the sole purchaser of imported food supplies.” Importers already knew this, and it was thought that the Imperial Conference would be a good time to sound out the Dominions on this issue. French then laid three main points of discussion on the table: the foods Britain would need from Canada in wartime; how Canada would control its food exports; and how the British would buy those commodities. Finally, French wanted to know what government agency or department the British would have to deal with if buying Canadian food was “found necessary.”

Given that the exact circumstances of war were unforeseeable, precise contracts were not feasible, something the commitment-phobic King must have found soothing. Canada, Laflèche told French, had formed a Defence Supply Committee (which brought together officials from the Departments of Agriculture, Labour, National Defence, Transport, Mines, and Trade and Commerce) to handle such matters. Norman Robertson outlined the fact that, in any event, little could really be done before war began as “the Dominion Government had no powers to impose control of the marketing of food in peace and it was unlikely that any legislation would be passed in time of peace conferring powers of wartime control.” Both sides concluded that the issue of food supply in the event of war required further investigation and consultation “through

the regular official channels.”²⁴ Thus, in the realm of food, little came out of either this meeting or the conference in general. But what Canadian officials could not have failed to understand was that in wartime, the British government would not hesitate to intervene in the food economy, and that it fully expected Canada to cooperate by enacting measures compatible with British needs.

Despite clear British desires to liaise on this issue, there is very little evidence that the food question crossed Canadian officials’ minds in the seven months following the conference. In early February 1938, the British had to remind the Canadian authorities that they had agreed to exchange information with the U.K. on the subject of food defence plans. They sent out a secret memorandum that outlined the current state of Britain’s own food plans, and asked for comments on the section pertaining to Canada. Little of substance had changed in the interval, but the details were taking shape. According to these plans, in wartime Britain would look to Canada for “wheat, flour, barley and oats; butter and cheese; bacon and hams; canned salmon and apples.” Private wheat trading in Britain would be halted, which would make the Food Controller the sole purchaser of this commodity. “In these circumstances,” the British indicated, “the question arises whether it is possible that private trading on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange might also be suspended and that some central authority, such as the Canadian Wheat Board, might have to intervene to undertake the sale of wheat to the United Kingdom and negotiate prices and deliveries.” The British were making it quite clear that they expected a complete suspension of peacetime wheat trading in the event of war. The British wanted to know what the Canadian authorities thought of such a

²⁴ “Memorandum, Supply of Food in Time of War From Canada – Notes of Interview with Mr. French, [Director], Food (Defence Plans) Department,” June 3, 1937, *DCER*, vol. 6, pp. 243-244.

scenario, and whether the Wheat Board had any contingency plans in the event that this came to pass. Bacon and butter, it was also noted, in light of compromised European supplies, would probably be the next most important food commodities Canada could supply, most likely on a contract basis. "Advice as to the best procedure to follow in placing these contracts," it was stated, "would be much appreciated."²⁵ But this secret memorandum on British food plans (and Canada's place therein), instead of being acted upon promptly, was swiftly lost in the bureaucratic shuffle. It was apparently forwarded to Laflèche at National Defence and also to the 'relevant' government departments, but by late March not a peep had been heard from those departments, which were then asked by O.D. Skelton "to expedite" the process.²⁶

In May, the British High Commissioner, Sir Francis Floud, took the topic of food supply (which was quickly moving up on the list of British concerns) directly to King.²⁷ The British, perhaps looking for a smoother way to communicate on this increasingly vital question, asked if Canada would appoint a liaison officer to deal with Britain's supply authorities on the issue of food.²⁸ This suggestion did not go over well; Loring Christie dismissed the request, telling O.D. Skelton that:

In replying to Floud would it not be well to say that 'liaison' is not a suitable term and that there will be no sitting in on U.K. committees or boards. Neither of these things is suitable; neither is necessary to the purpose in hand; and neither was contemplated by the Imperial Conference Report, so far as Canada was concerned.²⁹

²⁵ "Memorandum, United Kingdom Food Control Plans in Event of War," January 1938, *DCER*, vol. 6, pp. 241-243.

²⁶ O.D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Francis Floud, British High Commissioner, March 21, 1938, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 245.

²⁷ LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Diaries, May 13, 1938; "Memorandum," Loring Christie to O.D. Skelton, May 22, 1938, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 245.

²⁸ Francis Floud to O.D. Skelton, July 14, 1938, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 246; LAC, WLM King Diaries, May 13, 1938.

²⁹ Loring Christie to O.D. Skelton, May 22, 1938, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 245.

Skelton informed the British of Canada's position, albeit in a more delicately-worded manner. He did have some good news to report, however, for the Inter-Departmental Supply Committee was "making progress" in their examination of the food supply question.³⁰

The foot-dragging continued into 1939. On March 15, the same day that Germany occupied the rump of Czechoslovakia, the new British High Commissioner, Sir Gerald Campbell, asked if Canadian officials "were yet in a position to reply to the High Commissioner's Office letter of February 7th, 1938, regarding arrangements for food control in time of war."³¹ They were not. Still stymied, the British tried other tactics. They asked J.A.C. Osborne, a Treasury Representative with the British Supply Board who had served as the first Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, if he could perhaps get something out of Canadian officials on the subject of supplies (including food) in the event of war.³² In addition, Lester Pearson, at that time working as Secretary to High Commissioner Vincent Massey in London, was asked by E.M.H. Lloyd to "make an informal enquiry" as to whether or not a reply to the secret memorandum was forthcoming.³³ Skelton replied, rather mysteriously, that "as a result of a number of misunderstandings, which have only recently been cleared up, consideration of the United Kingdom proposals and inquiries has been long deferred. It may be expected, however, that an interim reply will soon be returned to the United Kingdom questions."³⁴

³⁰ O.D. Skelton to Francis Floud, July 16, 1938, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 247.

³¹ LAC, RG25 (External Affairs), vol. 757, file 244, reel T-1765, March 15, 1939.

³² LAC, RG25, vol. 757, file 244, reel T-1765, "Memorandum for the Prime Minister," April 22, 1939.

³³ L.B. Pearson, Secretary, High Commission in Britain to O.D. Skelton, April 13, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, pp. 252-253.

³⁴ O.D. Skelton to L.B. Pearson, May 2, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 253.

Whether the memorandum's disappearance had more to do with Skelton's increasing continentalism, his suspicion of British motives, or his administrative shortcomings is not known, but once the débâcle came to light and with the international situation quickly deteriorating, the fact that virtually nothing had been done on the food front caused a scramble among the Canadians to make up for lost time. Skelton immediately sent a copy of the memorandum containing the British food defence plans and their 1938 request to G.S.H. Barton, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture. As Skelton wrote:

With reference to the final paragraph of the memorandum, it might be observed that the United Kingdom inquiries in this field can no longer be considered as remote and hypothetical as they did at the date when the memorandum was first communicated to the Canadian government.³⁵

George McIvor, head of the Canadian Wheat Board, was sent to speak to the Food (Defence Plans) Department about the question of wheat marketing as per the 1938 memorandum. The point, however, was made that the meeting should "be confined to informal exchange of views;" the Canadian government was still in no position to enter into firm agreements.³⁶ McIvor duly met with British food officials and was again told, in no uncertain terms, that "on the outbreak of war" (as war was no longer simply presented as a possibility) the British state "would take over complete control over foodstuffs including mills, flour importers and all open outstanding United Kingdom contracts throughout the world. Fixed price for wheat, flour and bread would be effective immediately which would result in closing Liverpool market. All details worked out." If that were the case, McIvor stated, then wheat would probably come

³⁵ LAC, RG25, vol. 757, file 244, reel T-1765, O.D. Skelton to G.H.S. Barton, May 2, 1939.

³⁶ Secretary of State for External Affairs to Vincent Massey, High Commissioner in Britain, May 11, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 254.

under state control in Canada as well. The head of the Wheat Board, incidentally, also reminded the British that “in any plan here a fair price level for Canadian farmers should be kept in mind.”³⁷

The Canadian attitude toward food supply in the prewar years raises more questions than it answers. Why was the King government so diffident on the issue of food planning in the event of war? Why was the subject not treated with more seriousness? Was it simply an outgrowth of King’s general policy of avoiding binding commitments that could draw Canada into preparations for a war that he was desperate to avoid? Skelton and Christie were both of the opinion that Canada should consider itself “a North American nation,” staying free of “overseas wars and entanglements,” and King’s allergy to anything that might adversely affect Canadian unity is well known.³⁸ Was this odd prevarication over the seemingly innocuous question of food supply part of that ideological bias? It was consistent with the Canadian government’s behaviour in other areas. Obviously, King was not keen on war and the fractious domestic discord it might entail, and both he and Skelton expressed strong reluctance to cooperate with the UK on issues related to defence. King supported the policy of appeasement, and when war was no longer avoidable, he fashioned a Canadian response that was, initially at least, predicated on ‘limited liability.’ Also unhelpful was the fact that King displayed little interest in agricultural topics, a disinterest that spilled over into his government.³⁹ His appointment of James Gardiner as Minister of Agriculture, and

³⁷ High Commissioner in Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, May 12, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 254.

³⁸ John Hilliker, *Canada’s Department of External Affairs, vol. 1: The Early Years, 1909-1946* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), p. 205.

³⁹ Ian MacPherson, “An Authoritative Voice: The Reorientation of the Canadian Farmers’ Movement, 1935 to 1945,” *Historical Papers* (1979), p. 169.

Gardiner's ability to dominate that post and turn it into his own personal fiefdom, was in part a direct result of King's apathy. There is also the question of the government's attitude toward state involvement in the wheat trade. It had been, for the last five years, casting about for some way to terminate the Wheat Board and to get the government out of the business of wheat altogether. The idea that in the event of war the state should *increase* its involvement went against everything it had been working towards. There were, in other words, quite a few points about British food plans that bothered Canadian officials, and that did not accord with the King government's ideological or political tendencies. In the end, Canada's lack of concern was probably due to a combination of all these factors, coupled with the fact that food – while vital – is generally taken for granted, overlooked until events conspire to make it a pressing issue. In the summer of 1939, those events were about to occur.

“Marching Resolutely Forward Facing Backward”

King's government may have been dreading war's entanglements, yet it is a perverse fact of life that wars do – in some cases – bring economic benefits to certain sectors of the economy. Those who produced the staples of war could expect to do well, and that included farmers. But if the war was going to have a positive impact on Canadian agriculture, then the sooner the better. The size of Canada's wheat carryover was enormous, and the harvest then underway on the Prairies threatened to break all previous records. Indeed, the 1939 wheat yield, at over 520 million bushels, turned out to be just shy of the record-setting crop of 1928 when 566 million bushels had been harvested.⁴⁰ The 1939 crop stretched the nation's storage capacity to the very limit and depressed

⁴⁰ *Report of the Minister of Agriculture for the Dominion of Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1940).

prices. But, now that the war had begun, some saw nothing wrong with the massive stash of wheat piling up in the elevators; the curse of plenty might turn out to be a blessing after all. The *Edmonton Journal* argued that the massive 1939 yield “the marketing of which under ordinary conditions would have been difficult, could not have been more opportune.”⁴¹ Wartime Britain, as the *Journal* and many others presumed, would now need more wheat, and Canada (it was further supposed) was the natural place for Britain to buy it. Some Ontario farmers planned on sowing more fall wheat than usual, for, as one contemporary observer pointed out, “They know how important the question of food is and they intend to do what they can to help.”⁴² Noble sentiments, surely, but was this a prudent course to take? The *Canadian Grocer*, a publication serving the food trade, thought so, believing that Canada was “bound to be a more important source of supply for food products,” and that farmers were fortunately placed to experience a windfall with the latest wheat harvest.⁴³

The memory of the First World War, the force behind all this optimism, was reminiscent of the tendency of military strategists to plan for future wars on the basis of the last one. In John Herd Thompson and Ian MacPherson’s brilliant phrase, farm observers were “marching resolutely forward facing backward.”⁴⁴ It is also an important indication that the war’s outbreak had certainly not shifted farmers’ priorities away from profits. The war was seen as a chance for farmers to increase their stagnant incomes and to throw off the Depression’s lingering effects. This was not a matter of

⁴¹ “Large Western Wheat Crop” (Editorial), *Edmonton Journal*, September 9, 1939, p. 4.

⁴² “Farmers to Boost Acreage Plan More in Fall Wheat – Work Being Rushed as Hired Men Hurry to Don Khaki,” *Toronto Star*, September 9, 1939, p. 6.

⁴³ “Many Steadying Influences Seen at Start of War Not Experienced in Last,” *Canadian Grocer*, September 15, 1939, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Ian MacPherson and John Herd Thompson, “An Orderly Reconstruction: Prairie Agriculture in World War Two,” *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. 4 (1984), p. 11.

greed, but in many cases, necessity. During the 1930s, many farmers had been financially unable to keep their land and equipment in satisfactory shape. War production might be hampered by the degraded state of agriculture.⁴⁵ It was hoped that, as in the last war, agricultural objectives could be smoothly harmonized with those of the war effort, leading to economic betterment in the short-and long-term.

Of course, the level to which the war would benefit Canadian farmers depended on British willingness to buy Canadian produce, and in general, Britain's early wartime food policies did not unduly favour Canada. This was understandable given Canada's prewar reluctance to cooperate. The British wanted to tie the U.S. economically to Britain's war effort, and therefore intended to get as much food as possible from the Americans. They would buy "from Canada only what it had to for political reasons, what it could get very cheaply, or what it could not get from the Americans."⁴⁶ This was fair enough; Britain's goal was to buy 'strategically.' Cheaper grain could be obtained on the global market, so instead of Canadian wheat, Britain bought from Argentina and Australia despite longer and more expensive shipping routes. Moreover, to keep Germany from purchasing food supplies from neutral nations, Britain engaged in preventative buying even if the commodities were not immediately needed.⁴⁷ The extension of British agriculture was emphasized, and imports deemed non-essential were restricted to conserve both shipping space and dollars, a policy that had an immediate impact Canadian food producers. Apple growers, for example, were hit hard

⁴⁵ W.M. Drummond, "Agricultural Prices and Agricultural Production," *Canadian Banker*, Vol. 50 (1953), p. 135.

⁴⁶ Dianne Newell, "The Politics of Food in World War II: Great Britain's Grip on Canada's Pacific Fishery," *Historical Papers*, Vol. 22 (1987), p. 182.

⁴⁷ Canadian War Museum (CWM), "Price Rise Unlikely for Canadian Food," *Toronto Star*, December 6, 1939, in *Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War* (hereafter cited as CWM).

when Britain, traditionally the destination for half of the country's apple crop, temporarily stopped all imports of Canadian apples.⁴⁸ In his diary, King expressed his distress at the way in which Canada was being treated, especially in light of the fact that other Dominions were receiving British orders. Australia's entire wool supply, he peevishly noted, was on its way to Britain, and New Zealand had also "made equally generous arrangements" with the U.K. "Our Government," King complained, "has been the first to arrange to send an expeditionary force and yet we are the first to be cut off in the matter of our farm products entering the British market." Gardiner thought that the apple producers would have to be bailed out to avoid disaster, a precedent that King deplored. The prime minister saw this as the start of "guaranteed minimum prices for agricultural products," something he believed should only be resorted to in an emergency situation "where [a] different course might result in demoralizing our producers."⁴⁹ In general, Canadian authorities found it difficult to get the British to buy even essential commodities, such as wheat, and the immediate impact of war was a disappointing drying up of sales rather than an increase. This should not have been all that surprising, however, given the lack of Canadian cooperation in prewar years.

The situation was not helped by the fact that the war drove up the price of wheat from a prewar level of 55 cents a bushel to around 90 cents.⁵⁰ As this price was far too high for the British to stomach, orders from the U.K. stopped. The British had been canny enough to conclude a large purchase of Canadian wheat right before the war began, which some scholars argue allowed them to hold off any further buying of wheat

⁴⁸ Britnell and Fowke, p. 89. See also Margaret Ormsby, "Agricultural Development in British Columbia," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January 1945), p. 18.

⁴⁹ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 21, 1939.

⁵⁰ Britnell and Fowke, p. 86.

at the inflated post-September 1939 prices.⁵¹ This was initially intended to remain in Canada as a reserve stock, but arrangements were made to ship it to Britain when war broke out in September.⁵² As per prewar plans, the Liverpool wheat market was duly closed, and the British authorities wanted the Canadians to do the same to Winnipeg, a request that was refused since “it would not be in the producers’ interest nor the national interest.”⁵³ Such a move would not only go against the King government’s entire philosophy surrounding wheat marketing, it also had the unfortunate effect of fixing wheat prices at a level guaranteed to provoke farm anger.⁵⁴ Wheat prices were finally on the way up; to abandon the free market in favour of sales contracts with Britain and negotiated prices was unacceptable to farmers. As a result, the British quit buying Canadian wheat entirely. The Ministry of Food stated that it would buy Canadian “flour, maize, barley and corn,” but only to the extent that their dollar resources would allow.⁵⁵ For their part, Canadian officials warned the British that the wheat dispute could have “an adverse effect on our national unity and our war effort” if the public began to view it as “a commercial struggle between two opposing interests.”⁵⁶ The confidence that the war would bring assured British purchases of Canadian wheat proved misplaced, as these skidded to a halt in the fall of 1939.

With wheat not moving, and with apples and other products, such as tobacco and poultry, either shut out of overseas markets or being sold in reduced amounts, hopes for a war-fuelled agricultural boom fell almost as quickly as they had risen. The situation

⁵¹ W.K. Hancock and M.M. Gowing, *British War Economy* (London: HMSO, 1949), pp. 154-155.

⁵² C.F. Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain: Government Policy to 1951* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 634.

⁵³ Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in Britain, September 8, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 268.

⁵⁴ Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain*, p. 633.

⁵⁵ Dominions Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 6, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 463.

⁵⁶ Secretary of State for External Affairs to Dominions Secretary, October 10, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 464.

was such that farmers might have to sacrifice more than they had anticipated. The wheat farmer, observed the *Canadian Forum* in October 1939, might just have to make do with “a controlled price as part of his contribution to winning the war,” but this publication also questioned how advantageous that price would be for producers if it was set by the buyers (the British) themselves?⁵⁷ As it turned out there was no guaranteeing that the British would buy Canadian wheat at all, never mind at a fair price. Out of the uncertainty and disappointment came a natural desire on the part of farmers to know exactly what they *should* do to tailor their production to war needs. Farming requires no small amount of advance planning, and in their vulnerable post-Depression state farmers not unreasonably wanted federal guidance before they committed themselves to any great and likely expensive changes in their agricultural activities.⁵⁸

Instead of clear direction, farmers received a combination of vague suggestions, faintly condescending entreaties to be patient, and hints that it would be better to downgrade their high expectations. In late September, according to the *Toronto Star*, G.S.H. Barton commented, somewhat tellingly, that “it was evident that the temper of the people was against allowing this war to become a matter of great profit.”⁵⁹ Saskatchewan’s Minister of Agriculture, J.G. Taggart, admitted to farmers that prospects for a significant rise in wheat prices were not great, and that expanded production was not a good idea.⁶⁰ Gardiner remarked, rather nebulously, that farmers should use this time of uncertainty to take stock of their farm activities and to prepare themselves for

⁵⁷ “Economic Effects of the War,” *Canadian Forum*, October 1939, p. 210.

⁵⁸ “Farmers Want to be Told Now What to Plant,” *Globe and Mail*, October 18, 1939, p. 13.

⁵⁹ “Canada Speeding Food Production To Assist Allies,” *Toronto Star*, September 28, 1939.

⁶⁰ CWM, “Western Canada Warned Against Drastic Change,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 4, 1939.

any sudden demands that war might bring. Canadian farmers were exhorted to be 'flexible,' and to be ready to alter their farming practices at a moment's notice. As warranted as this cautious attitude may have been, it did little to assuage farmers' worries over the continuing lack of British purchases. Far from being a solution to Canadian agricultural woes, the war instead was beginning to look like it might worsen them.⁶¹

The unpalatable truth was that there was a good reason for the lack of concrete guidance coming from federal authorities. Canadian agricultural planning was effectively at a standstill until Britain decided with more certainty what it would buy from Canada, and in what quantities. In the prewar years Britain had created relatively detailed plans to direct and control the British food supply, but the list of what Britain would actually need from Canada was somewhat imprecise, and Canada did not press the British on this. This lack of cooperation came back to haunt Canadian officials, for without clear information from the British, Canada could only guess at what they were going to require, and under what financial terms. Gardiner admitted as much to G.G. Coote of the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture, telling him that policy formulation was impossible until they arrived at "understandings with the British Government regarding the financing of the sale of our food products."⁶² George Britnell and V.C. Fowke summed up the situation that Ottawa faced when they wrote that the "realities of export surpluses, combined with the uncertainties of export demand, made the development of any decisive wartime agricultural production policy by the Canadian Government

⁶¹ "Food Demand Lag Perplexes Farm Leaders," *Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1939, p. 11.

⁶² LAC, RG17 (Agriculture), vol. 3375, file 1500-1 (1), James Gardiner to G.G. Coote, October 10, 1939.

extremely difficult.”⁶³ The most specific statements out of Ottawa indicated that pork and cheese were two commodities that would surely increase in demand.⁶⁴ Indeed, about the only area in which farmers were actively encouraged to expand their production was in hogs; bacon, it was believed, would be one product that Britain would require in great quantities.

Herbert Hannam and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Despite the obstacles, Canada’s government was working on wartime policy, a process in which the Canadian Federation of Agriculture wanted to be involved. But the disappointments were to continue as neither clear direction nor consultations were immediately forthcoming. Herbert H. Hannam, then Vice-President of the CFA, asked numerous times if he could present the views of farmers to the Agricultural Supplies Committee (ASC) but was rebuffed, a fact that left him and his colleagues “disappointed and disturbed.” Hannam was unhappy that the ASC was about to “complete a war program for agriculture and announce it to the public before consultation with producer representatives.”⁶⁵ The call for Canadian farmers to be patient in the face of uncertain demand clashed head on with the frustrated ambitions of producers to finally improve their economic lot.

Hannam, termed “a transitional figure in the Canadian agrarian movement” by historian Ian MacPherson, played a prominent role in wartime agriculture. He was a smooth bridge between the old guard and newer voices heard during the interwar years,

⁶³ Britnell and Fowke, p. 90.

⁶⁴ “Farmers Advised to be Ready to Meet War Output Demand,” *Globe and Mail*, October 6, 1939, p. 2; CWM, “Wartime Foodstuffs Needs are Difficult to Estimate,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 25, 1939.

⁶⁵ LAC, MG28 I66, (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), vol. 5, file 23, H.H. Hannam, 1938-41, Herbert Hannam to Members of the Eastern Canada Conference Continuation Committee, September 29, 1939.

of which his was perhaps the strongest.⁶⁶ Born in 1898 in Grey County, Ontario, in 1926 Hannam graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College with a B.S.A. After a short stint with the agricultural press, he joined the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO), serving as Educational Secretary. A Carnegie Fellowship then took Hannam to Scandinavia where he examined farm co-operatives.⁶⁷ Upon his return to Canada, he became Secretary of the UFO, a position that placed Hannam well on his way to becoming one of Canada's leading agricultural advocates.

Hannam was a strong proponent of cooperative principles – he edited the *Rural Co-operator* and his 1937 pamphlet, *Cooperation: The Plan for Tomorrow Which Works Today*, had been reprinted ten times – and was convinced that Canadian farming communities needed to stand united and that farmers had to organize to improve their economic well-being.⁶⁸ Since the late nineteenth-century, Canadian farmers had formed various groups espousing agrarian principles to further their cause and to present their interests to both government and the public. Organizations such as the Grange and the Patrons of Industry endeavoured to rally farmers around a common cause, while the wheat boom on the Prairies later gave rise to a powerful grain growers' movement. An attempt to organize the very heterogeneous farm community into a neutral, universal interest group was made in 1909 with the formation of the Canadian Council of Agriculture. Poor economic conditions in the postwar years propelled the more politically active, agrarian-based Progressives who briefly had ruffled the political

⁶⁶ MacPherson, "An Authoritative Voice: The Reorientation of the Canadian Farmers' Movement, 1935 to 1945," p. 173.

⁶⁷ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 127, file Hannam, H.H. – Personal, 1941-44, "New Secretary is Experienced – H.H. Hannam Has Studied in Ontario and Europe," *Toronto Weekly Sun*, December 21, 1933.

⁶⁸ "Agriculturalists Support Farmer Union Proposal," *Globe and Mail*, January 7, 1941, p. 1.

establishment before succumbing to internecine forces.⁶⁹ The farm movement was largely dormant until depressed conditions again struck the sector. In 1935, the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture (renamed the Canadian Federation of Agriculture in 1940) was formed, an event that historians Ian MacPherson and Terry Crowley argue marked the moment when the farm movement dropped the pretence of agrarianism and became a narrowly-focused economic lobby group.⁷⁰ That this was done in the midst of seriously depressed agricultural conditions was not coincidental.

During the Second World War, the collective farm voice spoke mainly through the CFA and its leadership. Hannam was still Secretary of the UFO when he was named Vice-President of the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture in 1935. In 1940 he took over as President of the CFA, a position he held until his death in 1963. The CFA was an umbrella group, counting as members provincial farming federations and some commodity-based organizations. On behalf of Canada's farmers, the CFA repeatedly pressed for more consultation with and more direction from Ottawa. Along with clear direction, what farmers wanted most, according to Hannam, was parity. "We are not seeking abnormal profits," Hannam argued. "We do not want prices which will unduly increase the cost of living and lead to after-the-war overproduction and a return of panic prices. All we ask, in the interests of sound economy, is that farmers get an even break, a parity of prices. Even this would not give the average farmer better wages than are

⁶⁹ The UFO won a minority government in 1919, and in 1921 Albertans elected a United Farmers government. With T.A. Crerar as leader, the Progressive Party won 65 seats in the 1921 federal election. In 1922, the United Farmers of Manitoba formed a minority government. See W.L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950).

⁷⁰ MacPherson, "An Authoritative Voice," and Terry Crowley, "J.J. Morrison and the Transition in Canadian Farm Movements During the Early Twentieth Century," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Summer 1997), p. 330.

paid to unskilled labour.”⁷¹ The *Globe and Mail* agreed. “The Canadian farmer,” it argued, “is entitled to something better than the standard of living of a European peasant.”⁷²

The call for parity was another vestigial remnant of the Depression, a somewhat ephemeral concept that somehow managed to entwine economic formulas with abstract notions of agrarian idealism and equality between industry and agriculture, and between producer and consumer. The notion transcended pure economics, and was suffused with a desire for the recognition of agriculture’s vital place within society. Wrapped up in the idea of ‘parity’ was the belief that farmers should be treated the same as other economic agents, and that they deserved “a far larger share of the consumer dollar” than they were getting.⁷³ The period between 1926 and 1929, the heralded boom years for agriculture, were held up as the standard by which farm prices should be judged. The war, it seemed to some, presented Canadian farmers with an unbridled opportunity to recapture the golden, perhaps mythological, days of parity, but in order for that to happen, the British needed to buy much more food than they were at present.

Priming the Pump? The Crerar Mission to Britain

The difficulty in getting the British to buy Canadian food was but one part of a broader problem with war supply as a whole. Canada, not unreasonably, wanted to know how its resources could be best put to use, while Britain had a host of pressing issues of its own to consider. What the two nations needed to do was communicate as directly as possible. The lack of British purchases had been no small topic in the federal cabinet,

⁷¹ “Butter Prices Less Than Cost of Production,” *Globe and Mail*, October 16, 1939, p. 15.

⁷² “Low Farm Prices” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, October 17, 1939, p. 6.

⁷³ “Intelligent Plans for Farms Urged,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 6, 1940, p. 1.

which had agreed to take Canada's concerns directly to London.⁷⁴ So, as farmers waited to learn what, exactly, they might be called upon to produce for the war effort, in Autumn 1939 a contingent of Canadian officials travelled to London to pin down the reticent British and to smooth a path for Canadians goods to flow to the U.K. Almost simultaneously, Britain's Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, invited the Dominions to send representatives over to engage in discussions on a broad range of defence and war supply issues.⁷⁵ Gardiner was keen to go, but King had no intention of sending him as the Minister of Agriculture had "special interests and points of view of [his] own."⁷⁶ This was certainly the case. Described by historian Joseph Schull as "the most ruthless politician" in King's cabinet, James Garfield Gardiner left a complicated, at times controversial, legacy.⁷⁷ Gardiner, perhaps more than anyone else, helped shape the nation's agricultural policies at this critical juncture. In addition, despite fashioning himself as the farmer's champion, at times Gardiner inspired as much criticism as admiration from amongst the agricultural classes. He was, in short, a truly polarizing figure in Canadian politics.

Born in Farquhar, Ontario in 1883, Gardiner worked as a schoolteacher in Saskatchewan before earning a degree in political economy and history from the University of Manitoba. Upon his return to Saskatchewan, he bought a farm and continued to teach. Vaulting quickly into public life, he made his adopted province his life-long political base, becoming a Liberal MLA in 1914, serving as Premier from 1926

⁷⁴ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 21, 1939.

⁷⁵ Dominions Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, September 21, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, pp. 375-376; Wilson, p. 643.

⁷⁶ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 28, 1939.

⁷⁷ Joseph Schull, *The Great Scot: A Biography of Donald Gordon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), p. 53.

to 1929, and again from 1934 to 1935. Gardiner then made the jump to federal politics, accepting an offer from Prime Minister Mackenzie King to serve as his Minister of Agriculture, a post Gardiner held from 1935 to 1957. Gardiner was known for his unswerving party fealty and for ruthlessly promoting both the Liberal cause and his own political ambitions which he founded largely on western interests and agriculture. As some scholars aver, Gardiner's ambitions really lay in a broader domain; he wanted to become more than a regional, sectoral politician.⁷⁸ He made the Department of Agriculture his kingdom, but he did so somewhat reluctantly after it became clear that he would not be given his first choices, either Finance or National Revenue. Gardiner felt that his talents would be best put to use in a financial post, and he was also constantly on the look out for an office that would give him "more national influence." Agriculture, which in 1935 was viewed as an inferior post, was not considered a national position but was rather closely identified with the Prairies and with Prairie politicians. To accept a "western portfolio" was to accept a role as King's western representative on the federal stage. Gardiner initially fought against this, but accepted when he realized that King was not going to give in.⁷⁹

Failing to secure a 'national' post, Gardiner thus set about turning the heretofore regional portfolio into a national one. At the Department of Agriculture one of his initial goals, as his biographer David E. Smith points out, was to raise the profile of the agricultural sector within government and to secure for his department a position of

⁷⁸ See Robert Wardhaugh, "Region and Nation: The Politics of Jimmy Gardiner," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Fall 1993): 24-36.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33; Ward and Smith, pp. 195-201; Norman Ward, "The Politics of Patronage," p. 304.

prestige.⁸⁰ Along with that came an attendant desire to alleviate the depredations that the Great Depression had wrought on farmers, an objective that continued into the war years. Attaining that objective, however, would have to be done without overly intrusive government regulation – at this juncture Gardiner, an upholder of *laissez-faire* economic principles, opposed interventionist methods.⁸¹ That said, Gardiner’s attitude towards the Canadian Wheat Board, which the Liberals wished to eradicate, was a bit ambiguous.⁸² This institution, which John Herd Thompson termed a “symbol of First World War interventionism,” enjoyed broad farmer support and could not be scrapped without provoking Prairie antagonism.⁸³ Gardiner’s initial mechanism for economic redress was the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), an initiative begun by the R.B. Bennett government and which was designed to combat drought conditions by paying a subsidy to farmers who implemented certain water and soil conservation measures.⁸⁴ Gardiner turned this into a large, successful body that increased the Department of Agriculture’s stature while also providing him with an excellent political tool for his own purposes.⁸⁵

Another key ideological plank in Gardiner’s make-up was his unflagging loyalty to Britain and the cause of Empire, certainly one he shared with many other Canadians of a similar age and background. As his biographers note, the Second World War gave Gardiner the ultimate occasion to express the “sense of pride he felt as a citizen of the

⁸⁰ David E. Smith, “James G. Gardiner: Political Leadership in the Agrarian Community,” *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Spring 1987), p. 49.

⁸¹ MacPherson, “An Authoritative Voice: The Reorientation of the Canadian Farmers’ Movement, 1935 to 1945,” p. 169.

⁸² Ward and Smith, p. 233.

⁸³ John Herd Thompson, *Canada, 1922-1939*, p. 302.

⁸⁴ Ward and Smith, p. 216.

⁸⁵ For more on Gardiner’s use of the PFRA and the Prairie Farm Assistance Act (PFAA) as instruments of patronage, see Ward, 1977.

Empire,” as well as the opportunity to make a contribution to the Imperial cause, not the least of which was coordinating Canadian agriculture to provide the immense amounts of food required by the Allied war effort.⁸⁶ Gardiner thus went into the war with a series of contending interests on his plate: farmers, the Prairies, the Liberal Party, the British Empire, and not least, his own political aspirations. The question lay in how the party machinist, classic *laissez-faire* liberal, and reluctant Minister of Agriculture would balance those interests.

King barred Gardiner from the mission to Britain, and appointed a safer, more predictable politician to lead the delegation, T.A. Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources. Along with Crerar went “three outstanding experts in the marketing of farm products,” namely, George McIvor, A.M. Shaw, and Dana Wilgress.⁸⁷ Experts, certainly, but they were not farmers. Nor, however, were they agricultural neophytes. As Sir Robert Borden’s Minister of Agriculture from 1917 to 1919, Crerar was no stranger to farm issues, nor was he inexperienced when it came to food and war. As a former president of the Grain Growers’ Grain Company and the United Grain Growers, Crerar had once been prominent in the pre-First World War cooperative movement, but according to Gardiner was now a ‘dinosaur,’ out of touch with the current farm movement and its goals. “Tom has a lot of fixed ideas in his head which he got in the last war ... It makes it very difficult to do what needs to be done and will have to be done before long,” Gardiner moodily remarked to *Winnipeg Free Press* journalist Grant

⁸⁶ Ward and Smith, p. 231.

⁸⁷ CWM, “Government Makes Efforts to Iron Out its Difficulties Over Foodstuff Shipments,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 30, 1939. The delegation also included General H.D. Crerar, L.S. Breadner, and C.W. Jackson of the Department of Mines and Resources.

Dexter.⁸⁸ He characterized McIvor and Shaw as ‘establishment’ men, a wheat executive and an academic, respectively, who could not possibly be seen as representing producers at the grassroots level. Shaw, the former Dean of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan, was Director of the Marketing Service of the Department of Agriculture and the chair of the newly-formed Agricultural Supplies Committee. McIvor had been Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board since 1937. Wilgress, Director of the Commercial Intelligence Service at the Department of Trade and Commerce, had experience in overseas wheat marketing. Arriving at a later date was Graham Towers, Governor of the Bank of Canada. Prior to departing, King beseeched Towers to “emphasize the necessity of keeping Western Canada interested in war by seeing justice done to wheat and other food products.” It would not be easy; Crerar had already told King that in the last war the British had proven to be “very hard bargainers on everything.”⁸⁹ Still, if the British expected Canadians to do their utmost in support of the war, they had to show their good faith by putting in some orders for Canadian produce.

In terms of food, the Crerar mission met with mixed results. Originally in favour of maintaining an open market in wheat, a fateful trip by Crerar to the problematic Maginot Line gave rise to the realization of what would happen to wheat prices if the Germans invaded France, and converted him to support long-term fixed price contracts.⁹⁰ The British Minister of Food, William Morrison, had earlier broached the subject with Crerar. Britain reportedly offered to buy Canadian wheat at a price of

⁸⁸ Grant Dexter, *Ottawa at War: The Grant Dexter Memoranda, 1939-1945* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1994), p. 21.

⁸⁹ LAC, WLM King Diaries, November 15, 1939; September 21, 1939.

⁹⁰ J.E. Rae, *T.A. Crerar: A Political Life* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), pp. 195-196.

around 85 cents a bushel if Canada closed its wheat market, a suggestion that Grant Dexter wrote “came as a frightful shock all round.” That this proposal ‘shocked’ Canadian officials is puzzling given that Britain had certainly made no secret of its desires in this area prior to the war. Some believed that if Canada could just hold out until Britain had stopped buying wheat from alternative sources, such as Argentina, then “Canada’s bargaining position might be strong enough to extract a price higher than 85 cents.”⁹¹ Crerar presented the British with two proposals of his own; one that would see between 250-300 million bushels of wheat sold to Britain by July 31, 1941, at one dollar a bushel; and another for 150 to 180 million bushels at 93 1/3 cents a bushel.⁹² These prices seemed almost absurd in light of the fact that the current price per bushel at the Winnipeg market was 73 cents.⁹³ Accordingly, the British demurred, stating that the price was “much too high,” and would boost the cost of bread in Britain, a serious consideration during war.⁹⁴ This point was moot, however, for back in Ottawa the Cabinet Wheat Committee rejected the proposals as well, effectively ending Crerar’s quest to sell wheat to the British.⁹⁵

Still, the mission bore fruit in other areas, notably a bacon agreement, the first of a long series of food contracts between Canada and Great Britain. During the First

⁹¹ Dexter, p. 15.

⁹² High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, December 2, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 471.

⁹³ C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), p. 24.

⁹⁴ In his book *Canada’s War*, J.L. Granatstein called this argument “emotional blackmail” on the part of the British, but given the importance of bread to wartime feeding (and morale) the British objection was quite valid. During the First World War, the cost of bread had been subsidized by the state, and the rationing of bread was carefully avoided so as to prevent civilian unrest.

⁹⁵ Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in Great Britain, December 5, 1939, *DCER*, vol. 6, p. 472. The Wheat Committee’s decision may have been influenced by the bevy of “wheat experts” from Winnipeg who were completely against signing any lengthy contracts with the British, lest the open market in wheat be jeopardized. Several of these individuals had, according to Grant Dexter, rushed to Ottawa to prevent Crerar’s proposals from being accepted. See Dexter, p. 23.

World War, bacon had been one of Canada's key exports to the United Kingdom, averaging 200 million pounds a year between 1915 and 1920. Following the war, bacon exports to Britain had gradually dropped off until the Ottawa Trade Agreements were concluded in 1932. Under these terms, up to 280 million pounds of bacon could be freely exported to Britain on an annual basis. Although this quota was never reached in the prewar years, by September 1939 pork exports to Britain had recovered significantly.⁹⁶ Thanks to this new agreement, Canada promised to deliver a minimum of 4,480,000 and a maximum of 5,600,000 pounds of bacon per week until October 31, 1940, at a price which averaged out to about 9 cents a pound, live weight.⁹⁷ In order to oversee this contract, a Bacon Board was formed, with J.G. Taggart, Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture, at the helm.⁹⁸ Not surprisingly, many farmers initially reacted favourably, as the deal's wider significance was obvious. First, this new bacon deal promised to renew the fortunes of the pork industry, offering a guaranteed market for bacon that could potentially reach 291 million pounds. "A great opportunity is presented," wrote the *Farmers' Advocate*, "and it is our duty to approach the task with determination and a desire to perform this service in the most efficient manner possible."⁹⁹ More importantly, perhaps, was the indication that the floodgates of British purchasing (and therefore wartime prosperity), might finally be open. The *Globe and*

⁹⁶ Britnell and Fowke, p. 86.

⁹⁷ This was the minimum amount. Britain agreed to take more if it was available, up to a limit of 5,600,000 pounds per week. For more details on the contract, see J.E. Lattimer, "The British Bacon Agreement," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (February 1940): 60-67.

⁹⁸ The British penchant for dealing with separate commodity agencies when concluding large purchases was the reason for setting up the Board. The Bacon Board would later be expanded and renamed, becoming the Meat Board in June 1943. Other such bodies included the Dairy Products Board and the Special Products Board.

⁹⁹ "British Bacon Agreement Presents a Grand Opportunity" (Editorial), *Farmers' Advocate*, December 14, 1939, p. 728.

Mail called it “the most important news for the Canadian farmer that has come over the wires in weeks.”¹⁰⁰ It was, the *Montreal Gazette* told its readers, the awaited signal that Britain would now begin buying substantial quantities of Canadian food, and for farmers, this was the key.¹⁰¹

Still, amidst all this optimism, some dissenting voices were heard especially after the terms of the agreement were scrutinized. The price was deemed unsatisfactory by some, especially since Britain was paying more for Danish bacon. In addition, if the British stuck to the minimum amount, under the new contract the quantity of bacon exported to Britain by Canada would be significantly smaller than the previous quota under the Ottawa Trade Agreements (233 million pounds as opposed to 280 million pounds).¹⁰² Some Ontario politicians and producers were unhappy for other reasons. Responsibility for agriculture, after all, was supposed to be shared between the provinces and the federal authorities. Ontario was home to most of Canada’s pork production, yet Mitchell Hepburn’s government claimed that it had not received any official details on the bacon contract, complained that it did not have direct representation on the Bacon Board, and did not think farmers had been adequately informed. “The packers do know all about the agreement,” objected Ontario Minister of Agriculture P.M. Dewan, “and personally I don’t see why the producers should not be informed about it, either by the Bacon Board or the Federal Government.”¹⁰³ Manitoba

¹⁰⁰ “A \$50,000,000 Bacon Market” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, December 5, 1939, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ “Sending Home the Bacon” (Editorial), *Montreal Gazette*, December 6, 1939, p. 8

¹⁰² “Who Gets Interim Bacon Money?,” *Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1940, p. 6. If the maximum amount was taken, then the total amount would exceed the quota by about 11 million pounds. In practice, the British generally took the maximum amount, 5 to 6 million pounds weekly.

¹⁰³ “Bacon Exports Details Secret, Dewan Charges,” *Globe and Mail*, January 17, 1940, p. 5. The Bacon Board thus sent L.W. Pearsall, their Secretary-Manager, to Queen’s Park to address some of these concerns. Pearsall chided those who complained about the price being offered, noting that Britain could have chosen to get its bacon from the United States at a lower cost.

Premier John Bracken, an agronomist, jumped into the fray as well, urging the federal government to introduce measures to regulate the profits that the Canadian packing industry stood to make under the new agreement.¹⁰⁴

Vestiges of the First World War were obvious in the repeated invocation of the ‘packers.’ During the last war an enormous hue and cry had been raised over the excessive profits made by the packing industry, most notably Joseph Flavelle’s Canada Packers, resulting in an official inquiry.¹⁰⁵ Another part of the problem, as Bracken noted, was that pork packers were getting a guaranteed price for their product while the farmers who raised the hogs were not; indeed, the packers themselves would, as in peacetime, set the prices they would pay to farmers – was this fair? Members attending the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture conference complained that the federal Department of Agriculture was treating them with unwarranted diffidence. Packers, they contended, were being “consulted about every move” while farmers were unduly neglected.¹⁰⁶ Gardiner further fanned the flames when he announced that farmers should not expect higher prices in the early years of war. Only if the conflict lasted beyond three years would farmers begin to cash in through ‘soaring’ prices. But even then, he warned, “it is the desire of every sensible person that they should not rise as high as in 1918.”¹⁰⁷ Statements such as this cast doubt on Gardiner as the ‘farmer’s champion;’ could he be relied upon to fight for farm interests within the King government? If Canadian farmers wanted to have a say in the direction of wartime

¹⁰⁴ CWM, “Manitoba Premier Asks Protection for Farmers,” *Hamilton Spectator*, February 3, 1940; “Wants Profit Control,” *Toronto Star*, February 3, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ For an account of the packing scandal, see Michael Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire: The Life and Business Times of Joseph Flavelle* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978).

¹⁰⁶ “Who Gets Interim Bacon Money?,” *Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1940, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ “Warns Farmers Not to Expect Price Boost Yet,” *Globe and Mail*, February 20, 1940, p. 4.

agriculture, perhaps they needed to turn to a representative certain to express their desires and keep their concerns on the front burner.

A Growing Concern: The Emergence of the Farm Labour Shortage

The CFA moved to fill the leadership void. In February 1940 the federation released a ten-point plan that addressed the position of Canadian farmers within the war economy. The first point essentially called for parity, asking that the government work to “establish a fair relationship between the price of agricultural products and the products the farmer has to buy.”¹⁰⁸ The practice of selling to Britain via contract meant that the prices paid to farmers would not go up, while the costs of everything the farmer had to buy to produce (or even to live) were rising. Statistics bore this out.

Between Autumn 1939 and Spring 1940 the rural cost of living rose 6.5%, almost double the rise in urban areas.¹⁰⁹ The second point addressed the desire of farmers to have a voice at the state-planning level by having representatives named to the relevant war supply boards. Other points

called for protections to be put in place against over-production, a regulatory board for livestock, and several measures designed to alleviate some of the economic problems

**TO FARMERS
WHO NEED HELP**

Able Bodied Men...Willing to Work on Farms for Two or Three Months... are Available for Haying, Harvesting and General Farm Work

The Government of Ontario is ready and willing to help Farmers who need extra workers. Realizing that farm crops are vital to Canada's war effort, the Ontario Department of Labour has formulated a plan to register workers who will be available to harvest these crops.

In view of the fact that there is a scarcity of farm help we ask for your co-operation. Many willing workers have registered for work with the Ontario Department of Labour and are now ready for immediate employment. Farmers who need extra help should apply to the nearest Ontario Employment Office... or write direct to A. MacLaren, Director Farm Training, Department of Labour, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR
HON. N. O. HIPEL
Minister of Labour

Globe and Mail, July 13, 1940

¹⁰⁸ CWM, “Greater Income From Farm Work Vitally Needed,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 13, 1940;

“Says Farmers Have Already Contributed Heavily to War,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 18, 1940.

¹⁰⁹ “Living Cost Up in Rural Districts,” *Globe and Mail*, July 31, 1940, p. 14.

being faced by farmers. One issue that was not addressed in the CFA's manifesto was that of farm labour, a strange omission given its ultimate importance. In the end, the shortage of experienced farm help proved to be one of, if not *the* most difficult issue faced by Canadian farmers during the war, and one which would make their eventual accomplishments all the more striking. The attractions of military service and the higher wages of war-related employment would eventually draw over one-quarter of the labour force from the nation's farms. As the war effort intensified, as new defence projects

multiplied, farmers found it harder and harder to keep experienced farm hands in their employ.

The farm labour issue did not manifest itself as a potential problem right away, likely because the rural labour pool was unnaturally large at the beginning of the war. The Depression had caused something of a population explosion in rural areas as many urban unemployed had drifted to farms in search of work, or

Globe and Mail, August 14, 1940

simply to try and scratch out subsistence on the land.¹¹⁰ When wartime employment prospects in the cities picked up, these migrant urbanites left the rural areas. The real problems occurred when large numbers of experienced agricultural labourers succumbed to the attractions of the defence industry or military service. King's government would



EMERGENCY CALL

**To farmers
to school boys and
to secondary school girls**

FARMERS

If you can use able-bodied willing youth for harvesting and general farm help, apply immediately to your Reeve, Agricultural Representative or local Employment Office.

SCHOOL BOYS

If you are willing to serve your country's needs by helping on the farms, enrol with your school principal at your own school. Watch for enrollment dates.

SCHOOL GIRLS

If you are willing to serve by selling war certificates enrol with your school principal at your own school. Watch for enrollment dates.

The maintenance of a continuous supply of food for Britain's fighting forces and civilian population is of paramount importance in the successful prosecution of the war. The financing of our war effort is another battle which must be won on the home economic front. The Ontario Government seeks the co-operation of all in meeting the present critical situation.

M. F. HEPBURN
PREMIER

N. O. RIFEL
MINISTER OF LABOR

¹¹⁰ The government had fostered the movement of unemployed men from the cities to the country through employment schemes. See Cecilia Danysk, "No Help for the Farm Help: The Farm Employment Plans of the 1930s in Prairie Canada," *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1994): 231-251.

never block farmers from voluntarily enlisting in the armed forces, but some public figures sensed the danger that a loss of experienced manpower could pose to the farm sector, and urged caution. In early 1940, Quebec Premier Adélard Godbout, an agronomist and former Minister of Agriculture for Quebec, expressed his apprehension over the military recruiting taking place in the province's rural districts, and argued that farming needed special 'protection.' In Ontario, Conservative MLA Col. T.L. Kennedy asked farmers to postpone their plans to enlist.¹¹¹

In June 1940, after the fall of France and consequent public pressure to increase the level of Canada's involvement, the government passed the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), rendering single males between the ages of 21 and 45 liable for military service for home defence purposes.¹¹² In the wake of this, the Agricultural Supplies Board (ASB) advised flexibility with regard to the military training of home defence conscripts. It urged that agriculture be designated "an essential industry," and that any military training of farmer-recruits take place during the agricultural 'off-season' between November and March. The Board also suggested that farm operators be considered a "reserved occupation," with their military training scheduled so that no farms would be left without at least "one able-bodied man in charge."¹¹³ At this point, it should be noted that the CFA's position on farmers and military service broadly mirrored that of the ASB, an important point of agreement. In another encouraging

¹¹¹ "Godbout Bucks Farm Recruits," *Globe and Mail*, January 9, 1940, p. 3; "Delay Joining, Farmers Urged," *Globe and Mail*, July 23, 1940, p. 4. For more on Godbout's agricultural background, see Jean-Guy Genest, *Godbout* (Sillery: Éditions du Septentrion, 1996).

¹¹² See J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) and E.L.M. Burns, *Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1956).

¹¹³ LAC, RG17, vol. 3411, file 1500-25 (1), Department of National War Services, "Recommendations of the Agricultural Supplies Board in respect to the military training of those employed on farms and in Dominion and provincial agricultural services," July 17, 1940.

move, both the President and the Vice-president of the CFA, Hannam and J.H. Wesson respectively, were invited to sit on an advisory committee by the Department of National War Services.¹¹⁴ On the surface at least, it seemed that farm labour would be treated as producers believed it should: as a vital component of an essential war industry.

Grumbling on the Back Forty: Farm Frustrations Mount

The critical events that occurred in Europe in Spring 1940 also had broad implications for Canadian agriculture and food exports. As more territory fell to the Germans, Canada's overseas markets, which had included nations such as France, contracted; there could be no more coyness in the nation's trading relationship with Great Britain. For many commodities Britain was now Canada's only customer, not terribly good news for farmers looking for better returns for their produce. As the year wore on, frustration in the farming community increased, and criticism of Gardiner and the Department of Agriculture was heard throughout the country. At this point, prices were the main point of contention. They were too low for farmers to repair the damage done by the Depression, and those in charge of agricultural policy in Ottawa did not seem to be in a hurry to fix things. This was not simply a matter of narrow self-interest. Farmers, as patriotic as any other group, wanted to do their utmost to aid the war effort and were willing to follow the government's lead. But they needed the means to do so effectively. "We are often told that we are the backbone of the country," wrote one disgruntled farmer to the *Farmers' Advocate*. "You do not have to believe it. I don't –

¹¹⁴ CWM, "Federation of Agriculture Advises Ottawa Authorities," *Hamilton Spectator*, July 27, 1940.

because if we were we would not be in this deplorable condition.”¹¹⁵ Hannam voiced the widespread complaint that farmers were shouldering a disproportionate amount of the war effort, arguing that “[b]y producing below the cost of production for the first nine months of the war, farmers have already made the greatest contribution to this war of any industrial class or group in the country.”¹¹⁶ In addition, he pressed the point that Canada was “the last of all the important agricultural countries in the world to recognize the seriousness of farm problems and to take any steps to do anything about the situation.”¹¹⁷ A related complaint was that farmers were still being left out of the policy making process.¹¹⁸ E.W. Brunsten of the Alberta Federation of Agriculture demanded that Ottawa bring farmers into a “full partnership in the planning of agriculture.”¹¹⁹

As minister, James Gardiner attracted much of the anger. In July 1940, when Gardiner was named head of the newly created Department of National War Services, it gave the anti-Gardiner faction a reason to cheer.¹²⁰ It was widely assumed that he would be replaced as Minister of Agriculture with John Bracken, J.G. Taggart, W.J. Patterson and later Adélard Godbout rumoured to be in the running for the position.¹²¹ Both King and Gardiner wanted Agriculture to go to someone else, but difficulty in securing an acceptable replacement meant that Gardiner stayed on.¹²² When it became clear that he was not going anywhere, comments, mostly negative, sprang forth from farmers and

¹¹⁵ “The Backbone of the Country” (Letter), *Farmers’ Advocate*, May 9, 1940, p. 316.

¹¹⁶ CWM, “Says Farmers Have Already Contributed Heavily to War,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 18, 1940.

¹¹⁷ “Sees Farm Policy Meeting Criticism,” *Edmonton Journal*, July 8, 1940, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ “On Parliament Hill,” *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1940, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ “Intelligent Plans for Farms Urged,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 6, 1940, p. 1.

¹²⁰ According to Grant Dexter, Gardiner was given this post (which may have been created especially for him) when his demand for the Finance portfolio was once again refused. Dexter, p. 77.

¹²¹ “Hint Bracken Will Succeed to Farm Post,” *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1940, p. 11; “Federal Post for Godbout?,” *Globe and Mail*, October 19, 1940, p. 3.

¹²² Ward and Smith, pp. 237-238. Gardiner wanted J.G. Taggart to take over as Minister of Agriculture, but King did not agree. King favoured Saskatchewan premier W.J. Patterson, a selection that Gardiner opposed.

others who argued that he was spreading his energies too thinly. If Gardiner had proven disappointing when agriculture was his 'only' concern, what could farmers expect from him now? In a September 1940 editorial, the *Edmonton Journal* repeated calls for Gardiner's removal, insisting that as agriculture was of "vital importance" the government should appoint "a fully competent man whose administrative functions will be confined to the department of agriculture."¹²³ Doing so would allow Gardiner to concentrate on War Services while agriculture would be given the attention (and respect) it deserved. Even the generally friendly *Globe and Mail* eventually questioned Gardiner's capacity to handle two such sprawling ministries.¹²⁴ Some Western farmers, accusing Gardiner of causing a rift between the farming and non-farming populations, asked that his agricultural portfolio be taken away. Gardiner's capability to handle both jobs was perhaps less important than the 'optics' of the situation. If agriculture was vital (which it certainly was), did the sector not deserve a full-time minister? How were Canada's farmers supposed to interpret the fact that the individual in charge of their industry had enough time to take on such sprawling additional responsibilities? Was this proof perhaps of a cavalier attitude towards agriculture on the part of King's government?

On other fronts, developments were similarly demoralizing for farmers. With the farm labour shortage worsening, earlier hopes that the issue would be taken seriously faded. As it turned out, empirical evidence that rural labour shortages existed did not automatically translate into action by either the public or the government, something

¹²³ "Confusion in Farm Policies" (Editorial), *Edmonton Journal*, September 10, 1940, p. 4; "Relieve Mr. Gardiner of One or Other of His Posts" (Editorial), *Edmonton Journal*, October 18, 1940, p. 4.

¹²⁴ "It's a Full-Time Job" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, October 26, 1940, p. 6; "Urge Gardiner Be Removed," *Globe and Mail*, October 15, 1940, p. 3.

that was particularly true in the war's early years. In Ontario an outwardly innocuous proposal by Premier Mitchell Hepburn that the 'Soldiers of the Soil' campaign of the First World War, when 22,000 willing youths had been mobilized as farm labour, be resurrected ended up causing a firestorm of controversy. Recalling the success of the earlier scheme, in Summer 1940 Hepburn suggested that Ontario students again form "a youthful agrarian army," made up of mainly urban students aged 12 to 17, to assist the province's labour-short farmers. On its own, the scheme would have been difficult to oppose – no student would be compelled to participate and no farmer would be forced to take on volunteers. Hepburn, however, crossed a line, and stepped on some jurisdictional toes, when he suggested that in order to derive the greatest benefit from the plan, schools should delay their opening dates by two to four weeks. This provincial incursion into matters that were generally left up to the municipalities touched a nerve. School board members, teachers and parents criticized the usefulness of employing untrained city youth on farms, especially those of a younger age. The Chairman of the Toronto Board of Education, for one, was sceptical. "I don't know what contribution the city schools can make," he wondered, "as city people for the most part know really very little about farming."¹²⁵ In addition, the labour movement adamantly denounced the plan as "a return to the dark ages."¹²⁶ The problem, they argued, was not so much a labour scarcity as the inability of farmers to pay a competitive wage. Paying farmers a fair price for their produce would allow them to offer higher wages and thus preclude the need for 'emergency' help in the form of low-paid schoolchildren and untrained urban volunteers.

¹²⁵ "Schoolboy Land Army Called For," *Globe and Mail*, August 3, 1940, p.1.

¹²⁶ CWM, "Farm 'Child Labor' Scored as Return to 'Dark Ages,'" *Toronto Star*, August 3, 1940.

Even some farmers were lukewarm on the proposal, feeling that farm work was simply too demanding for untrained urban boys to perform. One farmer from Nelson township claimed that city youth, unused to agriculture, “would be only a nuisance and a worry to the farmer,” prone to injuring both themselves and the farmer’s equipment.¹²⁷ This argument may have had some merit. Among the “scores” of boys rushing to enlist as farm hands were many ultimately rejected for being undersized.¹²⁸ The *Toronto Star*, a firm opponent of the *Globe and Mail*, Hepburn, and the youth labour scheme, reported that one twelve-year-old boy was keen to volunteer as “it meant more holidays from school.”¹²⁹ When asked which end of a cow gets milked, the boy answered “the front end.” A far better idea, some argued, would be for the government to draft unemployed adult males to work on the farms.¹³⁰

Ontario’s government, school trustees argued, lacked the legal authority to impose delayed opening dates, but Hepburn reminded the school boards that as the province controlled school funding, he still ultimately held the stick.¹³¹ This threat did nothing to quell the controversy, as many saw Hepburn’s comments as confirmation of what they deemed a fundamental challenge to the very “democracy” for which the nation was fighting.¹³² The situation was finally resolved by moving the delayed high school opening date back from October 1 to September 16, and by allowing school

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “300 Boys Storm Offices to Get Work on Farms,” *Globe and Mail*, August 7, 1940, p. 4; “Boys Seek Farmhands’ Jobs at Labor Offices,” *Globe and Mail*, August 9, 1940, p. 5. Other parts of the province reported far less enthusiasm for the scheme. See CWM, “Few Students Have Enrolled for Soldiers-of-Soil Plan,” *Hamilton Spectator*, August 19, 1940; “Few Students are Reporting for Rural Jobs,” *Hamilton Spectator*, August 21, 1940.

¹²⁹ “Schoolboy Army Proposal ‘Hooyey, Eyewash’ To Trustee,” *Toronto Star*, August 8, 1940, p. 2.

¹³⁰ “Hepburn’s ‘Land Army’ Plan Denounced as ‘Child Labor,’” *Toronto Star*, August 7, 1940, p. 5.

¹³¹ “Can’t Make Schools Close’ But Hepburn Drops Hint,” *Toronto Star*, August 9, 1940, p. 1; CWM, “Hepburn Uses Club to Keep Schools Shut,” *Toronto Telegram*, August 8, 1940.

¹³² “Sees Hepburn Undermining ‘Democracy From Within,’” *Toronto Star*, August 9, 1940, p. 8.

boards to decide for themselves whether or not to implement the delay. In announcing this compromise, Ontario Minister of Labour Norman Hipel lashed out at critics of the plan, arguing that far more than 1,000 students (the number that had been placed on farms) would have joined up “had it not been for the criticism of the program.”¹³³ The *Globe and Mail* leapt to the plan’s (and Hepburn’s) defence, accusing the *Toronto Star* of political bias in its over-the-top vilification of the scheme. Other papers that had taken a more dispassionate approach, notably the *Globe and Mail*, had found the plan reasonable and worthy of further investigation. “Is it not imperative,” asked the paper, “that our leaders lay plans to ensure that the Empire’s food supplies be maintained even with the help of students?”¹³⁴

This odd episode embodied a wider debate that would occur throughout the war. The non-farming public’s attitude toward agriculture, and indeed, the food issue in general, was ambiguous at best. As the *Hamilton Spectator* pointed out, circumstances dictated that it was “vitally essential that food supplies should be maintained” and that “the needs of agriculture are an important part of the national war effort.” But when established routines were threatened, when those not part of Canada’s agricultural community were called upon to sacrifice for the good of their rural brethren, to what extent did urban folk really understand the issues?¹³⁵ How easy was it for city dwellers to identify with the day-to-day problems of those who put the food on their tables? As Canada increasingly became an urban nation, the gap between city and country widened,

¹³³ “School Opening Decision Left to Each Board,” *Globe and Mail*, August 14, 1940, p. 4. The Toronto Board of Education, after a rancorous debate, voted to open schools on September 3.

¹³⁴ “Why Hamper Hepburn?” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, August 17, 1940, p. 6. Of course, publisher George McCullagh’s ties with Hepburn may have influenced the *Globe and Mail*’s position; the two were close enough to cause the Premier’s nemesis, Mackenzie King, some concern. See J.W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record, vol. 1* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 23.

¹³⁵ CWM, “Schools and Farms” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, August 7, 1940.

impairing the ability of one group to understand the concerns of the other. Still, while not as successful as its backers had hoped, the neo-Soldiers of the Soil plan did pave the way for a subsequent and far more effective student labour scheme, the Ontario Farm Service Force (OFSF).

'The Biggest Problem Which is On Our Doorstep': Managing the Wheat Surplus

One striking paradox of the early war years was that the threat to food production posed by the growing lack of farm labour coexisted with the persistent presence of agricultural surpluses. Among the specific problems faced by farmers in the war's first two years, the wheat issue was the most vexing. Still, British wheat purchases in the months following the Crerar discussions had picked up somewhat. In a memorandum that painted a rosy picture of wheat sales, Hugh Keenleyside of External Affairs told King that the amount of wheat sold to the U.K. from November 1939 to May 1940 was close to the amount that would have been exported under Crerar's proposals.¹³⁶ While this was certainly gratifying, Canada still possessed a problematic surplus, and German control of Europe had effectively closed off any continental export outlets for Canadian wheat. This also had the effect of driving the price of wheat down from 90 to 70 cents per bushel. With Canada's grain storage capacity already filled with a carryover of around 300 million bushels, the excess wheat had to be stored elsewhere, usually on farms themselves.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ "Memorandum," Hugh Keenleyside to Mackenzie King, June 1, 1940, *DCER, vol. 7, 1939-1941, Part I*, p. 480.

¹³⁷ Grain was stored wherever farmers could find space, including dance halls. See "Even Dance Halls Store Wheat Crop," *Toronto Star*, January 22, 1941, p. 34.

These were hardly tenable circumstances as farmers were only paid for their wheat upon delivery, i.e. when they took it to the elevators. But farmers themselves were not entirely blameless. The optimism of the early war days had died hard, and buoyed perhaps by increased British purchases, wheat farmers sowed some two million additional acres in Spring 1940.¹³⁸ With no elevator space, a bumper crop incoming, and export estimates at around 200 million bushels, a crisis was looming, one that the government scrambled to meet.¹³⁹ Two main questions had to be addressed: what to do with the existing surplus; and, how to keep farmers from producing too much wheat in the future? Wheat, ostensibly, was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Trade and Commerce, but in practice the Cabinet Wheat Committee made wheat policy, and James Gardiner dominated this body. While Gardiner was in no way desperate to maintain his grip on the Department of Agriculture, one of his ongoing ambitions was to wrest authority over wheat from Trade and Commerce.

Gardiner suggested a series of measures to obviate what he termed “the biggest problem which is on our doorstep at the moment.”¹⁴⁰ First and foremost, he urged that the Winnipeg Grain Exchange be closed. In addition, Britain should be asked to enter into a long-term wheat contract at a fixed price. Farmers, he insisted, should be guaranteed 90 cents a bushel, and if necessary a state subsidy should be implemented to ensure that price. None of these proposals were accepted, as instead the notions of his rival, Minister of Trade and Commerce, James MacKinnon, prevailed. Winnipeg remained open and the 70 cent price per bushel persisted. Farmers, however, could

¹³⁸ J.W. Holmes, “Bushels to Burn,” *Behind the Headlines*, September 1940, p. 3.

¹³⁹ LAC, RG25-D1, vol. 823, file 703, reel T-2206, “Economic Survey of the First Year of War,” September 16, 1940; “Big Canadian Wheat Crop,” *Times (London)*, September 7, 1940, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain*, pp. 651-652.

receive additional payments if the Wheat Board ran a surplus, and farm storage payments were authorized. In order to promote fair distribution of storage space among wheat producers, a quota system was set up regulating the amount of wheat (along with barley and oats) that each farmer could deliver to the elevators. These measures did not directly address the fundamental problems of selling more wheat and keeping farmers from growing too much, but they were an important precursor to the more interventionist methods that would be applied the following spring. They also alleviated somewhat the immediate problems faced by wheat growers, assuring them a certain amount of elevator space, offering some compensation for farm-stored wheat, and holding out the possibility of bonus payments.

Gardiner Goes to London

Tinkering with wheat policy was one thing, but improving conditions for Canadian farmers in general was quite another. Outlets for Canadian food products were sorely needed, and while food sales to Britain had improved somewhat, they were still nowhere near hoped-for levels. Circumstances were such that sending another official mission to the U.K. seemed appropriate. Gardiner urged King to allow him to head such a delegation as reports indicated that Ministry of Food was “anxious that the Canadian officials go over and discuss the situation with them.”¹⁴¹ According to Grant Dexter, this was hardly the case. James MacKinnon, “whose mission in life” was to “get” Gardiner, showed Dexter a series of cables indicating that the British were not keen on seeing the Minister of Agriculture. “Their food policy for the new year was already

¹⁴¹ CWM, “Britain’s Food Needs Prompt Searching Inquiry by Canada,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 25, 1940; “Dominion Aims to Meet Needs of U.K. in Food,” *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1940, p. 11.

decided,” noted Dexter. “Ottawa would be doing much more useful work by sending across a delegation empowered to make new financial arrangements.”¹⁴² Despite King’s own opinion that the trip would be “largely folly” and involve “unnecessary risks,” he reluctantly gave Gardiner his permission. But the double-barrelled minister did not get the prize he so desperately wanted: the authority to negotiate a wheat contract.¹⁴³ But there were other commodities that could be discussed, pork, for instance. Canada’s huge bacon surplus had disappeared into British bellies, but the current contract, along with one for cheese, was due for “reconsideration.”¹⁴⁴

Despite the need to find secure outlets for Canadian food, the point was publicly made that this was not the mission’s prime objective. Putting a suitably patriotic spin on the trip, the ostensible goal was to find out exactly how Canada could be of optimum service to Britain in the realm of food; if any new arrangements were made that would also help Canada divest itself of its surplus stocks, so much the better.¹⁴⁵ After the trip, Gardiner stated that the mission had been motivated by the fact that Canadian farmers “had been required to make greater economic sacrifices” than others; in that light, it was necessary to go to the United Kingdom “and study the British position first-hand,” accompanied by officials “entrusted with the task of helping to market farm products.”¹⁴⁶ The real goal, however, was to convince Britain to buy more Canadian

¹⁴² Dexter, p. 85.

¹⁴³ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 19, 1940; “Canadian Ministers to Visit Britain,” *Times (London)*, October 5, 1940, p. 4; Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain*, p. 668.

¹⁴⁴ Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain*, p. 667.

¹⁴⁵ CWM, “Canadian Delegation Moves to Bolster Foodstuff Sales,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 4, 1940.

¹⁴⁶ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 5, file 26, Hogs and Bacon, 1939-40, “Summary of the Results of Conversations Between Canadian and United Kingdom Officials Respecting Canadian Agricultural Supplies For Britain, by The Hon. J.G. Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture,” November 19, 1940.

food, pure and simple, a move that might alleviate some of the political pressure Gardiner endured. Gardiner, in short, was there to sell.

Herbert Hannam learned about the proposed mission from the newspapers. While he agreed that such a trip was in the interests of farmers, he beseeched the government to include “at least one representative of Canadian producers, and preferably one who is close to and who holds the confidence of the various producer organizations across Canada,” a description that sounded more than a little like Hannam himself.¹⁴⁷ The request went unheeded; Hannam was not included in the delegation and, as with the Crerar mission the previous year, nor was any other suitable representative from the grassroots farm movement. A.M. Shaw was again included, as was J.G. Taggart. Among the bevy of other sundry officials were R.J. Waterous, Director of Material Resources at National War Services, and Georges Bouchard, Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture.¹⁴⁸

While Gardiner was away, calls that he be removed from the Department of Agriculture continued, making success in Britain somewhat imperative for the embattled politician.¹⁴⁹ The *Edmonton Journal*, for one, argued that King had “made a serious mistake” in not heeding earlier calls for Gardiner’s dismissal from at least one of his portfolios.¹⁵⁰ His position was not enhanced by reports out of London that he would be returning from his mission “empty-handed,” and that he was expected by some to be

¹⁴⁷ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 4, file 16, Department of Agriculture, Correspondence, 1939-41, Herb Hannam to James Gardiner, undated. See also LAC, MG26 J4, reel C-4569, Letter from Herbert Hannam, October 1, 1940.

¹⁴⁸ “Food from Canada,” *Times (London)*, October 7, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ “Urge Gardiner Be Removed,” *Globe and Mail*, October 15, 1940, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ “Relieve Mr. Gardiner of One or Other of His Posts” (Editorial), *Edmonton Journal*, October 18, 1940, p. 4.

dropped as Minister of Agriculture in favour of Taggart.¹⁵¹ These reports were premature. While the mission did not go as well as Gardiner had hoped, it was not a total failure. When Gardiner returned to Canada, he presented the mixed results of the trip in a positive light. In his report summarizing the meetings, Gardiner made the point that the trip was prompted by the ‘sacrifices’ made by Canada’s farmers. Next, he outlined the fact that Britain was the only morally acceptable outlet for Canadian agricultural products. Gardiner argued that “it is our duty to place the food supplies available for Empire consumption at disposal of the Empire through the Food and Shipping ministries of Britain, to be directed to any market they think advisable.” As far as prices went, Gardiner argued, somewhat vaguely, that Canada “should receive in return from the British government for these supplies sufficient to make it possible for our farmers to carry on producing food supplies which are greatly needed...” Gardiner then outlined the food Britain apparently needed, as the Ministry of Food had “established a list of essential food products in order of preference.” Rather bizarrely, Gardiner admitted the Canadians “were not supplied with that list.”¹⁵² Their meetings with the British, however, ‘led them to believe’ that the list went something like this: wheat, dairy products, fresh meat, bacon, fish, poultry, eggs, fruits (canned), vegetables (canned), and fruits (fresh). Fresh meat, according to Gardiner, was the only commodity on this list that Canada did not really want to sell to Britain given the fact that most of this was already marketed in the United States.

¹⁵¹ “Hear Gardiner is Returning Empty-Handed,” *Globe and Mail*, November 5, 1940, p. 1.

¹⁵² LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 5, file 26, Hogs and Bacon, 1939-40, “Summary of the Results of Conversations Between Canadian and United Kingdom Officials Respecting Canadian Agricultural Supplies For Britain, by The Hon. J.G. Gardiner, Minister of Agriculture,” November 19, 1940.

Gardiner had been able to conclude a few deals, but not without difficulty. According to Dexter, he had gotten “pretty desperate toward the end and ripped some concessions out of the British government. MacKinnon called it “blood money.” Apart from wheat, the other major Canadian food export to Britain was bacon, and Gardiner was able to conclude a deal that increased the amount of bacon sold but at a significantly lower price. Britain agreed to buy just over \$12,000,000 worth of fish, \$16,100,000 worth of cheese, \$69,300,000 worth of pork products, and smaller amounts of various foods such as preserved fruit, honey, and canned tomatoes.¹⁵³ In total, the agreements entered into with the United Kingdom amounted to \$105,741,000 worth of Canadian foodstuffs.¹⁵⁴ This was all good, but the big prize Gardiner had sought, a wheat contract, did not materialize. Despite his promise to stay away from the wheat question, Gardiner had attempted and failed to get the British to agree to a new contract at a higher rate per bushel.¹⁵⁵

The farm response to Gardiner’s trip was also mixed. Certainly, the food contracts were gratifying. Britain’s purchase of a larger amount of bacon was good news and would go a long way toward preventing a glut of pork. But the price that Britain would now pay for grade ‘A’ bacon was \$2.19 less per hundredweight than received under the previous contract, \$15.82 instead of \$18.01.¹⁵⁶ Seizing on the price drop, Hannam argued “Farmers will be indignant, not at Great Britain for buying at a price which Englishmen can afford to pay in wartime, but at the inequality of sacrifice

¹⁵³ Dexter, pp. 91-92. See also LAC, RG17, vol. 3701, file W-5-4-29, “Summary of Agreement for the Purchase of Canadian Bacon” and “Summary of Agreement for the Purchase of Canadian Cheese,” undated.

¹⁵⁴ “\$105,741,000 Food Order for Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, November 15, 1940, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Dexter, p. 86.

¹⁵⁶ “Export Bacon Price Dropped \$2.19 by Board,” *Globe and Mail*, November 18, 1940, p. 5.

and the discrimination against agriculture which is permitted to occur in Canada in connection with our war effort. No industry in Canada,” Hannam concluded, “is being asked to make a comparable sacrifice.”¹⁵⁷ According to Hannam, the whole affair amounted to nothing less than “discrimination against the farmers,” and it was more than the price cut, a difference which “means so little to Britain and is so vital to us.”¹⁵⁸ It did not help that the contract had been negotiated and signed with no input from the hog producers.¹⁵⁹ Once more, the lack of consultation and a perceived indifference to farmers’ interests had emerged as a point of contention between the farmers and Ottawa.

There was, however, another view of the negotiations. Given that the Battle of Britain was raging and that U.S. opinion on the war was beginning to shift, exactly how tough a bargain should the Canadian authorities have driven? The *Winnipeg Free Press* saw nothing wrong with accepting a lower price from Britain because “Our war aid is not conditioned by the receipt of blood money. We are not mercenaries, hiring ourselves out to the highest bidder. We are in the war because we are impelled into it by every consideration of enlightened self-interest and of civilization itself...”¹⁶⁰ The paper also took dead aim at Hannam, excoriating him in its editorial pages for daring to criticise the new bacon pact. Hannam, the *Free Press* charged, was merely “trying to stir up grievances in the hope of being able to capitalize later on.” Further, he was pursuing “domestic objectives that might be achieved by encouraging a sense of grievance in the minds of those people – who are disposed to think they are unduly

¹⁵⁷ “Hannam Raps Bacon Agreement,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 18, 1940, p. 22.

¹⁵⁸ “Claim Discrimination in New Bacon Agreement,” *Edmonton Journal*, November 18, 1940, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ “New Bacon Agreement Under Fire,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 13, 1940, p. 26.

¹⁶⁰ “Our Agricultural Markets” (Editorial), *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 16, 1940, p. 17.

singled out for sacrifices and the bearing of burdens.”¹⁶¹ “Those people” clearly referred to Hannam’s constituents – the farmers of Canada. Hannam was being rebuked for performing his role, sticking up for the interests of the agricultural community. The *Free Press* clearly believed that Hannam had stepped over the line by denouncing the contract. Having done so, his patriotism – and by extension that of the farm sector as a whole – was called into question.

Similar sentiments were articulated in the House of Commons by Dr. Herbert Bruce, the Conservative M.P. for Toronto-Parkdale. In a short speech, Bruce insisted that Gardiner stop quibbling with London over prices, and that instead Canada make “a thankoffering [sic]” to Britain. “Let us open our granaries to Britain and give her our wheat ... now is not the time to drive bargains or seek higher prices than are prevailing right at home,” argued Bruce. To avoid, perhaps, any misunderstanding, Bruce stated clearly that he was not asserting that farmers did not deserve “a fair price” for their produce. Instead, King’s government needed to be less “triumphant over bargains arising out of the Motherland’s necessity in her hour of direst need.”¹⁶² The *Globe and Mail* agreed. It lauded the new food contracts, but also conveyed concern over the agreements that “had the earmarks of a one-sided commercial deal.” “We don’t believe farmers or any other class of citizens wish their Minister to go to London and turn on the heat to get orders for food,” the paper continued. Gardiner, implied the *Globe and Mail*, was erring in “commercializing Britain’s dire needs.”¹⁶³ But the statements made by the *Free Press*, Herbert Bruce, and the *Globe and Mail*, as well-intentioned as they may

¹⁶¹ “He is Indignant” (Editorial), *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 19, 1940, p.11; “Criticism: Constructive and Otherwise” (Editorial), *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 23, 1940, p. 17.

¹⁶² “Stop Hagglng on Food Prices, Gardiner Told,” *Globe and Mail*, November 23, 1940, p. 24.

¹⁶³ “Selling to Britain” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, November 16, 1940, p. 6.

have been, were simplistic and betrayed a lack of knowledge about the issues involved. Even if Canada were to come up with a 'thankoffering' of food, would there be enough shipping space available to carry it all to Britain? Would Britain be able to store the produce? Who, ultimately, would pay for the food? What effect would it have on agricultural markets both in Canada and in Britain? It is unlikely that either Gardiner or the farmers would ever suggest that the British be denied Canadian produce in their time of need, but had that time arrived?

Those who took issue with Gardiner's bargaining were not necessarily coming from opposing sides. What the farm lobbyists wanted was a better deal for Canada's farmers, and this did not have to come in the form of higher prices for Britain. Canadian farmers, usually suspicious of government involvement in agriculture, in recent years had warmed up to the idea. If the government could not because of wartime circumstances get a fair price for farm produce from the buyer, then the state would simply have to make up the shortfall through subsidies and bonuses. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, reacting to the new bacon deal, urged the federal government to make up the difference between the old contract price and the new smaller one. At the present price, production of hogs could only go forward at a loss to the farmer. As Hannam pointed out, if "Canada wanted to give bacon to Britain, let Canada do it and not the Canadian farmer. The latter is already bearing more than his share of the war effort."¹⁶⁴ The point was a fair one: why should farmers, whose vital importance only intensified in wartime, be asked to sell food at or below the cost of production? If farmers complained, it was not because they did not want to support the war effort. Quite to the contrary; as Jack Sutherland, a farmer from Hanna, Alberta, wrote in

¹⁶⁴ "Ask Ottawa to Subsidize Hog Farmers," *Globe and Mail*, November 27, 1940, p. 4.

Winnipeg Free Press, "I need not repeat that we farmers are as anxious to win this war as any other economic group in Canada. The whole of our hope for the future is bound up with the objective of eliminating Hitlerism and what it stands for in this world." But it was not easy, Sutherland continued, when the prices farmers received for their produce went down while the costs of "wages, repairs, taxes and everything that we have to buy is going up all the time." The familiar theme of unequal sacrifice was invoked in his letter's close, as Sutherland wondered, "Why should farmers be asked to bear this additional burden of disparity?"¹⁶⁵

There is little reason to doubt that Gardiner was sincerely trying to balance the needs of both farmers and Britain. Nevertheless he found himself stuck, rather precariously, between farmers who decried the low prices and lack of consideration and others who thought his 'bargaining' with Britain was unseemly. He defended the new bacon contract by claiming that the lower price was in fact a trade-off for a guaranteed market – in exchange Britain had agreed to take Canada's entire pork surplus.¹⁶⁶ But farmers made it clear that they cared less about the price Britain was paying than the price they were *receiving* for their labours. Their quarrel was not with the British, but with the Canadian government, which, they argued, should be subsidizing agricultural production as an essential war measure.

Gardiner had other serious issues on his plate. In December 1940 Britain again decided to stop all imports of fresh fruits.¹⁶⁷ This decision reverberated in the Annapolis Valley, the Niagara Peninsula, and the Okanagan Valley, Canada's prime fruit growing regions. Another problem arose when, due to increased cheese production, butter

¹⁶⁵ "New Price for Bacon Seen as Disaster" (Letter), *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 30, 1940, p. 20.

¹⁶⁶ "Lower Bacon Price is Fair, Says Gardiner," *Globe and Mail*, December 17, 1940, p. 18.

¹⁶⁷ "Canada Loses Apple Market," *Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1940, p. 11.

became increasingly scarce in Autumn 1940. Rumours swirled that the WPTB was about to impose a price ceiling. Hannam's response was a request that the WPTB first take the time to consult with producers.¹⁶⁸ In late November a delegation made up of members of the CFA and the Canadian Dairy Farmers' Federation appeared before the WPTB to plead their case. They were heartened a few days later when a WPTB release on the butter supply stated that "Higher prices ... would be the most effective incentive to increased production." From this, the CFA concluded that its presentations had been effective:

No one knows what the 'Board' might have done had they not interviewed these farm representatives, and no one knows what the price of butter is likely to do in the next three months, however it may well be that before the winter season is over Canadian Dairy Farmers will have reason to conclude that their spokesmen on this occasion safe-guarded their interests in such a way as to obviate a loss of many millions of dollars in their farm income.¹⁶⁹

This self-congratulation was a bit premature; getting a foot in the door in Ottawa was much easier than getting the government to actually listen or to act. On the very same day that the CFA response came, the WPTB froze butter at December 12 prices, around 30 cents a pound. This meant that the price of butter would actually *drop* by about three cents per pound, a victory for consumers but a bloody nose for farmers.¹⁷⁰ "Stupid and damnable," "amazing," and "shortsighted," were just a few of the adjectives farmers applied to the WPTB's move. If butter production was low, critics argued, than pegging it at a lower price was not the way to encourage increased production.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 5, file 25, H.H. Hannam, 1938-41, Hannam to Hector McKinnon, November 15, 1940.

¹⁶⁹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 13, file 18, Butter and Cheese, 1940-41, G.G. Coote to Officers and Members of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, December 27, 1940.

¹⁷⁰ "Pegging Means Three Cent Cut in Butter Price," *Globe and Mail*, December 28, 1940, p. 11.

¹⁷¹ "Nixon Critical of Low Price Given Butter," *Globe and Mail*, December 31, 1940, p. 5; "The Price of Butter" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, January 1, 1941, p. 6.

Coming close on the heels of the bacon débâcle, this decision further cemented the ever-growing notion that the government was failing to pay attention to farmers' needs. As 1940 drew to a close, dairy producers joined wheat farmers, hog raisers, and fruit growers in a state of intensifying dissatisfaction.

January 1941: The Canadian Farm Lobby Comes of Age

From a farm perspective, the federal government's performance had been dismal enough to prompt serious discontent by the beginning of 1941. In the midst of that anger, plans were made for Gardiner to address farmers in London, Ontario on January 10 and 11, 1941. To give Ottawa credit, it now understood that in order to maintain peace on the agrarian front it would have to at least *appear* to be consulting with the farmers who "ask not for privilege, but for equity," according to the *Globe and Mail*.¹⁷² Criticism from rural areas was becoming so prominent that some wondered if the farm movement was contemplating a return to the political sphere. Hannam discounted those rumours, stating that the "United Farmers of Ontario have no notion of going back into politics," adding that they would rather "fight for the farmers on a strictly non-political basis."¹⁷³ For any progress to be made, however, the two sides would have to agree to a cease-fire, no small matter as farmers approached this meeting suspecting the worst. Farm representatives complained that they had not been given any firm indication as to the meeting's agenda or procedures. The venue, the ballroom in the Hotel London, came under fire for being too small to hold the expected number of attendees. Disorganized and lacking time for proper preparation, the CFA hoped that the sheer number of farmers present would give Gardiner a sense of just how heated the rural mood had

¹⁷² "Farm Revolt Brings Action" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, January 8, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁷³ "Denies U.F.O. Intends Re-Entering Politics," *Toronto Star*, January 7, 1941, p. 2.

become.¹⁷⁴ For his part, Gardiner, casting about for something to placate their anger, hoped that a floor price for butter announced just before the conference would do the trick. To ignore the butter situation, Hannam wired to Gardiner and King, would result in decreased production and continued dissatisfaction on the back forty.¹⁷⁵

The farmers were not the only ones dissatisfied with Gardiner's handling of agriculture. According to Grant Dexter, Gardiner's head was on King's chopping block, and the Prime Minister had taken to sending out letters on agricultural policy without referring to Gardiner.¹⁷⁶ The Minister of Agriculture, it was again rumoured, was about to lose his post to an eastern representative. Gardiner did not help himself by becoming "overassertive" with cabinet the day before the London conference was to open. Knowing that he needed to bring an announcement on butter to the meetings, Gardiner prompted a row when agreement on this proved difficult. King took him to task for his high-handed tactics, which included "trying to get his way by a ruthless forcing of the situation, sometimes in a very underhanded manner." Gardiner then threatened to resign, prompting King to confide to his diary that Gardiner was obviously "falling between" his two portfolios. While he had "excellent qualities," his defects ran in "a Hitler-Hepburn direction." There were numerous reasons for King's dissatisfaction with Gardiner, but it is tempting to suggest that the impending farm revolt played no small role.¹⁷⁷ As oblivious as King could seem on the subject of farming, the Prime Minister's acute political sense must have tingled as the farmers' grumbling reached critical mass. The cleavages that a farm revolt could open up were numerous, potentially pitting rural

¹⁷⁴ CWM, "Farmers Will Demand Hearing by Gardiner," *Globe and Mail*, January 9, 1941.

¹⁷⁵ "Butter 'Floor' Deemed Likely," *Globe and Mail*, January 9, 1941, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ Dexter, pp. 111-112.

¹⁷⁷ LAC, WLM King Diaries, January 9, 1941.

Canadians against urbanites, Westerners against central Canada, and even the provinces against the federal government. The possibility of open rebellion on the part of farmers and the effect it could have on national unity no doubt horrified King.

Undaunted by the previous day's scene in the cabinet and accompanied by "a regiment of experts and statisticians," Gardiner marched into battle. As it turned out, so many farmers showed up (between 1600 to 2000) that the meeting had to be moved from the hotel ballroom to the auditorium of the London Technical and Commercial School. Gardiner rose to address the assembled ranks of disgruntled producers, some of whom heckled him throughout his speech. Keeping his opening remarks low-key, Gardiner announced that a butter 'floor' was indeed in the offing, but did not say at what price. Hoping perhaps to win the farmers over by appealing to a common enemy, Gardiner blamed much of the butter chaos on "speculators" and "middlemen" whose large hoards of butter had forced the government to fix the butter price in the first place. As for proposal floating around that farmers should form a group along the same lines as Britain's National Farmers' Union, Gardiner merely noted that it would in fact be a good idea to have a "very complete" national farm group.¹⁷⁸ On the bacon issue, Gardiner told farmers that having a secure long-term outlet in Britain was worth more than "immediate profits."¹⁷⁹

After Gardiner had said his piece, "a tremendous reception" by the "applauding and cheering farm people" greeted Herbert Hannam who proceeded to lay out the farmers' case. "Something," he began, "is radically wrong, when farm people in large numbers make such a demonstration of protest as in evidence here today. There are ten

¹⁷⁸ "Floor Price for Butter Authorized," *Globe and Mail*, January 11, 1941, p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ "Gardiner Won't Bonus Hogs; Promises Butter Minimum," *Toronto Star*, January 13, 1941, p. 15.

years of patience and perseverance and unrealized hope, culminating in the angry tones of this audience.” Hannam did not wish to placate anyone, and if Gardiner thought that he could pacify the farmers with a vague promise of action on butter, he was gravely mistaken. The problem, according to Hannam, was not “just a question of butter, or cheese, or bacon.” The trouble was far broader than that, and its roots lay in the diffident attitude with which the federal government had been treating agriculture, which was patently unfair in light of the burdens the sector had been saddled with for almost twelve years. “It is a fact,” railed Hannam, “that during ten years of depression farmers carried more than their share of the burden and on top of this, under a war-time program, they find themselves worse off than they were in the depression years immediately before the outbreak of war.” The performance of farmers in the face of these adverse circumstances, Hannam contended, made them worthy of greater consideration. “Farmers,” he argued, “have served the nation well. “They have provided abundance whether in depression or war-time – and that abundance has been a blessing to everybody but the farmer. For constructive thinking, for good solid citizenship, they are the bulwark of this dominion. Do they not deserve the rewards and fruits of democracy in equal measure with other groups?” The federal Department of Agriculture, it was perceived, had failed to stand up for farm interests. For example, wages for industrial labour had recently been set at 1926-29 levels, but commodity prices were still far below this. “There cannot,” Hannam properly insisted, “be one policy for the city man and another policy for the farmer.”

Lest anyone impugn farmers as insufficiently patriotic, Hannam stressed that they well understood the war’s critical circumstances. “We do not forget,” he remarked,

“that we, along with Great Britain and her allies, are engaged in a desperate struggle with the most brutal, the most ruthless and deadly forces of destruction of all time. We are fighting against the gravest threat that ever has been made to all those things that we hold dear in our way of life.” Great Britain, Hannam was careful to point out, was not the object of farm anger – it was Ottawa. Desiring better treatment and higher prices was not selfish; on the contrary, food’s crucial importance to the war effort made an improved deal for agriculture in the interests of all. It was true, Hannam admitted, that the Canada’s government, largely unprepared for war, had been forced to dramatically shift economic gears but that did not excuse the current state of agriculture. “We believe (and we consider it a serious error in judgement) that in arranging this war-time economy, agriculture has been neglected,” he declared. “Failure to give our farmers fair prices and fair treatment, if not rectified at once, threatens to sabotage our future food supplies.” Farmers were mindful of history. They remembered their role in the First World War and were more than willing to perform the same functions this time around. But, argued Hannam, “artificially low prices at pegged or contract levels makes it humanly impossible for him to do so.” Farm anger was thus based on the fact that the policies implemented by the government did not allow the farmer to “make an even greater contribution than he is doing at present.” If Great Britain was unable to pay what constituted a fair price for Canadian produce, fine, but someone (namely, the government, in the form of subsidies) would have to make up the difference.

Hannam presented the Canadian economy in tripartite terms: industry, labour and agriculture, upon which the domestic war effort rested. From the farm perspective, agriculture was not being treated on a par with these other two groups. Why should that

be? Either agriculture was seen as less important than industry or labour, or federal authorities were simply not as *afraid* of farmers. What, after all, could farmers really do if their needs were not met? Strike? Hold back produce? Maybe, but not for long. Perhaps the lack of respect had more to do with the fact that farmers did not have a formidable lobby group to safeguard their interests, something that Hannam and the CFA were trying to change.

Hannam's final point was a direct swipe at the Minister of Agriculture. "Our farm people believe that the minister of agriculture sits as their representative in the dominion cabinet," Hannam began. "They believe that he ought to be their friend at court." But the feeling had developed that this was not the case:

In view of recent developments under our war program, there are grave doubts in the minds of many whether he really is their friend or not. In a democratic country those in a position such as that of federal minister enjoy their position because of the confidence and support of their fellow citizens. Mr. Gardiner did command and enjoy such confidence but policies which have been maintained and others which have been adopted more recently have destroyed that confidence for him.¹⁸⁰

This comment reveals much about the level of distrust that had built up between Gardiner and the farmers of Canada, whose patience, the government could not have failed to notice, was wearing dangerously thin.

During the conference a raft of farm groups (twenty-four in total) presented their grievances to the beleaguered Gardiner. In the short term, the meeting was not judged a success for either Gardiner or the farmers of Ontario. The farmers did not get higher prices, and the federal government did not warm any rural hearts. Farmers, argued the *Globe and Mail*, "were going to be discontented as long as the Government of Canada asks them to make sacrifices which no other class in the country is called upon to

¹⁸⁰ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 5, file 26, H.H. Hannam, 1938-41, "The Farmers Protest," January 1941.

make.”¹⁸¹ The meeting, however, set an important precedent as the lines of communication were now slightly more open. Indeed, political scientist Helen Jones Dawson asserts that the ‘Battle of London’ was a watershed moment for the CFA in terms of the Federation’s relations with the federal authorities, winning both attention and respect as the voice of agriculture.¹⁸² It was also, as Ian MacPherson argues, significant for the level of agreement showed by the very heterogeneous Ontario farm sector; “Never before had so many different kinds of farmers shown such unanimity.”¹⁸³ Thus, the event gave momentum to the CFA’s efforts to form a truly national representative body for farmers, a project that would soon accelerate.

Having met with Ontario farmers, Gardiner could not have been too surprised when those from other regions began clamouring for the same. From ‘the Battle of Ontario,’ the Minister immediately moved to ‘the Battle of the Maritimes,’ as agricultural officials from Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were observed meeting in Ottawa’s Chateau Laurier with “blood in their eyes.”¹⁸⁴ PEI cheese producers, for one, were angry that their product was shipped to Montreal to be weighed and graded, before being sent to Halifax for export; they ended up paying what they regarded as completely superfluous freight charges. In another head-scratcher, Nova Scotia hog farmers were paid Montreal prices for their hogs, less the attendant freight charges to Montreal. The trouble was that the hogs were never shipped to Montreal;

¹⁸¹ “Mr. Gardiner’s Speech Fails” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, January 13, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁸² Helen Jones Dawson, “An Interest Group: The Canadian Federation of Agriculture,” *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 3 (June 1960), pp. 143-144.

¹⁸³ MacPherson, “An Authoritative Voice: The Reorientation of the Canadian Farmers’ Movement, 1935 to 1945,” p. 177.

¹⁸⁴ “Dewan Terms Proposals of Gardiner Inadequate,” *Globe and Mail*, January 13, 1941, p. 1.

they were killed and processed for export in *Halifax*. Maritime farmers also wanted cheaper feed from Western Canada in order to lower production costs.¹⁸⁵

Doubtless these issues were among those considered at the CFA's annual convention, which opened in Toronto on January 20, 1941. In many ways, this conference marked the crystallization of the farm movement's transition from a vehicle of intermittent rural protest to a strong and narrowly-driven economic lobby. "Farmers of Canada," wrote the *Globe and Mail*, "will no longer go hat-in-hand to the various governments pleading their case, but will organize into a mighty body from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic seaboard to dictate the needs and policies of agriculture development."¹⁸⁶ The CFA members passed two resolutions. One called for the federal government to establish parity between the prices farmers received for their produce and their production costs, while the other called upon Ottawa to articulate a clear national plan for agriculture. They were buoyed by the presence and support of five provincial ministers of agriculture who approved of the plan to form a broader nation-wide farm organization.¹⁸⁷

In what was perhaps a symbol of their new-found solidarity, the CFA announced that Hannam would lead a delegation to Ottawa, to request an audience with the federal cabinet and Prime Minister King.¹⁸⁸ On January 26, King and the farmer representatives met for two hours, a meeting that, if his diary is any indication, made little impression

¹⁸⁵ "Maritime Farmers Penalized" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1941, p. 6; "Cheaper Feeds Demand Made," *Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1941, p. 13.

¹⁸⁶ "Farmers to Organize and 'Dictate Policies,'" *Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1941, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ "Food Production in Canada," *Times (London)*, January 24, 1941, p. 3. The provincial ministers who attended were P.M. Dewan of Ontario, John A. MacDonald of Nova Scotia, Douglas Campbell of Manitoba, Dr. K.C. MacDonald of British Columbia, and A.C. Taylor of New Brunswick.

¹⁸⁸ "Farm Body Will Take Demands to Ottawa," *Globe and Mail*, January 24, 1941, p. 1.

on the Prime Minister.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, King's remarks, as the *Globe and Mail* acerbically pointed out, gave the impression that he had very little knowledge of or interest in agricultural concerns; in fact he seemed almost surprised that Canadian farmers were so angry. "According to Ottawa dispatches," wrote the *Globe and Mail*, "Mr. King implied that the farmers' case should have been presented to the cabinet sooner. He had assumed everything was alright when the farmers didn't holler."¹⁹⁰ But they had been hollering, and loudly, for some time. Could King have been so out of touch with farm issues? If so, what does that say about Gardiner, the supposed advocate of the farmers' cause in Ottawa? Despite his somewhat naive grasp of farm conditions, King was quite affable with the farmer representatives, so much so that they were "overwhelmed by the graciousness of the Prime Minister."¹⁹¹ But if King was all smiles and charm, Gardiner certainly was not. Having hurried back from a western trip to attend the *tête-à-tête*, Gardiner was reportedly quite stiff with the delegation. Of course, the sight of angry farmers descending upon Ottawa full of grievances over his allegedly maladroit performance did not reflect very well on Gardiner. The next day the delegation laid their case before the cabinet, where Gardiner, agreeing that the prices paid to farmers should increase, stated that plans to ensure just that were in the works. This was, as the press pointed out, the first time that "almost the full Cabinet received representations from organized agriculture," a positive sign for farmers.¹⁹²

Positive or not, the farm unrest on display in London and Ottawa was indicative of the growing divergence between rural and urban realities within Canada. The war

¹⁸⁹ LAC, WLM King Diaries, January 27, 1941.

¹⁹⁰ "Farmers Should Not Weaken" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, January 31, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁹¹ "Farm Income is Small" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, February 15, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁹² "Ottawa Hints Plan to Improve Farm Prices," *Globe and Mail*, January 28, 1941, p. 1.

was quickly completing Canada's transformation into an industrial nation, a change that was in danger of leaving the agricultural classes behind. Modernization and technology could improve farm conditions, but those things did the average farmer little good if they could not afford to upgrade their equipment. The sentiments that led up to the events of January were stoked by the government's somewhat careless attitude toward farmers. For many farmers, it seemed as though the government – and perhaps urban society in general – believed that they would simply continue to produce as they had in the past, regardless of the effects that the war was having on agriculture. This feeling of being taken for granted, of being forgotten in the wake of more 'important' wartime concerns could ultimately give rise to more strident protests should the state not wake up to the very real obstacles faced by Canadian farmers.

The End of King Wheat? The Wheat Acreage Reduction Program



Toronto Star, March 14, 1941

There were more battles ahead. Gardiner's time in the Prairies had in part been spent studying the wheat issue, as the next regional struggle he had to fight was over the need to control wheat acreage. The problem of overproduction needed a solution, and the idea of decreasing the amount of wheat sown was an obvious answer, albeit one fraught with potential difficulties. Along with a decrease in wheat, however, the increase in the amount of livestock being bred to meet war demands meant that unless more feed grains were sown, a shortage could result. Thus, the question centred on how to get farmers to switch a part of their crop from wheat to coarse grains. The golden days of the wheat economy were coming to an end, something the *Canadian Forum* viewed as the end of a "great era" of Prairie dominance in Canada's export economy. The *Forum* also expressed the view that farmers "will never again be powerful enough or significant enough to frighten our governing classes." Farmers who really wanted "to do well out this war," it pessimistically concluded, "would be wise to sell [their] farm and invest in Canada Packers or some similar strategically placed and well-managed enterprise." If they still wanted to farm after the war, there would no shortage of farms available "at a bargain."¹⁹³ The CFA took a less histrionic approach to the problem, recognizing that the *status quo* in wheat had to change. Its position, which had been presented to cabinet during the January 27 meeting, opposed compulsory reductions but agreed with continuing delivery quotas based on the total amount of wheat that the government expected to be able to sell. It also proposed that the government raise the processing tax from 15 to 50 cents per bushel in order to increase the amount paid to the producer and

¹⁹³ "Wheat" (Editorial), *Canadian Forum*, April 1941, p. 4. Wheat would never again achieve the same level of economic ascendancy, but to state that "the west will not again count for so much either economically or politically" was obviously a tad premature.

to compensate for the scaled-back production.¹⁹⁴ Other groups had their own ideas and for weeks the various government departments concerned wrestled with the question.

On March 12, 1941, the government finally announced the new wheat policy package. James MacKinnon stated that Canada had reached the limit in terms of how much extra wheat it could feasibly keep on hand – the surplus must grow no more. The amount of wheat that Canada could market in the coming year was estimated at 230 million bushels (50 million at home, 180 million overseas), the delivery quota system was to be continued, and those quotas would drop to 65% of the previous year's deliveries. The price of wheat per bushel would remain at around 70 cents, while the processing tax would stay at 15 cents. So how then, were farmers supposed to make up the difference? Gardiner, following MacKinnon's statements, explained that producers would be issued varying payments for diverting acreage from wheat to other purposes. Western growers (only Prairie wheat was affected by the new policies) were promised a bonus of \$2.00 for every acre of coarse grains, \$2.00 an acre for grass, and \$4.00 for every acre of wheat *not planted* but instead left fallow.¹⁹⁵

Reactions to the new wheat rules were, in Parliament at least, not good. The Easter recess had to be postponed because of the sheer number of members from both sides of the house who wanted to publicly oppose the policies.¹⁹⁶ Harry Leader, a Liberal M.P. from Manitoba, threatened to resign his seat over what he termed a "fool policy."¹⁹⁷ The logic behind the plan was invisible to some. The *Canadian Forum* was particularly scathing, comparing the wheat reduction scheme to the Soviet farm

¹⁹⁴ Britnell and Fowke, p. 95.

¹⁹⁵ "Bonusing Program Aims at Reduction of Wheat Acreage," *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1941, p.1.

¹⁹⁶ "Not Single M.P. Gives Full Aid to Wheat Plan," *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1941, p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ "Liberal Ready to Resign Seat in Wheat Row," *Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1941, p. 8.

collectivization campaign, and predicting that it would end in “economic ruin.”¹⁹⁸ King himself was not a fan of the move either, believing, accurately as it turned out, that vast reserves of wheat would be needed to feed the postwar world.¹⁹⁹ For Hannam, busy trying to unite Canadian farmers around a single, national farm organization, the debate was both welcome and worrisome. He could not have been pleased by some of the objections, many of which were tinged with the stain of divisive regionalism. Still, there were positive signs for the CFA president. In an article on the wheat issue – which had become the *cause de jour* in Parliament – the *Globe and Mail* wrote that Hannam (now referred to as the “leader of organized agriculture”) was routinely accosted by politicians wishing to offer their support for farmers, proof that the CFA was “rapidly becoming a power in the land.”²⁰⁰ Farm concerns seemed to be pushing their way onto the agenda. In early April the *Globe and Mail* began running a regular column on farm and rural issues written by social reformer and agricultural spokesperson Agnes Macphail.²⁰¹ In the span of a few months, agriculture had gone from being the poor relation in the Canadian wartime economy to being a topic of heated public debate.

On April 14, 1941, Gardiner took to the CBC airwaves to further explain the wheat policy to the nation, delivering an address on “Canadian Agriculture and the War.” Here, he refuted claims that agriculture had been “a casualty of war.” Certainly, some sectors had taken quite a hit, notably the apple industry, tobacco exports, poultry and eggs. Wheat, of course, formed the largest and “most troublesome war casualty,” and western wheat growers were plainly being asked to undertake more sacrifices.

¹⁹⁸ Lucidus, “Wheat,” *Canadian Forum*, June, 1941, p. 85.

¹⁹⁹ LAC, WLM King Diaries, February 27, 1942.

²⁰⁰ “Not Single M.P. Gives Full Aid to Wheat Plan,” *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1941, p. 15.

²⁰¹ The column lasted less than a year, however. See Margaret Stewart, *Ask No Quarter: A Biography of Agnes Macphail* (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1959).

“There is no use sugaring the pill,” Gardiner bluntly stated, “by trying to convince you we are trying to do something for *you*. We are trying to do something for Canada and Britain and the democratic way of living. It is not my intention to try and convince you that what we are asking you to do will help you financially.” Gardiner then told wheat growers in essence that if they grew too much wheat, which was expensive to store, there would be less money in the Canadian coffers to fight the war. The appeal was somewhat oversimplified, but it had its own internal logic. Britain did not need wheat, and since Canadian bins were already full of the stuff, growing more made little practical sense. Why not instead divert farming energies into producing the foods that Britain *did* need? Western farmers, Gardiner stated, should diversify, and instead raise hogs and cattle, and produce more milk for cheese production. Because British needs had shifted from wheat to animal products, feed grains were increasingly needed to raise the extra hogs and cows. Wheat quotas had been set at 65% of the previous year’s yield, but this was not as simple as it appeared. “The Government,” Gardiner explained, “would be best pleased if you did not grow any wheat this year. The Government is not telling you cannot grow wheat this year. *They are telling you that too much wheat will not help win the war.*”

This was a complete reversal of the assumptions many had made in September, 1939, and was perhaps the final evidence needed that for farmers this war was going to be nothing like the last one. “We have wheat,” concluded Gardiner, in an almost mantra-like fashion. “We want grass. We want feed. We want hogs. We want cheese. We want butter. We want cattle. Give us less of what we have and more of what we want; and thus help Britain win the battle of the Atlantic, and push on to final victory

which alone can re-establish agriculture in Canada as a necessary part of a Brotherhood of Man which spells Freedom throughout the world.”²⁰² Flowery rhetoric aside, the Wheat Acreage Reduction Program was the first significant regulatory measure to try and push Prairie agriculture away from reliance on one staple and towards more diversified agriculture with greater emphasis on livestock and mixed farming.²⁰³

Lending a Hand on the Land: Tackling Farm Labour

Tailoring Canada’s agricultural output to the demands of war was a complex process, and one that could easily be threatened by a lack of adequate labour. As Canada’s war effort ratcheted upward, the farm labour situation had deteriorated, a trend that did not go completely unnoticed at the federal level. In October 1940 it had been announced that farm workers, put in the same class as university students, fishermen and trappers, would be summoned for their compulsory military training only when it would not interfere with their occupations.²⁰⁴ Their short training period began on November 22, 1940.²⁰⁵ But the bigger threat to farm labour would come from another source. That month, A.M. Shaw received a memorandum explaining that many farm hands were leaving agriculture to work on “local war projects such as the construction of camps and air fields.”²⁰⁶ The situation was only going to get worse as time went on, warned D.E. Stauffer, President of the United Farmers of Ontario.²⁰⁷ So what was the government doing on this issue? Did it have any concrete plans in the works to keep farm labour on

²⁰² James Gardiner, “Canadian Agriculture and the War,” Radio Address, delivered April 14, 1941, CBC, (Ottawa: Director of Public Information, 1941).

²⁰³ V.C. Fowke, “Economic Effects of the War on the Prairie Economy,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (August 1945), p. 386.

²⁰⁴ “Farm Workers are Exempted from Training,” *Globe and Mail*, October 4, 1940, p. 4.

²⁰⁵ “Will Issue Training Call to Canada’s Farm Youths,” *Globe and Mail*, October 28, 1940, p. 15.

²⁰⁶ LAC, RG17, vol. 3708, file W-5-39, H.R. Hare to A.M. Shaw, November 18, 1940.

²⁰⁷ “Shortage of Farm Labour Seen as Acute Problem,” *Globe and Mail*, November 28, 1940, p. 7.

the farms, or were officials simply going to rely on farmers to work harder and take up the slack? This was no small matter. In some ways, the shortage of farm labour was of far more importance to the nation, and by extension the war effort, than to the individual farmer. With prices below the cost of production, as long as farmers could produce enough to feed their families and pay their bills, their own survival was assured. There was less reason for farmers to exert themselves if they were not making fair incomes, and a lack of seasoned farm labour did nothing to help this situation. As one Ontario farmer whose number of hired hands had dropped from nine to three by January 1941, put it; “The farmers [are] producing at a loss and the less they produced the less they would lose, even though the country needs the products.”²⁰⁸

Officials at the Department of National War Services, also well aware that a problem was developing, spent the early part of 1941 studying the issue. R.J. Waterous, Director of Human and Material Resources at War Services, asked G.S.H. Barton at the Department of Agriculture if he knew how the subject of farm labour had been handled in the previous world war.²⁰⁹ Although there was scarcely anything in the departmental files on the issue, Barton provided an outline of the situation between 1914 and 1918. Back then the government had made “no specific attempt” to keep labour on farms, but because farmers had fared well economically during that period, they had more easily competed with industry’s higher wages.²¹⁰ Barton also noted that military exemptions were granted to farmers, at least until 1918, when they were discontinued. What Barton

²⁰⁸ CWM, “Say Farm Labour Shortage Likely to Cut Production,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 13, 1941; “Floor Price for Butter Authorized,” *Globe and Mail*, January 11, 1941, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3411, file 1500-25 (1), Department of National War Services, R.J. Waterous to G.S.H. Barton, January 6, 1941.

²¹⁰ LAC, RG17, vol. 3411, file 1500-25 (1), Department of National War Services, G.S.H. Barton to R.J. Waterous, January 7, 1941.

did not state explicitly was that during the First World War the real threat to farm labour levels had come mainly from the meat-grinder on the Western Front as military recruiters had taken more farmers off the land than had industry. The circumstances were different this time around, as Barton himself admitted that the effect of enlistments were “not nearly so acute as the effect of war industry to date.”²¹¹ The closer a farmer was to an urban area, the harder it became to find adequate help.²¹² While farmers by no means had had it easy during the Great War, industry had not started poaching farm help until 1916, and the labour shortfalls that existed were largely compensated for by a variety of volunteer schemes such as the Soldiers of the Soil. This was to be a tactic in the second war as well. In a letter to the American Agricultural Attaché, Bryce M. Stewart of the Department of Labour outlined present government plans to alleviate the farm labour shortage in Ontario and Quebec. These plans essentially amounted to “the use of the Employment Service, the recruiting of students and women in a special Ontario Farm Service Force, and some transfer of labour, especially from the Prairie Provinces.”²¹³ As labour problems worsened, it began to look like broad, community-based, volunteer farm labour schemes would again play a significant role in wartime agriculture.

²¹¹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3632, file N-1-30, Effect of War on Agriculture – Economics Division, G.S.H. Barton to Clifford C. Taylor, May 2, 1941.

²¹² LAC, RG17, vol. 3632, file N-1-30, Effect of War on Agriculture – Economics Division, J.F. Booth to G.S.H. Barton, May 13, 1941.

²¹³ LAC, RG17, vol. 3632, file N-1-30, Effect of War on Agriculture – Economics Division, Bryce M. Stewart to Clifford C. Taylor, April 30, 1941.

Ontario, the first province to experience serious farm labour problems, was also the first to implement a volunteer labour scheme.²¹⁴ The previous year's fracas over school opening dates did not discourage Ontario officials whose subsequent efforts to gain public support were much improved. The Ontario Department of Labour, in



cooperation with the YMCA and YWCA, set up the OFSF. Boys aged sixteen and over and girls seventeen and older were encouraged to join by advertisements that blared “I Need You,” and “Ontario farmers need you and will pay you to help them during your holidays.”²¹⁵ By April 1941, over 6,000 youths had signed up for the program, a number the *Globe and Mail* thought was “indicative of the desire of

Hamilton Spectator, June 25, 1941

teen-age boys and girls to do their bit.”²¹⁶ By the end of the program’s first year, 23,000 had enlisted.²¹⁷ To prepare prospective urban volunteers for farm life, a special booklet was drawn up that gave instructions for farm tasks such as milking cows and mucking out stables.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ For a more comprehensive look at the OFSF, see Sheila Hanlon, “Fair Soldiers of the Soil”: Expressions of Gender Ideology Within the Women’s Division of the Ontario Farm Service Force,” M.A. Thesis, University of Guelph, 2001.

²¹⁵ CWM, Ad, Farm Service Force, *Hamilton Spectator*, June 25, 1941; “Enrol 6,000 Students in Farm Service Force; Officials Expect More,” *Globe and Mail*, April 11, 1941, p. 5.

²¹⁶ “City Lads Do Their Bit” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, April 12, 1941, p. 6.

²¹⁷ “23,000 Enlisted in Farm Force; Outsiders Study Ontario Plan,” *Globe and Mail*, November 29, 1941, p. 4.

²¹⁸ CWM, “Issue Booklet on Farm Work,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 4, 1941.

What drove students volunteer to work on farms? ‘Doing one’s bit’ understandably played a role as well as emulating fathers and brothers in uniform. But there were other, perhaps more pragmatic, reasons to enrol. There was, of course, the perk of getting out of exams. Indeed, the fact that a number of the boys left the OFSF after their eight-week stint was up led some critics to conclude that they had joined up merely for the exam credits.²¹⁹ The pay the students were to receive, while not enormous, may have seemed appealing to boys and girls who had not yet held paid employment. In 1941, members of the Farm Cadet Brigade received \$25.00 a month, plus room and board, while the Farmerettes were paid \$15.00 per month, plus room and board.²²⁰ One advertisement for the OFSF noted that recruits would get “a wonderful Summer in the open air and sunshine, and return home in the Fall ‘brown as an Indian,’ stronger and healthier!”²²¹ The entire youth farm labour movement had a ‘summer camp’ air about it. Indeed, the camps that were set up for the youngsters were in many ways almost indistinguishable from some summer camps, but with the addition, of course, of farm chores. Then there were the ‘romantic’ possibilities that the plan presented. The young people who enrolled in the OFSF were granted ample, though chaperoned, opportunities to mix with members of the opposite sex.²²² The holiday-like atmosphere surrounding the venture, especially if friends joined up as well, might also have been a factor. The phrase “Holidays With Pay” became a popular description.²²³ The break in scholastic routine, the spending of vacation time in ‘exotic’ new

²¹⁹ “Farmerettes Staying on the Job Better Than Are the ‘Farmer Boys,’” *Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1941, p. 10.

²²⁰ Hanlon, p. 117. The rates of pay increased over the years. By 1943, male and female wages had risen to \$15 and \$10 per week, respectively.

²²¹ CWM, Ad, Farm Service Force, *Hamilton Spectator*, June 25, 1941.

²²² Hanlon, pp. 66-68.

²²³ CWM, “Farm Workers Needed,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 7, 1941.

surroundings, combined with earning money and helping the war effort made the program a worthwhile adventure for many Ontario youth. Ontario's scheme was successful enough to attract the attention of other jurisdictions. Following the OFSF's first summer of operation, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States, and several Canadian provinces were reportedly studying the plan.²²⁴

While the farm labour shortage hit Ontario first, it was not the only part of the country to feel a labour pinch. Reports indicated that by Summer 1941 Prairie farmers were also finding it increasingly difficult to obtain help.²²⁵ As in central Canada, many farm workers were migrating to urban areas in search of higher paying defence-related jobs.²²⁶ This would only worsen as labour-intensive wartime projects such as the Alaska Highway and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan inexorably drained workers from the region's traditional agricultural employers. In Quebec, the situation was much the same. One farmer from Lachute asked the Department of Agriculture for its help in finding "a good reliable farmer (preferably married) so that I can carry on the farm."

I would be willing to pay wages that you would consider reasonable. I have already had to decrease my stock as I found it impossible to obtain any farm help. As you will see, I am situated near two factories where they absorb everything with two hands from 'nine to ninety' at salaries I am unable to compete with. Of course I realize that factories have to be manned in order to help win the war, but do you think the factory workers and the rest of the Canadian people will be able to digest ammunition if farmers are going to be forced to close up their farms 'for the duration?'²²⁷

²²⁴ "23,000 Enlisted in Farm Force; Outsiders Study Ontario Plan," *Globe and Mail*, November 29, 1941, p. 4.

²²⁵ "See Labor Shortage for Harvest Season," *Edmonton Journal*, July 11, 1941, p. 5.

²²⁶ CWM, "Shortage of Farm Labour Seen Throughout Prairies," *Hamilton Spectator*, July 12, 1941; "North Said Short of Harvest Help," *Edmonton Journal*, July 31, 1941, p. 7; LAC, RG17, vol. 3633, file N-1-39, Agricultural Supplies Board Meeting, "Points Raised During Visit of Advisory Committee to the Bacon Board," November 10, 1942.

²²⁷ LAC, RG17, vol. 3401, file 1500-5(2), C.E. Wenham to the Department of Agriculture, October 29, 1941.

What measures did farmers want the government to take in relation to the farm labour problem? Suggestions varied, ranging from vague pleas to ‘do something’ about the problem to elaborate schemes. The PEI Federation of Agriculture, asking that Ottawa acknowledge the status of agriculture as “a vital war industry,” urged the federal government to come up with a plan that would ensure an adequate amount of “qualified” farm labour.²²⁸ The Vancouver Island Farmers’ Council passed a unanimous resolution demanding that the federal government establish an “Auxiliary Land Army” to provide labour.²²⁹ The Oxford County Federation of Agriculture submitted more detailed proposals. Experienced farm hands should be given exemptions from military service lasting a minimum of one year, while draft boards should consider exemptions for individuals “who understand practical farm operations.” In cases where farm help was not sufficient, recruits “experienced in farming” should be given leave. Intriguingly, the government should also form and subsidize “an army of farm workers” that would be “moved from place to place as the situation in various districts requires.” Finally, the group requested that exempted agricultural workers “be given credentials that will fully exonerate them in the eye of civilian as well as military authorities.”²³⁰ Three points are evident from this petition. First, the emphasis is laid on “experienced” farm help – farmers preferred good agricultural hands, not raw city youths or office workers on holiday. Second, when it came to determining whether or not a prospective recruit was better off staying on the farm, farmers clearly wanted a say in the process. Finally, the

²²⁸ “Want Farm Labour Made Available,” *Halifax Herald*, November 8, 1941, p. 9.

²²⁹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3373, Vancouver Island Farmers’ Council to Gardiner, May 20, 1941. They also complained that the labour shortage had resulted in an unfair advantage for “Oriental” farmers over “white” ones. Of course, that advantage was lessened considerably after the “Oriental” farmers were evacuated. Once this was done, it was not long before the ‘idle’ Japanese-Canadians were seen as part of the solution, to be used as emergency (and cheap) agricultural labour (a topic that will be explored in the next chapter).

²³⁰ Agnes Macphail, “Shortage of Labour Protested,” *Globe and Mail*, August 5, 1941, p. 11.

pressure that able-bodied men felt to enlist in the military was obviously causing a strain in rural districts. If farmers could demonstrate their status as performing an essential home front service, intense social pressure to enlist would perhaps be eased. Overall, what these and other farmers wanted was for the actions of federal government to match its rhetoric.

Agriculture on the Rebound?

Labour problems notwithstanding, by Spring 1941, optimists discerned a distinct upturn in agricultural fortunes. In May wheat growers received good news when Britain agreed to purchase 120,000,000 bushels of wheat, the largest ever single British purchase of this commodity from Canada.²³¹ This was quickly followed by reports that the government had also set a reasonably acceptable minimum price for butter: 29½ cents, to move in intervals to 32 cents by October. This was a compromise. While the prices were slightly above the 30 cent level suggested by butter traders, they were still below the 34 cents (1926-29 levels) that the CFA had demanded, and well below the 36-37 cent mark butter had reached just prior to the imposition of the price ceiling.²³²

There was also positive movement on the apple front as Britain eventually agreed to buy a quantity of Annapolis Valley apples, albeit in dried form.²³³ Pressure on the bacon front led the government to increase the price paid for that commodity. It had little choice. Part of the problem was that higher prices were being paid for hogs in the United States than in Canada, leading many Canadian farmers to send their hogs

²³¹ "Wheat Sale to U.K. Sets High Mark," *Globe and Mail*, May 14, 1941, p. 1.

²³² "Sets Minimum Butter Prices on Rising Scale," *Globe and Mail*, May 14, 1941, p. 13; "Butter at Highest Level Since 1930 in Toronto," *Globe and Mail*, December 17, 1940, p. 18.

²³³ "Sale of Apples Largest Ever," *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1941, p. 1.

south.²³⁴ By the time 1941 drew to a close, the problem of surpluses, save for wheat, had virtually ended. In fact, shortages were now the main concern. The difficulty, according to the *Monthly Review of the Bank of Nova Scotia*, was not “to find markets for bacon, dairy products, eggs, but to assure enough production to fill the demand.”²³⁵

Things continued to improve and the general outlook for Canadian agriculture was much better by Autumn 1941. Still, farmers remained wary as prices had not yet reached pre-depression ‘parity’ levels. Thus the news that the WPTB was imposing a general retail price freeze came as a blow. Creeping inflation during the war’s first two years and the memory of the rampant price increases and subsequent strife of the First World War prompted the move. In a letter to King, Hannam assailed the WPTB’s ambitious plan, which “deeply disturbed” the president of the CFA, whose request to consult with the government prior to its formal announcement had, predictably, been denied.²³⁶ While consumers would benefit, Hannam argued to freeze prices at 1941 levels would doom farmers to years of less-than-acceptable returns and make it difficult for them to improve their economic lot. “Canadian farmers do not ask for privilege,” he told King, “They ask only equity and equality of sacrifice in our war effort.”²³⁷ Agnes Macphail agreed. In her *Globe and Mail* column, Macphail maintained that while the fixing of prices was not in itself a bad policy for consumers given what had occurred during the First World War, steps “should have been taken to make sure it is just, equitable, balanced” for those who produced the food. The government may have

²³⁴ “Price of Bacon to Go Up Again,” *Globe and Mail*, July 9, 1941, p. 13.

²³⁵ “Press Summary: Agriculture in the Second Year of War,” *Monthly Review of the Bank of Nova Scotia*, August-September, 1941.

²³⁶ LAC, RG2 (Privy Council Office), series B-2, vol. 2, file D-10, Department of Agriculture, 1939-41, H.H. Hannam to Mackenzie King, October 25, 1941.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

believed that farm prices had advanced far enough, but farmers argued that they still had not recovered from the economic pressures of the Depression and the early dislocations of war. With a price freeze now in place, they would have their “inferior and inequitable position” set in stone.²³⁸

In a November 13, 1941, speech detailing Britain’s food position, famed British nutritional researcher Sir John Boyd Orr told the Canadian Club of Ottawa that obtaining greater amounts of food meant giving the farmer “a price which will call them forth. We cannot continue to have our food produced by men who have a lower standing of living than men of equal skill in the urban industries.”²³⁹ While Orr was referring to British farmers, this was the very same argument that had been put forth by Canadian farm advocates for years, and one which took on added significance under the new price control regulations. As the conservative *Toronto Telegram* argued; “[t]he narrowing of the profit margin of the farmer, the manufacturer, the wholesaler and the retailer will bring into operation the old economic law which encourages production when profits are in sight and eliminates it when they disappear.”²⁴⁰ The editor of *Saturday Night*, B.K. Sandwell, who also harboured conservative convictions, echoed these sentiments, which were panned by the *Canadian Grocer*. Sandwell,” wrote the paper, “must place primary producers of this country on a very low loyalty plane if he thinks they are going to fall down on the job of helping to win this war simply because they can’t make as much money as they think they should have.”²⁴¹ But this missed the

²³⁸ Agnes Macphail, “Agriculture Will Suffer by ‘Ceilings,’” *Globe and Mail*, October 25, 1941, p. 15.

²³⁹ Sir John Boyd Orr, Speech to the Canadian Club, Ottawa, November 13, 1941. The full text of Boyd Orr’s speech can be found at <http://www.canadianclubottawa.ca/en/events/archives/1941.html>.

²⁴⁰ CWM, “Lowered Production Likely Under Price Control” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, December 12, 1941.

²⁴¹ “Mistaken Idea About Primary Producers” (Editorial), *Canadian Grocer*, December 15, 1941, p. 46.

point for cuts in production were unlikely to occur simply because of a lack of patriotism. Producing at a loss could not be sustained indefinitely, and farm yields would decline if the cost of producing food outweighed the returns. An additional concern arising from the price freeze was the power that the WPTB would have over farmers. In December the Board had established the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation which would dole out subsidies to farmers when deemed necessary. Gardiner himself had been adamant that he would not “be a member of any government that removes the control of farm prices from the Department of Agriculture,” but this, of course, proved an idle threat.²⁴² With the price ceiling guarded by the formidable Donald Gordon who had been named Chairman of the WPTB earlier that fall, the stage was set for further battles for the Minister of Agriculture and the farmers of Canada.

Conclusion

For farmers hit hard by the Depression, the war’s outbreak had been met with cautious optimism, tempered by regret that, once again, Canada would be called upon to contribute blood, money, and food to a worldwide conflict. Despite the demonstrated importance of food in warfare, Canadian officials had done very little in the way of planning during the interwar years. As a result, optimism soon gave way to uncertainty on the part of farmers who wanted clear guidance as to what they should be raising on their farms. The government, in turn, had difficulty in getting the British to commit to buying Canadian foodstuffs, a situation that changed as Britain’s European sources were cut off by German victories. The best advice that the state could offer farmers, in these

²⁴² Dexter, p. 205.

early days, was to be flexible, be ready to respond to whatever the British needed, whenever they decided what that might be.

The war soon began to drain labour from the farms, leaving farmers short-staffed and short-tempered. As well, there was a mounting sense of frustration over farm prices and conditions coupled with a suspicion that the government was not taking agricultural issues seriously. The federal Minister of Agriculture, James Gardiner, became the target of farmer anger. In the wake of such sentiments, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture took a broader leadership role, culminating in Herbert Hannam's rousing speech at the London meeting between disgruntled farmers and government officials.

Canada, having gone into the war with a colossal surplus of wheat, soon found that wheat was something Britain did not need, at least not in huge amounts. With animal protein being the major war demand this time around, Canadian farmers had to quickly retool their agricultural practices to meet this need. Wheat production was to be curtailed, while the raising of hogs and beef cattle, and the production of coarse grains and dairy products was encouraged through a variety of economic inducements. Farmers finally had an idea of what they would be called upon to produce for the war effort, but the news that the government was going to impose a general price freeze once again dismayed the agricultural community, who argued that prices had not been allowed to advance high enough – the much desired 'parity levels' had not yet been achieved. Farmers, as patriotic as any other group, were also pragmatic: efficient production of food could best be achieved if farmers were treated fairly, and were given the same opportunities that they saw other sectors of the economy enjoying. When it came to wartime agriculture, profits and patriotism were thus inescapably joined.

Chapter Four
***‘Part of the Price of the Salvation of Human Freedom’:
Food Consumption and Regulation, 1939-1942***

Way back in 1939 A.D. the Canadian dinner table was among the most pampered in the world. Of all the varieties of foods produced on this good earth, seventy per cent found their way to our grocers' shelves and ultimately to our kitchen doors. We could buy without let or hindrance practically anything which offered nourishment for our bodies or pleasure for our palates. ... Well, much water has flowed under bridges since those dear remembered ante-bellum days. Times have changed and things that we thought couldn't happen have happened; controls, restrictions, shortages, rations have reared their ugly heads to revise and rule our menus. But even under this new order of meals and meal-planning we can still eat well.¹

– Helen Campbell, *Maclean's*, 1942

Introduction

While maximizing Canada's wartime food contributions rested largely upon the ability of farmers to increase their production, consumers had an important role to play as well. The war had badly disrupted global trading networks, and it did not take long for that disorder to reverberate down the food chain. As a result, Canadians were required to make small personal sacrifices in their eating habits. Between 1939 and the end of 1942 stocks of imported food products such as sugar, coffee, and tea tightened, while some domestic commodities, mainly pork, beef, and butter, also suffered periodic interruptions. Inflationary pressures caused food prices to rise throughout the first two years of the war, steadily if not dramatically. Officials hoped that the Canadian war effort could be conducted through voluntarism, not compulsion, but this did not transpire. Eventually the state, through the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB),

¹ Helen G. Campbell, "We Can Still Eat Well," *Maclean's*, September 15, 1942, p. 21.

took steps to regulate the economy. In a controversial and unprecedented move a retail price freeze and wage controls were implemented in late 1941. In 1942 rationing of certain food products was implemented to ensure equitable supply and distribution. Further changes to the Canadian diet came as a result of attempts to increase public awareness of nutrition, as dietary health was seen by many as having a direct bearing on both the war effort and on national proficiency in general. Thanks to increased appetites and larger pay cheques overall Canadian food consumption was on the rise, but eating more food, as nutrition experts stressed, did not automatically translate into a better diet. Rationing and supply difficulties also lent greater significance to proper eating habits, as eating the right foods in the right amounts was seen as the key to optimum nutrition.

Throughout this period consumers retained a strong interest in food-related issues, and they did not hesitate to react – at times vociferously – when prices rose or supplies were in some way threatened. Most Canadians recognized that while the alimentary inconveniences of war were annoying, they were not severe, and therefore they cooperated with the new food protocols, viewing them as simply another wartime obligation. A minority, however, were less collectively-minded. Activities such as hoarding food, buying and selling on the black market, and other attempts to ‘game’ the system were common, a problem that the state, via the WPTB, sought to check. In the end, voluntarism in the realm of food could only go so far. It was up to the government – previously committed to economic and social non-intervention – to check the bounds of self-interest by placing curbs on the economy and employing propaganda designed to remind Canadians of their duty and relative good fortune. According to much of the rhetoric employed by the WPTB and the government in general, the increasingly strict

regulations which developed during this period were due to the public's own failings. Thus, as 1942 drew to a close, the way in which consumers approached food was altered. Canadians now incorporated elements of sacrifice and moderation into their food habits, but at the same time they continued to engage in individualistic, self-interested behaviour that the state worked to curtail.

A Rush to the Colours or a Rush to the Grocers? Canadian Consumers Respond to War

In sharp contrast to the manner in which they had greeted the First World War, Canadians entered the Second World War in a rather more subdued fashion. The months (if not years) of escalating global friction had bred a feeling of uneasy resignation, and many were unenthusiastic over Canada's potential role in the conflict. According to the *Ottawa Journal*, the typical attitude upon the outbreak of war in Europe "was one of calm acceptance of what had become more and more inevitable during the last days of tension."² That "calm acceptance" however, did not extend to food as consumers throughout the country engaged in a brief yet intense food-buying frenzy that cleared store shelves and stretched grocers' nerves. Dealers in Edmonton, for example, reported "quite a lot of shoppers" walking out with hundred-pound bags of sugar along with large stocks of flour, scenes that were repeated in stores across the nation.³ This scramble to stock up was the first of numerous similar episodes that occurred throughout the war despite the imposition of a regulatory framework, consisting of price controls and rationing, which was designed to ensure equitable

² *Ottawa Journal*, September 1, 1939, p. 12. See also J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 19-20, for more on the response.

³ "Dealers Checking Sugar 'Hoarding,'" *Edmonton Journal*, September 2, 1939, p. 9.

access to food. If this was a harbinger of how Canadian consumers would behave when it came to wartime resource sharing, it was certainly not positive.

Fears surrounding the war's potential impact on the food supply had escalated as Canada's entry into the conflict neared, anxiety that was caused largely by memories of the First World War. While farmers recalled the period with a sense of optimism and opportunity, consumers had a very different recollection. The First World War had seen the cost of living, driven by food prices, increase rapidly. Despite the appointment of a Food Controller and later the Canada Food Board, Sir Robert Borden's government had not handled the situation with any great distinction, and inflation had spiralled out of control. In September 1939 the *Canadian Grocer* asserted that war would once again push food prices upward. The paper reminded its readers that during the Great War "Wheat, flour, sugar, tea, canned goods and all foods imported from European, Asiatic, and African countries had gone up, some of them sky high."⁴ Some dealers passed this worrisome possibility on to their customers. Consumer apprehension was in no way assuaged by ads such as one run by Toronto's Miracle Marketierias in the days leading up to the war, informing consumers that a "full pantry" was "now a wise safeguard," and featuring a sale on "flour, sugar, canned foods, coffee, preserving supplies."⁵ Given the context of the advertisement and its timing, the implication was unspoken yet all-too clear: stock up now or else. This type of message surely exacerbated public uncertainty by reminding consumers of the skyrocketing inflation that had occurred during the First World War, all in the hopes of increasing sales. A later advertisement, entitled "Here's

⁴ "War Clouds, Uncertainty, Exchange, Insurance Risks, Puzzling to Buyers," *Canadian Grocer*, September 1, 1939, p. 7.

⁵ *Toronto Star*, September 1, 1939, p. 30. The ad drew the attention of the *Canadian Grocer*, which noted that Miracle Marketierias had in a sense 'beat the gun' by running the ad before war had even been declared. See *Canadian Grocer*, September 15, 1939, p. 10.

What Happened Last Time!,” was far less subtle, as it helpfully included a chart comparing certain food prices from 1915-1917 with those then prevailing.⁶ Indeed, the cost of food during the previous war should be considered a prime factor behind the hoarding drive that occurred in September 1939. With this unsettling precedent in mind, it was not unreasonable for Canadians to stockpile certain food commodities before prices again began to climb.

A related concern arose from the uncertainty surrounding global food distribution networks. It was not coincidental that many of the most popular purchases in September 1939 were of imported commodities whose availability could be compromised by war. Tea and coffee were snatched up quickly, leading to brief shortages in some parts of the country.⁷ But sugar was by far the most popular commodity squirreled away, sometimes in amounts that reached into the hundreds of pounds.⁸ This run on sugar was the first real crisis faced by the newly-formed WPTB, which scrambled to respond to what it termed “a wholly abnormal and indeed wholly fictitious demand.”⁹ Still, the desire of many Canadians to hoard sugar was strong for the commodity exerted a tremendous dietary hold on Canadians. Women still did much of their baking at home, and sugar was certainly a key ingredient. Another significant factor in the sugar hoarding drive was that the war had begun in the middle of the late summer preserving season, an activity that required large amounts of sugar. While

⁶ Ad, Miracle Marketeries, *Toronto Star*, September 29, 1939, p. 29.

⁷ “Stocks Dwindle as Women Rush for Tea and Coffee,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, September 13, 1939, p. 3; “War Budget Speeds Buying,” *The Albertan*, September 13, 1939, p. 9. Other imported items, such as olive oil, suffered localized scarcity; see, for example, “Rush on Olive Oil,” *Toronto Star*, September 6, 1939, p. 4.

⁸ “Dealers Checking Sugar ‘Hoarding,’” *Edmonton Journal*, September 2, 1939, p. 9; “Rush for Sugar,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 5, 1939, p. 14.

⁹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG28 I66 (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), vol. 4, file 16, Department of Agriculture, Correspondence, 1939-41, Hector McKinnon to G.G. Coote, October 21, 1939.

doubts as to sugar's healthfulness had already begun to circulate, it was still seen by many as a dietary necessity, not a luxury.¹⁰ 'Experts,' such as child psychologist and *Globe and Mail* columnist Angelo Patri, advised parents that "Candy is food and children need it. They need the energy that sugar supplies, and they are entitled to the pleasure that the good taste gives them."¹¹ In a similar vein, when the government proposed raising the sugar tax in Spring 1941, Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) MP M.J. Coldwell protested, repeating the argument that it was something that children 'needed.'¹²

While imported goods such as sugar came first on the shopping list, domestically produced commodities were also purchased in large quantities, especially flour and butter. The hoarding of flour is particularly ironic given that Canada was sitting on the largest wheat surplus in its history. Perhaps Canadians remembered that wheat had been Canada's major food contribution during the previous conflict, and acted accordingly. It is far more likely that flour was hoarded simply as a matter of course, as a staple commodity that people knew they would need and that could be stored for a considerable length of time. When it came to butter, however, this 'hoarding' might be more correctly regarded as speculation: a teacher was found to have 8,000 pounds of butter, while an "insurance man" was caught with an incredible 30,000 pounds.¹³ These were isolated cases but evidence of widespread smaller-scale hoarding for personal consumption was extensive.

¹⁰ See, for example, Irving V. Sollins, "Sugar in Diet: An Educational Problem," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (February 1930): 341-348.

¹¹ "Candy Gives Children Needed Sugar Supply," *Globe and Mail*, October 10, 1940, p. 9.

¹² "Sugar is Called Child's Luxury; Tax Protested," *Globe and Mail*, May 31, 1941, p. 8.

¹³ "Uncover Plans to Make Profit Through War," *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1940, p. 15; "Would Be 'Get-Rich-Quick' Hoarders," *Canadian Grocer*, March 15, 1940, p. 54.

As more and more consumers chased after increasingly scarce foods, the fear of rising prices became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Demand outstripped supply, and the cost of food staples edged upward, fuelling panic.¹⁴ Before long the conviction arose that dealers were seeking to profit from the circumstances, another echo of the past war. As the cost of living had risen between 1914 and 1918, so too had the level of public antagonism directed towards the ‘profiteer’ and the ‘middleman.’ These shadowy figures had been routinely excoriated by the public, an antipathy that swiftly resurfaced in 1939. At a meeting called to discuss hoarding and profiteering, the Toronto District Trades and Labour Council condemned retailers who were, in their estimation, making undue profits by raising prices. Retailers duly passed the blame onto producers – some Ottawa dealers blamed the increase in meat prices on farmers hoping to capitalize on higher demand.¹⁵ Farmers, in turn, insisted that middlemen or the ‘packing interests’ were at fault. But fingers were most often pointed at consumers themselves, viewed as foolishly buying goods beyond their immediate needs. Grocers saw themselves as the blameless victims of consumer hysteria, as hapless businessmen who had “pretty clean skirts” when it came to the hoarding spree.¹⁶ The public, many dealers asserted, were the architects of their own misfortune, creating shortages where none should exist and driving up prices with their behaviour. The *Canadian Grocer* rose in defence of the food trade, recounting the story of one woman who, after being told by her grocer that he would only sell her two pounds of sugar rather than the twenty she requested, bought

¹⁴ “Prices of Food Rising,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 8, 1939, p. 8; Canadian War Museum (CWM) “Price of Potatoes Doubles in Week Since War Started,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 8, 1939, in *Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War* (hereafter cited as CWM).

¹⁵ “Price Control and Rationing” (Editorial), *Canadian Banker*, Vol. 47 (January 1940), p. 134; “Food Profiteering Charged by Labour,” *Toronto Star*, September 8, 1939, p. 11; “Meat Prices Advance Here,” *Ottawa Journal*, September 8, 1939, p. 12.

¹⁶ “Would Be ‘Get-Rich-Quick’ Hoarders,” *Canadian Grocer*, March 15, 1940, p. 54.

the two pounds and proceeded to angrily dump the sugar on the floor of the store.¹⁷

“The only cause for the temporary embarrassment in regard to sugar is the hoarding on the part of the public,” A.B. Thomson, a manager with Canada and Dominion Sugar Refining, stated bluntly. Gordon Mooney, a Loblaw’s employee, complained that “If people would buy their regular quantities of food and not become panicky it would be possible to keep up the supply of provisions.”¹⁸ Unlike Miracle Marketierias, the Safeway grocery chain appealed for calm, asking consumers to buy as normal.¹⁹

Another dealer created a display in his window asking customers “not to stampede” because he had adequate supplies of both flour and sugar.²⁰ But the hoarding instinct, arguably a natural human reaction in times of stress and uncertainty, remained strong.

Of course, the act of purchasing food requires the consent of two economic actors, a buyer and a seller. If dealers understood the negative consequences of panic buying, why did they continue to sell food in such unreasonable quantities? Why place all the blame on the consumer when buying and selling was a two-way process? No one, as far as the records show, held a gun to the heads of retailers and forced them to sell hundred-pound bags of sugar to the hordes of “hoarding housewives.”²¹ Grocers sold food in large quantities because they were businessmen whose purpose was to turn a profit; and as yet, no one questioned that objective. As long as the market remained free of state regulation, grocers were going to sell their products as they had all along,

¹⁷ “Accusations of Sugar Hoarding by Grocery Trade Not Proved,” *Canadian Grocer*, October 1, 1939, p. 22.

¹⁸ CWM, “No Shortages Exist Now, But Hoarding Lifts Costs,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 6, 1939; see also “Rush of Buying Blamed for Grocery Price Rise,” *Globe and Mail*, September 7, 1939, p. 4.

¹⁹ Ad, Safeway, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, September 16, 1939, p. 5.

²⁰ “Don’t Stampede’ Says Grocer in Unique Window Display,” *Canadian Grocer*, September 15, 1939, p. 10.

²¹ “Sweet Battle – Stocks of Sugar on Display Calm Housewives’ Apprehension,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 6, 1939, p. 3.

and the grocery trade operated on thin margins at the best of times. To be fair, some dealers did put restrictions in place to curb the flurry, limiting the amount of sugar or flour that a person could purchase at one time. This type of informal rationing on the part of the dealer was not altruistic, as there was little benefit to be derived from having one's stocks cleared out completely. However, if each customer could be provided a part of what they wanted there was a chance they would purchase other products. In addition, some dealers rationed their goods so as not to alienate their regular customers. The Toronto District Trades and Labour Council assailed this practice on a class basis, arguing that people in the more prosperous districts were able to continue buying large lots of food, while stores serving the working classes were quick to impose restrictions.

There was in fact a strong class dimension to the whole issue of hoarding. In order to buy hundreds of pounds sugar or flour, one had to be able to pay for it. In late October, after the initial hoarding rush had died down, Toronto's Miracle Marketierias again ran an advertisement urging "those who can afford to purchase certain foods *now* for later use" to do so. This was not, in their estimation, hoarding, but rather "common sense" that would "not only benefit themselves, but the country at large. ... A consumer reserve now will help those who can't afford advance purchases to get their requirements later on more easily and cheaply by avoiding extreme demands."²²

Noblesse oblige, certainly.

Given the potential nasty consequences of unrestrained food buying, the state would eventually become the ultimate arbiter in this matter. In the meantime, the media functioned as a moral guidepost, condemning the wave of panic buying and urging calm. Hoarding was foolish as Canada's food stocks, the *Toronto Telegram* reminded

²² "Food in War Time" (Ad, Miracle Marketierias), *Toronto Star*, October 30, 1939, p. 29.

its readers, were “not only more than we can eat, but more than we can sell.”²³ Bride Broder used her *Globe and Mail* column to warn about the “ugly head of hoarding rising among us,” and bemoaned the fact that so many were “thinking selfishly” and invalidating the patriotism of others.²⁴ The *Canadian Home Journal* told its readers that food conservation – a popular topic in wartime – “had nothing to do with that most despicable thing, hoarding.”²⁵ But in order for this type of language to make sense, the whole philosophy underlying the provisioning of oneself and one’s family had to be changed. Under wartime circumstances, the food resources of the nation became, in essence, ‘common property’ which had to be equitably shared amongst the entire population *and* the nation’s allies. The act of ‘stocking up’ to make sure that one had enough food to meet one’s wants had to be redefined, from sensible to unacceptable. The basic motive for hoarding came down to simple psychology: human beings are inescapably aware that their own survival depends on continuous access to adequate food resources. As anthropologist Robert Dirks points out, “famine is an ancient and persistent human experience,” and any possible threat to the food supply, however vague and ill-defined, is a direct attack on one’s own personal survival.²⁶ People tend to hoard in times of crisis or perceived crisis to offset possible future privation. When coupled with the very real probability that the war would create both short-term and long-term inflationary pressures that would force food prices to rise, the hoarding of

²³ CWM, “No Necessity in Canada to Hoard Food Supplies” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, September 5.

²⁴ Bride Broder, “Hoarding is Often Harmful,” *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1939, p. 22.

²⁵ Katherine Caldwell Bayley, “We Women Man the Food Front,” *Canadian Home Journal*, November 1939, pp. 54, 63.

²⁶ Robert Dirks, “Social Responses during Severe Food Shortages and Famine,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (February 1980), p. 22. Canada was not the only country to greet war with an outbreak of hoarding. Harvey Levenstein’s account of hoarding in the U.S. upon that nation’s declaration of war reveals many similarities. See Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 80.

food can be viewed as a rational reaction. But in a nation at war, supply imbalances can be a serious danger to civilian morale, and the efficiency of the war effort. Stocking up had to be transformed in the public's mind into an irrational, 'panicked' response, and hoarding into something practiced by 'hysterical' consumers. It was up to the state to successfully convince consumers that their actions were harmful to Canada's broader collective interests.

BE WISE... *Beat the Price Rise!*

As everyone knows, due to market conditions the price of grains has sharply increased in the past few weeks. Because RED RIVER CEREAL is made entirely from Canadian grains...in fact, it is the only Canadian cereal on the market that contains cracked wheat, cracked rye, and whole flax in such generous proportions...its price is always subject to the price of the grains themselves.

Replacement stocks of RED RIVER CEREAL are already up in price. As soon as your dealer's present supply of RED RIVER CEREAL is depleted, he will find it necessary to ask an increased price. The wise housewife will take advantage of this situation—go to her grocer *this week-end*, and lay in an extra supply of RED RIVER CEREAL.

Do not hoard or over-buy! Canada is well supplied with grains!

RED RIVER CEREAL
Made by the Maple Leaf Milling Company—Makers of Monarch, Pasty Flour

Remember—Not only is Red River Cereal a substantial, filling, energy-sustaining breakfast cereal, but it is also very economical. It goes far! When cooked, its "bulk" is increased three fold, and makes a hearty meal for the whole family. Ready prepared, it costs less than 8 cents per person per meal. Saves Red River Cereal in every day—every day.

In the war's early days, however, the distinction between 'common sense stocking up' and 'hoarding' was fuzzy at best, and seemed to depend on perspective more than anything else. What exactly constituted hoarding? How much of a given commodity could a person buy before they crossed the line? It was reasonably clear that products such as sugar or tea were not to be stockpiled, but what about laying in a quantity of other

Globe and Mail, September 21, 1939.

products in case they *might* become rationed or scarce in the future?²⁷ Was this a breach of wartime ethics? Furthermore, Canadians had to deal with messages from the food trade that were, in some instances, confusing or else flatly contradictory. Consider a late September advertisement for Red River Cereal, which featured an owl and the prominent slogan "Be Wise... Beat the Price Rise!" If this was perhaps too subtle, the

²⁷ There are indications that this was an ongoing puzzle throughout the war. See, for example, a letter sent to the *Globe and Mail's* "Homemaker Page" in April, 1942, entitled "Is This Hoarding?," *Globe and Mail*, April 2, 1942, p. 9.

company thoughtfully added the information that “[a]s soon as your dealer’s present supply of Red River Cereal is depleted, he will find it necessary to ask an increased price. The wise housewife will take advantage of this situation – go to her grocer *this week-end*, and lay in an extra supply of Red River Cereal.” But the advertisement also included the warning (in smaller type) “Do not hoard or overbuy! Canada is well supplied with grains!”²⁸ Was ‘laying in an extra supply’ not to be considered a type of hoarding? As it became increasingly apparent that such mundane issues could cause serious problems, the notion grew that state regulation of prices and supply would be required to obviate such a possibility.

The Role of the State: Consumers and the Wartime Prices and Trade Board

In contrast to the slow pace of government intervention in the area of food supply during the First World War, in September 1939 King’s government moved relatively quickly, no doubt wishing to avoid the domestic discord that rampant inflation had wrought during the previous conflict. On September 2 Minister of Labour Norman Rogers announced that measures were in the works to protect consumers.²⁹ P.C. 2516, passed by the cabinet, created the WPTB, a body vested with the power to control the price, supply, and distribution of “the necessities of life.”³⁰ Three senior civil servants, Hector McKinnon, Chairman of the Tariff Board, David Sim, from the Department of National Revenue, and F.A. McGregor, the Commissioner of the Combines Investigations Act,

²⁸ Ad, Red River Cereal, *Globe and Mail*, September 21, 1939, p. 5.

²⁹ CWM, “Will Announce Steps Against Food Hoarding,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 2, 1939; “Canada Food Controller Seen Wartime Possibility,” *Toronto Star*, September 2, 1939, p. 2; “Food Control Board if Profiteering,” *Ottawa Journal*, September 2, 1939, p. 5.

³⁰ Sheila I. Stewart, “Statutes, Orders, and Official Statements Relating to Canadian War-Time Economic Controls,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 1947), p. 102.

were named to run the newly-formed WPTB. When contrasted with the bureaucratic behemoth it would eventually become, the fledgling WPTB seemed almost comically small. Its staff of six hardly reflected its large if somewhat vague mandate.³¹ Nor was it strictly a food control board; its mandate, in fact, was much broader than anything Canadians had ever seen. Under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labour, McKinnon *et al* were to act as a sort of economic watchdog over prices and supply. It would be up to the WPTB to define the parameters of both hoarding and profiteering, and to find ways to combat these ills. Canadians were warned that under new regulations drawn up by the WPTB, no one was allowed to “accumulate or withhold from sale any necessary of life beyond an amount thereof that is reasonably required for the use or consumption of his household or for the ordinary purposes of his business.”³² Those found in violation of this edict faced a hefty fine (maximum of \$5000) or jail time (up to two years), and hoarded goods were liable to be seized. The ground rules were thus laid early – the days of ‘prudently stocking up’ were over. The war was to be won on the basis of the equitable distribution of available supplies, and woe to those who subverted those guidelines. These new regulations, however, were not initially accompanied by a state publicity campaign to counter hoarding and price gouging. Believing that despite the initial hoarding drive these practices were not widespread, McKinnon feared that propaganda would in fact prompt people to engage in these very actions.³³ In essence, the public was on its ‘honour’ to abide by both the letter and the

³¹ Joseph Schull, *The Great Scot: A Biography of Donald Gordon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1979), p. 51. In addition to serving on the WPTB, the members also kept their ‘day jobs’ in their respective departments.

³² CWM, “Provide Heavy Penalties for Hoarding Foodstuffs,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 8, 1939.

³³ David W. Slater, *War Finance and Reconstruction: The Role of Canada’s Department of Finance, 1939-1946* (Ottawa: Department of Finance, 1995), p. 100. McKinnon may have had a point. During the war Canadians were, in general, sceptical of obvious propaganda. See William R. Young, “Making the

spirit of the new price and supply rules – the efficacy of those rules would, for the time being, be up to consumers and dealers themselves.

At a time when farmers were demanding higher food prices to offset what they argued were artificially low prices left over from the Depression, consumers were watching closely to make sure such a thing did not occur. Expenditures on food, after all, claimed nearly one-third of the average urban family's income.³⁴ Women especially, whose daily activities gave them an intimate knowledge of food costs, could be expected to notice any undue fluctuations in prices, a fact that would later be exploited by the WPTB. Almost immediately they bombarded the new agency with protests over allegedly abrupt increases in the price of items like sugar, butter, meat and some vegetables.³⁵ These were not idle worries. According to press reports, the outbreak of war did have immediate effect on food prices across the country. For example, meat prices rose in Ottawa, while Hamilton fish and chip shops were hit hard by a sharp increase in the price of potatoes.³⁶ A survey conducted by the *Winnipeg Free Press* found that the cost of butter, potatoes, coffee and tea had risen in that city.³⁷ Price increases were also reported in Regina, prompting the mayor to complain to Ottawa, and

Truth Graphic: The Canadian Government's Home Front Information Structure and Programmes During World War II," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1978; "Building Citizenship: English Canada and Propaganda during the Second World War," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1981): 121-132.

³⁴ "Food for Average Canadian Family Takes Almost One-Third of Income," *Globe and Mail*, April 3, 1941, p. 13.

³⁵ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 4, file 16, Department of Agriculture, Correspondence, 1939-41, Hector McKinnon to G.G. Coote, October 21, 1939.

³⁶ "Meat Prices Advance Here," *Ottawa Journal*, September 8, 1939, p. 12; CWM, "Price of Potatoes Doubles in Week Since War Started," *Hamilton Spectator*, September 8, 1939.

³⁷ "Prices of Food Rising," *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 8, 1939, p. 8.

in Prince Albert lower-income families “who had struggled to keep off the relief list” were finding it hard to manage.³⁸

Of course, the question remains as to whether food prices were really rising that much, or whether consumers, primed for possible war-related increases, were simply paying greater attention and over-reacting to the slightest rise. But it can also be argued that the reality of higher food prices mattered less than the *perception* that food prices were too high and the fear that they would rise ever higher. Was this, as some contended, the thin edge of the wartime inflationary wedge, or was it simply a matter of normal, seasonal fluctuations? For its part, the WPTB did not consider the initial price increases to be unduly disproportionate, but others begged to differ.³⁹ The Housewives’ Consumer Association (HCA), set up during the Depression by the Communist Party of Canada to press for affordable food prices, reported a boost in membership that it attributed to an egregious amount of “wartime profiteering.” It also considered various responses, including boycotts, to the cost increases.⁴⁰

Government officials were indeed braced for serious economic dislocations, but these did not immediately occur, a situation that suited McKinnon’s unobtrusive style and his preferred line of attack of appealing to voluntarism. Partly for these reasons, the WPTB’s activities were largely limited early in the war.⁴¹ This was especially true in the realm of food. The WPTB’s most significant action taken came in August 1940 when, “to prevent exploitation of consumers,” it fixed the price of both bread and

³⁸ “Bitter Criticism,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, September 9, 1939, p. 3.

³⁹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 4, file 16, Department of Agriculture, Correspondence, 1939-41, Hector McKinnon to G.G. Coote, October 21, 1939.

⁴⁰ “Housewives Organize Blame Profiteering,” *Toronto Star*, November 29, 1939, p. 33.

⁴¹ See Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2004), p. 72.

flour.⁴² The amendments to the Wheat Board Act, passed in July, had included a 15 cent processing tax on bushels of wheat milled into flour for domestic use. Minister of Trade and Commerce James McKinnon had been adamant that this would not drive up the price of bread. So when Vancouver bakers increased bread prices, the WPTB retaliated with a ceiling pegged at July 23rd prices.⁴³ This shot across the bow indicated that the government was serious when it came to keeping a lid on inflation, and that food dealers would flaunt the rules at their peril. As with farmers, however, those in the food trade believed that they too had a right to a fair profit. In an editorial statement that strongly echoed the demands being made by farmers for ‘fair prices,’ the *Canadian Grocer* argued that “To be able to shoulder his proper share of Canada’s war expense, the grocer must protect his margin of profit to cover the increased overhead expense occurred by higher taxation and costs, and be able to contribute his share toward Canada’s war effort.”⁴⁴ Farmers and consumers, it seemed, were not the only group with interests to uphold, in wartime as in peace.

Food Supply and Prices: Rationing in the Land of Abundance?

In a country where agricultural surpluses posed a major problem, the idea of consumer rationing seemed slightly absurd. Imported commodities such as coffee or sugar, it was certainly agreed, might require some form of control, but it was widely assumed that domestically grown foods such as meat, butter or cheese would remain free of such restrictions. Indeed, some of the war’s early disruptions only highlighted the wealth of

⁴² “Press Release No. 39, Wartime Prices and Trade Board,” August 10, 1940; “Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Order No. 5, “Respecting Bread and Wheat Flour,” August 6, 1940, *Canada Gazette* LXXIV, No. 11. The order was later rescinded.

⁴³ “Grain Used by Canada to be Taxed,” *Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1940, p. 1; “Bread Pegged at July 23 Price by War Board,” *Globe and Mail*, August 7, 1940, p. 1.

⁴⁴ “Get Fair Margin of Profit” (Editorial), *Canadian Grocer*, October 15, 1940, p. 70.

Canada's food resources. When war-related issues temporarily closed off much of Canada's foreign apple market, the government launched a campaign urging Canadians to eat more apples, enlisting the help of the Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA) which was asked to encourage the public to up their apple intake.⁴⁵ Similarly, in early 1940 the rapid expansion of Canadian pork production in the wake of the British bacon contract resulted in a temporary market glut, prompting another government-led campaign asking people to consume more pork.⁴⁶ It came as something of a shock for Canadians (among the largest consumers of butter on the planet) to realize in late 1940 that the country's butter stocks were running dangerously low. This was Canada's first real wartime food shortage, and the public responded in a depressingly predictable manner – by buying up stocks of butter. With increasingly lower supplies came increasingly higher prices; in Toronto the wholesale price of butter rose to a height not seen since 1930.⁴⁷ In B.C., the price was high enough to prompt the Housewives' League of British Columbia to call for a butter boycott.⁴⁸ Some consumer satisfaction was achieved when the WPTB stepped in to set a maximum price for butter, but the failure to also fix a minimum price, as we have seen, caused bitterness among farmers and exacerbated the ongoing tension between food producers and Ottawa.

⁴⁵ Britnell and Fowke, p. 89; LAC, MG28 I359, (Canadian Home Economics Association), vol. 9, file 9, CHEA Newsletter, 1940-1950, Alice Stevens, "Canadian Apples in Wartime," News Letter, Canadian Home Economics Association, February, 1940. The CHEA, founded in 1939, was a national association of professional home economists.

⁴⁶ Britnell and Fowke, p. 87. Despite the loss of Danish bacon supplies, at this point Britain was reluctant to increase the amount of pork bought from Canada. See "Prices of Pork Likely to Drop as Supply High," *Globe and Mail*, April 18, 1940, p. 5.

⁴⁷ "Butter Shortage Likely to Force Importation," *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 12, 1940, p. 1; "Restriction Upon Butter is Unlikely," *Globe and Mail*, December 13, 1940, p. 1; "Butter at Highest Level Since 1930 in Toronto," *Globe and Mail*, December 17, 1940, p. 18.

⁴⁸ "Doubt Retail Butter Price to be Lowered by Pegging," *Toronto Star*, December 28, 1940, p. 2. The Housewives' League of British Columbia was a communist-affiliated group which fought to keep wartime prices in check. Similar Housewives' Leagues operated in various other Canadian cities. See Brian T. Thorn, "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Rocks the World": Women in Vancouver's Communist Movement, 1935-1945," M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2001.

The butter problem illustrated the extent to which food prices could spur tension between farmers and consumers. Queen's University professor J.L. McDougall, writing in the *Canadian Banker*, argued that the butter crisis "was proof, if proof were needed, that the urban population had grown fully used to food prices which meant distress to the farm population, and felt that such prices should be maintained to preserve them against disturbance of established habits and expectations."⁴⁹ In other words, during the Depression Canadians had become 'addicted' to low food prices, making the modest price increases of the early war years seem disproportionately large. A 1941 opinion poll conducted by the *Canadian Forum* reported that 69% of respondents (and 79% of female respondents) believed that food prices were too high, a further hint that most consumers had a low tolerance level when it came to inflation.⁵⁰ This attitude put policy makers in a tight spot. An official at the Department of Finance, R.B. Bryce, contended that the government understood and took account of the plight in which farmers found themselves. The general opinion was that "prices should be allowed to rise moderately during the first year or so of the war and that food prices in particular should be enabled, and in some cases encouraged, to return to their pre-depression relationship to other prices."⁵¹ This had to be done without arousing consumer anger or compromising supply levels. Over the next several years, the government would have to walk a fine line to enact policies that would balance the demands of farmers with the desires of consumers, while minimizing unrest from either quarter.

⁴⁹ J.L. McDougall, "The Position of the Farmer in a War Economy," *Canadian Banker*, Vol. 48 (April 1941), p. 333.

⁵⁰ Philip Spencer, "We Went to the People," *Canadian Forum*, January 1941, p. 318.

⁵¹ R.B. Bryce, "Prices, Wages, and the Ceiling," in David W. Slater, *War Finance and Reconstruction* (Ottawa: Department of Finance, 1995), pp. 127-129.

Butter may have been the first food to suffer from wartime scarcity, but it was certainly not the last. As previously noted, the amount of pork needed to fulfill the British bacon contract was quite substantial, and by Summer 1941 it became clear that

EATON'S



**Help Send More
Pork to Britain**

In order to maintain the required shipments to Great Britain of 9,000,000 lbs. a week—Canada must make a voluntary reduction of pork purchases during the Summer months, when hog deliveries are at their lowest. With such a wealth of other types of meat and fish so readily available—Canada can comply with this appeal and still have interesting, nourishing varied meals.

In answer to the Government appeal—to eat less pork during the summer months—EATON'S suggest the following to vary your summer menu:

DIAMOND ♦ BEEF	FRESH FISH
Blue Brand Prime	Whitefish
♦ Sirloin Steak lb. .33	Markeet 3 lb. .25
♦ Lean Minced Beef..... lb. .19	Halibut
♦ Round Steak, minced..... lb. .31	Cod, lb. .28 — Flaked, lb. .32
♦ Individual Delivered	SMOKED FISH
♦ Steak	Smoked Miltie 2 lb. .35
♦ Boneless Stewing Beef lb. .20	Chicken Miltie
♦ Red Brand Baby	Salmon Smoked
♦ Round Steak lb. .37	Large Rippers
♦ Sirloin Steak lb. .40	NO. 1 QUALITY VEAL
FRESH SPRING LAMB	Veal Patties
5 lb. Chops	Veal Cutlets
Stewing Lamb	5 lb. Chops
Lamb Patties	Stewing Veal 2 lb. .29
Lamb Fronts	DELICATESSEN
FRESH POULTRY	Mixed Stewed Beef ... 1/2 lb. .29
Roasting Fowl, 4-6 lb. ea. lb. .27	Beef Bologna
Baking Chicken, 2-3 lb. lb. .35	Variety Lunch
Chicken Legs	Maronni and
Chicken Breasts	Cheese Loaf

EATON'S MEAT DEPARTMENT—5th Floor, Centre
PHONE TR. 3311 — All orders delivered, City and Suburban Areas

T. EATON CO. Limited

meeting the quota would be difficult. Thus, after being asked to eat more pork, Canadians were now asked to halve their consumption of pork to ensure that the contract could be filled.⁵² Instead of bacon, consumers were urged to eat other meats. This prompted farm advocates such as Agnes Macphail to chide the government for its “short-sighted agricultural policy” that had failed to make it cost-effective for farmers to raise more hogs. Prices were too low to meet the cost of production, and as a result

farmers had little economic incentive to extend pork production.⁵³ Realizing the error, the government raised the price paid for pork, but this step did not address the existing shortfall in supply, meaning consumers would have to pay a price. Compounding the problem was the fact that Canadians had gladly been eating more bacon as it had dropped slightly in price since the beginning of

⁵² “Asks Canadians Eat 50 P.C. Less Pork,” *Globe and Mail*, June 30, 1941, p. 15. According to some reports, only Montreal met that goal. See CWM, “Montreal Only City to Cut Pork 50 P.C.,” *Globe and Mail*, July 11, 1941.

⁵³ Agnes Macphail, “Bacon Plan Considered Unnecessary,” *Globe and Mail*, June 28, 1941, p. 15.

the war. According to WPTB figures, a pound of bacon that cost 33.7 cents in May 1938 had dropped to 32.8 cents in May 1941.⁵⁴ Unfortunately for consumers now asked to shun pork, the average price of bacon alternatives had climbed. Beef shoulder, for example, had risen from 15.1 cents per pound to 19.4, sirloin steak that had averaged 27.5 cents per pound in January 1940 now cost almost 34 cents, and other cheaper cuts of beef had fared no better.⁵⁵

With food supplies tightening and with prices rising, the notion of rationing seemed less absurd. In a letter to the *Globe and Mail*, John Lindsell, the Archdeacon of Muskoka, suggested that pork, cheese, and butter, “the three products most needed in the Old Land” be subject to restrictions. Not only would this free up food for Britain, argued the Archdeacon, it would also give Canadians a chance to “practice some self-denial” and to “realize more than ever that we are at war.”⁵⁶ This sentiment was shared by Ontario Premier Mitchell Hepburn who, rather inconveniently for the federal government, argued that food rationing should be implemented at once. Cheese and bacon, he stated, were badly needed in Britain, so why then did the King government simply not order Canadians to stop eating cheese and bacon?⁵⁷ Within Hepburn’s purposely *naïf* suggestion was a kernel of truth, for the issue of whether or not Canadians were ‘doing enough’ was on the rise. Were Canadians “war conscious,” and

⁵⁴ LAC, RG64, (Wartime Prices and Trade Board), vol. 23, file 1, “Quarterly Summary – Average Retail Prices of Principal Foodstuffs in 69 Canadian Cities on the First Day of the Month, April 1 to June 30.”

⁵⁵ *Urban Retail Food Prices, 1914-1959* (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1960), p. 9.

⁵⁶ “Ration Cards Urged for Essential Foods” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, July 15, 1941, p. 6. See also “Rationing Approved for Essential Foods” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, July 18, 1941, p. 6.

⁵⁷ “Hepburn Urges Food Rationing to Aid Britain,” *Globe and Mail*, July 15, 1941, p. 3. This was well in line with Hepburn’s usual practice of criticizing King, with whom he shared a personal enmity. See John Saywell, *Just Call Me Mitch: The Life of Mitchell F. Hepburn* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

if so, was this adequately reflected in their diets?⁵⁸ If Canadians were not, then there was also the question of just how effective voluntary appeals would be – perhaps compulsion would bring a new sense of urgency to the war effort. Some economic experts believed that stricter controls would certainly be needed. M.K. Inman, Professor of Economics at the University of Western Ontario, feeling that food rationing would be an inevitable outcome of Canada’s war effort, predicted implementation in some form before 1942. This would be the only way, Inman argued, to “equalize the burden of war hardships.”⁵⁹ Inman was partially correct – rationing would eventually be needed, but at a slightly later date. Before it came to pass, however, two important and co-dependent precursors, a price ceiling and a significant expansion in the size and role of the WPTB, would occur.⁶⁰

Canada’s New Economic Controls

As the war approached its third year, the Canadian economy was heating up. The nation was nearing full employment, and wages were on the rise. But as more money chased after increasingly scarce goods, prices continued to edge upward. Inflation was still not a serious problem, but it accelerated steadily, prompting unease amongst Canada’s economic stewards. In August 1941 Graham Towers, Governor of the Bank of Canada, pointed out to Minister of Finance J.L. Ilsley that the First World War’s dramatic inflation had only begun in the third year of war, the point about to be reached in the present conflict. Towers believed that the very same “inflationary dangers” of 1916

⁵⁸ “Suggests Ration Cards” (Letter), *Toronto Star*, July 15, 1941, p. 6.

⁵⁹ “‘Rationing the Only Way’ Says Expert at Western,” *Toronto Star*, October 23, 1941, p. 1.

⁶⁰ “Prices Board Appoints 17,” *Globe and Mail*, January 3, 1942, p. 16.

were now at hand, and that something needed to be done.⁶¹ The cost of living had by that point increased by about 12% since the war's beginning, a figure that would rise to 13.8% by September, and food was the main culprit.⁶² Towers was not alone in his assessment: the government in general and the WPTB in particular accepted that stronger interventionist measures would be needed to effectively manage the wartime economy, but the nature of those controls was still up for debate. In June, the Bank of Canada had submitted a proposal of this nature to Ilesley, who in turn asked the WPTB to study the plan. The gist of the bank's proposal was unprecedented: a general price freeze that would apply to virtually all goods and services in Canada, counterbalanced by a wage ceiling. This was a major policy initiative that took state economic control further than it had ever gone. If adopted, the plan would also entail a significant expansion in the WPTB's size, both structurally and authoritatively. But there were obstacles – the WPTB's report on the proposal was not supportive; in fact, according to Grant Dexter, it “rather opposed the Bank of Canada.”⁶³ WPTB chair Hector McKinnon utterly opposed the plan, believing that it would fail. This was an awkward situation as he would be responsible for maintaining the ceiling, if it came to pass.⁶⁴

Whether or not the Bank of Canada plan was accepted, stronger controls would in some form or another have to be implemented. In anticipation of this, the WPTB underwent a series of changes. First, it was moved from under the aegis of the Department of Labour to the Department of Finance, certainly a more natural

⁶¹ Douglas H. Fullerton, *Graham Towers and His Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), pp. 148-149.

⁶² “Recent Jump in Food Prices Far Outdistances Advance in General Cost of Living,” *Globe and Mail*, August 15, 1941, p. 19; “Cost of Living Soars Again With Food Prices Main Cause,” *Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1941, p. 1. The *Globe and Mail* argued that food prices were advancing far beyond Ottawa's estimates.

⁶³ Dexter, pp. 201-202.

⁶⁴ Schull, p. 53.

jurisdictional fit. Secondly, the WPTB's scope – already large – was extended further to encompass virtually everything bought and sold by Canadians. As this was going on, however, a problem emerged. While “a consensus view in favour of the device was reached at the senior official and key ministerial level late in September,” in early October Prime Minister King began to express unease at the scope of the Bank's proposal.⁶⁵ King also had serious doubts as to the plan's ultimate feasibility. “They [Towers and Clark] seem to think that we can at one stroke, legislate to have prices kept where they are and wages, the same,” King confided, somewhat incredulously, to his diary. As usual, worried about the possible disruptive effects this could have, King duly “pointed out that an effort of the kind would probably result in such a [sic] upheaval of different classes, groups, that the government would find itself in an intolerable position.”⁶⁶ King astutely pointed out that agriculture needed to be considered – farmers might not welcome an economic policy that would restrict the prices they received for their produce. With Gardiner visiting the Prairies, King wanted to reserve judgement until he returned.⁶⁷

King's reservations were understandable. According to R.B. Bryce, the planned controls went further than those imposed in any other belligerent nation.⁶⁸ Both King and Hector McKinnon, “gradualists” by nature, favoured “piecemeal control” over the economy, while Towers and Ilesley pushed hard for the more daring Bank of Canada plan. In the end, the Bank's proposal won out, and King, having finally been persuaded

⁶⁵ Ken Taylor, “Canadian War-Time Price Controls, 1941-6,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 1947), p. 84.

⁶⁶ LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Diaries, October 3, 1941. Clark was W.C. (Clifford) Clark, Deputy Minister of Finance. He was also Chair of the Economic Advisory Committee, formed in September 1939.

⁶⁷ Dexter, p. 203.

⁶⁸ Bryce, pp. 127, 131.

to go along with the general economic freeze, announced the new policies to Canadians on October 18, 1941. The Prime Minister told the nation on radio that beginning December 1, retail prices could not rise beyond those prevailing between September 15 and October 11, 1941.⁶⁹ Whatever price had prevailed at individual stores for a particular product during that period was the maximum price at which that store could henceforth legally sell that product.

With the WPTB's expanded mandate came an attendant need to replace Hector McKinnon. He no longer wished to serve at its head, and given his ideological misgivings over the price ceiling, he was probably was not suited to such a role. One figure who agreed strongly with the general economic freeze was the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, Donald Gordon. Born in Scotland in 1901, Gordon's family had emigrated to Canada in 1914, settling in Toronto.⁷⁰ As a young man Gordon embarked upon what would eventually become "one of the most notable careers in Canadian banking," moving from an assistant manager's position with the Bank of Nova Scotia to the Bank of Canada where he had become Graham Towers' indispensable deputy.⁷¹ When in Fall 1941 it became clear that drastic measures would be taken to control the Canadian economy, Ilesley decided that the 40-year-old Gordon was the right person to oversee this massive undertaking. After some wrangling with Graham Towers (who did not want to let him go), Gordon was officially installed as the head of the newly expanded WPTB on November 20, 1941, while MacKinnon became president of the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation. An imposing individual, both physically and in terms of personality, Donald Gordon – at once firm and affable – was a perfect fit

⁶⁹ "Ottawa Limits Prices and Wages," *Globe and Mail*, October 20, 1941, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Schull, pp. 1, 6.

⁷¹ Bruce Hutchison, "Donald Gordon," *Canadian Banker*, Vol. 49 (April 1942), p. 266.

as Canada's new price czar. The hard-working civil servant kept a tight lid on inflation throughout his tenure, and he also possessed the charisma necessary to inspire most Canadians to adhere to the WPTB's regulations.

Predictably, the ceiling elicited mixed reactions from farmers, but consumers were by and large happy with the measure. Retailers in general were less pleased, petitioning the government to impose "piecemeal enforcement" rather than an overall ceiling, the result of which, some contended, "would be bankruptcy for some 60 per cent of retail trade."⁷² Grocers in particular were understandably upset about the ceiling's underlying premise – they vigorously denied that the existence of 'profiteers' lurking among them had required such draconian state controls. The *Canadian Grocer* took particular exception to an *Ottawa Journal* editorial implying that the controls would keep grocers from raising the prices of scarce foods as high as they possibly could. This was, grocers argued, impossible in a free market. "Maybe if the editor of the *Journal* were in the grocery or meat business," the *Grocer* sniped, "he would find there is such a thing as competition."⁷³ Another contentious aspect of the price ceiling was the mechanism put in place to ensure that grocers complied. Consumers were to be entrusted with the task of tracking prices and reporting dealers who did not obey the regulations. Public participation was crucial to the success of the price ceiling, and in order to organize that participation a special division of the WPTB, the Consumer Branch, was established.

According to the WPTB, the Consumer Branch was created "as a result of the eagerness with which Canadian women voluntarily enlisted in the battle against inflation

⁷² Dexter, p. 225.

⁷³ "Mistaken Opinion" (Editorial), *Canadian Grocer*, November 15, 1941, p. 42.

on the home front.”⁷⁴ Gordon understood quite well that women were most likely to notice if the local grocer or butcher suddenly raised their prices. This made perfect sense, since food markets are, in the words of historian Paula Schwartz, unmistakably “gendered sites;” women were primarily responsible for provisioning and feeding the family.⁷⁵ It was only pragmatic to solicit, not merely the support, but also the active participation of female consumers if the price ceiling had a hope of holding. Armed with special ‘blue books’ supplied by the WPTB, women were asked to take careful note of the prices of the things they purchased and to report any undue rise. They were also given detailed instructions on how to proceed:

How to Use Your ‘Blue Book’: 1. Study the sample pages carefully. 2. Never go shopping without your Blue Book. 3. Do not enter bargain or special sale prices. 4. Enter the highest price you paid in the basic period (Sept. 15-Oct. 11, 1941), or, if you have forgotten, the first time you buy any article covered by the price ceiling, enter it under the alphabetical index. When you again buy the article, you can refer to the price you have entered. 5. When the price is higher than your listing, record it in the last column. Then mention the matter nicely to your storekeeper. It may be that your first listing was not the highest price paid in his store during the basic period. Report Price Increases: If you are asked to pay a price above the basic period price, either communicate with the Board’s Local Office in your area, or telephone or write to the nearest Women’s Regional Advisory Committee. Please give the following information: 1st – A full description of the article. Where you bought it. How much you paid. 2nd – The date on which you previously bought it in the same store. How much you previously paid. And then, after you have checked, 3rd – Give what you believe was the highest price paid, in the same store, in the basic period. 4th – Your name and address, and telephone number. The consumer is assured that her name will not appear during the investigation. In the case of prosecution, the Board does not have the complainant called as a witness, unless unavoidable. Anonymous complaints will be investigated, providing the necessary information is given. ...⁷⁶

⁷⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 1445, file A-10-29-1, “Consumer Branch – Organization,” undated.

⁷⁵ Paula Schwartz, “The Politics of Food and Gender in Occupied Paris,” *Modern and Contemporary France*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1999), p. 39.

⁷⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 1445, file A-10-29-1, Consumer Branch – Organization, “Consumer Branch,” undated.

The pledge of discretion was important, as some women expressed reluctance to report on prices. Christine White, the Consumer Branch's Labour Liaison, noted "labour women appear to have a very real fear of what they quote [as] 'interfering.' They think that if they sent information regarding infringement of regulations they might involve themselves and get their husbands into trouble."⁷⁷ Still, enough women cooperated with the scheme to ensure its effectiveness.

Charlotte Whitton, who had just resigned as Executive Director of the Canadian Welfare Council, was involved in setting up the Consumer Branch. In December, 1941, she delivered a radio broadcast outlining the importance of the price control scheme and explaining the key role consumers would have to play if the ceiling was to work.

Whitton asked Canadian women to compile a list of the things they generally bought, along with the prices they usually paid for them. The basic period "was only a couple of months back – get out your old bills – look up your old accounts, ask your neighbours, or members of whatever organization you belong to – to help establish the proper price for all the things you have to buy." Once this was done, Whitton continued, it was everyone's "patriotic duty to keep prices there and to report any boosts at once in writing to the Board's Regional Prices and Supply Representative, or, directly, to Ottawa."⁷⁸ To head up the Consumer Branch, however, the WPTB looked not to Whitton but to Byrne Hope Sanders, an "advertising writer, newspaper-woman, magazine editor, housewife and mother."⁷⁹ It was an appropriate choice. As editor of

⁷⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-6, Consumer Branch – Labour Liaison, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, "Report, re American Federation of Labour Convention, Toronto, October 6th to 14th," October 20, 1942.

⁷⁸ CWM, Charlotte Whitton, "To the Homes of Canada," Radio Speech, December 18, 1941.

⁷⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 215, file Consumer Branch (General), "WPTB Press Release, No. 364", January 30, 1942. Whitton did work with the WPTB for a short time in the area of consumer affairs. Slated to address a series of women's gatherings, Whitton resigned after learning that these meetings would be

the highly popular woman's magazine *Chatelaine*, Sanders already had a high profile amongst Canadian women and thus was well placed to become the "voice of millions of Canadian housewives."

Sanders in particular and the Consumer Branch in general functioned as a crucial link between the WPTB and the women of Canada. The *Toronto Star* summed up her unique position as one of seeing that "housewives got a square deal" while convincing those same women that the WPTB rules were made "in their best interests."⁸⁰ To get a handle on how women were responding to various rules and regulations, 166 Women's Regional Advisory Committees (WRACs) were established across the country.⁸¹ The success of the scheme would, of course, depend on the willingness of consumers to participate, which the WRACs were supposed to encourage. According to the *Canadian Grocer*, some food retailers were sceptical of the scheme, believing that few women would bother as "not ten percent of consumers ... will remember what they paid for foods in the base period."⁸² Enough consumers however, did take note of what was going on at their local grocery establishment that the Enforcement Division, charged with the Sisyphean task of ensuring that Canadians obeyed the WPTB's regulations, was kept busy investigating breaches throughout the war.⁸³

chaired by local male dignitaries, a move she considered patronizing. See P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), pp.108-109.

⁸⁰ "Byrne Hope Sanders to be Can. Women's Watchdog," *Toronto Star*, February 2, 1942, p. 3.

⁸¹ Christopher Robb Waddell, "The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War II," Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, 1981, p. 128.

⁸² "Will the Public Inform on Retailers?," *Canadian Grocer*, December 15, 1941, p. 9.

⁸³ This was not easy, for the success of the WPTB's economic controls depended largely on the willingness of Canadians to follow the rules, as the Enforcement Division's resources were never overly large. Christopher Waddell argues that the WPTB did not want to set the public against the Board or its regulations, and thus generally tried to keep most enforcement activities quiet. The odd egregious infraction would be publicized as an example to others, but the Board saw little benefit in "extensive pressure ... to comply with the regulations." The division, arguably, was there in part to provide the

*Voluntary Rationing: The 'Common Duty'*⁸⁴

Economic observers noted that the application of a price ceiling increased the likelihood that rationing would be implemented. Gordon Taylor, writing in the *Quarterly Review of Commerce*, argued that “[s]uccessful rationing and a drastic fiscal policy are like Siamese twins; a happy marriage to one involves life with both. The truth of this statement will become more and more obvious to Canadians as stocks are depleted and as more numerous and intensive shortages develop.”⁸⁵ The *Canadian Banker* contended that price controls would inevitably lead to increased consumer spending, which if unchecked, would result in shortages. Unless the government set up a scheme to restrict purchasing power, then rationing would be necessary to maintain adequate supplies and to ensure that these were fairly distributed. ‘Fairness’ was thus identified as sufficient grounds for the adoption of rationing. The move would free up more food for Britain, certainly, but it would also go a long way towards ensuring ‘equality of sacrifice’ on Canadian soil.⁸⁶ The public, it appeared, also expected some form of rationing to take place. A Gallup poll conducted in January 1942 – before any official rationing statements had been made – found that 58% of those asked believed that rationing “of a wide variety of food, clothing and other materials” would be needed at some point. The pollsters interpreted this as an indication that “most Canadians were prepared,

impression that someone was watching, in the hopes that this would be enough to deter would-be wrongdoers. See Waddell, pp. 543-544.

⁸⁴ CWM, “A Moral Obligation” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, January 26, 1942.

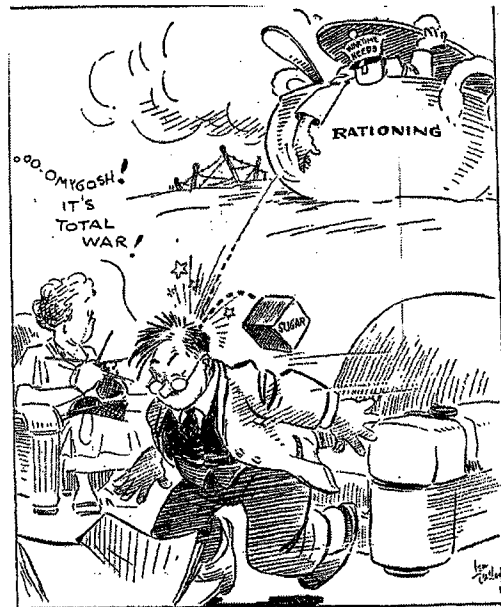
⁸⁵ Gordon Taylor, “Consumer Rationing Techniques,” *Quarterly Review of Commerce*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1942), p. 290.

⁸⁶ “The Price Ceiling” (Editorial), *Canadian Banker*, January 1942, pp. 155-156; “Rationing the Only Way, Says Expert at Western,” *Toronto Star*, October 23, 1941, p. 1.

psychologically at least” for the implementation of rationing.⁸⁷ They would have to be, for a new era of food resource sharing was about to begin.

On January 24, 1942, the war finally “pulled up a chair at the Canadian dining-room table,” with the WPTB decree that Canadians would have to make do with $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound of sugar per week.⁸⁸ Japan’s entry into the war and its startling early victories in the Pacific had deprived the Allies of the sugar crops of both the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, tightening the global supply still further.⁸⁹ There was also the additional factor of the recent entry of the

U.S. into the war. Americans had reacted to their nation’s entry into the conflict in much the same way as Canadians in 1939, with runs on sugar and other foods. This prompted the U.S. Office of Price Administration (OPA) to announce – also on January 24 – that American households would soon be restricted as to the amount of sugar they could legally possess.⁹⁰



OPENING SHOT FROM AN OLD PILL-BOX
Toronto Star, January 29, 1942

Distribution of available sugar would be governed by a system of cards and stamps, and consumption was to be limited to just under one pound a week per person, which would

⁸⁷ “Gallup Poll of Canada – Honor System Unworkable – Big Majority Feel Ration Cards Needed; Expect More Shortages,” *Halifax Herald*, February 12, 1942, p. 2. The same poll also showed that the parts of the country “closest to the actual theatres of war, such as British Columbia,” anticipated the likelihood of rationing more so than people in “inland provinces, such as Saskatchewan.”

⁸⁸ “Public Must Cooperate – An Editorial” (Editorial), *Halifax Herald*, January 27, 1942, p. 1; “Sugar Rationing Ordered for Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, January 26, 1942, p. 1.

⁸⁹ Vladimir Timoshenko and Boris C. Swerling, *The World’s Sugar: Progress and Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 28.

⁹⁰ “OPA Rations Sugar; Cuts Use by a Third,” *New York Times*, January 25, 1942, p. 1. While the announcement was made in January, official rationing of sugar was not implemented until April.

cut total consumption by around one-third. Unlike their American counterparts, Canadians at this point were subject only to ‘honour’ rations, a form of voluntary control which many would have remembered from the First World War.

Under the new rules in Canada, it was now illegal for consumers to have more than two weeks’ worth of sugar on hand, but compliance was left largely up to the individual consumer – no coupons would be used. Exceptions could be made for those living in rural or remote areas who, out of necessity, typically purchased large supplies. These individuals could continue to buy amounts in excess of the standard two-week supply. Everyone, however, was expected to adhere to the personal $\frac{3}{4}$ pound per week ration. Women were assured that there would be extra supplies available for canning and home preservation. Industrial users such as food processors and soft-drink makers, their sugar supplies now controlled by the Sugar Administrator, would eventually be forced to curb production of certain products, which in turn would limit the variety of manufactured sweets available to consumers.

The sugar restrictions placed on Canadians were not terribly onerous. The *Hamilton Spectator* said they were certainly “no hardship,” while the *Toronto Star* termed them “moderate.”⁹¹ In peacetime, the average Canadian consumption of sugar, factoring in things like soft drinks, confections, and processed food, normally hovered between one to two pounds per week, meaning that the new $\frac{3}{4}$ pound limit on purchased sugar did not represent an enormous reduction. It was generous, cooking expert Kate Aitken pointed out to the listeners of her popular radio show, in comparison to the

⁹¹ CWM, “A Moral Obligation” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, January 26, 1942; “Moderate Sugar Restrictions” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, January 26, 1942.

British ration of just ½ a pound per week.⁹² The rationing of sugar, home economists argued, was fine since eating less sugar (which they termed a “modern addition to the menu”) was in fact good for you.⁹³ Canadian officials, loath to take on the burdensome, expensive task of compulsory rationing, could only hope that the public would agree that the cut was fair and would respond positively to the informal methods being applied.

The fact that sugar was being rationed on the honour system elicited both criticism and approval. Calling it “a bold step” that “merits support,” the *Montreal Gazette* argued that it was laudable, “a unique combination of the voluntary and the coercive method” that told the public what they must do yet left compliance up to the individual consumer.⁹⁴ But a less sanguine Alfred Bence, a Conservative M.P. from Saskatchewan, complained that this method would not result in equality of sacrifice as some would doubtless take advantage. “The great majority of the people will do the fair and proper thing,” he told the House of Commons, “but in all countries and in all classes there are people who will not do the proper thing.” Bence’s worries had merit. Without ration coupons or stamps, there was little to prevent consumers from buying several two-week supplies from different grocers, for example, and thus laying in a stockpile of sugar. Thwarting these delinquent consumers (who, Liberal M.P. George Cruikshank stated, were mostly “in Toronto”) would require a compulsory system.⁹⁵ Other nations were doing it – the U.S. planned to ration sugar via the compulsory method, and in

⁹² LAC, MG30 D206, (Kate Aitken papers), vol. 7, file Tamblyn Broadcasts, Jan. 1942, “Kate Aitken, Tamblyn Broadcast,” January 26, 1942.

⁹³ “Sugar Cut Will Aid Health Eat Too Much, Say Experts,” *Toronto Star*, January 26, 1942, p. 2.

⁹⁴ “Sugar Ration – An Appeal to Us” (Editorial), *Montreal Gazette*, January 26, 1942, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *Debates of the House of Commons*, 3-19, vol. 1, January 27, 1942, p. 98. Cruikshank was from British Columbia.

Britain this had been a way of life for over a year. WPTB officials, despite being far more willing than their First World War predecessors to implement strict measures, were still not ready to assume the expense, responsibility, and potential controversy associated with compulsory rationing.

The unfortunate wave of sugar buying that greeted the rationing announcement seemed to confirm Bence's fears. Oblivious it seemed to the prospect of fines or incarceration, consumers descended upon grocers, laying in as much sugar as they could get their hands on. It was a sorry scene in many parts of the country. Grocers in Peterborough, Ontario, claimed that their customers "made no effort to cooperate with the Government order," while in Vancouver dealers erected signs pleading for consumers to obey the new law. Grocers in Niagara Falls complained that consumers were behaving as though they "did not understand that rationing already is in effect."⁹⁶ Some believed that the new restrictions pertained only to white sugar, but in fact it included all types of sugar, except maple.⁹⁷ In Toronto, those caught with excess sugar included one man who had amassed 42 pounds "in two pound lots," and a woman who had managed to secure 60 pounds in one day.⁹⁸ Another unanticipated result of sugar rationing, sniped the *Canadian Grocer*, was a sudden population explosion. "Previously many families had only one or two children but now when they come into grocery stores they are bragging about their large families."⁹⁹ Wiser, and perhaps slightly more cynical, grocers were more proactive in regulating the frenzy than they had been in September 1939. This time, more reports surfaced of grocers instituting limits on the

⁹⁶ "Big Sugar Rush Dominion-Wide," *Montreal Gazette*, January 27, 1942, p. 1.

⁹⁷ "Inform Hasty Sugar Buyers Rush Needless," *Globe and Mail*, January 27, 1942, p. 4; "The Purchase of Sugar is Now Regulated by Law" (Ad, WPTB), *Globe and Mail*, January 28, 1942, p. 5.

⁹⁸ "Nab Four Sugar Hoarders in City, None Prosecuted," *Toronto Star*, January 27, 1942, p. 2.

⁹⁹ "Sugar Rationing Boosts the Size of Families," *Canadian Grocer*, May 1, 1942, p. 29.

amount of sugar that could be purchased at one time, with some enforcing stricter restrictions on customers who were unknown to them.¹⁰⁰ Dealers deluged the WPTB with phone calls requesting advice as to how to handle the frantic consumers. The Board's pragmatic response was that grocers should limit individual sales to 5 pounds until consumers had had a chance to get used to the new rules. Eventually, no doubt weary of explaining the new regulations over and over, some retailers began affixing copies of the rules to each package of sugar.¹⁰¹

While not quite as severe or as lengthy as the hoarding drive that greeted the war's outbreak, the sugar rush that followed the institution of rationing was a disheartening sight for those who had hoped for better from their fellow Canadians. "Where are our patriots?" demanded the *Montreal Gazette*.¹⁰² "The people of Canada are instructed by their Government to reduce purchases and consumption of sugar – and immediately, with the selfish, and self-centred minority, the order has the directly opposite effect!" cried the *Halifax Herald*. Voluntary rationing, the paper argued, was clearly a waste of time. Appeals for voluntary restrictions had not worked with pork, gasoline, and now sugar as well. "Obviously," concluded the *Herald*, "if the people responsible for these 'runs' are to be kept within bounds, their 'patriotism' might in some manner be compelled."¹⁰³ The initial reaction was certainly not what the WPTB

¹⁰⁰ "Big Sugar Rush Dominion-Wide," *Montreal Gazette*, January 27, 1942, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ "Inform Hasty Sugar Buyers Rush Needless," *Globe and Mail*, January 27, 1942, p. 4; "Nab Four Sugar Hoarders in City, None Prosecuted," *Toronto Star*, January 27, 1942, p. 2; Ad, Loblaw's, *Globe and Mail*, February 13, 1942, p. 9.

¹⁰² "Sugar Buyers Rush Stores as Result of Sugar Curb," *Montreal Gazette*, January 27, 1942, p. 13.

¹⁰³ "The Only Way" (Editorial), *Halifax Herald*, January 27, 1942, p. 6.

had hoped for, but when the dust had settled some shamed-faced consumers even offered to return excess sugar.¹⁰⁴

Consumers too apparently had little faith in the honour system. A Gallup poll uncovered a strong feeling that compulsion would be necessary. Only 29% of respondents thought that honour rationing would work, while 65% believed that formal methods would be needed to get people to reduce their sugar consumption.¹⁰⁵ As the honour system was clearly problematic, why then did the WPTB not implement coupon rationing straight away? The standard argument against the scheme rested on two basic factors: money and logistics. It was believed that a coupon or ration card system would be prohibitively expensive – \$15,000,000 was the widely-quoted figure – as well as difficult to carry out effectively in Canada given that its population was spread out over such a geographically vast area. Donald Gordon was staunchly opposed to the idea, believing it to be far too unwieldy and generally unworkable.¹⁰⁶

This approach was reminiscent of that taken during the First World War when the Canada Food Board had pursued what it termed a “distinctly Canadian” version of food control, a “middle way” between the compulsory methods employed in Britain and the largely voluntary style followed in the United States. Henry B. Thomson, Chair of the Food Board, believed that rationing of food was “inadvisable” due to Canada’s “vast area, sparse population, and diversified conditions.”¹⁰⁷ No matter what the WPTB said, however, it did not expect to depend solely on voluntarism throughout the war. Honour

¹⁰⁴ “Hoarders Show Change of Heart, Some Offer to Return Purchases,” *Montreal Gazette*, January 28, 1942, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ “Gallup Poll of Canada – Honor System Unworkable – Big Majority Feel Ration Cards Needed; Expect More Shortages,” *Halifax Herald*, February 12, 1942, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Schull, p. 67.

¹⁰⁷ *Report of the Canada Food Board* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1919), p. 4.

rationing would be employed for as long as possible, but coupon rationing was accepted as a possibility and thus plans for its implementation were in the works. In October the WPTB admitted in its *Quarterly Summary* that while the honour system had reduced the amount of sugar consumed in Canada, its real value was that “it served during the transition period to make people conscious of the need for conserving sugar and buying in reasonable quantities. It also provided time for organizing *a more permanent system.*”¹⁰⁸

Until that time arrived, however, the state relied on a mix of voluntary restraint and propaganda. A certain amount of exhortation was needed to encourage obedience, and the garrulous Gordon did not share Hector McKinnon’s aversion to publicity. As in the First World War, a campaign was mounted to urge public compliance with the sugar regulations and to instill in Canadians a general sense of wartime austerity and economy. The campaign, naturally was aimed primarily at women and was conducted through a variety of channels. It consisted of a “systemic publicity programme in magazines, newspapers and radio,” including editorials, advertisements and store displays. It enlisted the cooperation of the popular “radio cooking schools” such as those hosted by Kate Aitken and Ann Adam. With large audiences, these women could influence the average Canadian housewife’s response to the food regulations. Their advice on food substitutes and conservation was supplemented in the press with recipes and suggestions supplied by nutritionists and home economists.¹⁰⁹

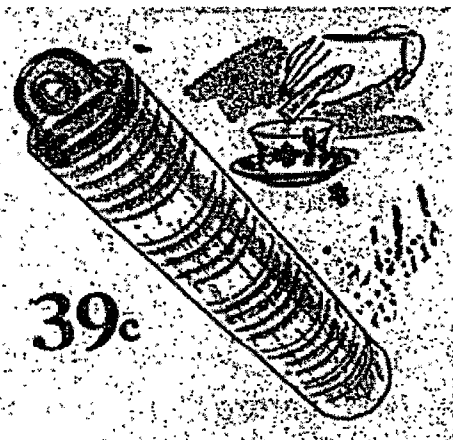
¹⁰⁸ LAC, RG17, (Agriculture), vol. 3405, file 1500-5-3(1), Wartime Prices and Trade Board – Publications, etc., “WPTB – Quarterly Summary – 1942 – July 1 to September 30, October, 1942.” Italics added.

¹⁰⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 642, file 19-38, vol. 1, Sugar Rationing, J.A. MacLaren to W.F. Prendergast, “Re: Educational Campaign on Sugar Rationing,” January 29, 1942.

Canada's 'celebrity cooks' were quick to respond to the call. The topic of Ann Adam's February 5, 1942 show on Toronto's CFRB radio was "How to use Bee Hive Syrup to save sugar!" a convenient topic since her sponsor was the St. Lawrence Starch Company, the makers of Bee Hive corn syrup.¹¹⁰ Listeners sent Kate Aitken their own tips on how to save sugar which she then shared on her radio show. Some of these tips included salting grapefruit rather than sweetening it and placing smaller spoons in the sugar bowl. This particular suggestion came from a woman whose husband had a habit of putting 2½ tablespoons of sugar in his tea and coffee. According to Aitken, "Mrs. Sheridan changed the sugar spoon – took out the big one and put in the little one, and didn't tell George. And he has never noticed. But I'm not so sure after this broadcast..."¹¹¹ Aitken also recommended taking sugar along when visiting others, a practice for which Simpson's department store sold a sporty "unbreakable sugar flask" holding up to six spoonfuls.¹¹² Through these various means Canadians were urged, both explicitly and implicitly, to change their approach to matters heretofore personal in nature – such as sugar consumption.

*It's the Fashion to Carry
Your Ration*
**New Unbreakable
Sugar Flask**

Take along your own sugar in this convenient plastic tube, when visiting! Holds six level teaspoonfuls, has secure screw-top in attractive pastel colors. Each 39c.



Globe and Mail, August 17, 1942

¹¹⁰ *Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1942, p. 11.

¹¹¹ LAC, MG30 D206, vol. 7, file Tambllyn Broadcasts, January 1942, "Kate Aitken, Tambllyn Broadcast," February 10, 1942.

¹¹² Ad, Simpson's, *Globe and Mail*, August 17, 1942, p. 13.

The onus was clearly on consumers to abide by the rationing rules. As for dealers, the WPTB seemed to assume that they could be counted on to do their part with far less exhortation. This optimistic attitude was shaken when it became obvious that some were subverting the cause. A sense of regret was evident in a special “Sugar Bulletin” issued to grocers in early April 1942. “The retailer who has loyally cooperated in the carrying out of the rationing scheme may justly feel disappointed to learn that there is a real need for this circular,” it began:

It is now definitely known that it has become common practice for Managers of some stores to suggest to customers that there is no need to worry about adhering to the rationed quantities of sugar, that the stores were not in any way restricted as to the amount they could sell. It is true that the household rationing scheme is on an ‘honour’ system. It is also true that no compulsion was placed on the retailer to enforce the regulations. Nevertheless it was also expected that they would (also from honourable motives) do everything possible to see that the provisions of the Order were carried out. To sell to or to influence a customer to take a quantity of sugar in excess of his or her ration makes the retailer an accessory to the breaking of the law.¹¹³

In the unlikely event that the new restrictions had escaped the grocer’s notice, the sugar regulations were helpfully printed on the back of the bulletin. That not all grocers operated “from honourable motives” was no doubt disheartening, and was further evidence, perhaps, that voluntarism might not suffice.

Another important weapon in assuring consumer compliance came from the WPTB’s Enforcement Division and the courts as sugar scofflaws were rooted out and brought to trial. In the face of such ubiquitous publicity, no one could plead ignorance of the new restrictions, but a few tried nevertheless. Shortly after the new regulations came into effect, three farm women from York County, Ontario, were hauled before the local magistrate to answer charges that they had each bought 100 pounds of sugar. The

¹¹³ LAC, RG17, vol. 3535, file 5-13-7 [1], “Sugar Bulletin,” April 8, 1942.

women argued that they had ordered the sugar before January 26, had received it after that date, and that they only learned of the new sugar law when a WPTB inspector arrived, whereupon they returned the sugar to their grocer. The grocer, who was not charged, had been under the impression that it was still fine to sell them that much sugar. The judge put off his decision, noting that farmers had so long been accustomed to buying large lots of food that he was “not prepared to say right now whether these people are guilty of an offence or not.”¹¹⁴ The judge also made the point that Canadians, having enjoyed “absolute freedom” up to that point in time, were faced with unfamiliar restrictions that would take some getting used to. The charges against the farm women were dismissed as the judge determined that they had not intended to break the new law. Another group of offenders from Toronto were fined the paltry sum \$5 each, and, in Kingston, city councillor Brigadier-General A.E. Ross was fined \$10 and costs for accepting delivery of a 100 pound bag after the regulations had come into effect. These small fines, mere slaps on the wrist, annoyed the WPTB and prompted a *Kingston Whig-Standard* editorial decrying the light sentences, for which the WPTB kindly sent a note of thanks to editor Rupert Davies.¹¹⁵ While these ‘nefarious criminals’ were dealt with lightly, some other sugar hoarders did not fare quite so well. One Toronto area man who had bought 300 pounds was fined the more substantial sum of \$50 plus court costs of \$18.30.¹¹⁶ Arguably, the shame of being put on trial and having it reported in the press may have outweighed the monetary punishment (especially given, with some

¹¹⁴ “Defer Decision in Sugar Cases,” *Globe and Mail*, February 14, 1942, p. 5; “Sugar Charges are Dismissed,” *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 1942, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 642, file 19-38, vol. 1 (Sugar Rationing), Ross M. Brown to Rupert Davies, February 21, 1942.

¹¹⁶ “Sugar Charge Fine is Heavy,” *Globe and Mail*, February 18, 1942, p. 15.

commodities, the potential profits on black markets), but some within the WPTB were still eager to see stronger penalties handed down by the courts.

A New Era of 'Austerity'?

By Spring 1942 it was clear that a major part of the civilian war effort would involve a certain measure of alimentary sacrifice. Sugar was rationed, and the Coca-Cola Company informed customers that since sugar had 'enlisted' for the duration, it was therefore cutting production.¹¹⁷ Confectioners were forced to suspend certain chocolate bar brands, while ice cream became even more of a luxury.¹¹⁸ Bakers were ordered to cut down on deliveries, to limit the variety of products they offered, and to simplify their procedures by omitting "frills."¹¹⁹ According to the Consumer Branch, one "pretty universal complaint" was the disappearance of old brands from grocers' shelves and their replacement with new, frequently more expensive ones.¹²⁰ The HCA (Housewives' Consumer Association) alleged that the reason behind this was to "confuse the housewife in checking back on prices," a situation the WPTB investigated.¹²¹ In 1943 the Board established a Standards Division to make sure companies were not downgrading the quality of their products while maintaining the same prices; in effect "an indirect price increase."¹²² Sensing perhaps a rise in consumer impatience, some companies took out advertisements asking the public not to blame food dealers for their difficulties. The H.J. Heinz Company of Canada reminded

¹¹⁷ "Sugar, too, Enlists for Victory" (Ad, Coca-Cola), *Globe and Mail*, February 18, 1942, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ "Chocolate Bars are Being Cut," *Canadian Grocer*, March 1, 1942, p. 8; "Why There is a Shortage of Ice Cream" (Ad, Borden Co.), *Globe and Mail*, May 9, 1942, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ "Orders Bakers to Cut 'Frills' and Deliveries," *Globe and Mail*, March 21, 1942, p. 12.

¹²⁰ LAC, RG64, vol. 1, file 16, Food – General, Byrne Sanders to Donald Gordon, July 9, 1942.

¹²¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 1, file 16, Food – General, "The Trade and Periodic Press," July 4, 1942; LAC, RG64, vol. 1, file 16, Food – General, F.A. McGregor to Donald Gordon, July 8, 1942.

¹²² Waddell, p. 142.

consumers to “Blame Hitler, Hirohito, and Benito.”¹²³ Christie’s Bread asked customers to inform their grocers in advance of the number of loaves they wished to purchase, otherwise “your grocer will be disappointed because he was unable to serve you and because he has lost a sale.”¹²⁴ In case consumers had forgotten why all this was necessary, moviegoers were treated to the fiercely-titled short film, *Food: Weapon of Conquest*, part of the National Film Board’s ‘Canada Carries On’ series.¹²⁵ In essence, the simple act of feeding oneself and one’s family had taken on new significance. “Eating,” readers of the *Globe and Mail*’s “Homemaker Page” were told, “is no longer a personal problem with each housekeeper. It is a *national emergency*.”¹²⁶ Food production was now routinely touted as one of Canada’s foremost contributions to the cause, and while farmers were protesting less about prices, complaints about their labour woes were impossible to tune out. Even the most ‘urban’ of Canadians faced increasing pressure to help out, either by volunteering their time on a farm, or by planting their own Victory Garden.

¹²³ Ad, H.J. Heinz, *Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1942, p. 3.

¹²⁴ “A Notice to Women Who Buy Bread” (Ad, Christie’s Bread), *Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1942, p. 9. ‘Don’t blame the grocer’ was one of the 30 broad “wartime copy slants” that advertisers were employing, according to an analysis by *Marketing* magazine. Some of the other popular themes identified by the publication (relevant to food) included: “2. To introduce a changed package. ... 4. To induce civilians to buy the product as a gift for relatives or friends in camp or serving overseas. ... 5. To suggest use of product as an economy measure. ... 7. To ask consumers not to buy. ... 8. To announce that the product will once again be available. ... 9. To tie-in with Government announcements of restrictions. ... 10. To stop panic buying and discourage hoarding. ... 11. To demonstrate that war needs must come first. ... 12. To explain shortages in retail stores. ... 13. To preserve trade mark identity. ... 15. To improve and maintain morale. ... 20. To stimulate patriotism. ... 21. To offer substitute for unprocurable or restricted products. ... 25. To appeal to the war workers’ market. ... 26. To show the public how to make best and most economical use of foods. ... 30. To urge consumers ‘Don’t blame the dealer.’” See “30 Kinds of Wartime Advertising Being Used in Canadian Campaigns,” *Marketing*, April 25, 1942, p. 18.

¹²⁵ *Globe and Mail*, March 28, 1942, p. 17.

¹²⁶ “Eating for Patriotic Purposes,” *Globe and Mail*, March 28, 1942, p. 11. Emphasis added.

But despite all this, Canadians were still buying and eating more. As with farmers, government authorities had to persuade consumers that war was now 'total.' Gordon informed Canadians in Spring 1942 that their standard of living was still quite high, a condition that was flatly incompatible with the notion of all-out war service. "Total war and a high standard of living simply cannot march together," he argued,

"they are absolutely contradictory terms. That is a very simple fact yet few individuals seem to have asked themselves what they ought to do about it. ... It has not yet dawned on them that if we are to organize for total war it is the people who must take on the job."¹²⁷ But would the people do so? What would it take to raise the war-consciousness of Canadians? The case can be made that Gordon's words were, in part, preparing the public for coupon rationing, a move that, according to

Hirohito, and Benito

... Don't Blame Your Grocer

AS YOU KNOW, our Government is planning on rationing tin.

So that means for a time—after present war-hoouse stocks are exhausted—some of the famous Heinz "57" Varieties will not be available in their familiar tin containers. However, stocks are large enough so that your "57" favorites will probably be on most grocers' shelves for several months at least ... and after that we have every confidence they'll still be there—but newly packaged.

However, if there should be a period when a few are missing, *don't blame your grocer! And don't blame your Government!*

Pin full responsibility on Hitler, Mienhito and Benito—and be glad that tin for us means more bullets and shells for the Allies' guns!

After all, there's no need to fear a shortage of essential foods. Canada's reserves and resources are too great for that. Unlike most warring nations, we must sacrifice temporarily only our modern, convenient way of enjoying some of the things we like to eat.

For instance, most of the famous "57" Varieties of Heinz quality foods are not affected. There will be no scarcity of the Heinz Baby Foods that are helping busy mothers to give their children the wholesome, nutritious foods young bodies need. Heinz Tomato

Juice ... Heinz Ketchup and Chili Sauce, Tomato Chutney, Pickles, Relishes, Vinegars, Peanut Butter, Prepared Mustard—all these and many more of the "57" are ready to help you keep right on setting the finest table in the world.

What about the future?

Progress due to research helps us to face it with confidence. Our Research Laboratories have expanded steadily, until now they have twice the personnel and equipment they had during World War I. And because we have been working constantly on the development of new packages, new products and new methods, this crisis does not find us unprepared!

The House of Heinz steadfastly adheres to its established principle of maintaining, and endeavoring to improve, the high quality of its products.

Now, or years from now, when you see the Heinz keystone label you can be sure that it guarantees wholesome, delicious foods of finest quality. That has been true for more than 75 years, and will *always* be true.

Until all this is over, and we can go about our daily work in peace and security, we know you will co-operate with your grocer and with your Government in the biggest job of all—*winning the war!*

H. J. HEINZ COMPANY OF CANADA, LTD.

Makers Of The Famous 57 Varieties



Globe and Mail, March 5, 1942.

the Chairman, would be unavoidable if Canadians did not start showing some consumer restraint.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ "Wheat is Not Needed to Help Win the War,' Gordon Tells Farmers," *Globe and Mail*, April 14, 1942, p. 13.

¹²⁸ "Buying Spree Said Abating," *Globe and Mail*, April 14, 1942, p. 13.

A new cause for alarm emerged that spring with the onset of the beef crisis. Britain's need for animal products, rather than grain, created problems for Canada's food czars, Donald Gordon and James Gardiner. The war, or, more accurately, the price controls imposed by the WPTB, had made it less attractive for farmers to market their beef in Canada. The price paid to farmers by the packers was not capped, but the price squeeze applied at the retail level had inexorably made its way back up the food chain. Unimpressed with the prices being offered by Canadian buyers, farmers increasingly shipped their cattle to the U.S. where higher prices prevailed. The American market had long been the preferred destination for Canadian beef, but the combined effects of the Depression and the protectionist measures imposed by the U.S. had devastated the western cattle trade in the first half of the 1930s.¹²⁹ When the U.S. had eased these restrictive measures in 1935, Canadian beef exports and prices had rebounded dramatically. By 1942, so much cattle was being sent to the U.S. that Canadians began to notice something odd and troubling in their local butcher's shop – dwindling supplies of fresh beef.¹³⁰ From January 1 to April 16, 1942, farmers had already exported 67,756 head of cattle to the U.S., a huge increase over the 28,303 they had sent south over the same period in the previous year. Consequently, the stocks of some of the nation's largest meat-packing houses such as Swift, Canada Packers, and Burns and Co.

¹²⁹ CWM, "Cattle Prices and Price Control" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, April 8, 1942; Max Foran, "Crucial and Contentious: The American Market and the Development of the Western Canadian Beef Cattle Industry to 1948," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn 2002), p. 458. The Smoot-Hawley bill, passed in 1930, almost wiped out Canadian beef exports to the U.S.

¹³⁰ "Can Ottawa Hold Beef Under American Prices?," *Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1942, p. 18.

shrunk appreciably, and consumers, with more money to spend and with an intensified appetite for beef, were hard-pressed to find any for their dinners.¹³¹

Shortages were reported in Toronto, a situation that J.G. Taggart argued was merely local in nature and not indicative of a broader problem.¹³² It did not take long, however, for this 'local' shortage to spread to other parts of the country, to the point that finding a decent cut of beef became a challenge for many Canadians. By mid-April Montreal was experiencing a beef 'famine' of its own, and things eventually got so bad in London, Ontario, that the mayor cabled Donald Gordon, stating that action on this issue was "urgently needed."¹³³ As with sugar, many dealers instituted their own informal rationing programs by selling their limited supply to regular customers only or by limiting the amounts available for purchase.¹³⁴ The best cuts were, of course, the scarcest – those who could afford them snatched them up immediately, with some no doubt willing to pay extra for the privilege. As the supply crisis went on, however, scarcity made its way down to the lesser grades, and even threatened the production of cheaper processed meats such as bologna and sausages. The government was still urging Canadians to steer clear of pork so that the British contract could be filled, a situation that left very few menu choices in a culture where meat formed the centrepiece of a good meal. Inevitably, reports trickled into the WPTB that some grocers were breaching the price ceiling on beef.

¹³¹ CWM, "M.P.'s to Demand Ottawa Move to Break Deadlock in Beef Price War Here," *Toronto Telegram*, April 18, 1942; "Roast Beefless Sunday Faced by Toronto Folk Onus is Put on Ottawa," *Toronto Telegram*, April 17, 1942.

¹³² "Beef Shortage Said 'Local,'" *Globe and Mail*, March 30, 1942, p. 5.

¹³³ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-10, Beef, vol. 1, E.R. Nichols to Donald Gordon, May 29, 1942.

¹³⁴ CWM, "Montreal Man Facing Charge in Beef Prices," *Toronto Telegram*, April 17, 1942.

The beef situation was worrisome enough for the WRACs to swing into action. In the first real project taken on by the fledgling organization, members were asked to investigate local meat prices and availability and to send the details back to Ottawa as quickly as possible.¹³⁵ The 184 reports were sent to the Consumer Branch and used to draft one master report which it then sent on to Donald Gordon. The WRACs uncovered clear evidence that many dealers were simply ignoring the ceiling. Of the seventeen butchers interviewed in Charlottetown, nine “admitted they were selling above their ceiling, while five were absorbing the difference, two were not in difficulty and one claimed that he had not punctured the ceiling, but had ‘only changed the quality.’” In the face of difficulties some were doing what they felt they had to, legal or not, in order to maintain their margins. Dealers had been inconvenienced to the point where many felt “they must go out of business, others fearing they must soon go out of business, others only reporting there might be no beef for weeks.” The WRACs also reported that many dealers were charging higher prices for lower-grade cuts. WRAC members from Ottawa reported that beef prices there were “topping other Canadian cities and still soaring, while grades deteriorate.” From Verdun, Quebec, came reports of consumers queuing up to buy beef for 37 cents a pound – in 1941 the average price of a pound of round steak had been around 28 cents.¹³⁶ In the Maritimes, rumours abounded that the beef scarcity was due to central Canadian packers refusing to send it eastward as the ceiling price was too low to absorb the shipping costs. Despite the WRACs’ findings, the government contended that while there were beef shortages

¹³⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-10, Beef, vol. 1, Byrne Sanders to All W.R.A.C. Members, Sub-Committees, Corresponding Members; and Liaison Officers, April 10, 1942.

¹³⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-10, Beef, vol. 1, Consumer Branch to Donald Gordon, “Report on Beef,” April 18, 1942; *Urban Retail Food Prices*, p. 10.

around the country, these were isolated in nature; the overall beef picture therefore “was not alarming.”¹³⁷ But for women who could not find a roast for Sunday dinner, or war workers who arrived at the shops late to find all the best cuts gone, whether or not the scarcities were local or systemic made little difference.

With sugar rationed and beef stocks inadequate, news came that tea supplies were also in danger. As with sugar, the widening war in the Pacific threatened global tea distribution, and while the WPTB assured Canadians there was a six-month supply on hand, it also warned that there was no telling how future events might unfold.¹³⁸ The government apparently had no plans to change its overall approach to consumption management. In late April Taggart stated that formal rationing – a large and expensive procedure – was “unlikely to come to Canada.”¹³⁹ Barring extreme circumstances, voluntary rationing would suffice, an attitude not everyone shared. If coupon rationing was on the horizon, the government was not saying, lest more hoarding take place. The HCA – which had actively protested ‘profiteering’ – also demanded formal rationing of food, passing a resolution asking the government to abandon the voluntary principle in favour of what it termed “equal rationing.” In a meeting with Donald Gordon and Byrne Sanders, HCA president Elizabeth Brown, recently profiled by *Life* magazine as “Mrs. Canadian Housewife,” reportedly “asked questions about prices that worry the \$30-a-week and under income group.”¹⁴⁰ Brown argued for compulsory rationing, noting that the honour system was only workable if everyone followed along. Unfortunately, as

¹³⁷ CWM, “Baby Beef Helps to Ease Butchers’ Acute Shortage,” *Toronto Telegram*, April 22, 1942; “Ottawa Finds Beef Situation ‘Not Alarming,’” *Globe and Mail*, April 22, 1942, p. 7.

¹³⁸ “Tea Shortage Held Possible,” *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1942, p. 13.

¹³⁹ “Coupon Food Rationing Unlikely, Controller Says,” *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1942, p. 8; “Opposed to Formal Rationing, Is WPTB Official,” *Canadian Grocer*, May 1, 1942, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰ “Compulsory Rationing Would Please Women, Says Mrs. Elizabeth Brown, Alias Housewife,” *Globe and Mail*, May 4, 1942, p. 10; “Housewives’ Body Asks Dominion Ration Food,” *Globe and Mail*, April 29, 1942, p. 4.

Brown noted, “there are always the selfish ones who make us all suffer. She and other housewives had seen women buying orders so large they filled the back of the automobile.” Brown was suggesting, no doubt, that the rich benefited primarily from the honour system because they could afford extra goods. The individuals she referred to clearly took little notice of the WPTB’s propaganda offensive against selfish consumer behaviour. Through a series of advertisements and placards, in the spring of 1942 Canadians were admonished to “think before you use so much sugar,” while bold signs told the public that “Loyal Citizens Do Not Hoard!” and that hoarders were “Public Enemy No. 1,” and ‘cupboard Quislings.’¹⁴¹ With new foods being added to the ‘problem’ list on a regular basis, the fact that some Canadians continued to hoard or overbuy increasingly annoyed those who were following the letter, as well as the spirit, of the wartime food rules.

In May 1942 the WPTB decided that media reports of shortages or even potential shortages were partially to blame for hoarding. In a confidential bulletin sent to its administrators, the WPTB stated that press reports of supply problems created “an atmosphere conducive to unnecessary forward buying and hoarding.” When approached, the press agreed to steer clear of “unnecessary items and comment,” but they complained that it was the WPTB itself that usually supplied the information that found its way into the newspapers. Since that was indeed the case, the Board passed a new internal rule banning officials from speaking to the media about “present or future shortage of supply, or drawing attention to simplification or restriction orders unless it is

¹⁴¹ “Think Before You Use So Much Sugar” (Ad, WPTB), *Globe and Mail*, April 6, 1942, p. 11; “Loyal Citizens Do Not Hoard!” (Ad, WPTB), *Globe and Mail*, April 13, 1942, p. 7; “The Hoarder – Public Enemy No. 1” (Ad, WPTB), *Globe and Mail*, April 22, 1942, p. 7; “Don’t Be a Cupboard Quisling!” (Ad, WPTB), *Globe and Mail*, May 12, 1942, p. 9.

considered necessary and in the public interest...”¹⁴² This ‘watch-what-you-say’ campaign also extended to retailers who were asked to pay special attention to what they said to customers about supply situations. To this end, the WPTB placed a notice in trade publications entitled “An Appeal to the Merchants of Canada – Halt the Hoarding Habit!” which told dealers that it was their “patriotic duty to discourage hoarding.”

Hoarding sabotages the war effort. You have direct contact with every family in the country. They come to you with their buying needs. No one has a better opportunity than you to set them straight. Remember that anything you or your employees say across the counter may start a rumour or a rush of unnecessary buying. Be guarded in how you talk about scarcities. Do not urge people to stock up. Explain to your customers that over-buying in itself is the cost of many shortages. ... You and your employees are in a position to talk convincingly and sanely to the public. You are in a position where a word of warning will count most. You can stop rumours promptly. You can stem waves of senseless buying at the start. You can restore confidence and a sense of fairness to confused or greedy shoppers.¹⁴³

This new ‘secrecy’ policy, it appeared, proved immediately effective. With supplies tightening, tea and coffee were added to the honour ration on May 26, 1942, and Canadians were asked to slash their usual tea consumption by half and their coffee consumption by one quarter. The sugar ration was cut back as well, down to a ½ pound per person per week, a significant change in that it brought Canadians in line with the ration amounts prevailing in both Great Britain and the United States.¹⁴⁴ For the first time since the beginning of Canada’s new era of austerity, there were no reports of panic buying in the days leading up to the announcement, something that Byrne Sanders attributed to “a new sense of public responsibility.”¹⁴⁵ A much better explanation, however, was that these moves had not been preceded by any widespread rumours or

¹⁴² LAC, RG17, vol. 3535, file 5-13-7[1], “Bulletin No. 71,” May 16, 1942.

¹⁴³ LAC, RG64, vol. 24, file Retailers’ Bulletins, vol. 1, “Retailers’ Bulletin,” Number 6, May 18, 1942.

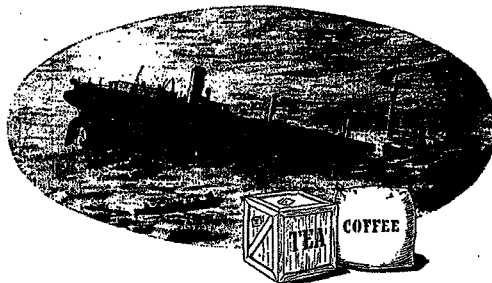
¹⁴⁴ “Order Tea, Coffee Rationing,” *Toronto Star*, May 26, 1942, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ “No Rationing Panic Seen as Good Sign,” *Toronto Star*, June 5, 1942, p. 10. There were reports of people hoarding tea, coffee, and sugar *after* the new restrictions were announced, but few (if any) beforehand.

speculation thanks to the gag order implemented by the WPTB. The ‘confused’ and ‘greedy’ consumers did not hoard because they had not been tipped off that changes were on the way.

The theme used in the tea, coffee, and sugar rationing propaganda campaign was

BEGINNING AT ONCE
TEA AND COFFEE
ARE RATIONED



Ships and lives must be conserved

To bring tea from Ceylon and India, to bring coffee from South America, ships must cross oceans loaded with soldiers. Today these ships and their naval escorts are required for most essential services. Every ship, every foot of cargo space, is needed to carry war materials, and to bring essential goods to Canada.

So Canadians must now reduce their consumption of tea and coffee. You must reduce your normal consumption of tea by at least a half. You must reduce your normal consumption of coffee by at least one fourth. These reductions are absolutely necessary.

TEA CONSUMPTION MUST BE CUT AT LEAST IN HALF



COFFEE CONSUMPTION MUST BE CUT AT LEAST ONE FOURTH



THIS IS THE LAW

You must not buy more than 2 weeks' supply of tea or coffee for yourself and household in any one week.

You must not make further purchases of tea or coffee at any time when you have two weeks' supply on hand of the reduced ration. (Exception: those in areas remote from supply.)

Patrols have the right to halt or refuse customers' orders if they suspect the law is not being kept.

Patrols must not have on hand more than one month's supply of tea and coffee, whether packaged or bulk.

There are heavy penalties for violations of this law.

THE WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD

Globe and Mail, May 27, 1942

lifeline must not bear the added strain of a single pound of unnecessary supplies. Selfish desires must not be satisfied at the risk of men's lives."¹⁴⁷ The WPTB was also fully aware of the example that its own officials and staff could give, and conversely, the

a familiar one, resting on the fact that bringing these largely imported commodities to Canadian cupboards risked tonnage and human lives. This “ships and lives must be conserved” appeal was essentially the same one used in the First World War.¹⁴⁶ Donald Gordon framed the issue thus when he stated that “Brave men ... struggle and fight every minute of the day and night to maintain the lifeline of merchant shipping. That

¹⁴⁶ “The Price in Human Lives – Tea and Coffee are Now Rationed, and the Sugar Allowance Reduced,” *Consumers' News*, May 23, 1942; “Beginning at Once Tea and Coffee are Rationing” (Ad, WPTB), *Globe and Mail*, May 27, 1942, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ CWM, “Canadians Will Respond” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, May 27, 1942.

censure that would be incurred if they failed to do so. Accordingly, Board employees were asked to give up their morning and afternoon coffee and tea breaks lest they “expose the Board to severe criticism.”¹⁴⁸

The fact that the WPTB still relied on voluntary rationing continued to prompt comment. On one side were those who strongly favoured the honour system. The *Globe and Mail*, for instance, was confident that Canadians would “conform voluntarily to the rationing orders and accept them willingly as part of the price of the salvation of human freedom.”¹⁴⁹ The *Hamilton Spectator* argued that coupon rationing “should not be necessary in a democratic country ... Canadians will accept these curtailments in the manner expected of them, without complaining and in the knowledge that it is the least they could do toward the common cause to preserve the world’s freedom and bring back order and decency to this earth.”¹⁵⁰ This attitude spilled beyond the editorial pages. An advertisement for Simpson’s department store stated confidently that “[b]ecause Canadians are the kind of people you like to have living next door, this ‘good neighbor’ system of rationing we think, will work.”¹⁵¹ Others were not quite so optimistic. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, unhappy with the voluntary method, maintained that gasoline consumption had only come down after gas cards were introduced, and that “satisfactory results in the tea, coffee and sugar field will only come with card rationing, too. Cumbersome and costly though it is, card rationing has this to be said for it: it is fair.”¹⁵² But it was also a headache to administer. As *Maclean’s* magazine put it, the “official

¹⁴⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 229, file Tea, Coffee – Ration, “WPTB notice,” June 1, 1942.

¹⁴⁹ “More Rationing Justified” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, May 27, 1942, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ CWM, “Canadians Will Respond” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, May 27, 1942.

¹⁵¹ “Tea for Two Instead of One” (Ad, Simpson’s), *Globe and Mail*, June 3, 1942, p. 14.

¹⁵² “More Honour Rationing” (Editorial), *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 27, 1942, p. 13.

view at Ottawa is clear and decisive. It is: avoid coupon rationing like the plague if there is any other way out.”¹⁵³

It was not right, according to detractors of the honour system, to allow scofflaws to get away with their selfish ends at the expense of ‘moral’ citizens. Coupon rationing would be no hardship for those already obeying the rules and it probably would make little difference to the ever-present minority determined to circumvent the law. It might, however, supply the extra motivation needed by the everyday wafflers in the population. The temptation to buy just a bit more coffee than one really needed would be rendered null if one only had enough coupons for ½ a pound, and it would take some of the pressure off grocers. By implementing coupon rationing, the WPTB would be sending a clear message to the public that the food situation really was serious. As it stood now, the state’s favoured approach was a bit contradictory. The rhetoric and propaganda flowing from the WPTB was stern – it pulled few punches in censuring those who failed to live up to their ‘honour.’ But relying on voluntary measures blunted some of the authority it hoped to wield. How critical could the situation really be if the government was relying on the honour system?

Diet as a Weapon of War: Nutrition and the State

A corollary to further mobilization of the food supply was a greater emphasis on proper nutrition. The First World War had demonstrated to a disquieting degree the role civilian health played in successfully prosecuting total war. As the economic and political situation deteriorated in the 1930s, the connections between nutrition, public health, and national security became a subject of public debate, most notably in Britain,

¹⁵³ “Backstage at Ottawa,” *Maclean’s*, June 15, 1942, p. 49.

where Sir John Boyd Orr's studies on nutrition revealed some rather unsettling facts about British public health.¹⁵⁴ Orr and his colleagues brought about a revolution in the way public health and nutrition were conceptualized, and his findings had a significant influence on how British wartime food policy was formulated.¹⁵⁵

In Canada, the importance of food and national health did not go completely unnoticed in the interwar years; still, it did not receive the level of sustained public debate as it had in other countries. The Ontario Medical Association established dietary standards in 1933, but as scholars have shown, the Canadian government was slow to act on the question of dietary health, believing this to fall more properly within the purview of the provinces. In 1936 the League of Nations made a recommendation that its member states form national nutrition groups, but the Canadian Council on Nutrition (CCN) did not begin meeting until 1938.¹⁵⁶ That same year the CCN produced Canada's first national dietary standard. After war's outbreak the issue took on greater significance, and slowly began to make its way into the broader consciousness of both ordinary Canadians and public officials.

The war led to a far greater general emphasis on proper eating; whether they made it to the front lines or remained on the home front, all Canadians would be asked to do more, and good health was crucial. Early in the war Canada was largely self-sufficient in terms of food, with many surpluses, and it was not initially believed that the

¹⁵⁴ Sir John Boyd Orr, *The National Food Supply and Its Influence on National Health* (London: King, 1934); *Food, Health and Income: Report on a Survey of Adequacy of Diet in Relation to Income* (London: Macmillan, 1936).

¹⁵⁵ Jane I. Guyer, "Toiling Ingenuity": Food Regulation in Britain and Nigeria," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (November 1993), pp. 803-804; John Coveney, "Why Food Policy is Critical to Public Health," *Critical Public Health*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 2003), p. 101.

¹⁵⁶ Aleck Ostry, "The Origins of Canada's First National Dietary Standard," *Michael*, No. 3 (2006): 55-68; see also Ostry, *Nutrition Policy in Canada, 1870-1939* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006) and Alana J. Hermiston, "If It's Good For You, It's Good for the Nation!" *The Moral Regulation of Nutrition in Canada, 1930-1945*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 2005.

conflict could threaten the nutritional health of Canadians. In January 1940, Dr. F.F. Tisdall, Director of Nutritional Research at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children and chairman of the Canadian Medical Association's committee on nutrition, argued that it was "impossible to conceive of a food shortage here."¹⁵⁷ The inherent wealth of Canada's food supply was also stressed in a *Globe and Mail* article that favourably contrasted the diet of Canadians on the economic margins of society (viz., Ontario relief recipients) to that of a German public already feeling the effects of the war.¹⁵⁸ But while the availability of food was identified early on as a key advantage, it was an advantage that had to be properly utilized to be most effective. While Canadians would not starve, it was certainly possible that their diets could become unbalanced. "On the Canadian front," stated another *Globe and Mail* article, "it is not food shortage that we have to combat, but ignorance of food values."¹⁵⁹ Thus, while there was little danger to Canadians in terms of the amount of food available, their diets had to be appropriately managed to maximize its effectiveness. Any nutritional failings that existed prior to the war had to be overcome if the war effort was to run as smoothly as possible.

During the early war years the government's rather dismissive prewar attitude toward nutrition prevailed, an approach that did not go unnoticed. "Canada as usual," noted the *Canadian Forum*, "lags behind in the public attention that is being devoted to this question."¹⁶⁰ When the experts *were* called upon to give advice, it was frequently in response to supply problems. As previously noted, Britain's decision to curb apple imports from Canada resulted in a government-led campaign to get Canadians to eat

¹⁵⁷ "Mobilize Housewives Diet to Aid Win War," *Toronto Star*, January 13, 1940, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ CWM, "Poorest of Ontario Better Fed Than Even Richest Germans, Comparison of Diets Reveals," *Globe and Mail*, October 18, 1939.

¹⁵⁹ "Need Training in Food Values on Home Front," *Globe and Mail*, October 26, 1939, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ "Nutrition" (Editorial), *Canadian Forum*, July, 1941, p. 101.

more of the fruit. Home economists were enlisted to help, and their appeals were based partly on the nutritional benefits of eating more apples. When Canadians were asked to cut their pork consumption so that the nation's bacon obligations could be fulfilled, Laura C. Pepper of the Department of Agriculture's Consumer Service Section asserted, rather conveniently for the government, that as Canadians ate too much pork in the summer anyway, their health would benefit from such a reduction.¹⁶¹

With the state not taking much of a lead on this issue, it fell to non-governmental bodies to educate and encourage the public on the subject of dietary health. "Home defense begins in the kitchen, and Canada expects every housekeeper to do her duty there," wrote Helen Campbell in the November 1939 issue of *Chatelaine* magazine. "It's practical patriotism to feed the family nutritious, properly balanced meals based on dietetic values as well as economy and sound common sense. For health is important to a stiff upper lip and high morale is an effective weapon against the enemy."¹⁶² In Spring 1940 the Canadian Medical Association prepared 1,500,000 copies of a booklet, *Food for Health in Peace and War*, which recommended a daily diet based on "milk, meat and raw eggs, vegetables and fruit, and whole-grain cereals."¹⁶³ In an editorial lauding the pamphlet, the *Toronto Star* contended that: "The maintenance of good health is of course everyone's anxiety at all times... This war will be severely taxing and good health is an essential if the nation is to weather the strain. Food, therefore, is now

¹⁶¹ "Enjoy Canadian Apples This Thanksgiving!" (Ad, Dominion Department of Agriculture), *Globe and Mail*, October 10, 1940, p. 11; LAC, MG28 I359, vol. 9, file 9 (CHEA Newsletter, 1940-1950), "Canadian Apples in Wartime," News Letter, the Canadian Home Economics Association, February, 1940; CWM, "Eat Less Pork As Health Aid, Expert Advises," *Globe and Mail*, July 30, 1941.

¹⁶² Helen G. Campbell, "Home Defense," *Chatelaine*, November 1939, p. 57.

¹⁶³ "Eat Properly to Win War Low-Cost Diet Book Urges," *Toronto Star*, May 15, 1940, p. 11; "Diet Stressed as National Aid," *Globe and Mail*, May 15, 1940, p. 7.

regarded as a defence weapon.”¹⁶⁴ Dr. Edna Guest, a prominent physician, echoing that sentiment, presented a recommendation to the National Council of the YWCA that it should “emphasize the study of nutrition as a special wartime project,” a suggestion that the representatives “unanimously approved.”¹⁶⁵ The following year the Canadian Home Economics Association passed a resolution calling on the government to treat nutrition as “an urgent war measure” by appointing nutritionists to educate Canadians “in food values and efficient meals.”¹⁶⁶

In 1941 the relative inertia with which the state had handled nutrition began to change. That year, the CCN (which came under the purview of the Department of Pensions and National Health) undertook a series of nutritional surveys that revealed some “deficiencies of protective foods” among urban Canadians, especially those in lower-income groups.¹⁶⁷ The most frequent deficits included vitamins A, B and C, along with calcium and iron. According to the surveys, this suggested “an inadequate use of beans, carrots, cereals (whole grain), cheese, eggs, green vegetables, liver, milk, molasses and tomatoes.”¹⁶⁸ Based on these results, the Council concluded that many Canadians did not have sound diets, a problem that was put down to two main factors:

¹⁶⁴ CWM, “So Simple” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, May 20, 1940.

¹⁶⁵ “Safeguard Health in War,” *Globe and Mail*, May 30, 1940, p. 10.

¹⁶⁶ LAC, MG28 I359, vol. 2, file 11, Executive and Subexecutive Minutes (Permanent Record), Minutes of the General Meeting of the Canadian Home Economics Association, July 2, 1941; LAC, RG17, vol. 3373, file 1500, Charlotte D. Black to G.S.H. Barton, July 4, 1941. This was in fact an endorsement of a similar recommendation made by the National Council of Women, on May 22, 1941.

¹⁶⁷ LAC, RG17, vol. 3670, file N-9-12 [1], C.A. Morrell to W.C. Hopper, May 26, 1941; LAC, RG17, vol. 3670, file N-9-12 [1], “Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Canadian Council on Nutrition and Representatives of Various National Organizations Interested in Nutrition,” June 19, 1941; “Nation Wide Diet Campaign to Open Soon,” *Globe and Mail*, November 8, 1941, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ LAC, RG17, vol. 3670, file N-9-12 [1], “Proposed Agenda for the Meeting of the Canadian Council on Nutrition,” November 28, 1941.

not enough money to buy adequate food; and a lack of nutritional knowledge.¹⁶⁹ An education campaign, it was agreed, might improve the situation.

Towards the end of 1941 Minister of Pensions and National Health Ian Mackenzie announced that the government was launching a campaign designed to improve Canadian nutrition through a combination of public education and further study. The two main targets were to be women as they were mainly responsible for family food planning and preparation, and workers, through an examination of industrial eating places. To that end, a Nutrition Services Division was created within the Department of Pensions and National Health under the direction of Dr. L.B. Pett. The timing of the campaign announcement was propitious, coming just days after J.T. Thorson, who in June 1941 had taken over from Gardiner as Minister of National War Services, had made some disturbing revelations about the poor health of many new military recruits. Speaking before Parliament, Thorson stated that of the 217,588 men examined for duty, just over half (56 per cent) were assigned an 'A' category rating.¹⁷⁰ The *Globe and Mail* found this situation deplorable, arguing "[s]uch a condition among the young men just arrived at manhood, in a country so rich in varied food resources as Canada, is a serious indictment of our civilization... Even in the United States, malnutrition is widespread, and is far too prevalent in Canada in view of our *superabundant production of food.*"¹⁷¹ It was understood that many recruits were

¹⁶⁹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3670, file N-9-12 [1], "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Canadian Council on Nutrition and Representatives of Various National Organizations Interested in Nutrition," June 19, 1941.

¹⁷⁰ "Health of Men Disappointing," *Globe and Mail*, November 6, 1941, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷¹ "Nutrition Campaign Needed" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, November 10, 1941, p. 6. Emphasis added.

rejected “due to physical defects resulting from malnutrition.”¹⁷² Coming on the heels of Thorson’s startling admission, the nutrition campaign was thus imbued with a more powerful significance.

The momentum surrounding the new emphasis on nutrition and public health received a further boost from Sir John Boyd Orr. Taking his “highly infectious” enthusiasm for nutrition to Canada for the first time since the outbreak of war, in November 1941 the renowned researcher addressed to the Canadian Club of Ottawa on “The Food and Nutrition Situation in Great Britain.”¹⁷³ Boyd Orr outlined the crucial importance that nutrition had played, and would continue to play, in the British war effort. Not long after, another prominent authority, Dr. E. V. McCollum, spoke publicly in Canada. A biochemist whose impact on the science of nutrition has been compared to Albert Einstein’s impact on physics, McCollum was one of the world’s leading experts in the discipline.¹⁷⁴ Before the assembled audience at the University of Toronto, he discussed the problems that low-income individuals faced in providing adequate nutrition for themselves and their families.¹⁷⁵ Both Boyd Orr and McCollum incorporated broader themes of social welfare and postwar reconstruction into their speeches, underscoring the impact that proper dietary health could have on society as a whole. As malnourished populations could not win total wars, neither could peace or prosperity take root among the hungry.

¹⁷² LAC, RG17, vol. 3670, file N-9-12 [1], “Proposed Agenda for the Meeting of the Canadian Council on Nutrition,” November 28, 1941.

¹⁷³ “Problem of Nutrition in War and Peace,” *Toronto Star*, November 17, 1941, p. 14; Sir John Boyd Orr, “The Food and Nutrition Situation in Great Britain,” Address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa, November 13, 1941.

¹⁷⁴ Harry G. Day, “Nutrition and E. V. McCollum,” *Science*, July 27, 1979, p. 359.

¹⁷⁵ “Small Farming Viewed as Aid,” *Globe and Mail*, December 4, 1941, p. 5.

THE *Kitchen* IS RIGHT ON THE *Home Front* NOW

Canada has plenty of good food—raw. But Canadians eat a great deal of it—cooked. And what they eat is pretty important nowadays, when everyone should be their most efficient every day. So the tools of the cooking trade are well worth checking . . . ovenware that makes the most of every nutritious meat and vegetable . . . aids to baking that's good to the last crumb . . . generous mixing bowls and milk pitchers . . . and all the things that help to keep the kitchen clean as the nutrition laboratory it really is.



Globe and Mail, August 24, 1942

As the leading lights of the nutrition world made their rounds in Canada, the subject continued to gain attention, with a plethora of groups and businesses casting their support behind the national nutrition project. The National Council of Women announced that it, too, was joining the movement to improve Canada's dietary habits by establishing local nutrition committees.¹⁷⁶ A note in the *Canadian Grocer* indicated that fifteen companies had pledged to spend a combined \$1 million in order to “promote nutrition in foods.”¹⁷⁷ Of course, those in the food business were well aware that an increased war-related emphasis on nutrition provided a golden opportunity to sell products and seem patriotic at the same time. All one needed to do was wrap their product in a cloak of health. Nabisco, for example, reminded grocers that “[t]he homemaker's interest in proper nutrition as an aid to keeping her family fit, has been

¹⁷⁶ “National Council Nutrition Groups,” *Globe and Mail*, December 1, 1941, p. 14.

¹⁷⁷ “Fifteen Firms Provide \$1,000,000 To Promote Nutrition in Foods,” *Canadian Grocer*, January 15, 1942, p. 34.

greatly stimulated by the war,” and “point[ed] out the nourishment and energy value of Nabisco Shredded Wheat for every man, woman and child on the ‘home front.’”¹⁷⁸

To make sure that Canadians would get all the vitamins they needed, Canada became one of several nations to manufacture bread and flour ‘enriched’ with a greater nutritive content. In December 1941 Ian Mackenzie announced that Canadians could soon purchase flour and bread containing larger amounts of vitamin B1, or thiamine, in both white and wholemeal versions.¹⁷⁹ Studies in recent years had demonstrated the importance of this vitamin, which some deemed “essential to charm, composure and good digestion.”¹⁸⁰ Popularly known as the “morale vitamin,” the extra thiamine would not be added to the flour; rather new milling techniques had been developed that would leave more of the naturally occurring vitamin in the flour.¹⁸¹ The British had begun manufacturing this type of bread in 1940, and while Canadian authorities confidently expected that sales of the new products labelled ‘Canada Approved’ would be brisk, they still mustered the home economics troops to sing thiamine’s praises, and to urge consumers to buy the new bread.¹⁸² In her “Cooking Chat” column, food writer Marie Holmes declared that “people who run low on vitamin B1 often become nervous and afraid, unhappy, irritable and hard to get along with, forgettable, inefficient and unable to concentrate on a job.” Furthermore, Holmes said that “Nutrition scientists point out

¹⁷⁸ “Help Canada Keep Fit – By Keeping This Famous Product Out in Front,” *Canadian Grocer*, February 15, 1942, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ “Vitamin-Rich Flour, Bread Receive Okay,” *Globe and Mail*, December 13, 1941, p. 15.

¹⁸⁰ “News of Food,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1942, p. 18.

¹⁸¹ Harvey A. Levenstein, “The Perils of Abundance: Food, Health, and Morality in American History,” in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Penguin, 2000), p. 523. For an examination of the cultural impact of vitamins in American society, including the wartime preoccupation with thiamine, see Rima D. Apple, “‘If I don’t get my vitamins ... anything can happen’: Nutrition in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture,” *Pharmacy in History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1998): 123-131.

¹⁸² R.W. Welch and P.C. Mitchell, “Food Processing: A Century of Change,” *British Medical Bulletin*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (2000), p. 12; “Housewives Urged to Purchase Canada Approved Bread, Flour,” *Montreal Gazette*, January 21, 1942, p. 4; Harriet Chick and Alice Copping, “Britain’s National Bread in Balanced Nutrition,” *Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (September 1945): 226.

that the difference between a hero and a coward, or an ambitious man and a no-good, and a calm and cheerful one and a crosspatch may go back to the vitamins or lack of them in his food.”¹⁸³ These were far from desirable characteristics in a population at war – far better to err on the side of caution by purchasing ‘Canada Approved’ bread. The armed forces, Canadians learned, would be using the new flour in place of the old, less nutritious version, and if it was good enough for the military, then why not give it a try?¹⁸⁴

But would Canadians take to the wholesome loaf? Early results were mixed. In late July, a Dominion Experimental Farm official reported that since its release to the public on April 15, Canada Approved bread was selling most swiftly in urban areas of central Canada, but was significantly less popular in the west and the Maritimes.¹⁸⁵ Still, in 1940 the average Canadian ingested 1.42 milligrams of vitamin B1 per day, a figure that rose to 1.61 milligrams in 1942 and 1.72 milligrams in 1943.¹⁸⁶ While greater attention to nutrition in general may have been partly responsible for the increase, Canada Approved bread and flour arguably played a part as well.

¹⁸³ Marie Holmes, “Cooking Chat,” *Toronto Star*, March 17, 1942, p. 24.

¹⁸⁴ “The New Flour – Canada Approved,” *Globe and Mail*, May 21, 1942, p. 10.

¹⁸⁵ “Vitamin Bread Most Popular in Central Canada, Is Report,” *Globe and Mail*, July 23, 1942, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ “Estimated Average Supplies of Nutrients in Foods Apparently Consumed by Canadians Per Person Per Day, 1935 to 1956,” *Canadian Food and Nutrition Statistics, 1935 to 1956* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1959), p. 9.

Articles dealing with nutrition showed up with increasing frequency in women's magazines and on the women's pages in newspapers. In one, Dr. E.W. McHenry of the University of Toronto spoke about the current nutrition concerns to *Chatelaine* magazine's Helen G. Campbell, who admitted to being "a bit shocked at the condition of affairs" in Canada. McHenry himself expressed surprise that a nation "which produces an abundance of good food and pretty intelligent people" could have one-third of its urban populace suffering from malnourishment, and forty-four percent of prospective military recruits rejected as unfit. To help consumers make the right food choices, the magazine printed a list of "Daily Essentials" that Canadians should eat. It consisted of "three glasses of milk, six slices of vitamin-rich bread with butter, one serving of meat or fish, one egg three or four times a week, one serving of potatoes, one serving of green-leaf or yellow vegetables, one glass of tomato juice, [and] one serving of vitamin-rich breakfast cereal."¹⁸⁷ The



Globe and Mail, December 9, 1942

list bore a great resemblance to Canada's first *Official Food Rules* (later renamed the *Canada Food Guide*) that was released in July 1942 under the aegis of the Department of Pensions and National Health in conjunction with the CCN.¹⁸⁸ Canada was following

¹⁸⁷ "Helen G. Campbell, "Food for Fitness," *Chatelaine*, March, 1942, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁸ Health Canada, "Canada's Food Guides From 1942 to 1992" (Ottawa, 2002), pp. 5-6. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/fg_history-histoire_ga_e.pdf

in American footsteps; the U.S. Food and Nutrition Board had released the first “Recommended Dietary Allowances” (RDAs) in May 1941.¹⁸⁹

McHenry, a chemist whose speciality was nutrition, had been instrumental in establishing national dietary standards while a member of the CCN. During the war he worked hard to turn the public’s attention to diet, especially industrial war workers. In his estimation, in order to get all the needed vitamins and minerals, a war worker’s lunch should consist of milk, a “well-buttered” sandwich containing meat, egg, cheese or peanut butter, and made with whole wheat or the new Canada Approved bread. Another key lunch component, the doctor advised, was “sweet food” like cookies “for the psychological feeling of satisfaction as much as anything else.”¹⁹⁰

The focus on food intensified still further when, on June 4, 1942, Donald Gordon announced that the WPTB was planning to implement coupon rationing. Nutritionist Anna Speers had already been added to the staff of the Foods Administration. Shortly after Gordon’s announcement, the WPTB’s newly-formed Advisory Committee on Nutrition held its first meeting. Its goals included establishing “minimum nutritional standards for Canadian civilians ... to be used as a basis for production plans and for possible rationing,” as well as making “recommendations on the relative importance of various foodstuffs for the guidance of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board.” It was also tasked to help “establish a nutritional basis for recommendations for subsidy in imported food items,” and to “advise the Foods Administration on all matters relating to nutrition

¹⁸⁹ Vivek Bammi, “Nutrition, the Historian, and Public Policy: A Case Study of U.S. Nutrition Policy in the 20th Century,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Summer 1981), p. 633.

¹⁹⁰ “Workers’ Diet Vitamins Easy, Cheap to Obtain,” *Globe and Mail*, May 22, 1942, p. 11.

and to assist in making available or improving the nutritional status of civilians.”¹⁹¹

Several prominent figures attended its inaugural meeting, including J.G. Taggart, Dr. L.B. Pett, Dr. E.V. McHenry, and George Britnell. With Canada heading into a new era of stricter regulatory controls over the food supply, the expertise these individuals could provide was essential. This committee assisted the development of rationing policies by providing the WPTB with the information needed to devise rationing programs that complied with basic health needs, while also giving the government an authority to which it could appeal when responding to concerns relating to rationing.¹⁹²

‘A Great Convenience:’ The Introduction of Coupon Rationing

“The decision to abandon voluntary rationing and replace it with the compulsory coupon system has been wisely made by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board...” wrote the *Winnipeg Free Press* on June 5, 1942.¹⁹³ This staunch opponent of the honour system was justly satisfied with the news that the WPTB had put the sword to the ‘voluntary’ principle, but support also came from less likely sources. Papers whose editorial pages had eloquently extolled the virtues of the honour system suddenly praised the move to coupons. “At first glance,” wrote the *Hamilton Spectator*, “it may seem like another ogre of regimentation, but it is nothing of the sort and its advantages are many.”¹⁹⁴ The switch to coupon rationing, the paper claimed, was not an indictment of the voluntary system, but rather a prudent attempt to ensure equity in the face of ever-

¹⁹¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 894, file 1-25-8 (Advisory Committee Nutrition, vol. 1), “Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Nutrition,” July 28, 1942.

¹⁹² LAC, RG64, vol. 894, file 1-25-8, Advisory Committee Nutrition, vol. 1, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Nutrition,” October 16, 1942; RG64, vol. 27, file History of the Nutrition Administration, November 1946.

¹⁹³ “Coupon Rationing” (Editorial), *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 5, 1942, p. 14.

¹⁹⁴ CWM, “Ration Coupons” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, June 5, 1942.

increasing scarcity. In announcing the new policy, Gordon contended that honour rationing had been “a great success,” but stated that coupons would be “a great convenience to the public in keeping track of their purchases.”¹⁹⁵

Given the size, expense, and sheer logistical challenge associated with ration cards, it is unlikely that the WPTB decided to implement such a program simply to make things easier for consumers. Only weeks earlier, at the Ontario Retail Food Distributors convention, J.G. Taggart had informed the assembled tradesmen that he opposed “formal rationing,” citing the problems associated with coupons.¹⁹⁶ So what drove this change of heart? The Consumer Branch’s newsletter, *Consumers’ News*, reported that coupon rationing was needed because “it is obviously impossible to apply a voluntary rationing system to more than two or three commodities.” The WPTB was really preparing for future eventualities, laying the groundwork for what it saw as the inevitable further tightening of Canada’s food supply. When the need to apply rationing on a larger or stricter scale arose, then the system would be ready to handle such requirements. With more commodities feeling the war’s pinch, it was important to get the Canadian public accustomed to the idea of stronger food regulation, and the procedures this entailed. This explained why the WPTB wanted sugar to be the first commodity so rationed. *Consumers’ News* noted that sugar made “the most suitable ‘guinea pig’ on which to work out a scheme which may ultimately embrace other commodities.”¹⁹⁷ The WPTB, in its *Quarterly Summary*, explained that while the honour system “worked reasonably well,” it was “not sufficient for stringent and direct

¹⁹⁵ “Rationed Commodities Planned for Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, June 5, 1942, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ “Opposed to Formal Rationing, Is WPTB Official,” *Canadian Grocer*, May 1, 1942, p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ “Coupon Rationing for Canada – Why it Has Become Necessary,” *Consumers’ News*, No. 5, June 18, 1942.

control.” What it had done was give the WPTB time to “organize a more permanent system,” while educating the public about the need to conserve supplies and to buy in “reasonable quantities.”¹⁹⁸ It had allowed for an important period of adjustment, training Canadians to think about food in a new, war-conscious, manner. But in the summer of 1942, the training wheels came off wartime rationing in Canada.

The process of placing millions of Canadians on compulsory rations was a massive organizational feat, and it began in earnest when ration card applications (asking for information such as names, ages, etc. of family members) were mailed to every household. Volunteers then went door-to-door to collect the completed applications, which were then turned over to transcribers who used the information to fill out the ration cards. The cards were then mailed out in advance of the July 1 deadline.¹⁹⁹ The WPTB hoped to start rationing sugar by coupon on July 1, but the Consumer Branch argued that to switch over in the middle of jam season would be utter folly.²⁰⁰ After Byrne Sanders took this concern to Gordon, the transfer of sugar from the honour ration was postponed until September, making tea and coffee the first commodities to be rationed via coupon starting in August. Canadians would have to choose between either one ounce of tea or four ounces of coffee per week, ration amounts which were actually below those allowed in Great Britain, a fact that did not go

¹⁹⁸ LAC, RG17, vol. 3405, file 1500-5-3(1), Wartime Prices and Trade Board – Publications, etc., WPTB “Quarterly Summary – 1942 – July 1 to September 30.”

¹⁹⁹ “Seek Volunteers for Ration Duty,” *Globe and Mail*, June 17, 1942, p. 11; “Seek 10,000 Volunteers for Ration-Card Pickup,” *Globe and Mail*, June 23, 1942, p. 17.

²⁰⁰ Schull, p. 67.

unquestioned.²⁰¹ Eating places were also warned that patrons could only be served one cup of either beverage – no refills allowed, either free or paid.²⁰²

Another vexing issue for both consumers and the WPTB concerned beef. Despite government steps to control the domestic supply, many parts of the country continued to suffer from beef shortages. After weeks of telling consumers that the situation would improve shortly, in mid-June the WPTB, finally admitting that the beef problem was critical, urged Canadians to curb their appetite for meat.²⁰³ Meat supplies were pressured further when Britain requested a significant increase in the amount of bacon exported from Canada.²⁰⁴ The fact that the new ration books (about to be released in September) contained extra unassigned ‘emergency’ coupons caused some to wonder about future plans regarding meat despite assurances from WPTB officials that it would not soon join the ration list.

After easing briefly, probably due to decreased summer demand, beef problems again emerged in September 1942. The situation was particularly bad in Toronto where some butchers’ shelves were quite literally bare. There was, according to some reports, only enough beef to satisfy 25%-30% of usual consumer needs, a state of affairs, in the words of the *Toronto Telegram*, that had become “a horrible muddle.” If the WPTB was capable of managing supplies of other foods, then “why not beef?” it not unreasonably asked.²⁰⁵ The answer to that question lay in the source of the commodity.

²⁰¹ “Tea, Coffee Rationed in Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, August 3, 1942, p. 1; LAC, RG64, vol. 1447, file A-10-29-10, Reports (Annual, Consumer & Progress), “Progress Report of Consumer Branch,” August 24, 1942. At this point Britons were restricted to two ounces of tea weekly, and coffee was not rationed.

²⁰² “One Cup, Restaurants Reminded,” *Globe and Mail*, August 4, 1942, p. 13.

²⁰³ CWM, “Price Board Now Agrees There is Beef Shortage, Sees Relief Late in July,” *Toronto Telegram*, June 19, 1942.

²⁰⁴ “More Bacon for Britain” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, August 13, 1942, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ CWM, “Maintenance of Beef Supply Muddled by Ottawa” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, September 14, 1942.

Controlling imported foods such as coffee, tea or sugar was relatively easy because the WPTB did not have to deal with domestic producers and James Gardiner's indomitable will. Taggart refused to call the beef dearth a "famine" as there were other types of meat, and fish, available.²⁰⁶ One advertisement from the federal Department of Agriculture told Canadians they could help by shifting more of their purchases to "cheese, beans, chicken, turkey, eggs, fish, fresh vegetables, [and] cereal."²⁰⁷

The situation left some consumers' heads spinning – if the butcher had pork laid out on display, was it OK to buy it? One Montreal woman who was "earnestly trying in every way to help" put this very question to the Department of Agriculture. "I cannot see, if it reaches the retail butcher, what good it does if we – the housekeepers – leave it lying there?," asked Mrs. W.B. Cartmel of Westmount, who also confessed that she found the beef situation "very puzzling."²⁰⁸ The situation was becoming rather ominous, and speculation about the possibility of meatless days entered the swiftly churning rumour mill.

A major part of the problem seemed to be location. People in smaller towns, often closer to sources of supply, reportedly had little problem obtaining beef, while urban consumers engaged in a regular "week-end scramble for meat."²⁰⁹ Still, given the availability of 'alternatives' such as fish and poultry it was estimated that Canadians still had access to "about twice as much meat as was available to civilians in the United

²⁰⁶ "No Meat Rationing in Sight, Although Shops Bare," *Globe and Mail*, September 10, 1942, p. 15; "Chicken or Fish Menus Suffice at Week-End," *Globe and Mail*, September 12, 1942, p. 4.

²⁰⁷ "Please Do Not Buy Pork" (Ad, Department of Agriculture), *Globe and Mail*, September 17, 1942, p. 11.

²⁰⁸ LAC, RG17, vol. 3402, file 1500-5, Mrs. W.B. Cartmel to the Department of Agriculture, October 13, 1942. See also LAC, RG64, vol. 1447, file A-10-29-10, Reports (Annual, Consumer & Progress), Lois Dallamore to Mary Jukes, "Weekly Progress Report – Main Consumer Problems," November 6, 1942.

²⁰⁹ "Notes and Comments," *Globe and Mail*, September 15, 1942, p. 6; "Week-End Scramble for Meat Forseen," *Toronto Star*, September 25, 1942, p. 19.

Kingdom.”²¹⁰ But Canadians were used to eating as much meat as their pocketbooks would allow, and therefore showed signs of bewilderment – verging on a sense of thwarted entitlement – that there should be shortages of such an elemental food, war or no war.

On her radio show, Kate Aitken tried to explain the meat shortage to her baffled listeners. “The meat situation,” she noted, “isn’t getting any better and here are some of the questions I’ve been asking – here are some of the answers. How much meat do Canadians eat? Before the war, we ate about 65 pounds of beef, 65 pounds of pork, about 8 pounds of lamb or mutton, about 2 pounds of poultry and 1½ pounds of fish per person – which adds up to 141½ pounds of meat and fish [per] person.” The country, according to Aitken, had the same amount of beef cattle, lamb and fish as before the war, and about double the number of pigs and poultry. So why then was meat so hard to find? “All the bacon is going to England, all the salmon pack is going to England, we’ve lost 120,000 cattle to the United States because the price is 2½ times higher. The army is eating a lot of meat and there just isn’t enough to go round.” Beef was not something that could be produced quickly, either. As to why farmers did not “get a hurry on and grow more beef,” Aitken noted that “a roast of beef isn’t a thing you whip up in a hurry – to get that nice rare sirloin roast on your table takes 3 years growing.”²¹¹ Clearly, voluntary consumption curbs on meat and encouraging meat alternatives might not be enough. Gordon warned Canadians that if the situation became serious enough, coupon rationing would be implemented.²¹²

²¹⁰ CWM, “Alternate Meat Sources Urged by Authorities,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 24, 1942.

²¹¹ LAC, MG30 D206, vol. 8, file Tamblyn Broadcasts, Sept. 42, “Tamblyn Broadcast,” October 5, 1942. Aitken was referring to annual totals.

²¹² “Rationing of Beef Seen if Necessity Merits It,” *Globe and Mail*, September 21, 1942, p. 1.

As October approached, more hints appeared that food rationing would be expanded. The WPTB announced that it was setting up a system of 500 local ration boards “to put consumers in every locality in more direct touch with the administration of Canada’s rationing system.”²¹³ The boards consisted of between 4 and 8 “leading citizens, chosen locally” who ostensibly represented “the principle groups of the community.”²¹⁴ Members of the public who had problems or questions relating to rationing could now take their concerns directly to a local representative who would attempt to resolve the issue. A month later the WPTB proclaimed that it had established an Administration of Consumer Rationing, to be headed by Montrealer L.B. Unwin, a Vice-President with the Canadian Pacific Railway. The newly-formed division would “co-ordinate the various consumer rationing activities of the Prices Board throughout the Dominion.”²¹⁵ In a few short months, Canadians had gone from the honour system to a rationing program that, it appeared, would truly bring the war home – straight into every larder.

‘Seeking Unfair Advantage’: Hoarding and the Black Market

Not everyone was prepared to make the sacrifices entailed by the war effort. By 1942 the combination of scarcity and increasing regulation had prompted the emergence of an underground economy. With foods such as tea, coffee, and meat now more difficult to obtain on a regular basis, some turned to the black market, which the WPTB defined as “illegal buying and selling in violation of the gasoline, sugar, tea and coffee rationing

²¹³ LAC, RG64, vol. 84, file Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix G – Miscellaneous Publicity, “WPTB Press Release No. 0219, Local Ration Boards,” September 29, 1942.

²¹⁴ “Local Ration Boards Will Meet Consumers,” *Globe and Mail*, September 30, 1942, p. 15.

²¹⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 84, file Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix G – Miscellaneous Publicity, “WPTB Press Release No. 0237, Administration of Consumer Rationing,” October 26, 1942.

regularities, the price and rent ceiling systems, and restrictions on the sale of tires.”²¹⁶ Denials that it posed a serious problem were heard from certain quarters, but by Autumn 1942 it was generally accepted that significant breaches of the supply and price rules were taking place, though the government would not publicly admit this was being done in a systemic, organized manner. The infractions brought before the courts by the WPTB since December 1941 (close to 500) were generally touted as being “isolated cases.”²¹⁷ There were, however, troubling signs that the situation was escalating. The rate at which charges were being laid was increasing, as more cases (297) were prosecuted in July and August 1942 than in the previous seven months combined. The WPTB, in response to the greater levels of illegal activity and in anticipation of a wider black market, announced an expansion of its staff of enforcement officers. It also reiterated its resolve to apply the full extent of the proscribed penalties, which in the case of dealers, included shutting down “the offender’s place of business.”²¹⁸ While a majority of Canadians respected the new paradigm of wartime collectivism, the state was prepared to deal sternly with those who placed their personal interests above the greater good.

As the beef crisis persisted, reports indicated an active black market in Toronto where, authorities asserted, ninety percent of the beef sold by dealers was above the price ceiling.²¹⁹ Unable to get adequate beef from the large packers, retailers bought from other sources, including directly from farmers. Most paid prices that forced them to set their retail prices above the legal ceiling. This was being done, one WPTB

²¹⁶ “May Close Business of Black Marketeers,” *Toronto Star*, September 22, 1942, p. 13.

²¹⁷ “Deny ‘Black Market’ Common in Canada,” *Toronto Star*, September 25, 1942, p. 19.

²¹⁸ “May Close Business of Black Marketeers,” *Toronto Star*, September 22, 1942, p. 13.

²¹⁹ “Probe Beef ‘Black Market’ Reported Very Active Here,” *Toronto Star*, September 29, 1942, p. 3; “Prosecutions May Follow Beef Inquiry,” *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 1942, p. 4.

representative alleged, because consumers (“housewives”) themselves were placing so much pressure on dealers, and were in fact letting it be known that they would willingly pay over the ceiling price to obtain beef.²²⁰ Many women, perhaps with lower incomes, were happy to keep an eye out for unauthorized price increases, while other women with more money were equally happy to pay more. The WPTB forbade butchers from buying beef directly from farmers unless this had been one of their usual sources of supply before the price ceiling had come into effect. In November 1942, it was announced that all slaughtering would now have to be done on a permit basis.²²¹

Beef was not the only object of concern. As autumn wore on, there were reports of worrying numbers of consumers obtaining other food products through less than scrupulous methods. Evidence mounted that old-fashioned ‘bootlegging’ was back, only this time the beverages in question were tea and coffee. In one case, Arthur C. Loveys, a Torontonian with “a long record,” was handed a 60-day sentence for selling black market tea.²²² Items such as sugar, tea, and coffee were targeted by thieves and then sold to “small restaurants and cafes.” The so-called “Ice Box Thief,” a bandit who broke into homes and literally raided people’s refrigerators, stealing “meats, butter, eggs and other foods,” baffled Hamilton police.²²³ Homes were not the only target. In Ottawa, thieves made off with 86 half-pound containers of tea, 12 dozen packages of eggs, and a rather paltry three pounds of butter from a Dominion grocery store. Of note is the fact that rather than blindly grabbing whatever tea came to hand, the robbers

²²⁰ CWM, “Illegal Prices Blame Placed on Housewives,” *Toronto Telegram*, September 29, 1942.

²²¹ “Curb Buying of Beef Directly By Butcher,” *Toronto Star*, October 13, 1942, p. 27; “Control Slaughtering to Curb Black Market,” *Globe and Mail*, November 25, 1942, p. 9.

²²² “Sixty Days in Jail for Tea Bootlegger,” *Toronto Star*, October 24, 1942, p. 17.

²²³ CWM, “Ice Box Thief Steals Butter; Police Now Really Annoyed,” *Hamilton Spectator*, December 14, 1942.

reportedly “took a selection of the different brands of tea that were in the store,” evidence perhaps that the thief either wished to offer his own ‘customers’ a variety of choices or that he had been directed to certain brands by whomever had commissioned the theft.²²⁴ Whatever the reason, as the value of certain foods rose, their attractiveness to criminals increased as well.

While black markets were developing into a matter of concern, the WPTB did not turn a blind eye to hoarding, a continuing problem despite the raft of propaganda urging Canadians to refrain from over-buying. Apart from the damage it could do to supply levels and distribution, the practice threatened the spirit of communality crucial to the success of the food regulations and the war effort. The *Vancouver Sun* ran a particularly pointed editorial, calling hoarders ‘saboteurs’ who stole from all Canadians by taking “more than [their] share of the common wealth.”²²⁵ Donald Gordon, in a quote included in the September 15, 1942 issue of the *Consumers’ News*, declared “Anybody who rushes around trying to acquire a hoard of this or that may be rated, in my opinion, as a fifth-rate citizen.”²²⁶ One of those supposed “fifth-rate citizens” was one Annie Dworkin, an affluent Toronto resident, who in a well-publicized case was convicted and fined \$2000 for hoarding groceries and sugar.²²⁷ The court was not impressed with Dworkin’s argument that she, unaware of the WPTB regulations, had always bought such substantial quantities. The judge was incredulous that Dworkin, “a well-educated business woman, active in the affairs of the community,” could have been

²²⁴ “Dominion Store Robbed of Tea, Eggs, Butter,” *Ottawa Journal*, January 11, 1943, p. 18.

²²⁵ “Hoarder a Saboteur” (Editorial), *Vancouver Sun* (reprinted in *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1942, p. 6.)

²²⁶ “Another Year Demands a Greater Effort,” *Consumers’ News*, September 15, 1942, p. 3.

²²⁷ “Guilty of Food Hoarding Woman is Fined \$2,000,” *Globe and Mail*, September 18, 1942, p. 15.

ignorant of the rules. “If this sort of thing is permitted,” stated the Magistrate, “those who have money will get food and those who haven’t will not.”²²⁸

Also significant was the \$2000 fine levied against Dworkin, part of a trend of increasing penalties for WPTB infractions. In another case, the Empire Hotel in Timmins was fined \$1,000 after being found guilty of hoarding tea.²²⁹ A couple, also from Timmins, was fined \$500 for possessing a year’s supply of tea and coffee, 30 pounds of sugar, and 47 cans of salmon.²³⁰ “No trifling penalties, these,” wrote the *Hamilton Spectator*. “In some minds they may appear more than necessarily severe, but officials and courts probably see a need for making an example which will discourage tendencies to evade the wartime decrees.”²³¹ Still, many newspapers were unimpressed by the many small penalties handed down to hoarders. The *Vancouver Sun* demanded that the justice system treat hoarders with due severity, and “not regard hoarding as a harmless peccadillo and punish it with a parking fine.”²³²

Consumers were but one part of the complex food chain subject to WPTB controls and regulations – the chain also included dealers and processors. Donald Gordon has been fairly characterized as having run a very ‘business-friendly’ agency. But in individual cases, there is evidence that the chairman of WPTB did not play favourites and at times he annoyed those larger business concerns who believed that greater obeisance was due them. In one case, Canada Packers president J.S. McLean

²²⁸ “Society Woman is Fined \$2,000 on Charges of Hoarding Groceries,” *Canadian Grocer*, October 1, 1942, pp. 39-41. Dworkin appealed, had her convictions overturned, and her fines and court costs returned to her.

²²⁹ “Convicted of Hoarding Tea, Timmins Hotel Fined \$1,000,” *Globe and Mail*, September 23, 1942, p. 9.

²³⁰ CWM, “Couple Fined Total of \$500,” *Globe and Mail*, October 21, 1942.

²³¹ CWM, “The Black Market” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, September 25, 1942.

²³² “Hoarder a Saboteur” (Editorial), *Vancouver Sun* (reprinted in *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1942, p. 6.)

took Donald Gordon to task. McLean was angry that one of his competitors, the Swift Company, had been convicted of violating the price ceiling. It was not, according to McLean, the fine (which amounted to \$1000) that annoyed him, but rather the bad publicity that this conviction had garnered for the firm, and by extension, the entire meatpacking industry. He was irate that the public had not been made aware that the packing industry had endeavoured to obey the regulations and had taken large losses in the process. Nor had the fact that the packers had worked with the WPTB to set up meat and price regulations been related to the public. "You must be aware," McLean wrote to Gordon,

that numerous persons throughout Canada deliberately and continuously disregarded the Regulations, thereby making large profits. It does seem to me that a firm which conscientiously sought to observe both the spirit and the letter of the Regulations, and which failed to do so only in a minute percentage of their dealings, should not have been hauled to court for an infraction by a junior employee, which was directly against the instructions of the Company.²³³

McLean also stressed that he was not speaking solely for himself, but was certain that his position was shared by the industry as a whole.

McLean's ire increased shortly thereafter when his firm was charged with breaking the price regulations. Vowing that he would "assuredly put up the strongest defence possible in regard to this complaint," McLean called the charges against his company "a rather ungracious recognition of the loyal co-operation you had from this Company throughout. In connection with the fine imposed on the Swift Company, you stated that you were not aware of the facts until it was too late to correct them. There is still plenty of time to have these complaints withdrawn, and I feel very strongly that is

²³³ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-9, Canada Packers Meat Prosecution, J.S. McLean to Donald Gordon, July 10, 1942.

the only decent thing to do.”²³⁴ Taggart urged Gordon to let the matter drop. In his estimation, since the beef crisis had eased, it would be far better for the WPTB to abandon the charges pending against Canada Packers. “Prosecution at this date,” wrote Taggart, “looks more like persecution and tends to make our Administration much more difficult.”²³⁵ Not so easily swayed, Gordon refused to intervene on Canada Packers’ behalf. He understood its position and certainly must have appreciated the need to keep relations with the food industry as harmonious as possible. But as he told McLean, the WPTB “had a duty to perform and I know of no other procedure than that of uncompromising honesty.”²³⁶ Since some consumers were annoyed with rising meat prices, Gordon was perhaps right in playing it safe by not siding with the ‘interests,’ an accusation which had plagued Canada’s first food controller from the First World War, William Hanna.²³⁷

Butter Rationing Comes to Canada

Despite the meat headaches and the rationing of sugar, tea and coffee, the variety of foods available to Canadians was still abundant. In fact, to remind Canadians of their good fortune, the Dominion grocery chain ran an advertisement in October 1942 trumpeting the fact that “Canadians Are Eating Better Than Kings.” “Ask any citizen of the United Nations – except the U.S. They would be amazed that we even spoke of food shortages. To the British, French, Norwegians – all lovers of good eating – our ordinary

²³⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-9, Canada Packers Meat Prosecutions, J.S. McLean to Donald Gordon, July 14, 1942; LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-9, Canada Packers Meat Prosecutions, J.S. McLean to Donald Gordon, August 19, 1942.

²³⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-9, Canada Packers Meat Prosecutions, J.G. Taggart to Donald Gordon, August 20, 1942.

²³⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 581, file 16-8-9, Canada Packers Meat Productions, Donald Gordon to J.S. McLean, August 24, 1942.

²³⁷ See Stacey J. Barker, “‘Save Today What Our Allies Need Tomorrow’: Food Regulation in Canada during the First World War,” M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 2003.

meals would appear luxurious to the point of extravagance.”²³⁸ But to a people unaccustomed to even the slightest curb on their personal food choices or habits, even the mildest regimentation necessitated by the exigencies of war required some adjustment. This was also evident as butter joined the roster of ‘problematic’ foods. Butter had been among the first food items to feel the pinch of war, with intermittent scarcities reported in various localities from late 1939 onwards. In Fall 1942, however, serious shortages were reported in Toronto and Montreal.²³⁹ A variety of circumstances had contributed to the scarcities. Butter consumption, high before the war, had further increased. The average Canadian had eaten just over 30 pounds annually in 1939, but by 1942 this had risen to almost 34 pounds.²⁴⁰ Butter production, on the other hand, had not increased enough to meet this rising demand.²⁴¹ British contracts for Canadian cheese had prompted a shift from butter to cheese production, reducing the amount of butter available at a time when consumption was on the rise.²⁴² The authorities placed much of the blame on ‘hoarders.’ In a speech to Ontario dairy representatives, Taggart suggested as much as nine million pounds of butter was being “stored away in people’s basements in Canada.”²⁴³

Labour objected to the suggestion that lower-income Canadians were hoarding butter, as “they had neither the money to buy quantities of butter nor the means of storing it.” If some consumers were hoarding, labour charged it was most likely being done by those “in higher income brackets” who were taking their cues from WPTB

²³⁸ Ad, Dominion, *Toronto Star*, October 8, 1942, p. 13.

²³⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 1447, file A-10-29-10, Reports (Annual, Consumer & Progress), Lois Dallamore to Mary Jukes, “Report of Consumer Problems,” November 20, 1942.

²⁴⁰ *Canadian Food and Nutrition Statistics, 1935 to 1956*, p. 29.

²⁴¹ “Production of Creamery Butter in Canada, By Provinces, 1935-50,” in Britnell and Fowke, p. 290.

²⁴² Britnell and Fowke, p. 289.

²⁴³ CWM, “8,000,000 Pounds of Butter Said Held in Cellars,” *Toronto Star*, November 18, 1942.

statements.²⁴⁴ The *Globe and Mail* suggested that increased purchasing power was to blame as workers, previously unable to buy as much butter as they would have liked, were now using far more.²⁴⁵ Others asserted that Canadians were drinking more milk, a by-product of tea and coffee rationing.²⁴⁶ Whatever the reason and despite the extent of the shortage, Taggart once again tried to calm the situation by dismissing the notion that butter would be rationed anytime soon; in fact he ‘guaranteed’ that it would not be.²⁴⁷

Palpable resentment greeted Taggart’s interpretation of the issue. His insistence that butter rationing was not necessary backfired as some consumers charged they were being swindled out of their proper allotment by duplicitous dealers and greedy hoarders. Others resented the implication that consumers were largely to blame for the dearth. Elizabeth Brown led “a deputation of indignant housewives” before the Toronto Board of Control, demanding action. She angrily defended women against the charge that *they* were the ones responsible for hoarding butter, arguing that the fault instead lay with “speculators and wholesalers.”²⁴⁸ Of course, the situation for the consumer was made worse by the fact that margarine was still an illegal substance in Canada (and it would remain so until 1948).²⁴⁹ Butter’s scarcity prompted social workers to call for an affordable butter substitute “within the reach of very low-income groups.”²⁵⁰ Butter producers had long been protected by state prohibition of margarine, but this ban had

²⁴⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-6, Consumer Branch – Labour Liaison, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, “Report of Visit to Montreal,” November 18, 1942.

²⁴⁵ “Rationing of Butter” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, December 22, 1942, p. 6.

²⁴⁶ “‘Drink More Milk’ Trend Menaces Butter Market,” *Globe and Mail*, November 18, 1942, p. 13.

²⁴⁷ “Guarantees Not to Ration Butter in Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, November 19, 1942, p. 13.

²⁴⁸ “Butter Action Demand Sent to Government,” *Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1942, p. 4.

²⁴⁹ For more on the volatile debate surrounding margarine, see W.H. Heick, *A Propensity to Protect: Margarine and the Rise of Urban Culture in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991) and Ruth Dupre, “‘If It’s Yellow, It Must Be Butter’: Margarine Regulation in North America Since 1886,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (June 1999): 353-371.

²⁵⁰ LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-6, Consumer Branch – Labour Liaison, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, “Report of Visit to Montreal,” November 18, 1942.

been temporarily lifted thanks to First World War shortages. With pressure on the milk supply steadily increasing, murmurs about margarine's possible re-legalization began to be heard.²⁵¹

While the WPTB pondered its course of action, consumers and retailers grew impatient. The *Globe and Mail* quoted one retail representative who stated: "The situation is so rotten I don't want to discuss it. ... It's going to be a repetition of the black market on beef we had a short time ago."²⁵² In the absence of state regulation of the butter supply, retailers who were hard-pressed to secure enough for all their customers again resorted to informal rationing methods. Still, fights and arguments over supplies were common. The manager of the Dominion grocery stores in Niagara told Christine White that "there were rows in the store day after day" and that he "could not keep peace amongst his customers." Adding butter to the ration roster "he would gladly welcome."²⁵³ Dealers wanted to curb "sharpshooters" from swooping down and buying up butter as it became available by requiring purchases of other groceries at the same time, but the WPTB would not hear of it.²⁵⁴ Despite the public education that had been conducted throughout the war, some Canadians still did not grasp the concept of hoarding. One woman in Halifax reportedly asked her stunned grocer for ten pounds of butter so that she could stock up "before the darned hoarders get it all."²⁵⁵ Kate Aitken

²⁵¹ CWM, "Don't Mention It" (Editorial), *Hamilton Review*, November 11, 1942; "In the Spotlight: Ottawa Permitted Margarine During 1917 Butter Famine," *Toronto Telegram*, December 17, 1942.

²⁵² LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-6, Consumer Branch – Labour Liaison, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, "Report of Visit to Montreal," November 18, 1942.

²⁵³ LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-6, Consumer Branch – Labour Liaison, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, "Report re. Niagara Conference, Committee Chairmen," November 28, 1942.

²⁵⁴ "Hint Butter Purchases May Be Permitted Only if Other Goods Bought," *Globe and Mail*, December 2, 1942, p. 5; "Fear Abuses if Butter Sold Only With Other Purchases," *Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1942, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ "Failed to Realize She'd Be Hoarding," *Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1942, p. 16. The story was also related in "Who's a Hoarder?," *Canadian Grocer*, December 15, 1942, p. 41.

reminded her listeners that “The biggest offender in Canada today is the woman who on a pleasant afternoon walks down Queen St. or the Danforth with a shopping bag and drops into store after store buying a pound of butter here, a pound of butter there, finally goes home and says with pride to her family I’ve got 5lbs of butter put away in the refrigerator. She’s taken it from working people who need it.”²⁵⁶ The shortage in Toronto was so acute, reported Aitken, that mere rumours of available butter could send women stampeding from one grocery store to another. In St. Thomas, Ontario, one grocer was slightly injured when 200 women rushed him when he brought out a case of butter.²⁵⁷ Chains such as Loblaw’s appealed for patience, pointing out that whatever butter it could secure was immediately put up for sale, and it was were “not holding any butter in our Warehouse, or any other place of storage.”²⁵⁸

In early December Christine White reported that as tension over the butter situation was coming to a head, it was time the WPTB did something about it:

There is no doubt at all that ordinary people look to the Board to protect our food supplies. They expressed their willingness to submit to any regulations so long as they are convinced that the Board has control of the situation. Statements in the press that butter should be more plentiful and so on merely annoyed people when they find their store without butter. It was these kinds of statements that caused the rioting in Niagara. Housewives did not believe the store managers when they said they had no butter in stock. ... I was present in a store in Niagara when women workers employed in the local cannery protested the lack of butter forcibly. They said they had responded to government appeals to work in canning factories to help the food supply of the country while the Government did not protect their food supply. ‘To hell with working for bread and dripping.’ ...²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ LAC, MG30 D206, vol. 8, file Tamblyn Broadcasts, Sept. 42, “Kate Aitken, Tamblyn Broadcast”, December 4, 1942.

²⁵⁷ CWM, “Manager Hurt in Butter Riot,” *Hamilton Spectator*, December 17, 1942.

²⁵⁸ Ad, Loblaw’s, *Globe and Mail*, December 18, 1942, p. 10.

²⁵⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 550, file 16-3-7-A, vol. 1, Butter Complaints, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, “Report re. Butter Situation,” December 2, 1942.

The mounting pressure finally prompted the WPTB to take action. In a meeting held by the newly formed Consumer Rationing Committee, Taggart outlined the parameters of the butter situation. During the months of October and November, he informed committee members, “65 million pounds of butter had disappeared,” well above the anticipated 46 million pounds. Taggart believed that higher consumption levels could only account for 5 million pounds, which meant “at least 15 million pounds had been hoarded.” The western provinces were not experiencing a shortage, but southern Ontario and Montreal had hardly any butter. Taggart blamed this on price discrepancies – butter was inexorably being shipped to areas of the country where a higher price prevailed. Despite his earlier ‘guarantee’ that rationing would not be needed, the Foods Administrator now suggested that very course. The committee members decided to recommend a weekly ration of 8 ounces for a period of four weeks, whereupon conditions would be reviewed. The decision was also taken to publicly blame the situation on “excessive hoarding” and greater consumption of milk.²⁶⁰ If there was not enough butter to go around, then it was the consuming public’s own fault, not the government’s.

On December 20, 1942, Donald Gordon took to the airwaves to announce the introduction of butter rationing. Effective immediately, Canadians would have to use the extra ‘C’ coupons in their ration books to purchase their weekly 8 ounce butter allotment.²⁶¹ As Taggart and the Consumer Rationing Committee had discussed, Gordon duly placed the blame for butter rationing squarely on the shoulders of “greedy and unscrupulous people,” namely hoarders who had engaged in panic buying of

²⁶⁰ LAC, RG64, vol. 83, file Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix C – Management Committee, Consumer Rationing Committee, “Minutes of the Third Meeting,” December 10, 1942.

²⁶¹ “Butter Rationing Starts Today,” *Globe and Mail*, December 21, 1942, p. 1.

“hysterical” proportions. According to Gordon, “a serious inconvenience has been forced upon the people generally because of the thoughtless and selfish actions of a relatively small section of the community.” The rationing order did not seek to cut consumption; it meant to ensure a more “equitable distribution of available supplies.” “Rationing,” noted the Chairman, “is the only way we can now ensure that decent citizens will obtain a legitimate share of available supplies before the hoarder gobbles them up for his own selfish use.”²⁶²

Reaction to the move was generally favourable, but skeptical eyes were cast upon the WPTB’s attempt to set the consumer up as scapegoat for the butter fiasco. Consumer hoarding may well have played a part in the shortage, but it was not the sole cause. One grocer told Christine White that consumers should not be blamed as “there had not been enough butter coming into the district to permit anyone to hoard.”²⁶³ For the government, however, blaming the consumer was a good way to divert attention from the WPTB’s reluctance to act, and away from Taggart’s rather awkward previous statements dismissing the possibility of butter rationing. The *Globe and Mail*, for one, did not take the bait. “It is impossible for us to pronounce upon the validity of this allegation,” the paper commented:

but if the Government knew of its existence it should have taken drastic measures long ago to check it. The officials evidently were blissfully ignorant about a month ago that any serious crisis about butter was impending, for as recently as Nov. 19 Mr. J.G. Taggart, the food administrator, made an explicit declaration to a convention of dairymen in Toronto that rationing was of butter was not then contemplated.²⁶⁴

²⁶² LAC, RG64, vol. 633, file 550-3-7-0, Butter Rationing, vol. 1, “Butter Rationing: An Announcement by Donald Gordon, Chairman, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board,” December 20, 1942.

²⁶³ LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-6, Consumer Branch – Labour Liaison, Christine White to Byrne Sanders, “Report re. Niagara Conference, Committee Chairmen,” November 28, 1942.

²⁶⁴ “Rationing of Butter” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, December 22, 1942, p. 6.

Gardiner, not surprisingly, was opposed to the move to ration butter and (a bit overdramatically) threatened to quit. The Minister of Agriculture, cognizant that dairy farmers would not like the measure, and wary of any WPTB encroachment upon what he considered 'his' territory, told King that he would "have to consider whether he can stay in the government where one man [Gordon] can decide what is to be done and override the policies of the Dept. of Agriculture."²⁶⁵ King, his mind no doubt filled with grander issues, was "astonished to find in Toronto many families are without butter at all...." In the Prime Minister's opinion, the butter shortage was due to having "too large an army."²⁶⁶

Butter rationing did not magically fill store shelves, but it calmed matters somewhat. Reigned in by the coupon, consumers no longer clamoured for as much as they could get, making grocers' lives a little less stressful, and giving them the opportunity to replenish their stocks. Indeed, immediately after the ration announcement, dealers reported that demand for butter had slackened off. Was this evidence that the WPTB had been partially correct? Were consumers living off the butter they had squirreled away?²⁶⁷ Perhaps, but a better explanation for the decrease in purchases was that rationing had psychologically soothed the public. Even if rationing did not guarantee adequate supply, it was reassuring to know that the existing supply was being parcelled out as fairly as possible.

²⁶⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 633, file 550-3-7-0, Butter Rationing, vol. 1, J.G. Harvey to Donald Gordon, December 23, 1942.

²⁶⁶ LAC, WLM King Diaries, December 18, 1942.

²⁶⁷ "Fair Division Promised, 'Panic Buying' of Butter is Halted by Rationing," *Globe and Mail*, December 22, 1942, p. 4.

Conclusion

By the end of 1942 the war had wrought significant changes on the Canadian food supply and diet as civilians found themselves restricted in the amounts of sugar, tea, coffee and butter that they could purchase, and therefore, consume. Beef, a commodity fundamental to the diets of many Canadians, was in short supply in many parts of the country, prompting speculation that it too would soon be subject to rationing. War and the havoc it played on normal channels of trade and distribution forced Canadians to pay closer attention to their food supplies. The panicky response that greeted the war's outbreak was the first indication that the state would have to intervene to ensure that available food resources were marshalled in an equitable manner, a notion that subsequent events served to substantiate. State intervention was generally accepted, but the extent to which that regulation should go remained contentious, as seen in the debates over rationing and price control methods. Could Canadians be trusted to do the 'right thing' when it came to food? Most upheld the laws governing food; those who did not were in minority. Still, with their self-interest gradually reigned in by the WPTB, it was possible for consumers to obey the rules while maintaining a keen watch over food prices and supplies. Patriotism and obedience coexisted with a willingness to voice concerns and critique the government's performance, should it be perceived as lacking. Meanwhile, the importance of maintaining a proper diet also became, in a sense, 'everybody's business,' as the message was put forth that an optimum war effort rested upon an optimum level of dietary health. Increasing supply problems and the attendant need to introduce stricter control measures only served to increase the importance of proper eating habits.

In general, the consuming public demonstrated a real willingness to abide by the new regulatory protocols that now surrounded food, but at the same time a significant number also exhibited a disturbing tendency to subvert those protocols, whether it was by hoarding scarce foods, patronizing the black market, or by simply failing to adopt a suitably 'wartime' approach to their diets. That these two contradictory mindsets could co-exist within Canadian society illustrates the extent to which the civilian attitude toward the war effort was more complex than previous interpretations would indicate. Indeed, beginning in 1943, a considerable part of the WPTB's task would be to keep enough Canadians committed to upholding ever-stricter food regulations in the face of improving Allied fortunes.

Chapter Five
'Measuring Up to What is Possible':
The Rational Patriotism of Canadian Farmers, 1942-1945

And there are many other contributions the Canadian farmer makes that we would find it difficult to get along without. ... His part in the national economy has been the subject of countless articles and speeches, and this part is acknowledged to be as important in peace time as it is in war time. And so, even if our farmers are not as familiar with a conning tower and a fuselage as they are with farm machinery, they deserve a salute, because they are among the best soldiers Johnny Canuck has. The Plow is the Backbone of a Strong Nation!¹

– *Camrose Canadian*, 1942

Introduction

In 1944 Malcolm MacDonald, the British High Commissioner to Canada made reference to the critical role that food had played over the course of the war. Adequate rations had been crucial in allowing the British people “to keep body and soul together until the forces of freedom all round the world should come to their rescue to help them beat back the Nazi conquerors.”² MacDonald also paid tribute to the fact that much of this food had been grown in Canada. In 1942 alone, Canada supplied 82% of Britain’s imported wheat, 99% of its imported flour, 72% of its imported bacon, and a significant amount of cheese and apples.³ Between 1942 and 1945, Canada’s determined farmers contributed to the Allied cause by setting new wartime production records, while at the same time waging their own sector-specific battles that were primarily a continuation of

¹ “He’s a Farmer By Trade...,” *Camrose Canadian*, March 25, 1942, p. 7.

² Canadian War Museum (CWM), “Canada’s Huge Food Output Helps Win War,” *Financial Post*, May 12, 1944, in *Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War* (hereafter cited as CWM).

³ George Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 108.

those they had been conducting since the start of the war. Their prime objectives continued to be higher incomes, sufficient help, and above all, a voice in the agricultural policy-making process. Farmers, repeatedly told that agriculture was indeed a critical part of Canada's war effort, wanted to see policies that matched the rhetoric. The major obstacle hampering farmers continued to be the labour shortage, which worsened despite government measures intended to alleviate matters. While the economic condition of agriculture was improving, a feeling of general dissatisfaction with the government's handling of food and farm policy settled over the agricultural community, resulting in a push for a complete administrative re-organization. A mini-movement advocating a unified food agency emerged, supported by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). While changes of this magnitude did not occur, the government responded to the growing chorus of complaints by clarifying the increasingly muddled lines of responsibility between the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) and the Department of Agriculture, and two new bodies, an Agricultural Food Board and an Advisory Committee on Agriculture, were formed with significant CFA participation. On the international stage, Canada fought for a stronger voice in inter-Allied food policy as King's government strove to obtain a seat on the newly formed Combined Food Board (CFB). Part of a wider more general desire to extend the nation's influence beyond its borders, this quest was motivated as much by national pride as it was by a practical need to take part in a process that could have a substantial impact on the food supply, both during and after the war, when Canada would be expected to play a considerable role in relief efforts. As the war entered its final stages, farmers and

organized agriculture began to look beyond the conflict to the postwar world, hoping to parlay their wartime contributions into meaningful peacetime influence and benefits.

Canadian farmers approached the end of the war with perhaps an equal measure of trepidation and equanimity, fearful of what economic decontrol might bring, yet hopeful that peace would see no return to the darkness that had marked their fortunes in the harsh prewar years. For its part, the King government understood that farmers needed assurance that war's end would not usher in another disastrous economic collapse as had affected agriculture after the First World War. Called upon during the Great War to increase production for patriotic purposes, emboldened by expanded markets and buoyed by high commodity prices, farmers had invested in more land and more equipment, a boom that continued into the postwar years. When prices fell in 1920, farmers had found themselves unable to finance their debts. With this in mind, both farmers and the state wanted to enact measures that would ease the transition between war and peace and provide some stability for agriculture after the Second World War. Farmers were just as anxious to win the war, and just as willing to work towards that goal as any other segment of Canadian society. This attitude, however, did not blind them to their problems; instead the circumstances of war brought them into sharp relief. Their patriotism was not limited, but it was rational – they would strive to do what was asked of them, but they wanted something in return.

All Aboard the 'Parity Price Special': Farmers Take Their Concerns to Ottawa

As the war entered its latter half, changes seemed to be on the horizon. Japan's December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor had widened the scope of the war and brought in

the United States as an ally. In terms of food and agriculture, Japan's seizure of territories in the Pacific had serious implications by threatening Allied access to sugar, tea, and vegetable oils. The Allied troops sent to the Pacific theatre relied primarily upon the food resources of Australia and New Zealand, greatly reducing the amount that these nations could export to Britain. Canada, already supplying a great deal of Britain's imported food needs, had to increase its contributions even further.⁴ The result was shortages and new restrictions for Canadian consumers. For farmers, facing a growing dearth of labour and machinery, it became a matter of producing much more with increasingly fewer resources. Farming ranks had long called for the state to treat agriculture with the respect it deserved as a crucial 'war industry.' With the war now taking a decidedly ominous turn, it seemed that a real sense of urgency was about to take hold in Ottawa. Journalist Grant Dexter's well-placed government sources told him that the widening war meant that "agricultural policy, it was evident, must take on an emergency character. For the first time real pressure for increased production will be needed."⁵ Whether or not this would translate into more agriculture-friendly labour policies, higher produce prices, or greater farmer participation in policy-making, remained to be seen. The pressure from farmers on Ottawa was not about to let up, and if anything, the expansion of the war would give Canadian agriculture added leverage with which to further their cause.

Throughout the war, farmers did not hesitate to present their demands to the government. Beginning in 1941, the CFA began an annual tradition of submitting a

⁴ R. Warren James, *Wartime Economic Cooperation: A Study of Relations Between Canada and the U.S.* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1949), p. 341.

⁵ Grant Dexter, Memorandum, February 13, 1942, in *Ottawa at War: The Grant Dexter Memoranda, 1939-1945* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1994), p. 277.

brief to the cabinet, outlining its concerns and suggestions as determined by its members during a yearly convention. This approach did not satisfy everyone, however. Western wheat farmers, in the tradition of their more radical forebears, believed that stronger measures would be required to get King's government to respond to their needs. This determination to safeguard their interests became evident in early February 1942 when a Prairie delegation descended upon Ottawa. Dissatisfied with government wheat policy, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool had circulated a petition calling for, among other things, parity prices. The wheat growers, arguing that the government's present policy spelled "economic disaster" for farmers, demanded dollar-a-bushel wheat, a longstanding goal that represented a hefty 30 cent increase over the prevailing 70 cent a bushel level.⁶ They also demanded that price ceilings on farm products be set at or above parity levels and that wheat delivery quotas be "equitable."⁷ The farmers who signed the petition were also asked to provide monetary support (a quarter was the minimum suggested amount) to fund a delegation that would seek an audience with the cabinet.⁸ The effort was impressive. Some 185,000 signatures were gathered along with \$40,000 in donations, and over 400 Prairie farmers accompanied their voluminous petition to Ottawa, rolling into the capital on trains quickly dubbed the "parity price special."⁹

As the Prairie delegates arrived just as the CFA was wrapping up its annual meeting in Ottawa, it added its own, small delegation to the Prairie contingent. When

⁶ "Farmers Are Convinced Policy Revision Near," *Globe and Mail*, February 4, 1942, p. 3; CWM, "Farmers Claim Agriculture Should Be On War Footing," *Hamilton Spectator*, February 2, 1942; C.F. Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain: Government Policy to 1951* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 733.

⁷ Wilson, p. 726.

⁸ William E. Morriss, *Chosen Instrument: A History of the Canadian Wheat Board: The McIvor Years* (Canadian Wheat Board, 1987), p. 136.

⁹ "Farm Delegation Storming Ottawa," *High River Times*, February 5, 1942, p. 1; "Wheat Farmers Invade Ottawa," *Globe and Mail*, February 2, 1942, p. 1.

the delegations and federal officials met face-to-face, James Gardiner smoothly assured the farmers that both he and the government had their best interests in mind, and that a parity price for wheat was indeed the Liberal “long-term objective” as well.¹⁰ The minister discussed each of the petition’s seven points, and presented government positions that were not unduly out of line with the demands of the farmers.¹¹ The delegates themselves were generally quite pleased with the meetings, and according to some reports, were confident that the government would soon be giving due consideration to their case. The CFA’s demands were similar to those of the wheat growers, but were broader in nature, reflecting the Federation’s national position. In its 1942 submission to the cabinet, the CFA drew attention to the inequities that, it argued, still existed within the war effort. It contended that agriculture had done all that had been asked of it and more, “notwithstanding the fact that it is the one war industry that still receives for some of its more important products prices only slightly higher than those that prevailed in the pre-war depression years.”

This was not a new call – farmers had been singing the same refrain since the start of the war. In fact, very little in the CFA’s 1942 submission was different from the

¹⁰ Wilson, p. 733.

¹¹ The seven points read as follows: “1. That the government recognize and accept the principle of parity prices for all agricultural products. 2. That no price ceiling should be established on agricultural commodities below parity levels which may be established by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. 3. That equitable delivery quotas on wheat should be established and continued as long as required. 4. That the initial payment on all wheat delivered to the Wheat Board should be not less than \$1.00 per bushel, basis 1 Northern in store Fort William, and that the final settlement should be made on the basis of parity prices above referred to. 5. That the carryover of wheat as at 31st July, 1941, should be regarded as a national emergency war reserve, and that all sales made by the Wheat Board after 31st July, 1941, should be credited to the current season’s deliveries. 6. That suitable amendments should be introduced to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act so that an adequate and practical crop insurance scheme may be established irrespective of market prices prevailing or the number of townships suffering crop failure. 7. That since the future of agricultural industry depends largely on our ability a) to conserve the fertility of our soil; b) to establish production and marketing methods which while maintaining continuity of supplies will also prevent avoiding surpluses, and since these objectives may involve an increasing degree of control and regulations, including international agreement, such changes should be made in our agricultural policy as may be necessary to achieve these objectives.” See Wilson, p. 726.

previous year's brief, an indication, perhaps, of the manner in which the government had (mis)handled agriculture in the intervening year. There were calls for adjusting the price of milk, establishing a Board of Live Stock Commissioners and for dollar-a-bushel wheat. Agriculture, the CFA again argued, had to be treated the same as any other war industry, "with definite production goals set as definitely and as far in advance as possible, with an adequate quota of skilled labour and with sufficient farm incomes assured to hold and to pay such skilled help and to maintain farm equipment." The serious shortfall in farm labour was now the dominant concern, and the CFA clearly placed the fault on Ottawa's shoulders, as it had "not generally recognized that skilled help is as indispensable on the farm as in the machine shop."¹² At its annual convention, Herbert Hannam had stated that farm labour was "one of Canada's major war problems," a reality that officials in Ottawa still did not appreciate.¹³ Quebec Premier Adélard Godbout had already reiterated his earlier concerns over farm labour, rightly arguing that "tilling the soil could, in very large measure, be considered war work..."¹⁴

The continuing exodus of skilled farm help, farmers argued, had to be stemmed by effective government intervention, ideally as part of an overall manpower scheme that would balance the labour needs of all sectors of the war effort. On their own, farmers simply could not compete with the higher wages offered by industry, and the backbreaking nature of farm work certainly did not help. The long hours, physical toil, and insufficient pay served only to increase the attractiveness of other types of

¹² Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG28 I66, (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), vol. 11, file Annual Meeting 1942, Resolutions and Registrations, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, "Submission to the Prime Minister of Canada and Members of the Government," February 1942.

¹³ Agnes Macphail, "Part Played By Farmers in War Told," *Globe and Mail*, January 29, 1942, p. 13.

¹⁴ "Godbout Sees Lack of Farm Labor; Urges Easing of Farm Recruiting," *Montreal Gazette*, January 20, 1942, p. 11.

employment. As one hired man put it, no one “after, say, forking hay or grain all day in a scorching sun, should have to milk seven or eight cows. It is simply lowering man to the level of the – I was going to say horse, but the farmer does not work his horse more than ten hours daily.”¹⁵ Nor could farmers counter the patriotic and heroic pull of military service. Temporary or unskilled help such as that offered by urban volunteers simply could not replace the loss of experienced hands to either the armed forces or industry. Hannam and the farmers he represented understood that agriculture had to share the country’s labour pool, but they still wanted a fair allocation of hands “consistent with a balanced allotment of Canada’s available manpower.”¹⁶ Thus, the association urged more substantial military training postponements for farm hands, along with farmer representation on the boards deciding these matters.¹⁷

The courteous nature of the assembled farm delegation, plus the government’s pacifying response, served to defuse some of the tension that had built up between western farmers and Ottawa. Agnes Macphail, writing in her *Globe and Mail* column, thought that the federal government was more open to consultation with farmers than ever before.¹⁸ But not all government voices were conciliatory in the wake of the Ottawa meetings. Food Administrator J.G. Taggart took issue with the CFA’s call for equality of sacrifice across Canada’s economic spectrum. Bluntly telling the farmers they should not expect to get higher prices until war’s end, he informed them that the application of the price ceiling had in fact been deliberately delayed by the WPTB to

¹⁵ “Hired Man States Views on Farm Work” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, January 7, 1942, p. 6.

¹⁶ CWM, “Asks Division of Manpower in Three Ways,” *Globe and Mail*, January 29, 1942.

¹⁷ Other groups, such as the Maritime Federation of Agriculture, had already put forth requests to have agricultural representatives sit on military service boards. LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 11, file Annual Meeting 1942, Resolutions and Registrations, Roy Grant, Maritime Federation of Agriculture, to W.E. Haskins, CFA, December 18, 1941.

¹⁸ Agnes Macphail, “Sees Ottawa Giving Heed to Farmers,” *Globe and Mail*, February 7, 1942, p. 13.

allow farm prices “to rise to something like parity.” To ask for more would be inappropriate. Continuing with his tough line, Taggart also told farmers that war made it frankly impossible to “divide the burdens on an equitable basis,” and that “[i]f we wait for the day when we have equality of sacrifice, then we’ll wait for a long, long time to pursue this war to a successful conclusion.”¹⁹ His remarks may have resonated with some, but others believed that it was only a matter of time before Ottawa granted the farmers their due if only to avoid the unpleasant consequences that continued neglect would bring. One paper in Claresholm, Alberta, pragmatically observed that “ultimately the farmer is going to get an even break for his efforts or there will be a lot of political gut-cleanin.”²⁰

In Parliament some of that ‘gut-cleanin’ had already begun, as those opposed to the government’s handling of agriculture seized on the moment. Much of the criticism came from the progressive members of Parliament, such as CCF M.P. Percy Wright who, like Gardiner, was also a Saskatchewan farmer. Wright assailed the King government’s ostensibly *ad hoc* approach to farm questions. “This government,” he argued, “instead of developing a balanced, equitable programme for agriculture during the war, has simply drifted along, trying to deal with each separate situation as it arose.” The labour shortage was a visible consequence of that inaction. In order to produce more food for Britain, Wright advocated “some form of selective service draft.”²¹ A few days later Dorise Nielsen, the United Progressive M.P. for North Battleford, also berated the government for its lacklustre performance. Despite the meetings and Gardiner’s soothing words, in Nielsen’s estimation it did “not seem that the delegation

¹⁹ “Can’t Change Prices Rules, Says Taggart,” *Globe and Mail*, February 13, 1942, p. 4.

²⁰ “Current Comment,” *Claresholm Local Press*, February 5, 1942, p. 3.

²¹ *Debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. 1, 3-19, February 3, 1942, p. 271.

which came to Ottawa has received a great deal of attention.” She strongly opposed the idea (as alluded to by Taggart) that farmers wanted to profit from the war (“never was a greater lie spoken”), and like Wright called for better central planning. “I know that the Minister of Agriculture has a good head on him,” Neilson quipped. “I would not deny it; he must have, to be able to fool the farmers all these years and get away with it.” The farmers and their representatives had spoken. It would now be up to the government to respond.

‘On to the Land’: Coping With the Farm Labour Crisis

In answering the charges, the government confessed some missteps in the area of farm labour. Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston, admitting in Parliament that too many farm workers had left for other wartime occupations, confessed effective measures had not yet been implemented to address the resulting labour shortfall.²² J.T. Thorson, the Minister of National War Services, presented an Order-in-Council providing that all War Service Boards evaluating military training postponement requests would in future include a farm representative.²³ This was positive news for agriculture, but it did not mean that farms would be completely off limits when it came to recruiting. “We still need and expect young men from the farms for our fighting forces. No better fighting men can be found,” argued Ralston.²⁴ Few farmers could disagree with that assessment. To be fair, they were not asking that *all* farm workers should be untouched, but rather that effective manpower controls should be employed to make certain that producers had enough skilled help left to continue with their part of the war effort. It was a difficult

²² Ibid, February 10, 1942, pp. 448, 464-5.

²³ “Training Plan Move Will Protect Farms,” *Globe and Mail*, February 11, 1942, p. 21.

²⁴ *Debates of the House of Commons*, February 10, 1942, p. 448.

problem, and one the government sought to address as it drew up its new manpower mobilization plan.²⁵ As part of this process, the Department of Agriculture mailed out questionnaires to selected farmers in order to obtain a representative sample that would paint a clearer picture of the labour problem facing farmers.²⁶ Respondents were asked to supply information as to the amount of land they were cultivating as well as the types of products raised on their farm. They were also asked for details about the people who worked on the farm, including members of the farmer's family along with any outside help, and the amount of wages paid out. Finally, farmers were asked if they were having trouble securing workers, along with any comments they had about the situation.²⁷

The results of the survey drew a bleak picture. The amount of "male family help" on farms had decreased by 12% in the past year alone, while the amount of hired help had increased, meaning that the amount of money farmers were spending on wages was rising, adding to the overall costs of production and cutting into the farmer's bottom line. Average monthly farm wages without board, \$40 in 1939, had risen to \$65 by 1942 and would reach \$97 by 1945.²⁸ The report also noted that between February and March 1942 some 60% of respondents who were looking to hire were having problems doing so either because no help was available or because they could not meet the

²⁵ "Canada Mobilizes Labor for War," *Globe and Mail*, March 25, 1942, p. 1.

²⁶ LAC, RG17, (Agriculture), vol. 3701, file W-5-29 197, Farm News – Press and Publicity – 1942, "Farm News," February 13, 1942.

²⁷ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour in Wartime, 1941-42, "Department of Agriculture, Farm Labour Questionnaire."

²⁸ "Monthly Wages without Board, for Male Farm Labour, Canada and by Region and Province, 1909 to 1974," *Historical Statistics of Canada*, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectiona/toc.htm>.

prevailing salary rates.²⁹ Later estimates suggested that between September 1939 and March 1942 farms in Canada had lost approximately 300,000 males and 100,000 females.³⁰ A later farm labour survey, this one conducted by Ontario, unearthed a similar situation; 49% of respondents were “without adequate help” while 42% said that they did not have enough labour to match their 1941 output.³¹ The situation was clear. Farmers, pressed by circumstances to turn out more, had to do so with a seriously depleted and increasingly expensive labour pool.

On March 24, 1942 the government finally announced its new manpower scheme, the National Selective Service (NSS) programme.³² Among the new regulations were several that would have a direct and, hopefully beneficial effect on agriculture. The most significant move for farmers was the government’s introduction of the *Stabilization of Employment in Agriculture* regulations, which effectively froze agricultural workers to the farm sector. Any male farm worker who wanted to take a job outside of agriculture now required special permission to do so. They did not need a permit to move to a new job on another farm.³³ In addition, military training exemptions would be granted to “essential” agricultural workers called up under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA).³⁴ A National Selective Service Advisory Board would be set up, which would, King promised, include a representative

²⁹ *Report of the Minister of Agriculture for the Dominion of Canada for the Year Ended March 31, 1942* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1942), p. 130. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan registered the largest drop in farm help.

³⁰ George Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 178.

³¹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3632, file N-1-30, Effect of War on Agriculture – Economics Division, “Circular Letter from P.M. Dewar to All Agricultural Representatives,” June 4, 1942.

³² For information on the NSS policies in general see Arthur MacNamara, “Administering Manpower in Canada,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (May 1943): 57-70, and Michael D. Stevenson, *Canada’s Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources in World War II* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).

³³ Stevenson, pp. 27-28.

³⁴ “Canada Mobilizes Labor for War,” *Globe and Mail*, March 25, 1942, p.1.

from “the agricultural community.”³⁵ The measures looked good on paper, but it remained to be seen just how these new regulations would work in practice. Still, as Britnell and Fowke observed, the new regulations were significant in that they constituted the first “formal recognition of the necessity of stopping the mass migration of workers from Canadian farms.”³⁶ The CFA was pleased with the announcement, along with the mounting seriousness with which agriculture was apparently being treated by the government, a change it ‘modestly’ attributed to its own lobbying efforts. “The pronouncement that agriculture is a War Service, and the provisions made to keep labour on the farms,” the CFA stated, “is so much in accordance with the representations made by the Federation that we are entitled to believe that our National Organization played an important part in securing this recognition of the position of Agriculture in the Nation’s War effort.”³⁷

Almost immediately Labour Minister Humphrey Mitchell had to correct the misperception that farm workers were now ineligible for military service.³⁸ He explained that farmers had not received a blanket or automatic exemption from home defence duties would still have to apply, formally, for postponements. When granted, the deferments were only temporary, and some military service boards did not always follow the new guidelines. In August 1942 Grant Dexter learned that there had been “fairly wide variations in the rulings of the local boards and there is no appeal body. The Saskatchewan board is the worst. This board refuses to carry through the order-in-

³⁵ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour in Wartime, 1941-42, “CFA – Mobilization of Manpower,” March 26, 1942.

³⁶ Britnell and Fowke, p. 178.

³⁷ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour in Wartime, “CFA, Mobilization of Manpower,” March 26, 1942.

³⁸ “Farm Workers Not Exempt From Service,” *Globe and Mail*, April 2, 1942, p. 12.

council freezing farmers. It sends the farm boys along with others into the army.”³⁹ If true, the repercussions could be serious as the lack of definite long-term postponements or exemptions could adversely effect agricultural production. Farmers expressed reluctance to expand their operations for fear that they would not have enough help in the future, this being part of the ‘hidden cost’ of the farm labour shortage, a point that was stressed at an ASB meeting in November 1942:

Mr. Wilson stated farm boys were being called up and were getting deferment for short periods. This is resulting in reduction of farm production and the fathers of these boys will not break new land or take on production of new livestock because they are afraid their sons will have to go to the army at the end of 1, 2, or 3 months. Those boys who have been called and whose call has been postponed cannot settle down to farm work and are, therefore, not doing much on the farm and nothing in the army. It is suggested that postponement should be for full crop years. This matter is very important at the present time with hog producers because this is the breeding season.⁴⁰

Losing men to home defence training, while not the biggest drain on farm labour, was still an added burden that did not make agricultural planning any easier. As Ken Taylor, then serving as the WPTB’s Secretary, later noted, “farm labour turnover was extremely high making it difficult to plan the farm program for the year. In relation to demand the supply of farm machinery was short, and shortages of lumber, repair parts or milk cans tended to breed an irritated frustration.”⁴¹

This lack of farm machinery and basic equipment could have a deleterious effect on production. In order to meet the needs of munitions production many farm equipment firms had turned all or almost all of their facilities over to the manufacture of

³⁹ Dexter, pp. 358-359.

⁴⁰ LAC, RG17, vol. 3633, file N-1-39, Agricultural Supplies Board Meeting, “Points Raised During Visit of Advisory Committee to the Bacon Board,” November 10, 1942.

⁴¹ Ken Taylor, “Canadian War-Time Price Controls, 1941-6,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 1947), p. 94.

war *matériel*.⁴² Massey-Harris, for one, had been producing aircraft parts and shells since December 1939.⁴³ Thus, new farm machinery was scarce just at the moment when further mechanization would have helped offset the labour shortage. Repairing older equipment was encouraged, but the adverse economic conditions of the 1930s meant that many farmers had entered the war with sub-par machinery.⁴⁴ The CFA reacted strongly when, along with limits established in 1942 over the amount of farm equipment and parts to be manufactured, the following year brought a federal decree that no steel would be allocated for the manufacture of new farm equipment. In a letter to Minister of Munitions and Supply C.D. Howe protesting the move, CFA Secretary W.E. Haskins argued that as farmers were being asked to carry out “the biggest programme of food production that any people of any number have ever attempted ... “a minimum supply of farm machinery” was crucial. “The labour situation,” Haskins went on, “is such that farmers in their late 50s, 60s, and even in their 70s are working long hours to produce the volume of foodstuffs required. They are being assisted by their wives and daughters, and they cannot produce the increased volume now required, or extend it in 1943, by man-power alone.” Haskins stressed that their demand for more machinery was not a ‘selfish claim’ – it was merely a request to be supplied with the tools needed to perform the job they had been asked to do.⁴⁵ Howe’s dismissive reply to the CFA was terse. The Minister stated that since Canada obtained a third of its steel supply from the United States, the nation had to limit the use of steel “for other than war purposes.”⁴⁶ Howe

⁴² “Farm Implement Making Becomes a Lost Trade,” *Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1942, p. 18.

⁴³ Merrill Denison, *Harvest Triumphant: The Story of Massey-Harris* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1948), p. 309.

⁴⁴ Britnell and Fowke, p. 184.

⁴⁵ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Machinery, 1942, W.E. Haskins to C.D. Howe, April 17, 1942.

⁴⁶ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Machinery, 1942, C.D. Howe to W.E. Haskins, April 18, 1942.

also told the CFA that it could best serve everyone's interest by telling the farmers that they must conserve the equipment they already owned; in short, farmers would simply have to make do for the duration. Thus, for farmers, the message coming from the government was as contradictory as ever. Farm labourers now needed permission to leave the agricultural sector, but this did nothing to address the shortage that already existed. New military training guidelines for farmers had been announced, but the postponements they granted were not lengthy enough, and in some cases were not even granted at all. Urged to produce more despite the labour shortfall, farmers were told to put up with inadequate machinery as steel could not be spared for 'non-war' equipment. The frustrating ambiguity of the situation remained – did the government see food production as a matter of national urgency or not?

'Wheat Will Not Win the War'

The confusing signals coming from Ottawa were compounded by the uncertainty surrounding the government's wheat policy. By 1942 it was clear that the First World War slogan 'Wheat Will Win the War' was singularly inappropriate for the current conflict. The government's wheat reduction policy had succeeded in cutting acreage sown by almost a quarter, but Canada's wheat carryover stubbornly persisted. In Britain a campaign to increase the domestic production of wheat engendered good results, reducing the amount the British needed to import.⁴⁷ In fact, during the war the global wheat supply was never really in much danger, as it was, in the words of historian R.J.

⁴⁷ Francis Hedley Auld, *Canadian Agriculture and World War II: A History of the Wartime Activities of the Canadian Department of Agriculture and its Wartime Boards and Agencies* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1953), p. 1. Between 1939 and 1944, British wheat growers increased their production by 91%. See Alan F. Wilt, *Food for War: Agriculture and Rearmament in Britain before the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 224.

Hammond, “the last food” to feel the pinch of scarcity.⁴⁸ Given these circumstances, the continued agitation for a ‘fair’ (i.e. higher) wheat price, was, from a policy standpoint, impossible. The reasons for this lay not only in supply levels or in reduced demand but in the fact that the primary focus of Canada’s agricultural war effort was not wheat. Canadian food production, as in the First World War, was geared towards filling British needs. But unlike the First World War, when Britain’s food program had been dubbed the “breadstuffs policy” because of its emphasis on wheat, bread, and grains, protein was now the focus of Britain’s latest wartime feeding strategy. Meat and other animal by-products now made up the bulk of Britain’s Canadian shopping list. Filling those demands meant that farmers had to grow *less* wheat and *more* feed grains in order to meet expanded live stock production, and this was to be encouraged primarily by keeping wheat prices low.⁴⁹ There was the consumer side to consider as well, as any increase in the price of wheat could have an unwelcome inflationary effect, given its wide use. With this in mind, Donald Gordon and WPTB officials fought to keep wheat prices at a lower level even if this meant subsidizing wheat growers out of the government’s own pocket.⁵⁰

Pressure from wheat farmers and their advocates was heavy. In addition to the large delegation that had invaded Ottawa in early February, Saskatchewan’s Liberal M.P.s threatened King with a caucus revolt if the wheat price was not increased. The province’s Liberal premier, W.J. Patterson, went to Ottawa with the dire news that a CCF victory in Saskatchewan would be the outcome if the price of wheat was not

⁴⁸ R.J. Hammond, *Food: Volume One: The Growth of Policy* (London: HMSO, 1951), p. 347.

⁴⁹ Dexter, p. 277.

⁵⁰ LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Diaries, February 23, 1942.

substantially boosted.⁵¹ After much wrangling, the Cabinet Wheat Committee arrived at a compromise that raised the price paid for wheat to 90 cents a bushel. Gordon also received assurances that consumers would not be affected by the increase as the Wheat Board would sell wheat for domestic use at prices well within the price ceiling regulations.⁵² In addition to the 20 cents per bushel increase, the total amount of wheat that the Canadian Wheat Board would purchase from growers would go up to 280,000,000 bushels. Wheat acreage reduction payments would also continue, a measure primarily aimed at those who could not easily diversify their production. A range of attractive measures were announced in the hopes of increasing the supply of feed grains and flax – the latter now desperately needed with Japan’s seizure of flax-growing regions in Asia. Floor prices were introduced for barley and oats, while farmers who grew flax would receive a generous fixed price of \$2.25 a bushel. The bonus to be paid for summer fallow was cut in half to further encourage the sowing of feed grains.⁵³

The King government was finally learning that farmers were like any other economic actor. An appeal to self-interest – to a sort of ‘rational patriotism’ – would likely net greater results than merely relying on moral suasion and jingoistic platitudes. The *Cardston News* (Alberta) alluded to this when it observed that the government had finally made it “not only patriotic but profitable” to change farming practices to meet war needs.⁵⁴ It was also a complete reversal of the agricultural needs of the First World War when farmers had simply been called upon to produce ‘more of the same.’ This

⁵¹ “Increased Wheat Price Sequel to Revolt Threat,” *Globe and Mail*, March 10, 1942, p. 1.

⁵² Wilson, pp. 736, 738.

⁵³ Britnell and Fowke, p. 208; “Ottawa Spotlight: The Grain Policy,” *Camrose Canadian*, March 18, 1942, p. 1.

⁵⁴ “More Barley Needed in 1942” (Editorial), *Cardston News*, April 7, 1942, p. 4.

point was driven home by Donald Gordon in April 1942, when he told farmers at the Canadian Club of Winnipeg that “wheat is not needed to help win this war – but practically anything else the west can grow or produce is needed.”⁵⁵

Critical voices were raised, some grounded in regional jealousies. Ontario M.P.s blasted what they termed “handouts” to Prairie farmers.⁵⁶ Ontario Conservative leader George Drew, who accused Gordon of “talking through his hat,” assailed the WPTB Chairman’s “amazing speech.”⁵⁷ Regional posturing aside, the government’s programme was a pragmatic response to war needs. The West was the base upon which Canada’s expanded livestock production would rest, and meat was now the undisputed focus of Canada’s agricultural war effort. Overall, it was a fair package that managed to balance the needs of the war effort with the needs of farmers and consumers. By making it attractive to produce certain commodities and thus unattractive to stick to the same old peacetime production modes, the government was finally channeling farmers’ financial self-interest to the service of war. Evidence that these changes to Canadian wheat policy were successful can be found in two places: coarse grain and hog production rose significantly; and in the fact that the impetus for significant policy alteration was far less pronounced in subsequent war years.⁵⁸

The most prominent wheat policy developments in the latter war years came in September 1943 when the government designated the Canadian Wheat Board as the sole buyer of wheat grown in Canada, raised the price for Number 1 Northern wheat to \$1.25

⁵⁵ “‘Wheat is Not Needed to Help Win the War,’ Gordon Tells Farmers,” *Globe and Mail*, April 14, 1942, p. 13.

⁵⁶ “Slim Audience Hears M.P.’s On Grain Bills,” *Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1942, p. 3.

⁵⁷ “Drew Attacks Gordon Speech About Wheat,” *Globe and Mail*, April 15, 1942, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Oat production increased from 384 million bushels in 1939 to 641 million in 1942, and barley more than doubled, going from 103 million bushels in 1939 to 256 million 1942. See *Canada: Production, Trade and Prices for Principal Agricultural Products, 1925-1958* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1959), pp. 4-7.

per bushel, and closed the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. While the machinations behind these moves were complex, the fundamental motive was connected to a strong revival of demand for wheat from the United States where a serious shortage of feed grains that threatened livestock production. American quota limits on Canadian wheat imports were lifted in April, which greatly enlarged the available market. While this would not have ordinarily been a bad development, crop forecasts in both countries were not good, presenting the very real possibility that grain prices could skyrocket. Prices did advance far beyond what the Wheat Board was authorized to pay, meaning that it was able to buy very little, a fact that portended serious consequences for Canada's wheat sales to Britain. In addition, there was also the general harm that inflated wheat prices could do to the price ceiling.⁵⁹ It was clear that the private wheat trade in Canada had to be suspended, but Gardiner annoyed Finance Minister J.L. Ilsley by employing a variety of tactics to delay this to allow the price to rise even further.⁶⁰ Despite a longstanding dislike of the Wheat Board, King's government finally granted it a monopoly on wheat marketing in Canada in the early fall of 1943, a victory for farmers who had been urging the "orderly marketing" of wheat.⁶¹ Wheat acreage reduction payments were discontinued in 1944, and delivery quota limits were eased. With both prices and demand improving, growers returned millions of acres to wheat, although the days of oversized wheat yields were over.⁶²

⁵⁹ Britnell and Fowke, pp. 213-214; J.F. Booth, "The Canadian Agricultural Price Support Program," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (August 1951), p. 337; see also Robert Ankli and Gregory Owen, "The Decline of the Winnipeg Futures Market," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January 1982), pp. 277-278.

⁶⁰ Morriss, p. 142.

⁶¹ Robert Irwin, "Farmers and 'Orderly Marketing': The Making of the Canadian Wheat Board," *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 2001), p. 102.

⁶² Wilson, pp. 804-808; Britnell and Fowke, p. 216.

A 'Complete Divorce of Understanding': Ottawa's Beef War



Globe and Mail, September 24, 1942

As the government wrestled with wheat policy, another struggle was shaping up between Donald Gordon and the WPTB on one side and James Gardiner and Canada's beef farmers on the other.⁶³ As noted in Chapter Two, a beef shortage had developed as Canadian farmers had taken advantage of the higher American prices and exported a large number of cattle to the U.S. Further, the price ceiling meant that as packers had to sell to customers at the rates that had prevailed in October 1941, some declined to sell to those whose fixed buying price was too low. A further reason for the squeeze in beef was the fact that consumers were being asked to consume less pork so that overseas

⁶³ An excellent account of this quarrel and its ramifications can be found in Christopher Robb Waddell, "The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War II," Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, 1981.

contracts could be fulfilled.⁶⁴ This all spelled trouble at a time when busy Canadians across the country were eating more meat, and in particular, more beef. Therefore, the government had to make sure that the beef supply was sufficient to meet domestic needs. Behind closed doors, the cabinet and the WPTB considered various problematic ways of addressing this challenge. The price ceiling on beef could be lifted or increased, but as this could have dire consequences for the WPTB's whole range of economic controls, Gordon would have none of it. The government could directly subsidize beef farmers, making it worthwhile for them to sell their cattle within Canada, or it could simply bar them from selling it in the U.S.⁶⁵ The prospect of federal authorities clamping down on cattle exports to America was not looked upon kindly by beef farmers who instead demanded that the WPTB raise the beef ceiling.⁶⁶ The ever-protective CFA, seeing that the *status quo* favoured the farmer, was particularly insistent that the movement of livestock from Canada to the U.S. not be unduly hampered.⁶⁷ Having fought hard for admittance into the American market, the CFA and Canadian farmers were loath to see anything jeopardize that profitable access. Haskins argued that the beef problem would be resolved if farmers simply received two cents more a pound.⁶⁸ Hannam agreed. Positing that the current supply problems were transitory and would work themselves out, he proposed a one cent per pound increase in the ceiling price for beef which would translate into a two cents a pound increase for the farmer.

⁶⁴ Max Foran, "The Price of Patriotism: Alberta Cattlemen and the Loss of the American Market, 1942-48," *Great Plains Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 2001), p. 19.

⁶⁵ "Can Ottawa Hold Beef Under American Prices?," *Globe and Mail*, March 27, 1942, p. 18; "Meat Consumed by Canadians Gains Sharply," *Globe and Mail*, October 20, 1942, p. 17; "All-Canada Food Prices Given Lift," *Globe and Mail*, February 6, 1941, p. 16; CWM, "Cattle Prices and Price Control" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, April 8, 1942.

⁶⁶ "Beef Embargo Held 'Mistake,'" *Globe and Mail*, April 16, 1942, p. 4.

⁶⁷ CWM, "'Beefs' About Beef Coming Up in House," *Toronto Star*, April 18, 1942.

⁶⁸ "Sees Beef Shortage Solved If Farmers' Prices Raised," *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1942, p. 3.

With both sides poised to dig in their heels on this issue, the conditions were ripe for a titanic clash between Gordon and Gardiner. Gordon, with the overall economy in mind and anxious to maintain the price ceiling, wanted to curb cattle exports and was busily laying the groundwork for meat rationing, two measures that Gardiner firmly opposed.⁶⁹ As always, the truculent minister pushed for higher prices, arguing that this would stimulate production. Moreover, like the CFA, under no circumstances did he want to endanger cattle exports to the U.S. Gardiner and the CFA had a valid point. If the price being paid in Canada met or exceeded the American price, farmers would not need to ship their cattle south – they would remain in Canada and the beef supply would be adequate. But Gordon was also right to be wary for unless this was done by means of a government subsidy, consumer prices for beef would almost certainly rise.

In May the WPTB presented measures designed to maintain access to the American market, ensure higher prices for farmers, and generate sufficient domestic beef supplies. The WPTB already had a compensatory agency at its disposal, the Commodity Prices Stabilization Corporation (CPSC), that had applied subsidies to various products such as milk and flour.⁷⁰ In Spring 1942 the Board established a new CPSC subsidiary, the Wartime Food Corporation (WFC), to buy all the beef cattle needed to adequately supply the domestic market, by paying producers the price they would have received in the U.S. The Corporation would then sell that beef to packers (or the military) at a price that would not break the price ceiling and absorb the loss.⁷¹ To ensure that this scheme would work, all cattle exporters had to take out a license with

⁶⁹ Joseph Schull, *The Great Scot: A Biography of Donald Gordon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), p. 70.

⁷⁰ Auld, p. 12.

⁷¹ Foran, "The Price of Patriotism," pp. 19-20. According to Britnell and Fowke, the total loss amounted to \$832,282. See *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace*, p. 264.

the Food Corporation by June 15, 1942.⁷² Canada was divided up into 15 different price ‘zones,’ and the ceiling price was raised slightly, though as the WPTB noted, consumers would probably not detect this since many butchers had already broken the price ceiling.⁷³ The government believed that these procedures would effectively balance the interests of all who had a stake in the beef industry, from producer on down to consumer.

The beef shortage eased somewhat over the summer, but re-emerged in August with a vengeance, prompting the WPTB to assume “rigid control” over the beef supply.⁷⁴ The WFC had ceased to offer the U.S. export price on beef as the quarterly amount of cattle allowed to enter the U.S. under the quota system had been reached; henceforth the WFC would pay the ceiling price instead.⁷⁵ Beef producers, unimpressed with the low seasonal ceiling prices set for beef, held their cattle back from the market, waiting for exports to the U.S. to resume in October when the quota was again open to them. As a result, very little beef was making its way into butcher shops. The government thus decided to expand the WFC’s power and scope, to the extent that it became the only beef exporting agency in the country; farmers could no longer privately export their cattle. Technically, the U.S. market remained open to Canadian cattle, but in practice the system created an embargo. Farm reaction was predictably angry. W.B. Bryce, President of the Manitoba Federation of Agriculture, complained that it was now “just a packers’ market” and that “the farmer will be worse off.”⁷⁶ The Ontario

⁷² “Board Acts to Protect Beef Supply,” *Globe and Mail*, May 21, 1942, pp. 1, 2.

⁷³ CWM, “Meat Cost to Consumer May Not Appear Higher as Ceiling Already Broken,” *Toronto Telegram*, May 29, 1942.

⁷⁴ “Ottawa Acts to Meet ‘Acute’ Shortage of Beef Cattle,” *Globe and Mail*, September 4, 1942, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Foran, “The Price of Patriotism,” p. 20.

⁷⁶ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Beef Cattle, 1942-43, W.B. Bryce to W.E. Haskins, September 9, 1942.

Federation of Agriculture “voiced extreme disapproval” over the government’s claim to have consulted with producers on this drastic shift in policy.⁷⁷ The complaints were in vain: the border effectively remained closed to Canadian cattle exports.⁷⁸

Gardiner sent Gordon into a tizzy by openly contradicting the WPTB’s claims at a press conference. Gardiner stated that according to his figures, there was in fact no “widespread” beef shortage in Canada. Any difficulties were local in nature, adding that “the emphasis being placed on this limited shortage [was] not fair to farmers.”⁷⁹

Gardiner also refuted the charge that farmers were holding their cattle back until the next U.S. quota period opened, since the present quarter’s quota had not in fact been filled. Farmers were not selling because they were busy fattening up their cattle on feed, which was currently plentiful. If Canadians would accept less beef now, there would be an abundance of better quality beef next spring. It was not beneficial for farmers to sell underweight cattle to satisfy current consumer demand, Gardiner argued, and (perhaps taking it a little too far) that eating less meat for a while would actually be good for Canadians’ health. Farmers deserved some leeway in this matter for they “had done as a good war job as any producer in Canada since the war started and [have] had less financial consideration than any other.”⁸⁰ If the country wanted more beef now, he said, then it should be willing to pay a premium for it. His statements did not resound well

⁷⁷ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Beef Cattle, 1942-43, “Ontario Federation of Agriculture,” September 4, 1942.

⁷⁸ Britnell and Fowke, p. 265.

⁷⁹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Beef Cattle, 1942-43, “Press Statement of Hon. James G. Gardiner,” September 10, 1942.

⁸⁰ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Beef Cattle, 1942-43, “Press Statement of Hon. James G. Gardiner,” September 10, 1942.

with the non-farm population who found the idea that there was no beef shortage rudely inconsistent with their reality.⁸¹

A fortnight later Gordon made his own statements on the beef shortage, statements that contradicted Gardiner's claims, a fact that did not escape notice. Gordon essentially told farmers that the beef shortage was their fault. Instead of spending extra time fattening cattle, Gordon wanted farmers to sell them off for slaughter as soon as possible for withholding them from the market would not result in higher profits. In an almost bullying tone, the WPTB Chairman warned farmers of the consequences that might be imposed if they continued to hold out. Beef prices, he stated unequivocally, would not only remain as is, but the Board was also considering beef rationing.⁸² How would such a position go over with producers? The *Toronto Telegram* was none too optimistic, noting that "the farmer is an individualist and he will not be driven – not in these times, anyway, when he is short handed."⁸³ Farmers were also pragmatic about their economic survival – it was not in their interest to sell their beef, so they did not, and it would not serve the war effort if they could not afford to continue farming. Gordon's threats fell on deaf ears, and the domestic beef supply remained tight.

Ilsey and King were justifiably upset that the fight over beef had devolved into a display of one-upmanship; King in particular rued the fact that the two combatants were using the newspapers as platforms for their positions.⁸⁴ The press had a field day with the feud. One editorial cartoon, creatively entitled "MOOOO!," depicted Gordon and a

⁸¹ See CWM, "Maintenance of Beef Supply Muddled by Ottawa" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, September 14, 1942; "Long on Talk, Short on Action" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 15, 1942, p. 6.

⁸² "Gordon, Gardiner Differ on How to Handle Beef," *Globe and Mail*, September 22, 1942, p. 3.

⁸³ CWM, "Where Are You Going, Mr. Donald Gordon?" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, September 22, 1942.

⁸⁴ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 24, 1942.

much smaller Gardiner engaged in a tug-of-war over a rather distressed cow bearing the label “The Beef Problem.”⁸⁵ The row was regrettable, a “disturbing development” that, according to the *Globe and Mail*, only served to hurt the nation’s efforts to win the war.⁸⁶ Clearly, the situation needed to be defused. On September 24, Gordon met with the cabinet where the beef issue was hashed out. King feared the two sides would get “very heated,” and was pleased when this did not occur. A compromise was reached in the form of an increase in wholesale beef prices that, it was hoped, would not have an adverse effect on the consumer price.⁸⁷ The WPTB also made it known that it would tolerate no undue increases in beef’s retail price, and would take steps to ensure that this did not occur.

Farmers remained unimpressed. Thanks to the large amount of feed grain available, they continued to fatten up their cattle in 1943, resulting in consumer meat rationing and a rather significant black market in beef. In 1944 farmers finally began to sell off their cattle in large numbers, a move that has been partly attributed to the labour shortage – they simply had to cut their stock in order to reduce their pressing workload.⁸⁸ The record-setting glut of meat that resulted was big enough to end meat rationing, at least temporarily, and to fill the first British beef contract, a two-year deal announced in Summer 1944. The opening of the British market to a considerable amount of Canadian beef – a new development – helped offset the fact that the U.S. market was still off limits and would remain so until 1948.

⁸⁵ “MOOOO!” (Editorial Cartoon), *Globe and Mail*, September 24, 1942, p. 6.

⁸⁶ “Beef War Must End” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 23, 1942, p. 6.

⁸⁷ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 24, 1942; “Wholesale Beef Ceiling Raised,” *Globe and Mail*, October 8, 1942, p. 1; Britnell and Fowke, p. 265; “Ottawa’s Beef War, Settled,” *Globe and Mail*, October 10, 1942, p. 17.

⁸⁸ Britnell and Fowke, p. 268.

Lending a Hand on the Land: Ad Hoc Schemes and Alternative Sources of Farm Labour

As farmers worried about the effect wartime policies could have on their incomes, they also fretted over the difficulties they encountered in securing labour. The absence of adequate government manpower regulations increased the importance of the various *ad hoc* emergency farm help schemes that emerged to fill the gap. With the labour pool as tight as it was, no source of labour could be ignored. More students and more urban helpers were needed, and two other potential sources of help that had not yet been tapped included ‘unfree’ labour, namely enemy prisoners of war and internees.⁸⁹ Beginning in 1942, rumours

swirled that these individuals would soon be available for farm work, reports that farmers were quick to seize upon.⁹⁰ One Ontario farmer who had been forced through lack of help to reduce his stock asked the Department of Agriculture if he could ‘have’ an Italian prisoner-of-war. “Surely,” he argued, “they can be sifted out [and] they must have wakened up to the fact that they were only used as a tool for Hitler.” If not, he would settle for “a good Hart-Parr



Globe and Mail, April 29, 1942

⁸⁹ This was not just a Canadian problem. Most of the nations engaged in the war had to resort to ‘non-traditional’ farm labour. See R.J. Moore-Colyer, “The Call to the Land: British and European Adult Voluntary Farm Labour; 1939-49,” *Rural History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (April 2006): 83-101.

⁹⁰ CWM, “Would Use War Prisoners Here to Work Farms,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 19, 1942.

tractor.”⁹¹ In the short run, he would receive neither; POWs did not appear on farms until late in 1943, though by Summer 1942 hundreds of Japanese evacuees were working for Canadian producers.⁹² In total, about 4,700 Japanese-Canadians were employed on farms during the war, along with a few thousand POWs. In addition, by 1944 just over 3,000 of the 8,932 Canadians who had been identified as conscientious objectors were also working in agriculture.⁹³

This type of labour could and did provide valuable assistance to farmers, but it was not without its problems. The difficulties encountered by P.H. Ashby, an Alberta rancher, illustrate some of the issues and emotions that using this type of labour could provoke. Ashby first had to go to great lengths to get Japanese workers for his farm, even making a personal appeal to G.S.H. Barton for assistance in jumping through the bureaucratic hoops. In one letter, Ashby expressed some of the reasons why he had to resort to this kind of help, sentiments to which many farmers could easily relate. The frustrating lack of labour meant that he was

[C]utting production on these farms to the lowest level since I have been farming. ... I shall keep only what I can leisurely care for myself and to hell with the whole business. No wonder there was a Norway fiasco and a Dunkirk and a Greece and a Crete and a Libya and Hong Kong and a Singapore and a Malaya and all the rest of it ... If we farmers managed our farms that way, everybody would starve to death. ... I'll not work my wife and kids to the bone any longer. We have reached the end of the tether. I might say we have worked

⁹¹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3408, file 1500-14, Charlie Seguire to the Department of Agriculture, January 28, 1942.

⁹² Stephanie Cepuch, “The Public and the POWs: Reaction to the Release of German Prisoners of War for Agricultural Labour,” *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. 9 (1994), p. 329.

⁹³ Auld, p. 203. The British used both German and Italian prisoners of war as farm labourers, and historian Bob Moore argues that the Italians in particular were of considerable assistance on the agricultural front. Perceived as being less committed to fascism than German POWs, the Italians required much less supervision. See Bob Moore, “Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy toward German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 1997): 117-136. Similar sentiments arose in the United States; see Susan Badger Doyle, “German and Italian Prisoners of War in Albuquerque, 1943-1946,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 66 (July 1991): 327-340.

from 4:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. all spring and my boys are now thin from over work.⁹⁴

Barton agreed that Ashby had a fair complaint and forwarded the matter to those in charge of the Japanese labour scheme.

Ashby eventually got his workers but then encountered 'difficulties' with the evacuees. He wrote back to Barton, complaining viciously about his Japanese charges.

"I am firmly convinced," wrote Ashby:

[T]hese Japanese are an entirely different breed of humans and although we might, in a matter of several hundred years, be able to absorb some of them into our own blood, their intention is to keep themselves Japanese. I have no doubt whatever it is the intention of these Japanese to gradually absorb all those along the Pacific coast line, or rather to drive all whites out of that area. They can work and work hard for themselves, but never for a white man, unless they benefit by it. These two families are certainly not loyal to Canada, neither are they loyal to white people.⁹⁵

Unpleasant sentiments, certainly, but they serve as a potent reminder of the ethnic hatreds that so often go hand-in-hand with war. Further, Ashby was certainly not the only labour-short farmer to have certain 'expectations' regarding Japanese workers.⁹⁶

Sugar beet growers in particular faced a serious labour squeeze thanks to the sheer numbers of field hands needed and the backbreaking nature of the job which made recruiting help difficult. Hard-pressed to secure enough workers, beet producers also wanted to take advantage of Japanese labour, but they had misgivings. In 1943, the Alberta Beet Growers Association estimated that their members would need 150 to 200

⁹⁴ LAC, RG17, vol. 3421, file 1500-45, Re. Japanese Labour from B.C., P.H. Ashby to G.S.H. Barton, July 9, 1942.

⁹⁵ LAC, RG17, vol. 3411, file 1500-25 (1), Department of National War Services, P.H. Ashby to G.S.H. Barton, December 5, 1942.

⁹⁶ The removal of Japanese-Canadians had other consequences for agriculture. For example, as Margaret Ormsby pointed out, Japanese cultivators were responsible for 75% of British Columbia's strawberry crop in 1941. Because of their absence, the 1942 harvest dropped by 50%. See Ormsby, "Agricultural Development in British Columbia," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January 1945), p. 19.

Japanese families to keep up production. The farmers, however, would only take the workers if certain issues were addressed. They believed that there was “too much movement of Japanese people from the farms on which they are located,” a situation that caused anxiety and called for “stricter supervision of such free movement.” In addition, the growers were alarmed by the appearance of “distinct signs of Japanese organization movements” among the workers. Finally, the beet farmers complained that “too much leniency [was] being shown towards petty complaints arising from the Japanese...”⁹⁷ That Japanese labour was used at all amid such fears is perhaps a good indication of just how serious the labour situation really was. By war’s end 2,600 Japanese labourers had been used on Alberta sugar-beet farms alone.⁹⁸

In addition to the antagonism roused by the use of Japanese labour, some farmers exhibited less than charitable attitudes towards other sources of emergency help. The Ontario government’s proposal to bring in hundreds of Bermudans to work on the province’s sugar beet farms created a stir in 1943. The project had to be scrapped, with “colour prejudice on the part of Ontario farmers” cited as the reason.⁹⁹ This episode did not excite much general outrage except among Ontario’s black community, which rightly viewed the incident as a troubling indication of the racial prejudice that existed within Canadian society. James Desmond Davis, President of the Young Men’s Negro Association, lauded the government’s plan in a letter to the *Globe and Mail*, but

⁹⁷ LAC, RG64, (Wartime Prices and Trade Board), vol. 1221, file 31-3, Meetings – Agriculture, vol. 1, “Alberta Beet Growers Association Meeting of Directors,” January 8, 1943.

⁹⁸ Ron Laliberte and Vic Satzewich, “Native Migrant Labour in the Southern Alberta Sugar-beet Industry: Coercion and Paternalism in the Recruitment of Labour,” *Canadian Review of Anthropology & Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 1999), p. 73.

⁹⁹ “Color Barrier Upset Farm Labor Scheme,” *Globe and Mail*, February 12, 1943, p. 4. At this point in time, the United States was also looking to import farm labour from the West Indies, which culminated in an April 1943 farm worker agreement between the U.S. and Jamaica. See Wendi N. Manuel-Scott, “Soldiers of the Field: Jamaican Farm Workers in the United States During World War II,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Howard University, 2003.

condemned the attitude which led to the scheme's abandonment, lamenting the fact that it was "forestalled by ignorance and wilful sabotage on the part of those who say they need help so desperately – the farmers themselves."

Davis was troubled by the fact that the farmers preferred the idea of using enemy POWs rather than "the proved patriotic Negro British subject."¹⁰⁰ In total, almost 35,000 POWs were housed in Canada during the war, and in July 1943 the federal government sanctioned the use of these individuals for labour purposes. This was allowable under the terms of the Geneva Convention if the men were paid for their services, but the level of public apprehension that their presence might arouse made the government initially reluctant to take that step. By late in 1943, however, the labour situation was such that many POWs were hard at work on Canadian farms.¹⁰¹ Both prisoner and farmer benefited from this scheme. Many POWs, bored behind barbed wire, leapt at the chance to secure such jobs. It allowed POWs to escape the monotony of prison life and to make some money, as the POWs' services were not free – farmers did have to pay for the labour (50 cents a day) although not all of the money went directly to the prisoner.¹⁰² In exchange for the fee, farmers were provided with willing workers who helped alleviate the depredations of the labour shortage. Civilians, fed a steady diet of propaganda that dehumanized the enemy, might have shuddered at the prospect of Germans roaming the countryside, but farmers, with their backs to the wall, were grateful for any help they could get.

¹⁰⁰ "Negroes Protest Color Barrier" (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1943, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Cepuch, pp. 324, 326.

¹⁰² Martin Auger, *Prisoners of the Home Front: German POWs and 'Enemy Aliens' in Southern Quebec, 1940-1946* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), p. 101; Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), p. 68.

Far less contentious, from a civilian point of view, was the continued use of urban volunteer help. This type of worker could do a variety of necessary farm jobs, and most farmers were happy to have them. Still, the CFA looked askance at the decentralized, jumbled nature of this source of labour.¹⁰³ The current crop of ragtag farm help movements, Haskins warned in 1942, had to be replaced with a more organized, federally directed body. As he wrote to Gardiner, “[p]rovincial governments, city people, farm organizations and farm communities have done a great deal in the way of providing help for this year but personally I am convinced that this haphazard disjointed and sketchy plan for solving a national problem will not be good enough for next year.”¹⁰⁴ The CFA instead proposed a national scheme organized along military lines, comprised of a band of volunteers motivated by patriotic zeal. That patriotism, Haskins argued, could easily be stirred up by the use of a uniform or other “distinct” or “conspicuous” markings.¹⁰⁵ These desires would go unfulfilled; a unified or uniformed land army did not materialize. However, schemes such as the Ontario Farm Service Force (OFSF) became larger and more sophisticated, and did provide considerable help to beleaguered farmers.

By 1942, Alex Maclaren had big plans for the programme that he believed would have to enroll as many as 430,000 people to meet the demand.¹⁰⁶ By that year, six distinct sections made up the OFSF. The Farm Cadet Brigade contained males aged 15 and up, while young women over the age of 16 were encouraged to join the Farmerette

¹⁰³ LAC MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour in Wartime, W.E. Haskins, CFA Secretary to E.M. Little, National Selective Service, Department of Labour, June 29, 1942.

¹⁰⁴ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour in Wartime, 1941-42, W.E. Haskins to James Gardiner, August 11, 1942.

¹⁰⁵ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour in Wartime, 1941-42, W.E. Haskins to E.M. Little, June 29, 1942.

¹⁰⁶ “430,000 Workers Seen Needed as Food Army,” *Globe and Mail*, January 21, 1942, p. 4.

Brigade. The Women's Land Brigade recruited female non-students, and the Holiday Service Brigade was made up of individuals "willing to give a day or a week or part of their holidays to help during haying or harvest."¹⁰⁷ In addition, there was also an Old Boys' Brigade and a School Children's Brigade.¹⁰⁸ To reinforce the fact that this was war service, by 1942 the program had taken on a distinctly martial air. Farmerettes were issued uniforms "in soldier blue shade," that were "smartly tailored" with "brass buttons and completed with a wedge cap resembling those worn in the armed forces."¹⁰⁹ While many of the volunteers, mostly male, were billeted on the farms, a series of camps were also set up to facilitate the use and supervision of the youthful workers. Under the close guardianship of the YMCA and the YWCA, the camps provided an important measure of security, both physical and 'moral.'¹¹⁰

By July 1942 farm labour conditions in Ontario had worsened, and losses were predicted unless enough help was found to gather the bountiful harvest.¹¹¹ Pleas went out for emergency volunteer helpers, whether they were "from industries, service clubs, Chamber of Commerce, church groups, or other organizations."¹¹² One Toronto reporter who had participated in the 'Bring in the Food' campaign had a few hints for urbanites considering going out to the fields. "Get a haircut. The rate flow of perspiration is appalling. Wear boots and heavy socks. You'll know why if you don't. Strong leather gloves are an absolute necessity. The thistles in the sheaves are as

¹⁰⁷ CWM, "Farmerettes Form Club at Hamilton Reunion," *Hamilton Spectator*, January 12, 1942; Sheila Hanlon, "'Fair Soldiers of the Soil': Expressions of Gender Ideology within the Women's Division of the Ontario Farm Service Force," M.A. Thesis, University of Guelph, 2001, p. 113.

¹⁰⁸ "Call for Farm Service" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1942, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ CWM, "Farmerettes Form Club at Hamilton Reunion," *Hamilton Spectator*, January 12, 1942.

¹¹⁰ Hanlon, pp. 60-63.

¹¹¹ "Acres of Wheat and Fruit But Aid Lacking on Farms, Harassed Growers Report," *Globe and Mail*, July 16, 1942, p. 16; "Extends Help Given Farmers By Students," *Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1942, p. 1.

¹¹² CWM, "Food Production Suffers as Farmers Are Unable to Cope With Volume of Work," *Hamilton Spectator*, July 25, 1942.

plentiful as oats. Old trousers and shirt, the lighter the better, are strongly recommended. It gets hot out there. If you're tired of your present job take your day-off at the farm. You'll be amazed how tickled you'll be to go back to work in a nice stuffy office."¹¹³ The situation was so pressing that the Ontario Ministry of Justice approved letting certain non-violent convicts serve a part of their sentences performing agricultural jobs.¹¹⁴

Calls for help went out in other parts of the country as well. In British Columbia, Fraser Valley dairy farmers reportedly sold off parts of their herds, and Okanagan Valley growers feared their fruit would remain unpicked.¹¹⁵ Saskatchewan in particular was hard-pressed to find adequate labour to bring in the 1942 wheat harvest. The province appealed through the Dominion Department of Labour for students from other parts of Canada to assist with agriculture.¹¹⁶ Under the NSS' aegis, the federal government paid to ship the students west, where they would earn at least four dollars per day. University students and others also headed west to help.¹¹⁷ While Dominion officials portrayed the scheme as a success, some expressed different views. First, that the appeal had been directed at students from central Canada instead of the west caused some comment. The *Winnipeg Tribune*, for instance, stated that it was all "very confusing," noting that "the farmers get a bunch of willing youngsters who, till a few days ago, probably didn't know the difference between a pitchfork and a scoop shovel,

¹¹³ CWM, "Farmers-For-A-Day" (Editorial), *Hamilton Review*, August 14, 1942.

¹¹⁴ "Plan Paroles for Prisoners to Help in War," *Globe and Mail*, July 28, 1942, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ "Cross-Country," *Macleans*, July 15, 1942, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ CWM, "Wheat Provides Dominion With Another Headache" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, October 6, 1942.

¹¹⁷ CWM, "Students Leave for Harvest Work in Saskatchewan," *Hamilton Spectator*, October 9, 1942.

while Western boys swat away at their book learning.”¹¹⁸ There were problems with some of the volunteers. Some were simply too green to be of much help, a few were sent home, and some injuries were reported.¹¹⁹ One harvest committee official chastised “authorities in the east who believe farmers can use inexperienced help from schools as they might experienced farm labourers.”¹²⁰ In addition, some who went west discovered that all the jobs were gone by the time they arrived, or they were sent to areas where help was not required. Others complained that farmers “tried to ‘chisel’” them on wages.”¹²¹ Problems aside, in many cases wartime harvests were brought in successfully largely because of these ad hoc ‘save-the-crop’ campaigns, but it was an unsatisfactory situation that many believed should not have been allowed to occur given the importance of food to the war effort.

The preponderance of blame for farm labour’s beleaguered state was placed squarely on the government, which demonstrated a frustrating duality on this issue. That farm labour was a problem, that it was being mishandled, was seemingly understood by some officials. Farmers may have wondered, for example, about Donald Gordon’s attitude *vis à vis* agricultural matters but he was not oblivious to the problems they faced. As Canada’s price czar, the effects the labour shortage could have on Canadian food supplies naturally concerned him as he conveyed this to Ilsley during the critical summer of 1942.¹²² But while Gordon showed increasing apprehension over farm labour, Gardiner, rather bizarrely, stated publicly that farms might *have to*

¹¹⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 887, file 1-19, Press Reports & Clippings, vol. 2, “Summary of Week’s Press Clippings – Information Branch WPTB, October 15-21, 1942.”

¹¹⁹ CWM, “‘Fired’ Harvesters Return With Tales of Experience,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 22, 1942.

¹²⁰ CWM, “Harvest Mix-Up Blamed on East,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 21, 1942.

¹²¹ “Students Were Sent to Areas Where Harvesters Not Needed,” *Globe and Mail*, October 22, 1942, p. 23.

¹²² LAC, RG64, vol. 1221, file 31-4, Farm Labour, vol. 1, Donald Gordon to J.L. Ilsley, July 14, 1942.

eventually contribute more men to the military while privately lobbying for exactly the opposite.¹²³ This somewhat confused official attitude did not go unnoticed by the non-farm press. “So far,” *Maclean’s* reported:

the farmer is getting little sympathy either from Hon. James Gardiner or Colonel Ralston. Mr. Gardiner says they must do their best with the manpower they now have; that they won’t get more, may have to do with less. ... Colonel Ralston has so far turned a completely deaf ear to appeals that he let soldiers help with harvesting. What will happen (politically) if a nation-wide wastage of foodstuffs is threatened through lack of harvest manpower is yet to be seen.¹²⁴

As 1943 began, labour shortages affected all agricultural sectors despite efforts on the part of the government to ensure a more equitable sharing of available manpower. “The shortage of farm labour across Canada has emerged as a first rate wartime problem which is going to take a deal of ingenuity to solve,” wrote the *Ottawa Journal*. “Up to the present it has hardly been taken very seriously by those outside agricultural circles – the natural emphasis has been on the needs of the armed services and industry for manpower. Now farmers are making abundantly clear they must have men if they are going to meet the ever-growing demands for food.” Wheat farmers, beet growers, livestock raisers, dairy producers – all felt the effects of Canada’s dwindling labour resources, and again all looked to a somewhat motley assortment of volunteer helpers to address the shortfall. Relying on this type of emergency labour was, as the *Ottawa Journal* argued, at best an imperfect solution. What Canada needed, it concluded, was “a real manpower policy” to replace the untidy jumble that currently existed.¹²⁵

As in the past, farmers and their advocates sounded the alarm, warning that inadequate help would result in curtailed production. The government had to take

¹²³ “Gardiner Says Armed Forces May Require More Farm Men,” *Globe and Mail*, August 5, 1942, p. 17; LAC, RG17, vol. 3411, file 1500-25 (1), Department of National War Services, Gardiner to G.S.H. Barton, August 8, 1942.

¹²⁴ “Backstage at Ottawa,” *Maclean’s*, August 15, 1942, p. 15.

¹²⁵ “Farm Labour Shortage Hits Home” (Editorial), *Ottawa Journal*, January 15, 1943, p. 8.

immediate action if, as Wellington Jeffers, financial editor of the *Globe and Mail* argued, “nasty snags” in Canadian food production were to be avoided.¹²⁶ The lack of attention paid to the labour issue by the government, declared the *Toronto Telegram*, was symptomatic of a general failure “to adjust the country to a wartime economy.”¹²⁷ As Donald Gordon had stated in his letter to Ilsley, some farm advocates were also beginning to draw a link between food shortages, rationing and the farm labour crisis. Agnes Macphail was one such observer, arguing that rationing in a food-abundant country such as Canada was a sad comment on the government’s handling of the labour issue. She demanded that farm help be left where it ‘belonged’ – on the farm.¹²⁸ The news that the new bacon contract would involve a 16% increase in the total amount delivered to Britain led some to wonder where, exactly, the labour required to accomplish this would come from. The *Farmer’s Magazine* placed the onus directly on the government and the non-farmer, arguing that it was “time the Federal authorities made urban consumers much more aware than they are today that unless this assistance is given to the farmer they themselves face severe rationing of many basic foods including bacon, eggs, meats and dairy products.”¹²⁹ The Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce told Gardiner that local agriculturists would be incapable of meeting production goals. “This shortage of help,” the Chamber noted, “may force farmers to reduce their crop acreage this year, and may lead to enforced reductions on the number of cattle and sheep, just at a time when the government is needing an increase in

¹²⁶ “Finance at Large,” *Globe and Mail*, January 11, 1943, p. 18.

¹²⁷ CWM, “What is the Government Going to do About it?” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, January 14, 1943.

¹²⁸ “Butter Ration an ‘Indictment,’” *Globe and Mail*, February 10, 1943, p. 17.

¹²⁹ “Manning the Swill Pail” (Editorial), *Farmer’s Magazine*, September 1942, p. 10.

livestock.”¹³⁰ The *Farmer’s Magazine* concurred with these opinions, arguing that the labour shortfall was “the biggest obstacle in the way of Canadian farmers reaching this year’s food production goals.” More urban volunteers were needed. Hoping to bring the seriousness of the situation home to potential land army recruits, the publishers of *Farmer’s Magazine* announced they would place a series of ads outlining the farm labour situation in several non-farming publications, including prominent periodicals such as *Saturday Night* and the *Canadian Home Journal*.¹³¹

The labour situation was exacerbated by the fact that new farm equipment was now difficult to obtain; machinery dealers’ shops were “practically bare” by 1943. Beginning in October 1942, the WPTB began rationing farm equipment; farmers now had to apply for a permit and substantiate that they really needed the machinery.¹³² As promised, the WPTB had reduced the allotment of material for the manufacture of farm machinery to only 25% of the 1940 amount, meaning that the only “absolutely essential” equipment and spare parts were being produced.¹³³ Normally, Canadian manufacturers produced 435 different varieties of agricultural implements, a number that was now reduced to 73 for the West and 117 for Eastern Canada. R.W. Gallup, the WPTB’s Administrator of Farm Machinery, told farmers that they would have make do with what they had or share equipment with fellow producers. Even if machinery were available, would farmers, in many cases still feeling the lingering effects of the Depression, have

¹³⁰ LAC, RG17, vol. 3374, file 1500 (5), Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce to Gardiner, January 11, 1943. They were endorsing an earlier submission made on the topic of farm labour by the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce.

¹³¹ “Presenting the Farmer’s Case,” *Farmer’s Magazine*, January 1943.

¹³² Britnell and Fowke, p. 186.

¹³³ “New Machines Not Available, Farmers Told,” *Globe and Mail*, January 21, 1943, p. 4.

been able to afford it? As George Haythorne noted, “many ... were not in a financial position to invest in such equipment.”¹³⁴

In early February 1943 the CFA went on its annual pilgrimage to Parliament, seeking a sympathetic ear and an indication that its concerns were being heeded. The main topic of that year’s meeting with King and his cabinet was labour, specifically the impossibility of meeting ever-increasing production goals if more farm help was not found. “It is our considered opinion,” argued the CFA, “that the increasing shortage of farm labour cannot be met by the unpaid labour of the farmers’ wife and young children, nor can skilled labour so essential to present day farming be replaced by untrained help from the cities without a decline in the production of food.”¹³⁵ But in announcing the government’s farm labour program for 1943, Minister of Labour Humphrey Mitchell disappointed many by confirming that volunteers would remain the main source of agricultural workers. The creators of the new Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Program had found partial inspiration in Ontario’s Farm Service Force.¹³⁶ The new plan, predicated upon close cooperation between the NSS and the provinces, rested on two main pillars. The first was to ensure that those who were already on the farm remained there (via existing NSS regulations); the second was to uncover “all possible sources of extra labour, both seasonal and year-round.”¹³⁷ Full-time farm workers would remain frozen in their jobs and would continue to receive military training deferments. Non-essential workers in other sectors, prisoners of war, Japanese evacuees, natives, women,

¹³⁴ George Haythorne, *Labor in Canadian Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 35.

¹³⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 1357, file Federation of Agriculture, “CFA Submission to the Prime Minister of Canada and Members of the Government,” February 9, 1943; “Farms Cannot Provide Food and Manpower Too,” *Globe and Mail*, February 10, 1943, p. 13.

¹³⁶ CWM, “Press Release, Farm Labour Policy, Department of Labour,” February 26, 1943.

¹³⁷ Haythorne, *Labor in Canadian Agriculture*, p. 70.

and discharged soldiers would all be funnelled to the farms whenever possible. The CFA gained a certain measure of satisfaction as Mitchell also announced that “experienced farmers” would be added to various NSS and labour committees, the delayed fulfillment of a promise made the previous year.

The reaction to the government’s less-than-ground-breaking farm labour plan was unenthusiastic. The *Canadian Forum*, arguing that Canada’s war effort should be focused more on areas like agriculture, where the country’s contribution “might conceivably be decisive” to the Allied cause, excoriated the program as an apathetic response to farm labour needs. The plan was shallow, consisting of “‘could-be’ tightening up of regulations” and “palliatives such as child-labour, seasonal labour, inexperienced labour, Japanese labour, and war-prisoner labour, none of which, nor all combined, can do more than tickle the surface of a dire need.”¹³⁸

One question that is somewhat difficult to answer concerns just how farmers felt about the deluge of well-meaning urbanites and other non-farmers. Agricultural work is not an unskilled occupation, but the implicit assumption underlying these schemes was that just about anyone could step onto a farm and be of immediate and constructive assistance. An element of urban ‘superiority’ was undoubtedly present in such postulations, predicated upon the idea that those who had remained on the land were somehow locked in a peasant existence, unable to rise above their station and succeed in an urban setting. The presumption that city dwellers, even those whose families were generations removed from the countryside, could step into the breach and ‘save’ their beleaguered country cousins via some atavistic understanding of farm life understandably rubbed some rural residents the wrong way. Certainly, there were some

¹³⁸ “A ‘Great Refusal’ Imminent” (Editorial), *Canadian Forum*, March 1943, p. 339.

farm tasks that required little training or expertise, but it would have been natural for farmers to resent the idea that green city folk or teenage boys and girls could make up for the loss of experienced farm hands. Farmers in Alberta were “doubtful that the young people would be equal to the heavy labor of haying and harvest.”¹³⁹ They also expressed misgivings over the students’ lack of experience and the time it would take to train them.

Our mechanized equipment is too costly to be trusted to high school boys or girls – if we could get them,” wrote one Alberta farmer. “We need men, and men who have been used to farm operations. ... The point we are trying to make is: with more required production you must come directly to the soil. There we need men. And not a month or six weeks late; as was the case with the men sent from the East last fall; but early this spring. We have never needed help more. ... All of central Alberta is in the same condition we are.”¹⁴⁰

Ads run in the agricultural press by the OFSF addressing this topic are further evidence that such concerns were prevalent. One such advertisement, under the heading “Who Says High School Students Are No Good On the Farm?,” sought to assure farmers that this type of help could be of great value if handled properly. According to the message, farmers simply needed to pay heed to the fact that most of the volunteers knew “little or nothing about the farm” and therefore could not perform the same type of tasks that “a mature, experienced farm hand” could handle. Farmers were counselled to “have a little patience; give a little instruction and in a surprisingly short time you’ll have a mighty useful worker.”¹⁴¹ This was undoubtedly sound advice, but certainly farmers would have preferred government policies designed to return as much skilled labour to the farms as possible. In failing to implement effective measures to keep

¹³⁹ “U.F.A. Hears of Outlook for Labor,” *High River Times*, June 17, 1943, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ LAC, RG17, vol. 3129, file 66-5 (2), J.L. Walters to R.S. Hamer, March 18, 1943.

¹⁴¹ Ad, Ontario Farm Service Force, *Farmer’s Magazine*, May 1942, p. 20.

experienced workers on the farm, and by relying on unskilled urban volunteers to reach food production goals, the government cemented the impression that it was not treating farming with the consideration due a vital war industry.

'Rationing Without Representation': Canada and the Combined Food Board

While farmers had some misgivings about the government's attitude toward agriculture, on the international stage Canada's status as a major wartime food producer was one King's government was anxious to promote or to use as a means to gain a greater say in inter-Allied planning. One result of the U.S. entry into the war was a new era of joint supply boards and wartime co-operation between the Americans and the British. Bodies such as the Combined Munitions Assignment Board, the Combined Raw Materials Board, the Combined Production and Resources Board, and the Combined Food Board (CFB) were formed in 1942.¹⁴² That the two major Allied powers sought to cooperate closely on matters of matériel production and distribution was not surprising, and neither was the fact that smaller nations – such as Canada – were left out. Both the Americans and the British were anxious to keep the decision-making process as streamlined as possible, and each had little interest in inviting others to sit at their small table.¹⁴³ The exclusion displeased many Canadians, including those within official circles, who felt that the nation was shouldering a considerable wartime burden that justified a seat on at least *some* of the boards. According to Grant Dexter, the initial attitude taken by the government was slightly petulant in nature, along the lines of “if

¹⁴² The fullest account of the CFB is to be found in Eric Roll, *The Combined Food Board* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956).

¹⁴³ C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict, Volume 2: 1921-1948, The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

we could not be a principal, a member in our right, we would take no part. We would maintain our independence of action and deal with Britain or the U.S. as they to us for material, military units, etc.”¹⁴⁴ The omission of Canada from the CFB was particularly galling given the amount of food leaving Canadian shores for British tables and the enormous effort that farmers were making to increase production in the face of serious obstacles. Canadians, as R.J. Hammond observed, were well aware that, in relative terms, they were contributing more food to Britain’s larder than America.¹⁴⁵ Being left out in the cold was thus a painful insult, and a blow to Canada’s national pride.

Still, in Spring 1942 Canada and the U.S. arrived at certain bilateral agreements designed to optimize agricultural production in both countries. Arrangements were made under the auspices of the Joint Economic Committees of Canada and the United States that would see the U.S. increase its production of oil seed crops, in great demand since the expansion of the Pacific war, while Canada would raise more feed grains to help meet livestock needs on both sides of the border. In addition, the duties levied on farm equipment would be dropped, while the transference of farm workers between the two neighbours would be assisted.¹⁴⁶ This emphasis on the “complementary, rather than competitive aspects of Canadian and United States agriculture” was deemed crucial in light of the wartime demand for food and other agricultural products.¹⁴⁷

But when it came to the CFB, could Canada hope to secure a spot at the table? Officially announced by the British and the Americans in June 1942 after months of

¹⁴⁴ Dexter, p. 291.

¹⁴⁵ R.J. Hammond, *Food: Volume One: The Growth of Policy* (London: HMSO, 1951), p. 241.

¹⁴⁶ For a summary of these agreements, see R. Warren James, pp. 327-332.

¹⁴⁷ W.A. Mackintosh, Chairman, Canadian Committee, Joint Economic Committees to Mackenzie King, March 3, 1942, *Documents on Canadian External Relations, volume 9, 1942-1943* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer), p. 1434.

preparation, the stated purpose of this joint venture between the two main western Allies was simple: to deal with the critical global food supply problems wrought by war. When it came to membership, part of Canada's trouble lay in the nation's peculiar – some would say unique – position *vis à vis* the U.S. and Britain. The Americans regarded Canada as part of the U.K. Imperial realm, while the British were just as prone to lump Canada into the North American sphere. It was a disturbing reminder that in important questions of geopolitics, the Borden-esque view of Canada as the 'linchpin' between the two powers could just as easily land Canada in no-man's land.¹⁴⁸ In addition, the British were not eager to weaken their own position relative to the U.S. by sub-dividing their power by giving the Dominions more of a say. Still, the drive to get a seat was spearheaded by the Department of External Affairs; King was not overly keen to push for inclusion. On the other hand, being left off the CFB held out the prospect of political trouble at home thanks to the potentially unsavoury fact that Canadian interests would, ironically, be represented on the CFB by the U.S.¹⁴⁹ Clearly, the *status quo* was not acceptable.

Having been left off the Combined Boards and facing possible political fallout because of it, the question for the King government was how to proceed. Should Canada push for membership, or accept its fate and work from the outside to safeguard and promote its interests? The latter approach did not sit well with some. Hume Wrong, serving with Canada's Legation in Washington, D.C. believed that while

¹⁴⁸ Canada's position *vis à vis* the United States and Britain prompted the theory that the nation's natural role was that of a 'linchpin' – a mediating bridge between the two powers – and it was one to which Mackenzie King was particularly drawn. The fullest exposition of this theory remains John Bartlet Brebner's *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

¹⁴⁹ "Mr. King Promises Data on Board Personnel," *Globe and Mail*, June 11, 1942, p. 21.

Canada would surely remain off most of the joint Allied committees, it had a “strong case” when it came to the CFB.¹⁵⁰ Businessman E.P. Taylor, serving as a dollar-a-year man with C.D. Howe at the Department of Munitions and Supply, expressed a similar sentiment, arguing that the sheer volume of food the nation produced and exported warranted Canadian membership on the Board.¹⁵¹ At a meeting of the Cabinet War Committee on June 11, Ilesley questioned the desirability of “accepting silently a position of exclusion,” while Howe, at this point, saw no reason to press for inclusion. T.A. Crerar, Minister of Mines and Resources, insisted that Canada was “entitled” to receive direct representation, and failing that the case should be made to the British and the Americans that Canada would operate independently of the CFB. Ralston highlighted the fact that the public’s perception of Canada’s omission from the Board might not be favourable.¹⁵² Deputy Minister of Finance W.C. Clark expressed the opinion that the situation might have a damaging effect on morale. Canadians had already been asked to make sacrifices to the war effort, and in all likelihood would be asked to make even greater ones as the war continued. “If at any time in the near future they should become conscious of the subordinate role in decisions, though not in effort and sacrifice, which we are apparently supposed to play in the war, I for one would not be prepared to answer for the consequences.”¹⁵³ The fact that Canada was not a member of the CFB did not trouble the *Globe and Mail*, however. The paper rather blithely believed that Canada “would not suffer thereby, as President Roosevelt has intimated that they will

¹⁵⁰ H.H. Wrong, Minister-Counsellor, Legation in United States to Norman Robertson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, April 30, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 163.

¹⁵¹ H.H. Wrong, Minister-Counsellor in United States to Norman Robertson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, May 8, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 168.

¹⁵² “Extract from Minutes of Cabinet War Committee,” June 11, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, pp. 177-178.

¹⁵³ Deputy Minister of Finance to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, August 25, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 215.

treat North America as a single economic unit.”¹⁵⁴ The cabinet, however, disagreed, and decided that an attempt would be made to get Canada on the Combined Food Board.

Getting a seat on CFB was not simply a matter of ego, of looking important on the international stage. There were considerable functional outcomes at stake as well. As a major food producer and exporter Canada had a vested interest in Allied food policy. Decisions made during the war could have longer-term effects, and, as such, it was in the national interest to become as intimately involved as possible with this process. There was trepidation in the farming community over Canada’s exclusion from the Food Board, including fears that Britain might start buying more food from the United States.¹⁵⁵

With the government’s decision to press forward, it was up to Canada’s diplomats to make the case for membership. This rested primarily on the size and significance of the nation’s food contributions to the Allied cause, as well as the fact that Canada’s entire wartime food policy had been predicated upon British requirements “as they were known to the Canadian authorities.”¹⁵⁶ Canada exported almost 30% of the produce raised on its farms, and most of it to Britain.¹⁵⁷ In fact, Canada was supplying over a third of Britain’s total food imports. Practically all of Britain’s imported wheat came from Canada, as did three-quarters of its imported bacon, a quarter of its imported cheese, half the canned salmon, and a considerable portion of its eggs. The entry of the U.S. into the picture complicated matters for despite recent attempts to harmonize the food and farm policies of both nations, Canada regarded the level of cooperation as

¹⁵⁴ “Machinery for Co-ordination” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, June 11, 1942, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ “Minutes of a Meeting,” September 16, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 230.

¹⁵⁶ Secretary of State for External Affairs to Minister in United States, July 13, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 187.

¹⁵⁷ Roll, p. 65.

unsatisfactory. Given the importance of close coordination between all three nations in the realm of food, it only made sense that Canada be admitted to full membership on the Combined Food Board. The British disagreed. R.H. Brand, Britain's representative on the CFB, was dispatched to Ottawa to see if he could persuade Canadian officials to drop their request for a seat on the Board.¹⁵⁸ Brand proposed that Canada's involvement with the CFB could instead come through a "joint U.S.-Canada agricultural policy committee," along with membership on various other CFB sub-committees. C.D. Howe, citing his familiarity with other combined boards, rejected this idea, and the rest of the War Committee concurred – nothing short of full, equal membership on the Combined Food Board would do.¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, with the Board's activities beginning in earnest, Canada had to figure out some way of working with the CFB. If official appointments were made to CFB committees, it might have a damaging effect on Canada's quest for full membership, but on the other hand, it certainly did not serve the nation's interests to have decisions made without Canada's participation. A compromise was reached whereby representatives were named to work "informally" with the Board's committees.¹⁶⁰ In September, during a meeting in King's office, some resolutions were arrived at concerning Canada's participation with the combined boards. The good news was that Canada was to be named a full member of the Combined Production and Resources Board, but the situation remained frustrating in the realm of food. After being assured that the CFB would concern itself mainly with commodities that Canada

¹⁵⁸ "Memorandum by Chairman, British Supply Council, and British Member, Combined Food Board," July 28, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 195.

¹⁵⁹ "Extract From Minutes of Cabinet War Committee," July 29, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, pp. 196-197.

¹⁶⁰ "Memorandum by Special Wartime Assistant to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Method of Association of Canadian Government with the Combined Food Board," *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 210.

imported that it would stay away from the nation's main export items (such as wheat, bacon, and cheese), Canadian officials were persuaded to drop their request for a seat on the Food Board. Instead, Canada contented itself with formal participation on relevant CFB sub-committees.¹⁶¹ The battle was not yet over, however. Behind the scenes, Norman Robertson, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, wrote to Lester Pearson, then serving with Canada's Legation in Washington, stating that if circumstances warranted, the question of Canadian membership on the CFB would certainly be renewed.¹⁶²

In February 1943, amidst fears that the CFB was moving beyond its initial scope, the Cabinet War Committee decided that the moratorium on seeking Canadian membership was over.¹⁶³ The CFB had augmented its activities to such an extent that it was now connected with "nearly all food-stuffs except wheat and some other cereals, and also with fertilizers and agricultural machinery."¹⁶⁴ There was also the matter of postwar relief. As the CFB evolved, it was looking more likely that the agency would be heavily involved in those efforts, and Canada naturally expected to play a significant postwar role.¹⁶⁵ In addition, there was still a domestic political component that could not be ignored. As W.C. Clark had already pointed out, with civilians being asked to make new sacrifices on a regular basis, it was important for Canadians to believe their nation had a say in Allied food policies. As Norman Robertson put it in a letter to Donald Gordon; "As the Canadian public were asked to tighten their belts, they would

¹⁶¹ "Minutes of a Meeting to Discuss the Relationship of Canada to Certain of the Combined Boards in Washington," September 16, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 230.

¹⁶² Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Minister-Counsellor, Legation in the United States, December 4, 1942, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 239.

¹⁶³ "Extract From Minutes of Cabinet War Committee," February 10, 1943, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 240.

¹⁶⁴ "Memorandum by Department of External Affairs," April 13, 1943, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 240.

¹⁶⁵ LAC, RG17, vol. 3708, file W-5-40 [1], "Canada and the Combined Food Board," December 29, 1942.

want to know that their own Government had participated directly in the decisions.” According to Robertson, this argument, which British High Commissioner Malcolm MacDonald called “rationing without representation,” seemed to sway Brand somewhat.¹⁶⁶ The new Canadian drive to secure a seat on the CFB was based on the ‘Functional Principle’ that had been developed by the Department of External Affairs. This was a pragmatic way of gaining influence by ‘equating capacity with responsibility.’¹⁶⁷ In short, it was argued that the Canadian share in the CFB decision-making process should be commensurate with the amount of food the nation was producing for Allied use. Canada was already working so closely with the CFB, with a seat on practically every committee, that the Board was “operating on a tripartite basis” in all but name only; extending formal membership would, Canadian officials argued, be “the logical completion of what has already been done.”¹⁶⁸

As the months wore on, Britain warmed up to the idea of having Canada as an equal partner on the CFB. According to Grant Dexter, the British, who previously “had high hopes of getting plenty of food from the U.S.,” were unhappy with American export levels whereas Canada was performing well in this area.¹⁶⁹ In addition, there were indications that further Canadian aid – in the form of credits – might not be forthcoming if Canada was left out of the combined boards entirely.¹⁷⁰ In the summer of

¹⁶⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 900, file 1-26-1, Combined Food Board, Committee of Fruits and Vegetables, vol. 2, Norman Robertson to Donald Gordon, April 6, 1943. The discussion, Robertson reported to Gordon, took place after a luncheon for R.H. Brand, hosted by Malcolm McDonald. Among those present were G.S.H. Barton and Hume Wrong.

¹⁶⁷ J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 92.

¹⁶⁸ “Memorandum by Department of External Affairs,” April 13, 1943, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 241. Also, Roll, p. 82.

¹⁶⁹ Dexter, p. 408.

¹⁷⁰ See J.L. Granatstein, *Canada’s War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 298-299; Stacey, pp. 331-332.

1943, the British finally agreed that Canada belonged on the Food Board, and with the U.S. offering no objections, in October, King received a telegram stating that “[t]he importance of Canadian food supplies and the close interconnectedness of all North American food problems makes it appropriate and desirable that she should be directly represented as a member of the Combined Food Board sitting in Washington.”¹⁷¹ King accepted, and appointed James Gardiner to sit as Canada’s representative on the CFB, alongside Brand for the British and Claude Wickard, the U.S. Secretary of State for Agriculture.

But just how significant was Canada’s elevation to full membership on the CFB? As important as food may have been, the CFB itself was never really an effective body, and Canada remained excluded from other more powerful Combined Boards. Giving Canada a seat on the CFB, therefore, did not threaten U.S.-Anglo hegemony over the conduct of the war.¹⁷² John English termed it “an empty honour” owing to the unimportant nature of the Board.¹⁷³ But while it is true that the CFB, as Eric Roll points out, “had no direct part whatever in the production, movement, or distribution of a single ounce of food,” it is also true that over four years the Board made hundreds of recommendations relating to the food supply, and influenced the general direction of Allied food strategy.¹⁷⁴ In addition, as a matter of reputation and stature, the move for Canada was significant; as C.P. Stacey noted, “no other ‘middle power’ was so

¹⁷¹ Dominions Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 25, 1943, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 247.

¹⁷² Hector Mackenzie, “The North Atlantic Triangle in the Second World War,” *Canadian Issues* (Winter 2004), p. 4.

¹⁷³ John English, “Not an Equilateral Triangle: Canada’s Strategic Relationship with the United States and Britain, 1939-1945,” in *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956*, eds. B.J.C. McKercher and Lawrence Aronson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 170.

¹⁷⁴ Roll, p. 302.

honoured.”¹⁷⁵ The CFB *did* constitute a significant experiment in international cooperation, and Roll, at least, judged the Canadian contribution favourably. Apart from assigning extremely able officials to work with the CFB (Roll singles out Lester Pearson), the Canadians also brought to the table

a governmental machine which seemed to combine the best features of the British with the best of the American, closely tied politically and economically (in food particularly) to the United Kingdom, yet having powerful bonds also with the United States and being often faced with very similar domestic repercussions of international decisions, they were able to make most valuable, and at times decisive, contributions to finding solutions that were acceptable to all.¹⁷⁶

Being in the middle, acting as a conduit between the two more powerful members of the Board, while not glamorous by any means, was nevertheless a crucial position for Canada to assume.

Administrative Changes: A Canadian Ministry of Food?

Securing a place on the CFB was a small coup for the Canadian government, and a welcome one in light of what had been transpiring on the domestic stage between Canada's two food czars. The row over beef in 1942 was an obvious example of the antagonism that marked the Gordon-Gardiner relationship and the diverse interests they represented. It was also reflective of the intricate nature of wartime food regulation and the bureaucratic complexity that inevitably resulted. The situation, many argued, was sufficiently strained to have an adverse effect on policy and by extension the war effort. In controlling the prices of domestically produced foodstuffs and dabbling in the realm of producer subsidies, the WPTB had stepped into territory jealously coveted by

¹⁷⁵ C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer), p. 178.

¹⁷⁶ Roll, p. 307.

Gardiner. In 1943 rumours again began to swirl that some sort of domestic food board was about to be formed that would, according to the *Hamilton Spectator*, put the Department of Agriculture “in the driver’s seat.”¹⁷⁷ The *Ottawa Journal* added to the rumour-mill, musing as to Gardiner’s true motives:

What's the meaning of this news that all primary food administration is to be shifted from the Wartime Prices and Trade Board to the Department of Agriculture? Does it mean, or promise to mean, less control of farm prices by Mr. Donald Gordon, more control of them by Mr. James Gardiner? Mr. Ilsley, a man to bank with or on, says the prices are to remain with Mr. Gordon; still, we don't like the way things seem to be falling in Mr. Gardiner's lap. Mr. Gardiner has a knack of creating his own circumstances, of getting his own way. And of course, nothing would suit Mr. Gardiner better than to have the matter of farm prices taken away from a lot of those economists and placed in the hands of a man who knows all about farmers – and about farmer votes, too. What we have in mind – we're not suspicious, only mildly speculative – is that if an election should happen this year, this business of farm prices and farmer votes might carelessly get mixed up; with Mr. James Gardiner having a hand in the mixing.¹⁷⁸

Ilsley denied the reports, but there was no denying the fact that the government’s overall food policy *was* plagued by infighting and divided authority, a fact readily discernable to most observers. In a letter to Ilsley, M.M. Robinson, Director of the Ontario Food Distribution Council, laid out the frustration some felt about the WPTB and its “fanatical adherence to a poorly constructed cost-of-living index and the widening gap between Foods Administration and the officials in the Birks building, especially those of the Prices Division.” It did not help that the officials in charge, he argued further, were “without practical knowledge of production and distribution of foodstuffs.” While the WPTB had, in his estimation, been successful in many areas, it had not achieved much distinction in keeping food supplies steady. The overall result, according to Robinson,

¹⁷⁷ CWM, “New Food Board Said in Making,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 6, 1943.

¹⁷⁸ “What’s Going On? (Editorial),” *Ottawa Journal*, January 11, 1943, p. 10.

was “a resentful agriculture, a confused consuming public and the agencies of distribution in a bitter mood.”¹⁷⁹

Farmers too were pushing for a unified food agency. On January 19, 1943, Herbert Hannam accompanied a delegation of food industry representatives to Parliament where they pushed for a food ministry to be complemented by a three-person food board, a system similar to the make up to the Canada Food Board of the First World War.¹⁸⁰ They also proposed that the WPTB “be eliminated from the food picture,” but retain control over maximum prices. “When the Wartime Prices and Trade Board prices were not sufficient to procure production,” supporters suggested, “the Ministry of Food could provide subsidies.”¹⁸¹ The delegates criticized the WPTB’s handling of price policies, intimating, much as M.M. Robinson had, that the supply shortages confronting Canadians were a result of mismanagement. Canadian farmers had set production records in 1942 but still could not completely fill certain British contracts, including that for bacon, and the targets for the coming year were even greater. The nation had already suffered from “embarrassing shortages of meat and butter,” and food imports had been curtailed, resulting in increased pressure on already constrained domestic commodities. The separation of authority between food production and food distribution was identified as the crux of the problem. The delegation recommended one body to handle both sides of the food problem so that “a coordinated plan of production and distribution may be attained.” Within the proposed food ministry, a food board would control production and distribution of supplies, while

¹⁷⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 1, file 16, Food – General, M.M. Robinson to J.L. Ilsley, January 12, 1943.

¹⁸⁰ “Farmers Urge New Ministry of Covering Food,” *Globe and Mail*, January 20, 1943, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 232, file G-26, Pamphlets, “Price Control News, No. 3,” issued by the Canadian Retail Federation, January 25, 1943.

the WPTB should continue to control “maximum consumer prices.” If those maximum prices were not high enough then the food board “should have authority to determine what bonuses or subsidies should be paid.”¹⁸² According to press reports, supporters of a new food organization believed that James Gardiner would be “a fit and proper selection” to head up any such agency.¹⁸³ Perhaps Gardiner was behind this, for in September 1939 he had advocated creating a food board, under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, of course.¹⁸⁴

Other groups reiterated the call for a shake-up in Ottawa. Walter Thomson, a lawyer and rancher speaking as counsel for the Toronto Meat Dealers’ Association, also backed handing more power over to the Department of Agriculture as the WPTB did not “know the first thing about food administration.” Thomson railed against Donald Gordon for not consulting with Gardiner who would be more than willing to step in as he was “quite sympathetic with the farmer’s position.”¹⁸⁵ The Ontario Fruit Growers’ Association adopted a resolution at its annual meeting calling for the “immediate establishment of a separate Dominion food administration apart from the duties of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board.” The Canadian Fruit Wholesalers Association passed a similar resolution.¹⁸⁶

The impression that the government might be on the verge of altering food administration arrangements was given further impetus when Foods Administrator J.G.

¹⁸² LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 19, file Foods Administration, 1942-46, “Memorandum Re The Administration of Price Control Policies on Food Products,” January 19, 1943.

¹⁸³ CWM, “Feel Gardiner Would Fill Job,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 20, 1943.

¹⁸⁴ LAC, MG27 J4, (William Lyon Mackenzie King papers), reel C-3743, James Gardiner to Mackenzie King, September 26, 1939.

¹⁸⁵ “W.P.T.B. Administration of Foods is Indicted as Butcher Shops Bare,” *Globe and Mail*, January 22, 1943, p. 4.

¹⁸⁶ “Demand Food Authority Separate From W.P.T.B.,” *Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1943, p. 4; Food Ministry is Advocated by Fruit Body, *Globe and Mail*, January 28, 1943, p. 4.

Taggart resigned his position in late January 1943, ostensibly to devote more attention to his role as Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture.¹⁸⁷ The *Ottawa Journal* claimed that under the rumoured changes, the Department of Agriculture would be in charge of rationing, with the WPTB "certain to lose all authority it currently exerts in the production of food." In addition, the paper reported that a new ceiling, at the production not the consumer end, would be created. Driving these alleged reforms, according to the *Journal*, was the fact that the food "problem" was no longer one of price but one of production.¹⁸⁸ Sensing, perhaps, an issue with which his party could make political headway against the Liberals, in early February federal Conservative House leader Gordon Graydon went on the attack. He called agriculture "one of the war's major casualties," a situation he blamed on the flawed policies enacted by the both the WPTB and the Department of Agriculture. "Rationing," he argued, "was the last refuge of inefficiency," and he echoed demands for the establishment of a Canadian Ministry of Food.¹⁸⁹ "It could never have been intended," he stated "that the operation of the wartime price and trade board should reach so far into the realm of production and distribution of the products of the farm."¹⁹⁰ Support for Graydon came from the government's own benches when Thomas Reid, Liberal M.P. for New Westminster, B.C., demanded that "a Food Ministry be set up right now, not next week, next year, but

¹⁸⁷ Ken Taylor, who had served as WPTB secretary since its establishment in 1939, replaced Taggart as Foods Administrator. The 43-year-old Taylor was on leave from McMaster University, where he held the posts of Dean of Arts and Professor of Political Economy.

¹⁸⁸ "Agriculture to Decide Rationing – Prices Board Relinquishing Control of Foods," *Ottawa Journal*, January 25, 1943, p. 1.

¹⁸⁹ "Graydon Attacks Ottawa Policies on War Effort," *Globe and Mail*, February 2, 1943, p. 1. Graydon served in this capacity as John Bracken, the leader of the Conservatives, did not actually gain a seat in the House until 1945.

¹⁹⁰ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 19, file Foods Administration, 1942-46, "Gordon Graydon, M.P., Advocates Food Ministry," February 3, 1943.

now,” with Gardiner at the helm.¹⁹¹ Pressured from all sides, the issue was hard for King’s government to ignore.

According to the *Globe and Mail*’s “informed sources,” the question was indeed being studied at Ottawa. On February 9 Ilsley rose in the House to address the issue.¹⁹² Unfortunately for those who had been pressing for a Ministry of Food, there was to be no such body. But what Ilsley did announce was a clarification of the “lines of responsibility” between the WPTB and the Department of Agriculture which had become ‘blurred.’ One of the most glaring problems was the fact that both the WPTB (through the CPSC) and the Department of Agriculture (through the Agricultural Supplies Board) had the authority to apply producer subsidies. The Minister of Finance confirmed that henceforth food production, exports, and farm subsidies would come under the purview of the Department of Agriculture, while the WPTB would deal with the domestic distribution of food, imports, and the payment of consumer subsidies. The WPTB also retained authority over rationing and food pricing.¹⁹³

With his authority over production and producer subsidies reaffirmed, Gardiner immediately made the case that food shortages and rationing were not caused by production difficulties but by distribution problems and rumours. According to Gardiner’s logic, farmers were producing enough food but the system put in place by the WPTB to parcel out supplies was flawed. As for ‘rumours,’ Gardiner had implied that consumers were far too panicky, hoarding products that had the mere whiff of scarcity about them. These were provocative innuendos, and Gardiner was duly taken to task by

¹⁹¹ “Ministry of Food Demanded,” *Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1943, p. 1.

¹⁹² “Improved Methods for Food Undergoing Study at Ottawa,” *Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1943, p. 18.

¹⁹³ LAC, RG64, vol. 864, file 1-1-4, WPTB and Agriculture Div. of Jurisdictions, “Confidential Memorandum of Agreement,” February 9, 1943; “Agriculture Department To Control Food Output,” *Toronto Star*, February 10, 1943, p. 25.

the *Toronto Telegram*. It accused him of blaming the WPTB for the food muddles while absolving his own Department of Agriculture of any fault. “Insofar as it is correct,” argued the paper, “it cannot be regarded as other than condemnation of the government of which he is a member.”¹⁹⁴ The *Globe and Mail* also found problems with Gardiner’s attitude. The paper wondered why Gardiner was denying the existence of food shortages while, almost simultaneously, Gordon gave a speech in Chicago in which he anticipated the expansion of coupon rationing and the possible introduction of points rationing in Canada.¹⁹⁵ The clarification of responsibilities had seemingly done little to ease the disconnect between Canada’s warring food chiefs.

While the government had not caved in to the pressure to create a ministry of food, it now understood the importance of bringing farmers – or at least their leaders – into the decision-making process. Attracting the CFA to the fold would look good, and would perhaps ease public criticism of the government by the Federation. In mid-February, Hannam received a phone call from Ottawa – it was Gardiner requesting a meeting. After a cold train journey to the capital, Hannam learned that the emboldened Gardiner was planning two new bodies within the Department of Agriculture: a Food Board made up of high-ranking departmental officials; and an Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC). The Advisory Committee, as Gardiner envisioned it, would consist of 10 members – one from each province and a Chairman, a position that Hannam was asked to take. Hannam expressed his reservations, claiming that he alone could not provide enough farm representation in a body “composed largely, if not wholly, [of]

¹⁹⁴ CWM, “Mr. Gardiner Offers Poor Defense On Shortages” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, February 11, 1943.

¹⁹⁵ “Clarifying the Food Problem” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, February 12, 1943, p. 6; “Forecasts Extension of Coupon Rationing,” *Globe and Mail*, February 10, 1943, p. 1.

Provincial Department men.” A body such as this, Hannam also argued, “would not provide producer representation from the major sections of our industry – that is, livestock, dairy, grain, fruits and vegetables...” Amenable to enlarging the Committee by adding two more CFA-appointed members, Gardiner also floated the idea of having Hannam sit as Chair of the Food Board so long as he also remained President of the CFA. This did not sit well with Hannam. As he wrote to W.E. Haskins, Secretary of the CFA, Hannam feared “I would become so involved and engrossed in administrative work that the CFA would virtually have no president. In such a position I would be bound, Mr. Gardiner agreed, by the decisions of the Board. It just could not work.”¹⁹⁶

Hannam was right to be circumspect. There was always a danger that Gardiner was seeking to neutralize the CFA while appearing to be consulting closely with the farmers. Hannam was less hesitant about the Advisory Committee. It was not an ideal set-up, he confided to Haskins, and if he accepted the CFA was bound to be criticized. But by extending the offer Gardiner had put the Federation in a tight spot. Gardiner was granting the CFA the opportunity it had been pressing for years: the chance to have a direct influence on agricultural policy-making. If he did not accept the offer, the CFA left itself open to charges that it was “refusing to co-operate” with the government and “[un]willing to assume [its] share of responsibility.”¹⁹⁷ It was a real dilemma – either the CFA accepted and ran the risk of being co-opted by Gardiner, or it risked losing credibility with the public and perhaps its membership by refusing. The CFA executive approved Hannam’s appointment as Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee but

¹⁹⁶ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 9, file Agricultural Advisory Committee, 1943, H.H. Hannam to W.E. Haskins, February 17, 1943.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

rejected the suggestion that he head up the Food Board for the same reasons Hannam had laid out in his meeting with Gardiner.¹⁹⁸

In early March 1943 Gardiner formally announced that an Agricultural Food Board had been established under the direction of his Deputy Minister, G.S.H. Barton, along with an Agricultural Advisory Committee. The Food Board was empowered to “develop and direct the policies and measures of the Department of Agriculture for the wartime production of food and to co-ordinate the activities of all commodity Boards within the Department.” In addition, the Food Board took on greater responsibility for distributing the available domestic food supply, routing various foodstuffs as needed, either for export, to feed the army, or simply to shift supplies from areas of abundance to areas of shortage.¹⁹⁹ The Advisory Committee, made up of nine provincial representatives and three members from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, was to act as a liaison between the federal government and Canadian farmers.²⁰⁰ Whatever Gardiner’s motives, it was an opportunity to influence policy that neither the CFA nor its President could take lightly. By accepting Gardiner’s invitation, Hannam had essentially confirmed the CFA’s firm yet non-radical approach to farm advocacy. It was not in the farmers’ interest to adopt overly militant tactics, especially in wartime. Conciliation and compromise might not get the farmers’ everything they wanted, but it did allow, the CFA believed, for the organization to become a more effective voice for agriculture.

¹⁹⁸ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 127, Hannam, H.H. – Personal, 1941-44, Hannam to James Gardiner, February 22, 1943.

¹⁹⁹ *Report of the Minister of Agriculture* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1943), p. 151; LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 9, file Agricultural Advisory Committee, 1943, “P.C. 1563,” March 1, 1943.

²⁰⁰ *Report of the Minister of Agriculture*, p. 142; LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 9, file Agricultural Advisory Committee, 1943, “P.C. 1562,” February 26, 1943.

“Food Will Write the Peace’: The Hot Springs Conference on Food and Agriculture

Hannam had no sooner taken his position as Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Committee when events conspired to vault him onto an even bigger stage. It was widely understood that an Allied victory would bring with it obligations, both humanitarian and pragmatic, to feed those whose world had been torn asunder by war. Food availability (or lack thereof) could have serious political ramifications when the warring nations finally turned their energies toward peace. A lasting and stable peace would initially hinge on very basic needs, such as medical care, housing, and food. Accordingly, in 1943 a major inter-Allied conference was convened in Hot Springs, Virginia, to discuss the question of food supply. The meeting’s main goals were twofold: to discuss means of increasing worldwide agricultural production to ensure access to sufficient food resources; and to begin the process of freeing global trade in food from the protectionist policies that had proliferated during the interwar years.²⁰¹ Under the proper circumstances, it was argued, the world could produce enough food to feed all – the trick was in distributing that food in a fair and sustainable manner. For Canada, concerned with maintaining its position as a major food exporter, the importance of the conference was obvious. Postwar prosperity in the agricultural sector rested largely on the country’s ability to protect and extend its foreign markets as much as possible, and engaging in multinational discussions of this nature was clearly beneficial.

²⁰¹ Jean Atherton Flexner, “Food Policies of the United Nations,” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1943), p. 812; Alonzo E. Taylor, “United Nation’s Conference on Food and Agriculture,” *Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (November 1943), p. 386. See also William C. Johnstone, “The Hot Springs Conference,” *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (January 31, 1945): 16-22.

Characterized by one historian as a “rehearsal for a United Nations,” the conference was one of the first large international gatherings to discuss the problems of the postwar world.²⁰² It was the brainchild of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who announced his intentions in March 1943. “Freedom from want and fear,” a key pillar of the *Atlantic Charter*, was reportedly the springboard for the meeting.²⁰³ According to Lester Pearson, the news took everyone, even the U.S. State Department, by complete surprise. Pearson, unimpressed with the haphazard way in which the conference was conceived and planned, was named to the 15-member Canadian delegation.²⁰⁴ Also on the list of Canadian representatives was Herbert Hannam, sent in his capacity as president of the CFA, an inclusion that did not go unnoticed or unappreciated.²⁰⁵ (Hannam himself was surprised that the large British delegation did not include a representative from the National Farmers’ Union.²⁰⁶) The meetings, held over 17 days and involving delegates from 44 countries, culminated in the Hot Springs Declaration which embodied the firm conviction that with proper management, the world could be adequately fed – that “freedom from want of food ... can be achieved.” The war had to be won, first of all, and in the immediate aftermath urgent and intensive efforts would have to be made to alleviate hunger. Agricultural production would need to be expanded in the postwar world, but the delegates took this further by recognizing

²⁰² Craig Alan Wilson, “Rehearsal for a United Nations: The Hot Springs Conference,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Summer 1980), pp. 263-281.

²⁰³ The Atlantic Charter was an agreement initially reached between the United States and Great Britain, announced on August 14, 1941. It outlined nine general ‘common principles’ upon which a peaceful, postwar order would be founded, and is viewed by some as the ideological basis for the United Nations. For the wording of the Charter, see <http://www.internet-esq.com/ussaugusta/atlantic1.htm>

²⁰⁴ *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, vol. one, 1897-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 246; John English, *Shadow of Heaven: The Life of Lester Pearson, vol. one: 1897-1948* (London: Vintage, 1989), p. 275.

²⁰⁵ “Farmer’s Voice Heard at Food Conference” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, May 31, 1943, p. 6.

²⁰⁶ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 31, file United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, 1943, H.H. Hannam to CFA, May 23, 1943.

that having more food available would be futile if people could not afford to buy it. Thus, the Declaration grandly called for “an expansion of the whole world economy to provide the purchasing power sufficient to maintain an adequate diet for all.”²⁰⁷ The root cause of hunger, as the Depression had shown, was not so much a lack of food, but poverty. Each individual nation had to assume ultimate responsibility for the feeding of their population, but international cooperation was vital if the goals laid out at Hot Springs were to be achieved. The ball was tossed to the governments of the participating nations – it would be up to them to see that these noble aims were met. To help facilitate future progress, an Interim Commission on Food and Agriculture was established in July 1943, with Lester Pearson as its first Chairman.²⁰⁸

After the conference had wrapped up, Hannam expressed the feeling that it signified “a new chapter in world thought – a chapter based on the premise that world production and consumption can be matched and harmonized to banish the spectre of want in the midst of potential plenty.”²⁰⁹ Other Canadian participants leaned less towards idealism and more towards the practical outcomes of the conference. H.F. Angus of the Department of External Affairs believed that the conference had “probably improved morale” and might serve as a “stepping-stone for something more constructive.” Agreements had been arrived at by avoiding problematic issues, while the general consensus on freer trade had been blunted by the fact that many nations (especially Australia) made clear their determination to cling to any protectionist

²⁰⁷ “United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture: Text of the Final Act,” *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Supplement: Official Documents (October 1943), p. 163.

²⁰⁸ “L.B. Pearson Heads Allied Food Board, Organization Effected at Washington,” *Globe and Mail*, July 21, 1943, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 31, file United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, 1943, H.H. Hannam to CFA, June 7, 1943.

policies they deemed necessary. The conference thus accomplished little in the way of concrete policy, but Angus did grant that it had most likely served to increase morale among the United Nations, and boded well for further collaboration. He did issue an important caveat, however, noting that Hot Springs “excited expectations which are quite possibly doomed to complete disappointment.”²¹⁰ Still, the conference was the first tantalizing hint that postwar cooperation on such vital issues might be possible, and served as a slight beacon of hope in a world divided by violence and destruction.²¹¹

“Almost Beyond Human Endurance”: The Nadir of the Farm Labour Shortage, 1943-44

Before the lofty goals embodied by the Hot Springs Declaration could be reached, there was the small matter of winning the war, which Canadian farmers strove to facilitate even as they faced their most difficult year yet. Despite his public and private rows with James Gardiner (or perhaps because of them), Donald Gordon was not hesitant to address farm topics. In a speech to the Alberta Federation of Agriculture in July 1943, the WPTB Chairman told farmers that he did not dispute they were “not receiving a proper return for their labours.” But he then rebuked farmers for seeking redress during this critical period, stating “the agony of war is no time for any group to force adjustment and, more than that, it is short-sighted to believe that concessions extracted from the community by virtue of wartime shortages could be maintained.” Gordon

²¹⁰ Memorandum from Special Wartime Assistant to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, June 8, 1943, *DCER*, vol. 9, p. 853.

²¹¹ One eventual result of the Hot Springs conference was the formation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945. See Amy L.S. Staples, “To Win the Peace: The Food and Agriculture Organization, Sir John Boyd Orr, and the World Food Board Proposals,” *Peace and Change*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (October 2003): 495-523. See also Staples, “Constructing International Identity: The World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization, 1945-1965,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1998.

praised farmers for their production in the face of difficulties, specifically the removal of over 350,000 farm workers over the course of the war, but he also paid the agricultural sector a rather backhanded compliment. "... Though the farmer may have done his share of grumbling and grouching about these wartime difficulties," he stated, "the record shows clearly that he did not fall down on the job because of them. The evidence clearly demonstrates both his loyalty and his ability."²¹² For farmers who were, in certain parts of the country, "working almost beyond human endurance to help the country along," the praise was welcome.²¹³



Globe and Mail, June 9, 1944

But praise alone would not help farmers cope with the severe labour problems they were still facing. The grim feeling that infused the situation was reflected in one ad for the Ontario Farm Service Force which stated that "No longer can anyone sit back calmly with the knowledge that Canada is a great storehouse of food – that our fighting forces and we at home are sure of ample food supplies."²¹⁴ To help ensure that enough food was produced, everyone now had to pitch in. The government embarked upon a campaign to mobilize as much farm labour as possible in order to realize "the largest

²¹² LAC, RG17, vol. 3405, file 1500-5-3 (1), Wartime Prices and Trade Board – Publications, etc., "WPTB Press Release 0567 – Gordon at Lethbridge," July 23, 1943.

²¹³ LAC, RG36-31, (Wartime Information Board), vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, "Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa, No. 16 – Digest of Confidential Reports from voluntary correspondents," July 28, 1943.

²¹⁴ "We Can't Fight If We Don't Eat!!" (Ad, Ontario Farm Service Force), *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1943, p. 7.

agricultural production in the nation's history."²¹⁵ In Spring 1943 the NSS became more proactive in its approach to farm labour, pulling some former agricultural workers out of war industries in order to send them back, temporarily, to the farm. The plan ran into a snag, however, when some workers refused to return, pleading with the authorities to let them retain their higher paid urban jobs. According to the *Globe and Mail*, many argued that their industrial jobs would "enable them to build up a financial reserve so that they can better operate their farms" after the war.²¹⁶ However, Arthur MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour and Director of the NSS, stated that workers who refused to return would have their permits to work off the farm cancelled, making it impossible for them to get hired on at another plant.²¹⁷ This initiative was well-intentioned but certainly not practical as James Gardiner later pointed out to Minister of Labour Humphrey Mitchell. "I do not think that you can assign men who do not wish to go to farms back to farms with any success," wrote Gardiner. "It must be remembered that farms in Canada are not like a business where men are under a foreman, or a construction camp. These are individual farms where the man must live with the family, and a disgruntled individual living around the house would not be allowed to remain there for one week."²¹⁸

As the farm labour crisis worsened in 1943, urbanites were encouraged to offer their services even if this only amounted to evenings, half-days, or the occasional weekend.²¹⁹ Quebec's government set up special offices in Montreal and Quebec City

²¹⁵ "Soon Will Start Great Drive for Farm Production," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 14, 1943, p. 1.

²¹⁶ "Farms Soon to Recall 300 War Plant Workers," *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1943, p. 4.

²¹⁷ "175,000 Men in Canada Will Return to Farms To Harvest 1943 Crops," *Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1943, p. 15.

²¹⁸ LAC, RG27, (Labour), vol. 134, file 601-3-9, reel 10116, James Gardiner to Humphrey Mitchell, February 19, 1944.

²¹⁹ "Proclamation – Farm Commando Brigade," *Globe and Mail*, June 4, 1943, p. 5.

to link farmers who needed help with young people who were willing to take on agricultural jobs.²²⁰ The Toronto Farm Commando Brigade, an initiative touted by Mayor Fred Conboy, sought part-time urban volunteers for farms. Beginning in June 1943, volunteers gathered at the City Hall courtyard in the mornings, and at 8 o'clock were transported to the farms by the farmers themselves in cars supplied by the city or in trucks donated by the Simpson's and Eaton's department stores. Return trips would be made to the city about 12 hours later.²²¹ By the beginning of September the scheme had placed over 3,000 Torontonians on farms in surrounding counties. The scheme was also expanded to include a "Youth Farm Commando Brigade" to work on weekends and in the evenings on nearby farms. In addition, messages encouraging non-farm residents to take to the fields proliferated in the summer of 1943, as firms sought to associate themselves or their products with the farm 'rescue.' "Let's Go Farming," stated one ad published by the Canada Starch Company, depicting two obviously urban individuals with expectant faces, clad in city garb and with luggage in hand, poised outside a farm gate. "If you are a school teacher, a student, business or professional man, office of factory worker, storekeeper or clerk, what a change! ... what a holiday!," the advertisement also claimed. The appeal was framed in such a way so as to depict farm work as an adventure, and a healthy one at that, a way to get out of the oppressive and somewhat grimy urban world.²²² In probably the most surreal ad touting farm service, the Borden Company had its famous mascot, Elsie the Cow (busy gathering eggs) giving

²²⁰ "To Aid Farm Employment," *Montreal Gazette*, April 22, 1943, p. 10.

²²¹ LAC, RG27, vol. 135, file 601.3-9, reel T-10116, "Interim Report of Toronto Farm Commando Brigade Placement Committee," August 8, 1943; LAC, RG27, vol. 135, file 601.3-9, reel T-10116, "Report of the Toronto Farm Commando Brigade," September 9, 1943.

²²² "Let's Go Farming" (Ad, Canada Starch Company), *Globe and Mail*, August 9, 1943, p. 8.

a lecture to Elmer the Bull (dressed in overalls and driving a tractor) on the importance of volunteer farm work.²²³

Still, the widespread opinion that the government had completely mishandled the farm labour situation hardened into a conviction, particularly in rural areas. In early June 1943 one employee of the Wartime Information Board (WIB), the federal government's principal propaganda agency, observed that there was "Plenty of discussion about garnering the harvests, and much criticism of the Government for not having proposed a well-thought out plan before now, regarding the volunteer workers."²²⁴ With food production threatened by labour shortages, the *Globe and Mail* wondered what exactly Canada would be able to contribute to postwar relief efforts besides wheat. Where had the government gone wrong?

It began with the government's refusal to regard food as a weapon of war. It runs vividly through the stubborn refusal to plan the distribution of manpower and ensure the maintenance of food production ... Our farms in many cases are staffed entirely by elderly people and children... Food in abundance has gone to rot for want of labour to gather and preserve it.²²⁵

The farm labour crisis persisted as the war moved into its final stages, but some help was on the way. In early 1944, the *Globe and Mail* reported that military conscripts serving home defence duties could be made available to farmers.²²⁶ Excellent environmental conditions in 1944 promised a bumper crop, but lack of labour continued to provide a counterweight. Hannam lobbied to have soldiers discharged from the military sent to farms but the response was not encouraging.²²⁷ Ralston replied that

²²³ Ad, Borden Company, *Globe and Mail*, August 23, 1943, p. 7.

²²⁴ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, "Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, no. 8 – Digest of Confidential Reports from Voluntary Correspondents," June 2, 1943.

²²⁵ "Paying for Farm Neglect" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, November 15, 1943, p. 6.

²²⁶ "Draftees Will Help Farmers," *Globe and Mail*, March 9, 1944, p. 5.

²²⁷ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour, 1943-47, H.H. Hannam to Humphrey Mitchell, July 7, 1944.

while the government was “not by any means indifferent” to the problem and the military was considering the issue, they nonetheless found it “difficult to make any contribution on an expansive scale.”²²⁸ When Hannam responded he then had no choice but to inform the farmers that “their request for harvest help has been definitely refused by the government,” Ralston protested such a statement would be neither a fair nor an accurate summary of the situation.”²²⁹

Beginning in Spring 1944 urban dwellers were inundated with publicity urging them to get out to the farms and offer whatever assistance they could. “For Peace Sake ... Pitch In!” urged the Farm Service Force, while an advertisement for Eaton’s saluted the “gallant youngsters” who were “stanch substitutes for the freckle-face farm boy who fights in Italy.”²³⁰ Not to be outdone, rival Simpson’s reminded customers that labour was scarce and “farmers just can’t do it alone. If the bumper crop’s going to be saved – and it must be saved – City and Town folks will have to give all the help possible.”²³¹ Bright’s Wines incorporated the appeal for urban farm help into one of their ads, while Hiram Walker & Sons, makers of Canadian Club whiskey, urged Canadians to “Vacation for Victory” on the farms.²³² Makers of alcoholic beverages were thus able to keep their names before the public (and associated with a patriotic cause) while their production was restricted. The Farm Service Force, hoping to drum up as many youth

²²⁸ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour, 1943-47, J.L. Ralston to H.H. Hannam, July 13, 1944.

²²⁹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour, 1943-47, H.H. Hannam to J.L. Ralston, July 14, 1944; LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 17, file Farm Labour, 1943-47, J.L. Ralston to H.H. Hannam, July 15, 1944.

²³⁰ Ad, Farm Service Force, *Globe and Mail*, June 7, 1944, p. 7; Ad, Eaton’s, *Globe and Mail*, May 24, 1944, p. 24.

²³¹ Ad, Simpson’s, *Globe and Mail*, July 22, 1944, p. 10.

²³² “An Urgent Appeal...” (Ad, Bright’s Wines), *Globe and Mail*, June 20, 1944, p. 19; “Vacation for Victory” (Ad, Hiram Walker & Sons), *Globe and Mail*, July 12, 1944, p. 22.

recruits as possible, sent representatives to various Toronto high schools, where the students were shown the National Film Board production, "Hands for the Harvest."²³³

Despite the labour problem, as in previous years the 1944 harvest was successfully gathered thanks to the various *ad hoc* schemes set up to meet farm needs. In Ontario, the OFSF operated 50 youth camps containing close to 9,500 students. Officials also estimated that a further 62,000 young people and 590 of their teachers spent at least some time working on a farm. Under the auspices of the Farm Commando Brigade, an additional 30,000 to 40,000 Ontarians volunteered their services. The number of soldiers mobilized under the Farm Duty scheme was not quite so impressive – only 856 were sent out.²³⁴ Ontario and Quebec also sent a considerable number of harvest helpers to the Prairies, a tangible result of the Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Program begun in 1943. Looser restrictions on farm equipment also helped. In late March 1944 C.D. Howe announced an increase in the amount of steel allocated for agricultural equipment.²³⁵ Further help came in June when the government decided to drop all duties and the War Exchange Tax from imported farm machinery and spare parts. Ostensibly, this was ordered to help farm production, but it was also part of a broader overall trade policy that, it was hoped, would fit into a less protectionist postwar world.²³⁶

²³³ LAC, RG27, vol. 135, file 601.3-9, reel T-10116, "Memorandum," George Haythorne to Arthur MacNamara, June 24, 1944.

²³⁴ LAC, RG27, vol. 135, file 601-3-9, reel T-10116, "Minutes of Dominion-Provincial Farm Labour Conference," December 4-8, 1944.

²³⁵ "Shortage of Machinery, As Well As Help, Handicaps Farmers in Ontario," *Globe and Mail*, March 30, 1944, p. 13.

²³⁶ "Budget Removes Duties On Farm Implements," *Globe and Mail*, June 27, 1944, p. 15. The War Exchange Tax was a levy, equal to 10% of the value, placed on all imports that came from outside the Empire. See Robert B. Bryce, *Canada and the Cost of World War II: The International Operations of Canada's Department of Finance, 1939-1947*, ed. Matthew J. Bellamy (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), p. 94.

When it came to farm labour, the federal government did not distinguish itself in the eyes of rural Canada. Still, the ‘ragtag’ efforts that resulted, while not ideal, had been effective enough to help Canadian farmers reach new production records throughout the war. The consensus seemed to be that while Canada’s farmers had managed to extend their production, government’s inept handling of the labour issue had hampered them. As the war drew to a close, George Haythorne, Director of Agricultural Labour for the NSS, believed that things were going to get worse before they could get better. A cessation in fighting did not mean that thousands of farmers would be returning to the fields, although, as he told the Agricultural Advisory Committee in May 1945:

Every effort was being made to direct to farms men of agricultural experience who were now in jobs of less importance, also to see that the men on farms by virtue of deferment in their military call-up, would be retained on the farms and not allowed to drift into industry because of any slackening in the need for men in the armed services. They were doing their best to counteract the idea among deferments that because the war was now over they would be free to go anywhere for a job.²³⁷

With victory becoming more and more certain, the pressure of Canada’s postwar responsibilities loomed. If reconstruction and relief required even more food from Canada, would the nation’s farmers be able to meet that demand?

The ‘Big Chance’: Farmers and Postwar Agricultural Policy

Despite problems, the war had a positive and tangible impact on overall Canadian farm fortunes. “It is becoming quite noticeable,” wrote a WIB correspondent from Alexandria, Ontario, “that farmers on the streets are better-dressed and look less worried. There is much more money in circulation, and the country stores are doing

²³⁷ LAC, RG17, vol. 3628, file B-23-5, Agricultural Advisory Committee, “Agricultural Advisory Committee, Minutes,” May 10-11, 1945.

much better than in previous years.”²³⁸ As the tide of war turned in the Allies’ favour, Canadian farmers were among those contemplating the return of peace. “While giving their best efforts to the task in hand and being all-out in their desire to finish the job, farm people are now turning their thoughts to the post-war world,” wrote Herbert Hannam in August, 1943.²³⁹ “They know we are fighting for existence and for freedom, but they also believe we are fighting for an opportunity to build a better kind of security and freedom for all men than we have heretofore. They feel that unless we prepare for and make the best of that opportunity when it comes, it will be possible to lose the war for freedom even after gaining victory on the battlefield.”

Hannam’s presidential address at the CFA’s eighth annual meeting in January 1944 typified this anticipated transition from war to peace. He paid homage to the wartime accomplishments of both Canadian farmers and the CFA itself, which in its short history had become “the representative and responsible voice of organized Canadian agriculture,” while also setting the stage for postwar realities. The CFA did have a great deal of which to be proud – the pressure the Federation had applied on the government had in many cases proved effective. With Hannam chairing the Food Advisory Committee, the CFA was now in a position to influence state policy to a greater extent than ever before. Public opinion, Hannam also noted, was firmly on the farmers’ side, a by-product of the CFA’s “moderate and constructive” approach. Even though it had repeatedly and sometimes vociferously opposed the government on matters of farm and food policy the CFA had nevertheless “enjoyed a rather remarkable

²³⁸ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 31 – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 21 letters received October 31-November 6,” November 10, 1943.

²³⁹ LAC, MG26 I66, vol. 131, file H.H. Hannam, Speeches, 1943 to 1946, “The Canadian Farmer and the War,” by H.H. Hannam, August, 1943.

absence of opposition from urban people and consumers generally.” With peace now in the offing, the watchword for farmers in the postwar era was ‘stability.’ Pursuant to this, the CFA firmly believed that floor prices should form a significant part of Canada’s postwar farm policy, and it used the wartime experience as an example of what the government could do to protect prices if the political will was present. As the Federation averred, if the state could assume “complete control of the price structure in war-time in order to prevent prices from rising unduly, it can and should use price control in the post-war period to prevent prices from falling unduly.” Hannam wrapped up his speech by reminding farmers that along with increased influence came the duty to use that authority wisely. “So the task before us,” argued Hannam, “is not any longer that of striving for recognition and status, as it is that of rising to the occasion and measuring up to what is possible for us and what is expected of us in a position of leadership and power. This is our big chance.”²⁴⁰

Thus, with the war winding down the task for Canadian farm representatives was to take the influence they had gained over the past five years and wield it wisely, to benefit both farmers and society in general. After a slow start, farmers had finally achieved a certain measure of prosperity during the war – not as much as they perhaps could have attained, but enough to demonstrate the utility that judiciously-applied state regulation could have in the agricultural sector. The importance of planning had been made abundantly clear to many; according to the *Rural Co-operator*, it had transformed agriculture into “more of a profession and less of a gamble.”²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 11, file Annual Meeting, 1942-44, “Address by H.H. Hannam to Eighth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture,” January 27, 1944.

²⁴¹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Annual Meeting, Regina, 1945 – Press Reports, “Planned Agriculture” (Editorial), *Rural Co-operator*, January 9, 1945, p. 2.

While the termination of war measures was inevitable, what the CFA did not want was an immediate return to peacetime norms as a radical shift might leave agriculture worse off than before. Mindful of this, in 1944 the CFA suggested a series of measures that would serve agriculture in peacetime. It asked the government to press for a “satisfactory international wheat agreement,” to re-open the cattle trade with the United States, and to appoint a Board of Livestock Commissioners. Farmers also wanted a clearer idea of just what the government planned to do with the regulatory edifice that had been built up over the war, particularly the subsidy structure. The subsidy mechanism had played an important role in encouraging wartime farm production, allowing farmers to supplement their income while consumer prices were kept from breaching the WPTB’s ceiling. Government farm subsidies, which totalled \$33 million in 1941, had increased to just over \$96 million by 1944.²⁴² What would happen if that structure were suddenly removed? Farmers justifiably feared a repeat of the collapse in farm prices that had occurred after the First World War.

Once peace came, the CFA encouraged the implementation of policies that would “ensure stability of prices to the same extent as now is achieved under War Measures Act provisions.”²⁴³ The government agreed that the sacrifices farmers had made during the war (via the price ceiling) warranted consideration in the postwar years. Based on this, James Gardiner presented a plan to the Economic Advisory Committee (EAC) in 1944 that included a convoluted method to arrive at support prices for various

²⁴² V.C. Fowke, “Canadian Agriculture in the Postwar World,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 253 (September 1947), p. 46.

²⁴³ “Clearer Farm Policy Asked by Federation,” *Globe and Mail*, February 4, 1944, p. 13.

commodities.²⁴⁴ The formula took into account farm prices from 1926-29, adjustments in supply and demand, the cost of living, farm practices and markets, and was, in the words of R.B. Bryce, “an ambitious but impossible formula.”²⁴⁵ Unimpressed, the EAC countered with a proposal of its own, later embodied in the *Agricultural Prices Support Act*. The purpose of this legislation was to ensure “adequate and stable returns for agriculture by promoting orderly adjustment from war to peace conditions.”²⁴⁶ The act called for the establishment of an Agricultural Prices Support Board (APSB). Its mandate would be to set the prices for various farm commodities (except wheat) and to take steps to make sure that farmers received those prices, whether by having the APSB pay the difference itself or by intervening in the market through active buying and selling.²⁴⁷ There was not, however, any set formula by which the support prices were to be determined. In other words, the free market would still provide the basis for farm prices but the government had armed itself with the means to smooth out any abrupt or unfavourable changes.²⁴⁸

The government responded to another farm demand for better access to short-term credit via the provisions laid out in the 1944 *Farm Improvement Loans Act*. Because of the unpredictable nature of their business, farmers had never really been viewed as good credit risks even, in some cases, by local merchants. “My own

²⁴⁴ The Economic Advisory Committee was created in September 1939 at the urging of senior government officials such as Clifford Clark and O.D. Skelton. Its members included a bevy of high-ranking civil servants, including Clark, Graham Towers, Donald Gordon, Norman Robertson, G.S.H. Barton, and Dana Wilgress. It was established to consider various wartime economic issues and problems, and to offer solutions.

²⁴⁵ R.B. Bryce, “From Policy to Legislation, 1944,” in *War Finance and Reconstruction: The Role of Canada's Department of Finance, 1939-1946* (Ottawa: Department of Finance, 1995), p. 211.

²⁴⁶ J.F. Booth, “The Canadian Agricultural Price Support Program,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (August 1951), p. 338.

²⁴⁷ W.M. Drummond, *A Review of Agricultural Policy in Canada* (Ottawa: Agriculture Economics Research Council of Canada, 1966), p. 53.

²⁴⁸ A.H. Turner, “Canada's Experience in Agricultural Support Measures,” *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (December 1959), p. 1252.

experience was that of a credit-extending grocer, yet from my beginnings I clove to one adage my father passed on to me: ‘Never trust a farmer,’” stated one dealer in a *Canadian Grocer* article on credit:

Did that mean that farmers are not honest men as a class? Not for a minute! Taken as a class, I think farmers average a higher degree of honesty than any other. What it means is this: Farmers’ lives are subject to Acts of God season by season, day by day. They must take returns when crops are harvested; and as most of them are like men in other groups, not greatly forehanded, using what they get in as fast as it comes, they are psychologically unfitted to conform to grocers’ time-rules. That they fully ‘intend to pay’ seems to them all that is needful; but the grocer cannot live who misses his discounts -- hence the rule.²⁴⁹

This new legislation would make it easier for a farmer to acquire credit, at least from a bank, by enabling them to obtain loans of up to \$3,000 at 5% interest, thus enabling them to purchase machinery, livestock, and even household appliances, or to undertake general improvements in the area of electrical systems, fencing, or farm structures.²⁵⁰

In 1945, the CFA called upon the government to take farm and food planning even further by implementing a “national food price policy” and floor prices “as a permanent feature of the national agricultural policy.”²⁵¹ It asserted that the prices farmers receive for their produce need not be overly high, but did need to be proportionate, i.e. properly balanced with other sectors of the economy. It also called for “a more synchronized national marketing program for all agricultural products” that emphasized better grading and inspection systems. “So-called government interference,” argued the CFA, “is more to be desired than the laissez-faire policy of leaving control in the hands of individuals or corporations who cannot provide stabilization or assure contracts, or who cannot, or will not undertake the social

²⁴⁹ Henry Johnson Jr, “Misfortune is Tinctured with Bad Management,” *Canadian Grocer*, April 15, 1942, p. 18.

²⁵⁰ Britnell and Fowke, pp. 404-405.

²⁵¹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Annual Meeting, Regina, 1945 – Correspondence, “Press Release, Canadian Federation of Agriculture,” February 23, 1945.

responsibility of equitably distributing the Nation's income." Finally, moving away from strictly agricultural matters, the CFA also addressed the matter of equity in new government welfare initiatives, pointing out the need to correct imbalances in the services offered to rural and urban residents in areas such as housing, health, education, and electricity.²⁵²

Conclusion

"At the outset, we are happy to say that through the rights of conference and consultation accorded our Federation in recent years, farm people now enjoy a degree of participation in national affairs never before experienced."²⁵³ So began the CFA's 1945 submission to the cabinet, a sentiment that reflected the success that the Federation had had in carving out a place for farmers in the policy-making process. Neither the CFA nor its members had ever relinquished the belief that they – as much as any sector – deserved to share in any rewards their wartime labours might bring, and that persistence paid dividends. Ken Taylor, J.G. Taggart's successor as Foods Administrator, wrote after the war that "farm pressure was never intransigent or intractable, but it rarely relaxed."²⁵⁴ The fledgling CFA had used the war years to establish itself as the "voice of the Canadian farmer."²⁵⁵ By emphasizing unity amongst its heterogeneous membership of over 350,000, the CFA's position as a politically neutral interest group, along with its steady and unflappable style of lobbying, allowed it to exercise a

²⁵² LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Annual Meeting, Regina, 1945 – Correspondence, "Presentation by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to the Canadian Prime Minister and Members of the Cabinet," February 23, 1945.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ken Taylor, "Canadian War-Time Price Controls, 1941-6," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 1947), p. 94.

²⁵⁵ Helen Jones Dawson, "An Interest Group: The Canadian Federation of Agriculture," *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 3 (June 1960), p. 134.

noticeable measure of influence on government agricultural policy in the latter half of the war.

As the war drew to an end, Canadian farmers could look back with satisfaction on five-and-a-half years of fruitful toil. Food production in Canada had increased by nearly 50%, while the prices farmers received for their produce had risen by approximately 60%.²⁵⁶ While never losing sight of their own needs or interests, farmers had responded to government measures enacted to meet wartime food demands. Livestock production in Canada during the war years was remarkable, especially in the realm of pork. Spurred on by patriotic exhortations and practical methods such as subsidies, bonuses and guaranteed contracts, farmers doubled the amount of pork produced between 1939 and 1945. Canadian farmers shipped almost 700 million pounds of bacon to Britain in 1944, a figure that represented 85% of the British bacon ration. By war's end Britain had purchased close to three billion pounds of Canadian bacon.²⁵⁷ Beef exports also soared, from 13.5 million pounds in 1943 to almost 195 million pounds by 1945, thanks in large part to the market provided by the first British beef contract announced in July 1944.²⁵⁸ The expansion in pork and beef production hinged on the availability of feed grain, which Prairie farmers produced in far greater quantities, being spurred by the inducements put in place by the federal government. By 1944, total income from wheat had dropped significantly on the Prairies, while income from livestock production rose by 450%. Wheat was still a mainstay of Canada's agricultural economy however, with the nation's exports representing more than half of

²⁵⁶ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 28, file Miscellaneous WIB Releases, "Wartime Information Board – Wartime Controls – Questions and Answers on the Cost of Living," September 12, 1944.

²⁵⁷ Fowke, "Canadian Agriculture in the Postwar World," p. 46.

²⁵⁸ *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1965), p. 377; "Canadian Beef for Britain," *Times (London)*, July 15, 1944, p. 3.

Britain's overall consumption of flour. Despite paying out a total of over \$86 million to farmers to grow less wheat, bumper crops led to record yields during the war period.²⁵⁹ Other farm sectors, such as dairy production, for instance, benefitted from the war as well.

These increases seem even more remarkable when the full scale of the farm labour shortage is considered. One British farmer who toured Canadian farms during the war observed that the "master achievement of Canadian agriculture during the war years" was the simple fact that "more pigs, more milk, more poultry and eggs, more beef, more big harvests of grain have been produced with many thousands fewer workers than before the war."²⁶⁰ The numbers themselves are sobering: over half a million Canadians left their farms to either enlist in the military or to take non-agricultural positions. The increase in food production over the war years, coupled with the loss of human labour meant, as Hannam noted in 1945, that Canadian agriculture had "doubled its output per man."²⁶¹

So how then did Canadian farmers manage such significant wartime production increases without adequate help? Certainly, many were able to 'make do' with the help that they did have. The panoply of *ad hoc* programs that sprung up, while not ideal, bridged the labour gap. The belated selective service regulations, while not always strictly enforced, did serve to stop the bleeding somewhat. The Federal-Provincial Farm Labour Program, while scorned by some, did prove to be of some benefit. Under the auspices of this plan, the movement of extra farm labour around the nation was

²⁵⁹ Auld, pp. 2, 27.

²⁶⁰ "Glimpses of Canadian Agriculture," *Times (London)*, November 13, 1944, p. 5.

²⁶¹ LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 12, file Annual Meeting, Regina, 1945 – Press Reports, "Production is Increased Despite Labour Shortage," *Regina Leader-Post*, January 17, 1945.

facilitated. And while farms were nowhere near as mechanized as they could (or perhaps should) have been, advances in agricultural technology since the First World War helped to mitigate the lack of human labour. Older equipment was refurbished through “the process of junkheap cannibalism.”²⁶² Of course, the most important factor might be the simple fact that those who remained on the farm simply worked harder. Like countless Canadians, farmers dug deep to find the extra reserves of energy and fortitude needed to push on in the face of wartime pressures. Thanks to their labours farmers generally found themselves in a satisfactory position when the war ended. The *Agricultural Prices Support Act* offered hope for a stable transition from war to peace. Overall, farm fortunes at the end of the Second World War were considerably brighter than they had been at the beginning of the conflict, and farmers could justly regard their wartime record with a considerable measure of pride and satisfaction. European postwar food needs promised healthy markets for Canadian produce, and farmers were well-poised to supply them.

²⁶² Denison, p. 314.

Chapter Six
***‘Let’s All Be Good Citizens and Stick to Our Ration Books’:
Wartime Food Habits, 1943-1945***

I think that there are some critical dangers in the road resulting from the excessive broadcasting of the idea that we can look after Europe. We have some surplus food in this country but it is beginning to melt away a little bit, and man does not live by wheat alone. At our present scale of production in this country, even allowing for a certain diminution of demand, we have not got a great deal to spare, and we are exporting very large quantities at the present time and just keeping our friends and allies on a pretty bare subsistence. The probable demand for the needs of liberated Europe are pretty staggering in terms of food and we can make a small contribution to them by curtailment in this country if it is intelligently handled, but any hope of a substantial contribution must come out of a substantially increased production. ... I think there has been a little too much glib talk and too many easy promises made that the North American continent will turn the horn of plenty on the European people, for at the present time we could not deliver the goods.¹

– Ken Taylor, Foods Administrator, WPTB, 1943

Introduction

The war had shattered ‘normal’ life for many civilians, but Canadians, according to the *Hamilton Review*, were the “spoiled and pampered children among the active belligerent nations.” Canada’s armed forces stood poised to make whatever sacrifices were asked of them, but the populations of other less fortunate nations were already doing so. At home in Canada, however, things were a little different. “On the civilian front,” the paper continued, “Canadians as a nation have faced none of the hardships experienced by other allied peoples in the war since 1939.” Any complacency that this had bred would have to give way, warned the paper; the so-called “wartime picnic” would have

¹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG64, (Wartime Prices and Trade Board), vol. 1537, unmarked file, “Wartime Prices and Trade Board – Food Press Conference, King Edward Hotel,” September 8, 1943. This conference was attended by a virtual ‘who’s who’ of the Canadian food world, including most of the relevant administrators from the WPTB and a variety of influential representatives from trade publications, the general media, and professional associations.

to come to an end.² The home front would soon feel the brunt of the intensified fighting overseas, and the paper implied that Canadians would be forced to commit themselves to a broader and deeper sacrifice or accept the consequences. There was an undeniable measure of truth in these sentiments, for Canadians had certainly not yet had to forego much of any consequence, in the matter of food at least. The rationing of a few key items and shortages of a few others (of which meat was perhaps the most vexing) had formed the extent of consumer suffering. These problems were counterbalanced by the continuing abundance of most foods, and by price controls that benefited consumers by keeping costs down. The *Review* was correct, however, in forecasting a drop in civilian good fortune, as this was the beginning of Canada's most 'austere' wartime period. In chastising Canadians, the paper may have been responding to the government's lead. In early January 1943, Foods Administrator J.G. Taggart, whose previous pronouncements had tended to emphasize the positive, informed Canadians that they were now "on wartime rations in so far as food is concerned," and that "the pinch of wartime economy is only beginning to be felt."³ Canadians would have to wake up to the sobering insecurity of war – that their nation of abundance might *not* be a limitless font of foodstuffs after all.

The fears voiced by Taggart and the *Review* were proven correct, at least in part. From 1943 to 1945 civilians found their food habits subjected to a variety of disturbances and new legal restrictions. As the latter half of the conflict unfolded, newcomers to the ration roster included meat and sweet spreads, while the butter ration fluctuated depending on the product's availability. At one point the supply of butter in

² Canadian War Museum (CWM), "It's Just Beginning" (Editorial), *Hamilton Review*, January 22, 1943, in *Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War* (hereafter cited as CWM).

³ "Fear Starts Hoarding," *Globe and Mail*, January 4, 1943, p. 6.

some parts of Ontario, including Toronto, was described as being “acute.”⁴ This scarcity, the *Ottawa Journal* gleefully reported, extended even to the restaurants frequented by Cabinet members and other government officials. The controllers themselves were without, and as the paper quipped, “not all the King’s horses nor all the King’s men could make it otherwise.”⁵ Wartime demands on shipping meant that imported foods, such as tropical fruits, were not consistently available. The arrival of a shipment of Mexican bananas in Hamilton in late January was deemed a newsworthy event by the *Spectator*.⁶ Certain domestic staples were also in high demand and low supply, resulting in annoyed consumers and expanded regulation. Thanks to labour shortages the availability of homegrown fruits was uneven during this period, a partial reason for the imposition of jam and jelly rationing in Summer 1943. The decidedly non-exotic potato was hard to come by especially in the winter and spring of 1943, while canned goods and various processed foods disappeared from shelves.

Nevertheless, even during this most difficult of periods at no time did Canadians approach the level of self-denial routinely practiced by civilians in other countries. One British woman who moved to Vancouver after the war could not help but notice the difference:

Although the men (my father, brother and later my husband) would never talk about what had happened to them during the war, the women in Canada talked to me about the war they knew. They talked about the hardships of rationing. Well, there were so many clothes in the shop windows, and their rations were huge compared to ours. So much food! Their stores were always open. They

⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 84, file Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix H – Reports, “Weekly Report No. 8, Administrative Section,” January 2, 1943.

⁵ “Ottawa Butter Shortage Spreads – Hope for Supplies by Thursday,” *Ottawa Journal*, January 12, 1943, p. 12.

⁶ CWM, “Shipments of Bananas Have Reached City,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 29, 1943.

couldn't understand what the bombing was like, and never knew the feelings that come with the loss of safety. You had to be there to really understand that.⁷

Wartime deprivation, it appears, was a relative experience; Canadians actually ate more during the war than they had previously. Some figures indicated that Canadians were spending up to 80% more on food than they had in peacetime.⁸ They were eating more because they were expending more calories, and things that Canadians would normally have bought with their extra funds, such as household items, new clothes and luxury goods, were unavailable during the war.⁹ Buying Victory Bonds was encouraged and they were certainly purchased in considerable amounts, but many people still had more in their pockets than they had had during the Depression.

While never facing the same level of hardship as civilians in other nations, when it came to food the war had a definite if temporary impact on the way in which Canadians conceptualized, prepared, and consumed their meals. With certain items now rationed, others available only on an intermittent basis, and a new emphasis on nutritionally effective eating, changes to the diet were inevitable. Canadians were also encouraged to contribute to the Allied breadbasket by growing food in their own Victory Gardens. Raising your own food was a tangible and patriotic way to meet the increased demand created by Canada's larger wartime appetite. Canadians were continuously exhorted to resist the temptations presented by the black market, and to maintain alimentary stoicism in the face of fluctuating supplies and the shifting proscriptions laid down by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB). Enforcement could only go so

⁷ *Equal to the Challenge: An Anthology of Women's Experiences During World War II* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2001), p. 319.

⁸ CWM, Lillian D. Millar, "Canada's Big Appetite: We Eat More But Not Wisely nor Well," *Saturday Night*, September 16, 1944.

⁹ George Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 148.

far; individuals still had to make the choice to modify their lives (and diets) in accordance with wartime requirements. The sacrifices – even the relatively small ones – had to be, on some fundamental level, acceptable in order for Canadians to make them. The majority of civilians were able to reconcile the demands placed on the food they ate with the overarching demands of the war. Their interests dovetailed with the common goal: to win the war and bring about a just and lasting peace.

“Meet Meat Rationing With a Smile!”



Globe and Mail, January 23, 1943

As certain commodities grew scarcer Canadians were indeed forced to come to terms with the rather shocking fact that North America might not be able to meet the all the demands being made on its people and its soil. Kate Aitken reflected this astonishment on her radio show, observing that it seemed “incredible that two agricultural countries

like Canada and the United States should ever be short of butter, of milk, of meat ...”¹⁰

The probably apocryphal yet revealing story of the customer lending the hard-pressed grocer a pound of butter again made the rounds, as did new anecdotes about milkmen breaking down due to the “pressure put on them by housewives for butter they didn’t have.”¹¹ People scrambled for limited products. Common items such as jam and potatoes grew scarcer, and dealers spoke of women “lying in wait until shop assistants make their appearance and then pouncing upon the goods that they bring from storage.”¹² But of all the foodstuffs whose supply was threatened by wartime circumstances, meat arguably caused the most anguish.

As 1943 began, the ongoing meat shortage continued to bedevil Canadian consumers whose New Year celebrations were marred by news that the Foods Administration was ordering a large portion of the beef supply to be redirected to the military. As long as the beef shortage continued, the government made clear that the needs of the armed forces would take priority. Once the army was provisioned properly, civilians would get the leftovers, mostly lower grade cuts.¹³ The *Toronto Telegram* opposed the action, arguing that it betrayed a serious lack of consideration on the part of the WPTB for civilian requirements. The fact that the armed forces needed beef was certainly beyond question, but the paper pointed out that so too did the multitude of Canadians labouring away in wartime industry. Feeding the military, however, always

¹⁰ LAC, MG30 D206, (Kate Aitken papers), vol. 8, file Tambllyn Broadcasts, September, 1942, “Tambllyn Broadcast,” January 25, 1943.

¹¹ *Maclean's*, February 15, 1943, p. 48.

¹² LAC, RG64, vol. 887, file 1-19, Press Clippings and Reports, vol. 3, “Women Struggle for Scarce Goods in Food Stores,” *Brockville Recorder and Times*, July 8, 1943, p. 4.

¹³ “Army is Given Priority On All Beef in Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, January 13, 1943, p. 1; “Save Beef for Army Use, Taggart Orders Abattoirs,” *Globe and Mail*, January 1, 1943, p. 1; CWM, “Clash of Federal Rulings Blamed for Beef Shortage as Black Market Charged,” *Toronto Telegram*, January 13, 1943.

took priority, and entailed a significant amount of food. In 1943 alone, for example, major food purchases for the armed forces included 52,000 tons of meat, 105,000 tons of vegetables, 41,000 tons of bread, 8,500 tons of butter and 2,500 tons of coffee and tea.¹⁴

But how, exactly, did the emergency requisitioning of meat fit into the WPTB's objective of ensuring "an equitable ration for all?"¹⁵ Defending the move, Taggart blamed the situation on farmers who were not selling enough cattle to meet the demand for beef. Another annoyance was the WPTB's continuing propensity to deem the beef shortage "local and temporary," namely a 'Toronto problem.'¹⁶ This was patently untrue as soon other districts across the nation suffered from their own 'local' beef supply problems.¹⁷ According to the *Hamilton Spectator*, women in Ottawa found it "almost impossible to buy beef," while Halifax and Saint John were "decidedly short" of meat.¹⁸ Various Ontario municipalities, Hamilton, Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, Woodstock, Peterborough, Niagara Falls, and St. Catherines, all reported beef difficulties. Supplies in Vancouver and Victoria also were reported as being abnormal. In most parts of Canada's 'cattle country,' however, supplies were still good. Whatever the cause or extent of the dearth, consumers feared for their Sunday roasts. "Will it come to this?" asked a *Globe and Mail* editorial cartoon in January 1943 depicting a

¹⁴ "Main Food Purchases for Canadian Armed Forces, 1943," *Canada at War*, February-March, 1944, p. 22.

¹⁵ CWM, "Civilian Needs Ignored in Ottawa's Beef Policy" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, January 2, 1943.

¹⁶ CWM, "Where is the Beef of Which Ottawa Speaks?" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, January 6, 1943.

¹⁷ "Butchers Urged to Report Black Market Operations," *Toronto Star*, January 6, 1943, p. 27; "Beef Shortage Serious in Eastern Provinces," *Globe and Mail*, January 19, 1943, p. 2.

¹⁸ CWM, "Meat Shortage is Most Acute in Big Cities," *Hamilton Spectator*, January 18, 1943.

glum, almost angry-looking butcher standing next to an empty display case and a sign which read: “No Beef, No Pork, No Veal, No Hope, No Nothing.”¹⁹

The widespread difficulty with beef led to speculation that its rationing would soon be enacted. The *Hamilton Spectator*, making fun of Taggart’s propensity to issue statements that were soon contradicted by WPTB actions, sarcastically predicted that if the Foods Administrator “is heard to announce that there is an abundance of beef and rationing ‘is not even being considered’ we can expect the official rationing order to come within a few hours from Donald Gordon.”²⁰ Taggart turned this mockery on its head, stating that meat rationing would be an “inevitable” result, a statement that prompted the *Ottawa Journal* to make the foreboding prediction that “the days of unlimited food for those able to pay have ended.”²¹

Despite Taggart’s remarks, the Foods Administration did not yet believe that meat rationing should be undertaken. However, it felt that meat should be rationed if and when the United States decided to do so.²² There was a general effort on the part of Canada and the U.S. to harmonize their rationing regulations as much as possible. Canada’s move to ration sugar in 1942 had been made essentially because the Americans had decided to do so despite Canadian objections that were largely ignored by the U.S. In January 1943, during discussions aimed at harmonizing Canadian and American agricultural policies, the two nations agreed to strive for ‘equality of sacrifice’ between the two nations. “It was agreed that, as a matter of principle, restrictions or

¹⁹ “Will it Come to This” (Editorial Cartoon), *Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1943, p. 6.

²⁰ CWM, “Riddles in Rationing” (Editorial), *Hamilton Spectator*, January 8, 1943.

²¹ “Less Butter, Less of Other Things” (Editorial), *Ottawa Journal*, January 21, 1943, p. 8.

²² LAC, RG64, vol. 83, file Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix C – Management Committee Minutes, “Consumer Rationing Committee, Minutes of Seventh Meeting,” January 19, 1943; CWM, “Think Canada Will Follow U.S. In Regard to Beef Rationing,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 9, 1943.

rationing of similar food products should impose substantially equal sacrifice on the people of the two countries,” reported the *Globe and Mail*.²³ Behind the scenes, however, Canadian officials harboured reservations about following the American rationing program too closely. “The rationing system in the US is unsatisfactory,” was the opinion coming out of Canada’s Legation in Washington in January 1943. It was complex, plans were announced too far ahead leading to hoarding, and it lacked coherence. Consequently, “public reaction to the rationing programmes seems apathetic and even hostile.” The sceptical attitude toward rationing in the United States, it was feared, could influence Canadians “through the press, the radio, and other media.” Still, harmonization, as much as possible, was needed since:

The public on each side of the border, and particularly in the United States, appears to become aroused if the public on the other side seems to be receiving a more liberal ration. Complaints poured into the Office of Price Administration (which administers rationing) when it was observed that Canadian housewives could obtain more sugar for home canning than American. When the American coffee ration was set at 1lb in every 5 weeks, there were complaints that the Canadian ration was 1lb every four weeks. ... When the announcement of rationing of canned foods was made in the USA, stories from Canada under unfortunate headings such as ‘Canada decides not to ration’ no doubt caused some questioning among American newspaper readers.²⁴

The American system might have its faults, but it was important to Allied harmony that neither population felt that the other was getting more than its ‘fair share.’

A greater degree of continental cooperation marked the move to ration meat; as one unnamed official put it, “It would not be a happy situation if the United States went

²³ Britnell and Fowke, pp. 141-142; “Extra Food for Allies is Planned,” *Globe and Mail*, January 7, 1943, p. 1; CWM, “Canada and U.S. to Work Jointly on Food Output,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 7, 1943; “Extra Food for Allies is Planned,” *Globe and Mail*, January 7, 1943, p. 1.

²⁴ LAC, MG26-J1, (William Lyon Mackenzie King papers), reel C-7039, Canadian Legation in Washington to King, January 5, 1943.

on a strict meat ration while Canadians could have all they wanted.”²⁵ Meat might be the centrepiece of the typical Canadian meal, but in the United States it took on an almost sacred character. “Traditionally,” wrote the *Washington Post*, “we are a meat-eating people, and what is more, have prided ourselves on it. All red-blooded, he-men Americans are popularly supposed to have gotten that way by eating meat – particularly rare beef. Every woman learns early in life that a sizzling steak with fried potatoes is one of the surest ways to a man’s heart.”²⁶ But the heavy overseas demands on U.S. meat made control necessary. While most of Canada’s meat exports (mostly pork) were being sent to Britain, American meat was flowing to Russia, North Africa, and Britain under Lend-Lease arrangements.²⁷

If Americans had to have their meat rationed, it would not be politically prudent to allow Canadians to continue to consume as much as they wanted. Food officials from both nations accepted that meat rationing would likely have to be implemented; Gardiner himself admitted that it was on the table. Indeed, with the North American public’s appetite for meat outpacing the amount entering the domestic market, it was almost a foregone conclusion that rationing would have to be undertaken at some point. Early in 1943, American officials announced that meat rationing would begin on March 20, and on March 31 the Canadian government announced that formal meat rationing would come into effect on May 1, a date later pushed back to May 27.

Canadians, who generally ate around two-and-half pounds of meat per week, would have to content themselves with a weekly ration of two pounds, a drop “of

²⁵ R. Warren James, *Wartime Economic Cooperation* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1949), p. 374; “Allies Need for Food Determines Rationing,” *Globe and Mail*, January 12, 1943, p. 7.

²⁶ “Steakless Days,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 1943, p. 10.

²⁷ CWM, “Beef Rationing Said Dependent on U.S. Verdict,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 11, 1943.

approximately 10 per cent in the meat consumption of low-wage groups and some 30 per cent for some high-salaried people.”²⁸ The two pound ration was not small, a point that was immediately and repeatedly made to the public by nutritional experts, the government and the press. It was much higher than the British ration and was identical to that of the U.S., and it did not include fish or poultry. The *Toronto Star* put the “luxurious” two-pound ration in perspective by holding it up against the food situation in other countries. The British got along on 1¼ pounds of meat a week, while in Russia “belts must be drawn tightly” thanks to the Nazi onslaught. In Germany, civilians reportedly subsisted on 10½ ounces of meat a week, and in Italy “entrails are now being rationed.”²⁹ The WPTB asked restaurants to observe ‘meatless days’ (Tuesdays) beginning on May 4, but other than that Canadians could order meat dishes in eating places without having to surrender any ration coupons.

Some butchers, not unexpectedly given their livelihoods, expressed the opinion that two pounds might not be large enough, but nutrition experts assured the public that the ration was more than adequate from a health standpoint. Marjorie Bell, head of the Visiting Homemakers’ Association of Toronto, even argued that people doing physically demanding jobs did not need more meat but rather required more fats and carbohydrates in their diet. The opinion that eating less meat would actually be good for one’s health began to circulate. The amount of the ration had, of course, not been arbitrarily decided; the WPTB’s Advisory Committee on Nutrition (ACN) had debated it and there had been no shortage of disagreement amongst the Committee members as to what constituted a healthy minimum. ACN member Dr. E.W. McHenry was

²⁸ “Two Pounds Weekly Meat Ration to Begin in Early May,” *Montreal Gazette*, April 1, 1943, p. 1.

²⁹ CWM, “Ration Contrasts” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, April 3, 1943.

somewhat shocked that the Committee had initially believed that one-and-a-half pounds per week was an adequate allowance; he shared the American National Research Council's view that two-and-a-half pounds per week was the required minimum.³⁰ The two-pound ration decided upon was in all probability a compromise between these two amounts.

Getting the public to accept and understand meat rationing was critical to its success. In the run-up to rationing, the WPTB spent close to \$100,000 on advertising alone, an amount that included \$7,400 for films and news clips, \$56,000 for newspaper ads, \$6,500 for radio spots, and \$23,000 for printing and distributing educational material such as meat coupon value charts for consumers, manuals for dealers, and posters.³¹ In addition to this official publicity, other less formal items appeared in the media. In an attempt to humanize the bureaucrats who now controlled Canada's meat consumption, the *Edmonton Journal* ran an article depicting WPTB officials in a rather folksy, down-home manner. The individuals whose decisions had such an impact on the Canadian diet were reassuringly portrayed as "friendly, reasonable people" who did not fit the traditional image of the stodgy bureaucrat, out of touch with the way people actually lived.³² Deputy Foods Administrator F.S. Grisdale, an Albertan with impeccable western farm credentials, was identified as "a grizzled veteran from the west who looks as if he could lean over the top rail of a stockyard pen and give you a pretty fair guess of aggregate weight of a parcel of cattle." New Foods Administrator Ken

³⁰ CWM, "Unable to Form Opinions Upon Present Information," *Hamilton Spectator*, April 1, 1943; "Two Pounds of Meat 'Lots' Food Scientist Maintains," *Toronto Star*, April 1, 1943, p. 19; "Two Pounds of Meat" (Editorial), *Ottawa Citizen*, April 3, 1943, p. 28; LAC, RG64, vol. 894, file 1-25-8, Advisory Committee Nutrition, vol. 1, E.W. McHenry to Anna Speers, October 29, 1942.

³¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 615, file 19-4, Publicity & Information. Rationing, W.F. Prendergast, WPTB Information Branch to Kathleen Archer, Ration Administration, June 28, 1943.

³² "How Meat Rationing Will Work in Canada," *Red Deer Advocate*, May 26, 1943, p. 2. (From *Edmonton Journal*)

Taylor, described as having “a twinkle of humour in his eyes,” was quoted as expressing confidence that Canada’s butchers would perform well under the added pressures of meat rationing, and “be able to cut a roast to within an ounce of what the coupon calls for.” Items also appeared in the press indicating the thoroughness with which the WPTB was preparing for meat rationing, including the fact that the Board had set up a special ‘school’ to teach butchers the ins-and-outs of meat rationing. Twenty-four meat trade representatives went on the three-day crash course under the partial tutelage of Vincent Davis, the head of Loblaw’s’ meat department. Butchers from across the country were shown the charts setting out the standardized cuts and were given demonstrations as to the proper way of slicing up the carcasses. The course, Canadians were informed, included slaughtering demonstrations at the Swift and Canada Packers plants. The goal was to ensure that these participants could then in turn inform other butchers of the best way to cut and package their products under the rationing regulations.³³ The message the WPTB was trying to get across was clear: consumers should not fear meat rationing and should trust that the state had their best interests in mind.

Meatless days began three weeks before coupon rationing came into force, serving perhaps as a training ground to get Canadians to think seriously about the meat they consumed. As the *Montreal Gazette* pointed out, meatless days were not new; during the First World War civilians had contended with both meatless and ‘wheatless’ days. The first ‘meatless Tuesday’ of the Second World War was an apparent success. According to the *Globe and Mail*, “no wails from the carnivorous” were heard in

³³ “W.P.T.B. Meat Experts Set to Advise Butchers,” *Globe and Mail*, April 22, 1943, p. 4; CWM, “Butchers To Be Trained in Standard Cutting Methods,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 21, 1943.

Toronto restaurants.³⁴ Dining on fish, poultry, eggs, salads and pasta, Canadians took to the new meat restrictions with smiles for the most part. The situation was undoubtedly difficult for some. In Halifax restaurant patrons had to content themselves with ‘grim’ fare such as lobster sandwiches, salmon, and turkey, but despite this austere menu there were only scattered reports of “customers growling at the restrictions.”³⁵ A Wartime Information Board (WIB) report on public opinion confirmed that little criticism was voiced.³⁶ Some Quebecers were annoyed that Tuesdays had been chosen, a decision that left observant Catholics meatless for two days a week. “La décision,” one Quebec resident argued, “de fixer au mardi la journée sans viande place, paraît-il, les Canadiens français catholiques dans une position d’infériorité vis-à-vis leurs compatriots de langue anglaise. Pourquoi ne changerait-on pas pour le vendredi, ce qui mettrait tout le monde sur un pied d’égalité?”³⁷ Religious issues aside, the evidence indicates that at this point in time, the majority of Canadians overwhelmingly accepted the need to control meat distribution in the greater interests of the war effort.

That the government had announced meat rationing so far in advance of the start date did not please the ACN whose members feared “panic buying in the week prior to rationing.”³⁸ Given the way consumers had acted in the past, this was not an idle concern.³⁹ But meat rationing was much more complex and potentially more perilous

³⁴ “No Meatless-Day Roars By Carnivorous Crowd,” *Globe and Mail*, May 5, 1943, p. 4.

³⁵ “Haligonians Favor Fish as Substitute,” *Halifax Herald*, May 5, 1943, p. 18.

³⁶ LAC, RG36-31, (Wartime Information Board), vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Wartime Information Board – WIB Correspondents – Topics of the Week,” May 12, 1943; May 19, 1943.

³⁷ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board – No. 8,” June 2, 1943.

³⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 1350, file Advisory Committee on Nutrition [Minutes], “Minutes of Meeting, Advisory Committee on Nutrition,” March 30, 1943.

³⁹ In the U.S., the distribution of ration book no. 4 in October 1943 caused a run on coffee (which was not rationed at the time), because the book included stamps marked ‘coffee.’ The Office of Price Administration had to reassure consumers that they were there merely as a precaution, and thus there was

than that of other commodities – the WPTB must have believed that the benefits that would accrue from educating the public as to what this process entailed would outweigh the possible problems caused by a few weeks of overbuying. The Committee was proven correct when, as with sugar and butter, the days leading up to the start of meat rationing saw many Canadians buying extra supplies despite the product's generally perishable nature. The action in the butcher shops was so heavy that many retailers feared that their stocks would be exhausted before rationing even started.⁴⁰ Having learned from previous experience, this time many dealers had laid in an extra supply of meats, anticipating the pre-ration rush. When it came, however, it far surpassed expectations, with buyers displaying an “unparalleled” demand for meat. Consumers seemed to believe that this would be “their last chance to get a large supply until the end of the war probably.”⁴¹

By all accounts, the day before meat rationing took effect was the heaviest day for meat sales in Canadian history. Across the country people queued up to get as much meat as possible. Winnipeg shops were virtually sold out of meat by the afternoon, and other cities saw similar scenes.⁴² “Toronto’s citizens,” reported the *Globe and Mail*, “showed yesterday they were determined to make the last 24 hours of free, couponless sale memorable.”⁴³ Curiously, unlike other pre-ration buying sprees, press coverage did not generally characterize this as a ‘panicky’ or overly negative event. This might have been due to the fact that meat has a much shorter shelf life than sugar or even butter, and

no need to hoard. See “Run on Coffee Started Here By Coupon in New Ration Book,” *Washington Post*, October 24, 1943, p. M13.

⁴⁰ CWM, “Meat Rationing is Preceded by General Buying,” *Hamilton Spectator*, May 20, 1943.

⁴¹ CWM, “Stocks of Meat Reduced Sharply by Panic Buying,” *Hamilton Spectator*, May 26, 1943.

⁴² “Butchers Relax After Deluge of Pre-Ration Meat Buying,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 27, 1943, p. 3.

⁴³ “Housewives Rush Meat Stores to Beat Rationing Deadline,” *Globe and Mail*, May 26, 1943, p. 4.

thus was not viewed as a particularly 'hoardable' commodity. Nevertheless, consumers cleaned out their butchers' stocks to get as much meat as possible before the long arm of the WPTB again reached into their larders. The scene was much the same in the United States where the Office of Price Administration (OPA) had to suspend sales of canned meat and fish two weeks before their meat rationing was to take effect thanks to hoarding.⁴⁴ In addition, with meat rationing already in the U.S. and with Canadian rationing not slated to begin until May, there was a notable increase in the amount of Americans coming to Canada to purchase as-yet-unrationed meat. In early April the *Vancouver Daily Province* commented on the wave of "meat-hungry American visitors" who "raided butcher shops in Vancouver and New Westminster and motored triumphantly over the border with ham, bacon and pork stored away in their rumble seats."⁴⁵ These 'meat tourists' were halted when the Canadian government passed an order requiring special permits to export meat to the United States.⁴⁶

Some also feared that coupon rationing might lead to a wider black market in beef. Larger packing firms had already alleged that some butchers were obtaining beef at unlawfully high prices from illicit sources. In an attempt to curb this underground trade, the WPTB implemented a new system of slaughtering permits for farmers. Another method to combat the black market in meat involved stamping each carcass in several places so that retailers would know that the meat they were buying was legal as

⁴⁴ "Canned Meat, Fish Put Under Sale Ban to Halt Hoarding," *New York Times*, February 18, 1943, p. 1.

⁴⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 887, file 1-19, Press Reports & Clippings, vol. 2, "Little Left At Home – Americans Raid Meat Stores," *Vancouver Daily Province*, April 5, 1943.

⁴⁶ "No Meat Permit Exemptions for Canadians Taking Meat During Trips to U.S.," *Globe and Mail*, July 4, 1945, p. 3.

only licensed slaughterers had access to this special stamp.⁴⁷ They also used moral exhortation to ensure farm compliance. “Beware the Meatlegger,” ran one WPTB ad placed in the farm press.

He won't introduce himself as Mr. Sly or Mr. Slick - But when tries to talk you into irregular trafficking in cattle, sheep or hogs, you'll find he's slick. He won't suggest anything irregular. The 'Black Market' operator is too smart for that. He will try every trick to put it over you. He is a detestable type. He doesn't care about the people who are fighting and suffering to keep the war away from our shores. He doesn't care what they are fed or starved. ...⁴⁸

On May 27 Canadians had to adjust to new protocols governing the purchase of meat, though initially few people were buying. Thanks to the heavy action in stores in the days leading up to meat rationing, day one saw butcher shops “with no meat and very few customers.”⁴⁹ This suited both dealers and consumers as it gave them a chance to figure out just what the new regulations entailed. Consumers, it was asserted, could help out their butchers by doing their “homework” before hand. “The housewife who knows the type and amount of meat she needs and its cost in coupons before she goes into the store will be the butchers ‘dream woman’ and shopping will be greatly simplified on both sides of the meat counter.”⁵⁰ In the coupon age the inherently adversarial relationship between retailer and consumer had to become more harmonious. “We still have the goods. You have the coupons. Let's Co-operate,” urged one butcher shop in Red Deer, Alberta.⁵¹ An editorial in the *High River Times* highlighted the butcher's plight. “This business of meat buying,” it was argued, “is no longer a light-

⁴⁷ “Butchers Urged to Report Black Market Operations,” *Toronto Star*, January 6, 1943, p. 27; “Order All Meat Stamped To Be ‘Tough’ on Offenders,” *Toronto Star*, May 21, 1943, p. 5; “Beef Ration Plan Controls Black Market,” *Globe and Mail*, May 21, 1943, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Ad, WPTB, *Farmer's Magazine*, June, 1943, p. 28.

⁴⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 84, Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix H – Reports, “Report on the State of Ration Administration,” June 2, 1943.

⁵⁰ “Housewife Budgets to Help Butcher” (Editorial), *Cardston News*, May 27, 1943, p. 4.

⁵¹ Ad, Alberta Meat Market, *Red Deer Advocate*, June 16, 1943, p. 2.

hearted transaction in which half-a-pound here or there makes no difference. It is a meticulous, fussy, exacting line of work.”⁵²

The new rules called for close attention by both dealer and consumer. Beef, pork, mutton, lamb and veal were rationed, to obtain them a consumer had to surrender one of the two brown ‘A’ coupons from their ration book, each representing half of the weekly ration. Because of the many different types and cuts of meats now under control, meat rationing was more complicated than that for sugar, butter, tea or coffee where one or two coupons would simply be exchanged for a fixed amount of a particular commodity. To help both retailers and consumers, the WPTB drew up a chart detailing the different meat items and the quantity an individual could obtain for one coupon. Four groups of meat products were outlined. Group ‘A’ contained smoked and cooked meats such as bacon and ham, with one coupon allowing the bearer to purchase half a pound. Group ‘B’, in which one coupon equated to $\frac{3}{4}$ a pound, was made up mainly of boneless cuts, such as some steaks, stewing beef, and various cuts of pork, lamb, and veal. Group ‘C’ meats, of which one pound per coupon was provided, contained mostly bone-in cuts, along with things such as hamburger and ground lamb. Group ‘D’ coupons provided $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds of larger bone-in cuts such as various roasts, ribs, shanks and briskets, as well as fresh sausages. Further confusing matters, consumers could ‘mix and match’ from the different categories as long as the final tally did not go beyond the coupons’ total value, and they could also save up coupons to obtain larger cuts or for special occasions.⁵³

⁵² “The Butcher’s Lot” (Editorial), *High River Times*, June 3, 1943, p. 2.

⁵³ “Meat Rationing,” *Globe and Mail*, May 25, 1943, p. 9.

Seeking to ease the confusion, Loblaw's drew up a "meat rationing guide" and physically changed the way it displayed meat in its store cases, grouping them by category and preparing the cuts so "as to give you a maximum per coupon."⁵⁴ It also set up special displays of un-rationed meats such as poultry, liver, bologna and wieners to encourage people to relieve the pressure from the rationed products. Dominion Stores printed 'photographic guides' for various types of rationed meat along with coupon information. Weston's began publishing a monthly "ration calendar" in newspapers, which indicated the dates ration coupons became valid, meatless days, and other information relevant to the food regulations. Arguably it was still a simpler arrangement than in the U.S., where a points system rationed the meat supply.⁵⁵

As it had with meatless days, public opinion seemed to firmly support meat rationing. Reports gathered by the WIB from May 30 to June 5, the first week of meat rationing, indicated a level of satisfaction with the rationing system. Consumers in Halifax were "more inclined to grin about rationing than to complain," while in Calgary rationing was received "with resignation, or even a thankful realization that things could be a great deal worse."⁵⁶ The *Halifax Herald* noted that meat rationing would finally put an end to the "most inequitable arrangement" currently in operation, while the

⁵⁴ "Loblaw's Presents Your Meat Rationing Guide," *Toronto Star*, May 25, 1943, p. 9.

⁵⁵ "Your Dominion Store Photographic Beef Ration Guide," *Globe and Mail*, May 27, 1943, p. 5; "Your Ration Calendar for June," *Globe and Mail*, May 29, 1943, p. 5. In late March 1943, the OPA began rationing meat, fats, and cheese on a points system. Canned and certain other foods were already being rationed this way. In the form of stamps, Americans could 'spend' 64 points per month on these items. Different products had different point values, and the OPA would change those values depending on supply. While this gave the authorities the ability to change the ration in response to fluctuating supply situations, consumers had to stay abreast of these adjustments. See Mei-ling Yang, "Creating the Kitchen Patriot: Media Promotion of Food Rationing and Nutrition Campaigns on the American Home Front During World War II," *American Journalism*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2005), p. 58. Like Canada, Australia opted for grade-based meat rationing system. See CWM, "Australia Copies System in Canada of Rationing Meat," *Hamilton Spectator*, January 8, 1944.

⁵⁶ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, Field Reports, No. 1-36, "Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa, No. 9," June 9, 1943.

Ottawa Citizen lauded the two-pound ration as ample, repeating the assertion that eating less meat would probably turn out to be a healthful practice.⁵⁷ Retailers responded well to the imposition of meat rationing, though some grumbled about the inclusion of certain items on the ration list.⁵⁸ There were reports of ground beef and sausage stocks going to waste because consumers simply did not want to use their precious meat coupons on them.⁵⁹ Ken Taylor addressed the fact that certain cuts of meat were not being purchased in a WPTB press release, stating that this was not the fault of rationing. He argued that consumers had bought large amounts of meat in days before rationing and thus were either “saving their coupons or using them to buy choice cuts.”⁶⁰ Taylor also expressed confidence that “the Canadian housewife will quickly adapt her buying habits to the ration system and make greater use of the less familiar cuts of meat.” In this Taylor was correct – by mid-July dealers were reporting an uptake in the sales of both sausages and ground beef.⁶¹ Canadians were growing accustomed to the rationing of meat, and were, for the most part, finding it an easy burden to bear. “Here and there,” wrote one WIB correspondent, “we hear complaints but most people are finding the quantities ample for their needs.”⁶² Meat rationing was in all probability harder on retailers than on consumers. Dealers, many of whom already lacked workers, now had to reconcile meat purchases with coupon values, an added burden in addition to physically handling and collating the accumulated coupons.

⁵⁷ “Let It Be Fair” (Editorial), *Halifax Herald*, April 2, 1943, p. 6; “Two Pounds of Meat” (Editorial), *Ottawa Citizen*, April 3, 1943, p. 28.

⁵⁸ “Urge Removal of Hamburger From Lists,” *Globe and Mail*, June 5, 1943, p. 4.

⁵⁹ “Says Buyers Won’t Use Coupons for Sausages,” *Globe and Mail*, June 17, 1943, p. 5.

⁶⁰ LAC, RG17, (Agriculture), vol. 3405, file 1500-5-3 (1), Wartime Prices and Trade Board – Publications, etc., “WPTB Press Release No. 0531 – Buying Not ‘Normal,’” June 11, 1943.

⁶¹ CWM, “Butchers Reveal Citizens Buying All Meat Types,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 13, 1943.

⁶² LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 13,” July 7, 1943.

While most consumers accepted the need to ration meat, some Canadians expressed displeasure with certain aspects of meat rationing and food rationing in general. When speculation that Canada would add meat to the ration list began to circulate, concern arose amongst those who depended on large amounts of protein to fuel their physically demanding jobs. These fears took on concrete form when the ration moved from rumour to reality. “Workmen’s lunches,” wrote the *Hamilton Spectator*, “are expected to change radically. Meat sandwiches six times a week,” the paper pointed out, “will make a sizable hole in a weekly ration quota.”⁶³ The WPTB attempted to meet this apprehension head-on. On March 31, 1943, the same day meat rationing was confirmed, the National Labour Forum radio series devoted a show to labour’s views on the rationing programme. Ken Taylor, L.B. Unwin, Administrator of Consumer Rationing, and Christine White, the Consumer Branch’s labour liaison, took questions from Norman S. Dowd of the Canadian Congress of Labour and Alfred Farmilo, President of the Alberta Federation of Labour. The labour representatives emphasised the fact that many individuals were simply not convinced that food rationing – except in the case of imported commodities such as tea and coffee – was needed. As Dowd remarked: “... lots of Canadians even today are asking the fundamental question: why have we rationing at all?” Explaining the situation, Taylor noted that increased demands on Canadian food meant that even if the government did not regulate supplies via *de jure* rationing, there would still be *de facto* rationing, what Taylor termed “rationing by queue” and “rationing by price.” Attempting to stress the class-leveling nature of wartime supply controls, Taylor argued that in the absence of state regulation a situation would result whereby “the people with money get all they want and the rest of

⁶³ CWM, “Unable to Form Opinions Upon Present Information,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 1, 1943.

us get what's left" (he could have added the people with the leisure time available to stand in line and search out supplies).⁶⁴ Coupon rationing was in fact a fair method to ensure the burden fell equally.

The fact that manual labourers were not entitled to larger rations was also cause for comment and complaint. "What would be no more than one good meal for a man engaged in physical toil would be enough for three meals for a person engaged in sedentary occupation," noted the *High River Times*.⁶⁵ Coal miners in Cape Breton threatened to go on strike in March if they did not get more food.⁶⁶ Throughout March and April, copies of an identical resolution for increased rations, passed by Trades and Labour Councils from around the country, showed up in government in-boxes.

"Whereas the ration of butter actually available is totally insufficient for the worker who brings his meal at the plant," began one:

Whereas such a rationing, besides allowing an insufficient quantity of butter might prove to be a serious impeachment to the war effort of the worker; Whereas such a drastic measure does not establish any difference between those who are in a position to observe it and those who are too hardly hit; Be it Resolved that the Federal Government be respectfully asked to do all within its power to improve the intolerable situation with which is actually confronted the Canadian worker by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board and induce the Board in acknowledging the priority of the worker's needs in the pursuit of the war effort of the country and increas[e] the workers' quota of foods vital to their subsistence, and more specifically [with] butter.⁶⁷

Saturday Night ran a letter outlining some of the problems facing workers in the wake of food shortages and increased restrictions. "It is difficult," noted the letter, "to make

⁶⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 615, file 19-4, Publicity & Information. Rationing, "Radio Broadcast – National Labour Forum," March 31, 1943.

⁶⁵ "Equitable Rationing" (Editorial), *High River Times*, April 15, 1943, p. 2. See also LAC, RG64, Consumer Branch, vol. 1447, file A-10-29-10, Reports (Annual, Consumer & Progress), Lois Dallamore to Mary Jukes, "Weekly Progress Report – Main Consumer Problems," April 12, 1943.

⁶⁶ "General Strike Threatened in Collieries for More Food," *Globe and Mail*, March 8, 1943, p. 8.

⁶⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 633, file 16-3-7-0, Butter Rationing, vol. 1, To Mackenzie King from Pioneer Lodge No. 103 I.A. of M., Stratford, Ont, April 27, 1943.

appetizing lunches with such a low minimum of butter and meat. There is considerable grumbling in the Vancouver shipyards, where 85% of workers eat out of tin boxes because of lack of cafeteria accommodation.”⁶⁸ The writer claimed that the lack of proper food and eating facilities was contributing to absenteeism. In September 1943 delegates attending the Canadian Congress of Labour’s annual convention asked the federal government to review its rationing policies by taking workers’ needs into greater consideration.⁶⁹

The wartime experience of shortages and eventually rationing transformed the ‘culture’ surrounding meat consumption, if only temporarily. Restrictions on beef, for example, led to a greater consumption of other types of meats and meat substitutes – within reason. Prior to the implementation of rationing, the shortage of steaks and roasts had increased the use of other products, leading the *Globe and Mail* to proclaim that “the once lowly wiener has come into its own.”⁷⁰ An attempt in Quebec to encourage the eating of horsemeat did not enjoy great success, but the shortage of meat did raise the profile of legumes as a “suitable alternative.”⁷¹ Neither did many Canadians take advantage of the “almost limitless supply of whalemeat” that Fisheries Department officials touted.⁷² These attempts to extend Canadian palates were doomed to failure, for as American food writer M.F.K. Fisher had pointed out in 1942, “one way to horrify at least eight out of ten Anglo-Saxons is to suggest their eating anything but the actual

⁶⁸ “Food Grumbling” (Letter), *Saturday Night*, May 29, 1943, p. 4.

⁶⁹ “Labor Congress to Back C.C.F. Party,” *Red Deer Advocate*, September 22, 1943, p. 2.

⁷⁰ “Scramble for Meat Foods Restores to Favor Summer Items Like Wieners, Loaf,” *Globe and Mail*, January 8, 1943, p. 4.

⁷¹ CWM, “Montreal Plans Gee-Gee Banquet,” *Globe and Mail*, January 13, 1943; “Today’s Food,” *Globe and Mail*, January 21, 1943, p. 16.

⁷² “Big Whalemeat Supply Is Available to Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, April 28, 1943, p. 16.

red fibrous meat of a beast.”⁷³ This was equally applicable to Canadians who, during the war, were generally urged to change their culinary approach to meat and adopt recipes that had conservation as a primary goal.

“Cook meat slowly to prevent shrinkage,” was one helpful tip dolled out by the Swift Company in one of their “Weekly Wartime Nutrition Hint” ads.⁷⁴ The WIB encouraged Canadians who, in the pre-ration era had taken their meat “straight,” to now “combine inspiration with a thrifty use of meat.”⁷⁵ The *Toronto Star* held a “How I intend to use my meat ration” contest in which readers were invited to submit letters detailing how they were planning to get the most out of the meat available to them under the new regulations. One of the winners noted that she was able to feed her family of four an ample supply of meat using only six of the eight coupons to which they were entitled. Her congenial weekly menu included a short rib roast, liver, lamb chops, meatloaf, and fish. The extra coupons were either saved or used to purchase bacon.⁷⁶

The day before meat rationing came into effect, Simpson’s published full-page advertisements in both the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* featuring advice from each paper’s food columnist. The *Star*’s Marie Holmes exhorted everyone to “Meet Meat Rationing With a Smile!” Her tips on handling the new ration included a greater use of sauces, cereals (as meat extenders), vegetables, and non-rationed “variety meats.” Holmes also offered several recipes designed for meat rationing, including one for “Canadian Victory Meat Loaf.”⁷⁷ The *Globe’s and Mail’s* Ann Adam highlighted the

⁷³ M.F.K. Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf* (New York: North Point Press, 1988), p. 101. Reprint of revised 1954 edition.

⁷⁴ “Weekly Wartime Nutrition Hints” (Ad, Swift Co.), *Globe and Mail*, June 2, 1943, p. 10.

⁷⁵ LAC, RG17, vol. 3638, file N-3-25-B [3], Consumer Information – Radio & Press Copies, June 3, 1943 – Dec. 30, 1943, “Radio Service, Wartime Information Board, Ottawa,” December 6, 1943.

⁷⁶ CWM, “Plan Menus in Advance, \$10 Winner Advises,” *Toronto Star*, June 5, 1943.

⁷⁷ Ad, Simpson’s, *Toronto Star*, May 26, 1943, p. 20.

fact that the two-pound ration would not mean the same thing to everyone. If the ration matched a consumer's normal amount, then they could take advantage of the situation by experimenting with less familiar cuts, thus extending their knowledge and resulting perhaps in a more varied diet. If the ration represented more meat than an individual or family was used to eating, then meat rationing would be a benefit. The information disseminated would teach women how to stretch their usual meat allotments, and to make use of "the thriftiest cuts." It would provide lessons on how to "measure your family's actual need of tissue building foods for positive health." Finally, for those whom the two-pound ration represented a drop in meat consumption (obviously citizens fortunate enough to be blessed with a higher income), they would become familiar with new cuts and new recipes and perhaps be inspired to incorporate the "wonderful dishes ... eaten abroad" into their menus.⁷⁸ Meat was still viewed, in many ways, as something to which everyone was entitled. They were not being asked to de-emphasise meat as the cornerstone of every meal; they were simply exhorted to make the most of less, to utilize unfamiliar cuts and explore new ways of consuming.

Such advertisements also reaffirmed corporate Canada's eagerness to identify with the war effort. The advent of meat rationing gave them an additional theme to pursue. Like most wartime ads/propaganda, John Labatt's "Isn't It the Truth" series's somewhat trite portrayal of meat rationing included loaded sentiments that left little room for dissent. "There's not a man, woman or child in Canada who'd refuse to share a meal with a Canadian soldier or a victim of the blitz," it asserted, picturing the happy recipients of Canada's bounty. The ad 'sold' meat rationing by employing the image of the hungry ally, but it also alluded to the real reason behind the imposition of meat

⁷⁸ Ad, Simpson's *Globe and Mail*, May 26, 1943, p. 12.

rationing (rational distribution), noting that it was “sharing in the fairest possible way.”⁷⁹ But the news, announced in Autumn 1943, that the new bacon contract with Britain was to be much smaller than previous contracts did not square with the public’s understanding of one of reasons why meat was rationed in Canada, namely to make more available for use overseas.⁸⁰ The reduction, according to Gardiner, had to do with a foreseeable decrease in the available amount of feed grains, but the real reason, others argued, had more to do with the fact that as farmers were not receiving high enough prices for their hogs, they were not raising as many.⁸¹

There was also less meat for export because, while Canadians may have overwhelmingly supported the need to control meat distribution, curbing actual consumption was another thing altogether. “I’ve sold more meat under rationing than at any other time,” commented one Toronto dealer.⁸² Meat rationing ensured a fairer distribution of supplies within Canada, but reports indicated that aggregate consumption of meat by Canadians actually increased. According to the Combined Food Board (CFB), the amount of meat available for consumption in Canada was 13% higher in 1943 than in previous years, just over 134 pounds per person as opposed to the 120 pounds in 1940. Meanwhile, as the Canadian meat supply grew, the amount of meat available to British consumers in 1943 was just over 107 pounds per person, down from a prewar level of 136 pounds.⁸³ By October 1943, in a letter to the Home Economics

⁷⁹ “Isn’t It the Truth” (Ad, Labatt’s), *Globe and Mail*, June 9, 1943, p. 2.

⁸⁰ “Bacon Contract Pared To 450 Million Pounds Per Year for Britain,” *Globe and Mail*, October 23, 1943, p. 1.

⁸¹ CWM, “Canadians Embarrassed Over Cut in British Bacon Quota,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 30, 1943.

⁸² “Lifting of Meat Ration Widely Approved Here; Lamb Tuesday Proposed,” *Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1944, p. 4.

⁸³ *Food Consumption Levels in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1944), pp. 50, 76.

Division of the Swift Company, the WPTB's Foods Administration admitted that while meat rationing had "worked fairly smoothly," in terms of achieving a fair distribution of supplies within Canada, the consumption of meat had not dropped, with the result that "no appreciable surplus [had] been accumulated for the British market."⁸⁴ In fact, the high level of consumer cooperation throughout the rationing of meat was attributed to the fact that they did not have to go without or often even with less. Canadians were able to obtain ample stocks with their ration coupons, and if they could not get all they wanted through legal means, they could resort to unlawful sources.

'Buy All You Want': Meat Rationing Suspended

By February 1944 the cattle that Canadian farmers had been fattening up began to flood the market and this, together with an ill-timed shipping bottleneck, created a meat surplus which led to depressed prices for farmers and raised the risk that large amounts of meat would go to waste. As the situation worsened, butchers and their representatives called upon the government to either ease or scrap meat rationing altogether, prompting speculation that the WPTB was about to take action along those lines.⁸⁵ Ilsley told the House of Commons that such moves were indeed being considered, a statement that perked up meat-loving Canadians but troubled others. The *Globe and Mail* contended that since the meat surplus was only temporary, scrapping the ration would be counter-productive, and that "nothing [was] to be gained from an

⁸⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 1199, file 20-1, Nutrition – General, vol. 2, Director of Requirements, Foods Administration to Beth Bailey McLean, Home Economics Division, Swift and Company, October 2, 1943.

⁸⁵ CWM, "Ask More Liberal Rationing as Meat Surplus Grows Huge," *Hamilton Spectator*, February 8, 1944; "Seek Increased Meat Ration to Cut Ontario Oversupply," *Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1944.

off-again-on-again policy, either by the consumer, the dealer or the producer.”⁸⁶ The

OFFICIAL NOTICE



MEAT RATIONING
and
MEATLESS TUESDAYS
TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

**KEEP YOUR UNEXPIRED MEAT COUPONS
FOR FUTURE USE**

Effective at once meat rationing and meatless Tuesdays have been suspended until further notice.

This means that ration coupons and other ration documents are no longer required by anyone to buy meat and canned salmon from dealers, and that hotels and restaurants and other quota users may obtain supplies so as to serve meat whenever desired.

Consumers should destroy unused meat ration coupons up to and including coupon number forty. All meat coupons on temporary ration cards should also be destroyed. Other coupons should be kept.

NOTICE TO THE MEAT TRADE. Ration documents should be surrendered by the trade in respect of all deliveries of meat made prior to midnight February 29. Those with ration coupon bank accounts will deposit all purchase documents. Those with no coupon bank accounts will surrender purchase documents to the banks in exchange for a bank transfer voucher to be sent to the nearest branch of the ration administration. Complete instructions will be contained in a special notice and food bulletin.

NOTICE TO MEAT SLAUGHTERERS. Because suspension of the meat ration is purely a temporary measure, meat slaughterers with permits will be required to continue observing the provisions of board orders 231 (defatting) and 340 (slaughtering and stamping of carcasses) but temporarily need not report on form BB 97, or be limited by quotas issued under the order. Farmers may now slaughter for sale direct to any household consumer.

THE WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD

Ottawa, February 28, 1944.

Globe and Mail, March 1, 1944

then agitate for similar action on the part of their government. Americans, however, did not vote in Canadian elections. If the shipping difficulties persisted, the prospect of tonnes of perfectly good meat spoiling in storage while Canadians remained on rations was a political nightmare that could not be countenanced. The cabinet agreed to temporarily suspend meat rationing.⁸⁹ In some quarters, speculation raged that lobbying by ‘special interests’ was ultimately the catalyst in forcing this decision. The *Canadian*

Hamilton Spectator echoed this concern, noting that the meat oversupply was not due to diminished demand from Britain but rather to a drop in the shipping space available to transport it.⁸⁷ As the surplus mounted, Canada’s food and agriculture officials took the question to the federal cabinet where, according to King, “a long and difficult discussion” ensued on the advisability of ending meat rationing.⁸⁸

There was more to this question than just the Canadian supply. The United States, King noted, might be unhappy with such a move, as the American public might

⁸⁶ “Placing Rationing in Peril” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, February 11, 1944, p. 6.

⁸⁷ CWM, “Removal of Meat Rations Unlikely Despite Surplus,” *Hamilton Spectator*, February 10, 1944.

⁸⁸ LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Diaries, February 28, 1944.

⁸⁹ LAC, RG2, (Privy Council Office), vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, February 28, 1944.

Grocer, reporting that Gordon and the WPTB were dead set against suspending meat rationing, alleged that “political pressure” from the Department of Agriculture had in fact forced the issue.⁹⁰

In all probability, most consumers cared little about the reasons behind the suspension; they were simply pleased that as of March 1, 1944, they were allowed to purchase meat without surrendering a coupon. They were told to hold on to them, however, as the temporary nature of the suspension was stressed. If and when supply circumstances changed, rationing would again be in force.⁹¹ The lifting of meat rationing, it was also noted, should not be taken as a sign that the war was over. “Anyone who has such ideas is in for disillusionment,” warned the Alberta-based *Cardston News*.⁹² The announcement pleased butchers, some of whom confidently predicted a 15%-20% increase in meat buying.⁹³ Others, however, expected no such runs, believing that Canadians had discovered that their demands had been adequately met under the ration regulations.⁹⁴ Still, some stores sought to capitalize on the suspension. “Buy All You Want,” and “Enjoy a Second Helping of Unrationed Lamb This Week End,” were two pieces of advice doled out by Dominion Stores. Other ads from groceries were adorned with large pictures of appetizing cuts of meat.⁹⁵ Despite this encouragement, no real meat buying rush materialized.⁹⁶ The WPTB’s Information Branch characterized the response to the meat ration’s removal as one of “mild

⁹⁰ “Political Pressure” (Editorial), *Canadian Grocer*, April 1, 1944, p. 44.

⁹¹ “Canada Lifts Meat Rationing,” *Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1944, p. 1.

⁹² “Unbounded Optimism on Meat Rationing Suspension,” *Cardston News*, March 9, 1944, p. 2.

⁹³ CWM, “Suspension of Ration System Welcomed Here,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 1, 1944.

⁹⁴ “Lifting of Meat Ration Widely Approved Here; Lamb Tuesday Proposed,” *Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1944, p. 4.

⁹⁵ Ad, Dominion Stores, *Globe and Mail*, March 3, 1944, p. 9; March 10, 1944, p. 9; March 16, 1944, p. 23; Ad, Loblaw’s, *Globe and Mail*, March 24, 1944, p. 8.

⁹⁶ “No Increase in Meat Sales Noted as Rations Lifted,” *Globe and Mail*, March 8, 1944, p. 10; CWM, “No Sharp Increase Noted in Sales of Meat Here,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 4, 1944.

enthusiasm,” with “no noticeable difference in retail sales.” As an explanation, it quoted a Kitchener dealer who stated that “people buy more of a product when it’s rationed than when it isn’t. They seem to lose interest when it’s easy to get.”⁹⁷ Sales were so sluggish that one owner of several butcher shops noted that many dealers who had raised a fuss over meat rationing “were now kicking themselves for not having kept quiet.”⁹⁸

One change in meat buying habits attributed to the ration experience was a marked preference for finer cuts, an ironic result given that Canadians had been encouraged to conserve meat and use it judiciously. Under rationing, people wanted to get the most out of their coupons, leading many to choose higher quality meats.⁹⁹ Also, in many cases people simply had more money to spend. Thus, when meat rationing was suspended Canadians had already acquired a taste for better grades of meat, a tendency a *Saturday Night* article on Canadian eating habits chastised them for. “Since family incomes have risen,” wrote Lillian D. Millar, “the average family has been buying the more expensive meats. As a result the normal marketing of meat was upset and a surplus of the cheaper cuts developed and a scarcity of the higher-priced ones.” The less expensive meats, she counseled, were as nutritious as the pricier cuts and their use would help curb the “excessive buying” in which families seemed to be engaging, a trend that certainly did not conform to the desired standard of wartime ‘austerity.’¹⁰⁰ Whether they bought expensive cuts or stuck to the ‘thrifter’ varieties, Canadians would

⁹⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 1355, file Bulletins – Miscellaneous, “WPTB – Current Views – Information Branch,” March 1-18, 1944.

⁹⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 1536, file Trends, 1944-45, “WPTB – Current Views – Information Branch, April 16-30, 1944.”

⁹⁹ “Meat Plenitude Cause of Strange Buying Trend,” *Globe and Mail*, March 31, 1944, p. 9; “Sees Buying Spree As Ration Ends,” *Globe and Mail*, June 27, 1944, p. 11; CWM, “Buying Fling on Expensive Cuts of Meat Seen Since Ration End,” *Globe and Mail*, June 27, 1944.

¹⁰⁰ CWM, Lillian D. Millar, “Canada’s Big Appetite: We Eat More But Not Wisely nor Well,” *Saturday Night*, September 16, 1944.

enjoy almost a year free of meat rationing before the looming issue of feeding postwar Europe changed the situation.

Playing the Game? Black Markets and Other Consumer 'Evils'

“While infractions of rationing have thus not been entirely absent, Canadians in general appear to have taken to rationing with good grace.”¹⁰¹ This sentiment, expressed by the *Monthly Review of the Bank of Nova Scotia* in 1943, is a fairly accurate description of the way in which Canadians responded to the wartime controls placed on their food. For the most part, individuals were willing to subjugate their normal modes of consumption for the greater good, but this overall compliance coexisted with a not inconsequential level of illegal activity. The black market, as already noted, began to operate early in the war. As food restrictions multiplied, however, so too did the underground economy as the number of individuals skirting the rules increased. The government, initially reluctant to even admit that black markets existed in Canada, changed its approach to openly condemn those who took part. “A black market,” exclaimed Donald Gordon in April 1943, “is treason and absolute sabotage on the home front.”¹⁰² The press quickly picked up on the issue, and patronizing the black market became as unconscionable as hoarding, wasting food, or rumour-mongering.

But successfully inculcating a wartime consumer ‘morality’ included reminding Canadians that a wide range of common, even innocuous practices were, strictly speaking, illegal. According to the *Toronto Star*, the black market existed, for example, whenever a grocer did not collect a coupon for a rationed commodity. It existed

¹⁰¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 608, file 19, Rationing in Canada, “The Why and How of Rationing,” *Monthly Review of the Bank of Nova Scotia*, Vol. 57, No. 9 (1943).

¹⁰² “Strong Men Iisley and Gordon Sound Grave Warning to Public,” *Toronto Star*, April 6, 1943, p. 9; “Gordon Blasts Black Markets at Conference,” *Globe and Mail*, April 6, 1943, p. 4.

whenever a grocer gave customers a little more than they were entitled to receive under the law or whenever retailers accepted loose ration coupons. It existed, it stated with some exaggeration, whenever a housewife lent her neighbour a little sugar or butter (an illegal act that prompted much ridicule until the WPTB withdrew the proscription). Buying on the black market, the *Star* argued in another editorial, could also pose health dangers. In many cases illegal foods bypassed government inspections and regulations, making them less safe for consumption. Reflecting Gordon's language, the *Star* asserted that any breach of wartime regulations "is in the nature of an act of sabotage."¹⁰³ Women were warned that they might be prolonging the war 'right in their own kitchens' if they were not vigilant in upholding wartime decrees.¹⁰⁴

As previously noted, Canadian food consumption rose during the war, and this coincided with increasing difficulties in filling British food requirements. "The United Kingdom," the Foods Administration noted in mid-1943, "is asking for the renewal of food contracts at the existing levels though in the past year it has been difficult to maintain the full shipments called for in the contracts." There was, consequently, a general hope that Canadians would observe "the spirit of rationing" as well as the law.¹⁰⁵ In other words, consumers were encouraged to get by on less, to purchase "only what they really need," even if this was less than that to which they were entitled under the rationing regulations. The *Toronto Star* tried to get this notion across by telling its readers that simply following the rationing rules was not enough. The ration coupon,

¹⁰³ CWM, "The Black Market" (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, May 20, 1943; "The Watched Pot" (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, June 21, 1943.

¹⁰⁴ CWM, "Dealings in Black Market Said Lengthening the War," *Toronto Star*, June 7, 1943.

¹⁰⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 83, Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix C, Management Committee Minutes – Consumer Rationing Committee, "Rationing Administration Management Committee, Minutes of Meeting," June 16, 1943.

argued the paper, was “a ticket of honour.” The rationing system had been devised with the belief that people would approach food with a self-disciplined attitude. Using coupons “to demand goods even when these are not absolutely essential” turned the so-called ticket of honour into a ticket of shame.¹⁰⁶ One letter-writer to the *Globe and Mail* lamented the fact that far too few of her fellow Canadians backed up their patriotic words with patriotic actions; many were as quick to crow about manoeuvring around wartime regulations as they were to complain about the restrictions affecting their lives. “They proclaim petulantly that they are not going to eat dry bread just to please the Government. ... The trouble with the black market is that it does not look black to the beam-filled eye of selfishness. Has a self-centred complex rendered us, as a nation, insensitive to the need of people whom the war has verged on annihilation?”¹⁰⁷ The food that Canadians ate now had to be seen as part of a common Allied supply – those who took too much, or more than was strictly needed to maintain good health were not living up to the dictates of wartime morality.

Honest mistakes in the collecting of ration coupons were to be expected as both consumers and dealers had to accustom themselves to brand new modalities in the buying and selling of food. But since dealers had to turn in the coupons they collected from customers in order to purchase more stocks, avoiding errors was crucial, and thus they depended on the integrity of consumers to ‘do the right thing’ if a mistake was detected. One striking (if possibly apocryphal) anecdote related to this topic was recounted on a Toronto Better Business Bureau radio broadcast entitled “Facts You Should Know About Rationing.”

¹⁰⁶ “The Ration Coupon” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, July 12, 1943, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ “Self Placed Ahead of Country” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, June 8, 1944, p. 6.

Some time ago a lady, after completing her shopping, found that she had given up only one butter coupon where she should have given two. She returned to the store and explained her mistake. The expression of blank amazement on the face of the assistant who took the coupon from her prompted her to ask if this mistake had never happened before. The answer was, 'Oh, very often, but this is the first time that anyone has ever brought back a coupon.' It is unfortunate that in this particular store consumer co-operation with the Government appears to be such an exception, instead of the rule.¹⁰⁸

Much of this broadcast's content, it should be noted, came directly from the WPTB's Consumer Branch, casting doubt as to the story's legitimacy.¹⁰⁹ If this story was in fact true, however, then it reflects rather poorly on either the integrity of Canadian consumers or the attentiveness of retailers. If false, one wonders what message the WPTB was trying to get across – for instance, were consumers not doing a good enough job following the ration regulations? Perhaps it was simply a means to discourage complacency, to remind Canadians that even the smallest lapse in wartime could have consequences, if not for themselves, then for others in society, in this case food dealers.

Along with following the rules themselves, those in the food trade were also encouraged to inform the WPTB of any suspicious activity, something that may have been difficult for those disinclined to 'snitch' on their colleagues.¹¹⁰ At times the attempts to circumvent the regulations were so blatant that dealers had little choice but to go to the authorities. A hotel operator in Cassleman, Ontario, informed the WPTB of a man, described as "foreign looking," who had driven a truck full of sugar "up to his door and offered [it] to any person who was prepared to buy."¹¹¹ In another case in Summer 1943, a Montreal merchant contacted the manager of a wholesale firm to

¹⁰⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 615, file 19-4, Publicity & Information. Rationing, "Radio Broadcast, CFRB Toronto, "Facts You Should Know About Rationing," July 17, 1943.

¹⁰⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 615, file 19-4, Publicity & Information. Rationing, Ella M. Webb, Consumer Branch, to M.W. Mackenzie, June 22, 1943.

¹¹⁰ "Butchers Urged to Report Black Market Operations," *Toronto Star*, January 6, 1943, p. 27.

¹¹¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 690, file 23-30, Black Markets, A.C. Collins, Food Officer, August 3, 1943.

purchase a large quantity of scarce food items (such as canned fish, jam, raisins, honey, corn syrup, and Jell-O) at prices above the ceiling, an apparently common practice.¹¹² At the WPTB's request, the wholesaler arranged a meeting with the black marketer who did not know that enforcement officers would be hiding in a neighbouring room to eavesdrop on the conversation. The wholesaler told the merchant "that any sales would have to be invoiced at [the] correct ceiling price ... [and] that the difference would be paid by a certified cheque from his personal account made payable to the manager personally." After discussing various items, the manager expressed some trepidation about going through with the deal, upon which the Montrealer tried to persuade him, noting "they could do a lot of business together." When the wholesale manager asked "what about the Wartime Prices and Trade Board," the black marketer answered that it was "not necessary to bother about them."¹¹³ One can readily understand the temptation that some in the manager's position would feel in the face of such an easy opportunity to make extra cash; the amount the Montreal merchant was willing to pay 'under the table' was significant. While this particular person went to the authorities, it is reasonable to assume that others did not.

Montreal was especially problematic for the WPTB. One of the WIB's correspondents reported that in Montreal there was "an appalling acceptance of black markets, by all types of people. There is a feeling that an honest man who does his duty gets all the dirt and none of the gravy; it is a struggle between integrity and a sense of being a sucker. No amount of moral suasion regarding rationing will be effective, but a

¹¹² LAC, RG64, vol. 1386, file 5-1, Enforcement -- General, vol. 2, I.M. MacKeigan, Enforcement Administration to H.D. Anger, Senior Solicitor, November 2, 1943.

¹¹³ LAC RG64, vol. 690, file 23-30, Black Markets, A.C. Collins and C. Smith to F.J. MacDonald, August 9, 1943.

vigorous stamping-out of black markets would stiffen the backbone of the Canadian citizen.”¹¹⁴ Montreal’s Dow Brewery could very well extol the virtues of wartime compliance by exclaiming “Let’s all be good citizens and stick to our ration books” in one of its advertisements, but Dow’s hometown was still the site of the most active black market in Canada, one that the WPTB was keen to extinguish.¹¹⁵ Some packers charged that half the butchers in the city were selling beef that they had bought from farmers for the ceiling price “plus \$15 or \$20 a head in cash ... black market money, which must be absorbed in the buyers' price to cover the total cost of the cattle.”¹¹⁶ So-called ‘conditional sales’ – whereupon the purchase of some scarce product was dependent upon the purchase of something else – was reported to be particularly bad in Montreal.¹¹⁷

The city was often blamed for shortages in other parts of the country, especially in Toronto, be it beef, potatoes, or jams. The WPTB intimated that Toronto’s serious potato shortage in 1943 was caused by Montreal. The *Toronto Telegram* reported that “one large wholesaler told the *Telegram* many of the New Brunswick dealers are demanding and receiving from \$100 to \$200 for carload lots over and above the ceiling price, according to [the] grade [of potatoes]. He also declared that Montreal is obviously willing to meet these demands, for to his knowledge that city is receiving

¹¹⁴ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Wartime Information Board – Confidential – No. 6 – WIB Correspondents – Topics of the Week – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 18 letters received May 9-15,” May 19, 1943; LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board – No. 18, August 11, 1943.”

¹¹⁵ Ad, Dow Brewery, *Globe and Mail*, June 26, 1944, p. 11; “Big Black Market Seen in Montreal,” *Toronto Star*, January 28, 1943, p. 5; “Prices Board Prepares Action Against Montreal Meat Market,” *Globe and Mail*, January 28, 1943, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ CWM, “Many Butchers Sell Illegally,” *Hamilton Spectator*, February 11, 1943.

¹¹⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 1447, file A-10-29-10, Reports (Annual, Consumer, & Progress), Lois Dallamore to Mary Jukes, “Weekly Progress Report – Main Consumer Problems,” April 12, 1943.

seven carloads to each one received in Toronto.”¹¹⁸ The WPTB responded by freezing half the potatoes held by wholesalers and required that all of the potatoes moving from the Maritimes go through Central Potato Control, headquartered in Montreal.¹¹⁹ A “Potato Bank” was also established in Toronto to oversee potato distribution Ontario.¹²⁰

The black market problem was by no means confined to Montreal as other cities also provided a fertile ground for illicit economic transactions. Despite its posturing, Toronto was no paragon of wartime virtue. Meat dealers there readily admitted the existence of the black market, adding “any one selling beef either had to be a philanthropist or operate on such a market.”¹²¹ In Vancouver, the *Sun* printed a list of popular black market items and what people were paying for them. Butter, which normally retailed for around 40 cents a pound, sold for \$1 in the underground economy, while tea and coffee, went for approximately twice their regular price. Smaller locales, for example the Quebec towns of Maniwaki and Hull, reportedly had an “extensive black market” in sugar and jams. The products being sold were, in some cases, stolen. While food pilfering had begun earlier in the war, by 1943 theft was a real problem, and a double-barreled one at that. Small-scale thievery was bad enough, but certain rationed commodities were obviously sought out by crooks, such as those responsible for stealing

¹¹⁸ CWM, “Court Action is Pending as Merchants Accused; City Faces Potato Dearth,” *Toronto Telegram*, April 20, 1943.

¹¹⁹ “Says Montreal Market Cuts Toronto Potatoes,” *Globe and Mail*, May 12, 1943, p. 5; CWM, “Prices Board Issues Order,” *Hamilton Spectator*, May 10, 1943.

¹²⁰ “Potato Shortage Felt in Many Ontario Towns,” *Globe and Mail*, February 5, 1943, p. 4; “Potato Shortage Acute; Buyers Forced to Pay Above WPTB Ceiling,” *Globe and Mail*, February 20, 1943, p. 4; “Shortage of Potatoes in Halifax,” *Halifax Herald*, March 23, 1943, p. 16; “Toronto Potato Bank Handles Distribution,” *Globe and Mail*, May 20, 1943, p. 4.

¹²¹ CWM, “Beef Shortage Now Acute; Black Market May Develop,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 14, 1943.

1,400 pounds of sugar from a soft drink manufacturer.¹²² It was, of course, frustrating for grocers and processors to have their goods stolen, but with most of the pilfered food destined for the black market, it became a headache for the WPTB as well. In May, F.A. McGregor announced that anyone stealing rationed foods would face an additional charge of “receiving rationed goods without coupons,” which carried a maximum fine of \$5,000 and a two-year prison sentence.¹²³

Hoarding did not seem to feature as prominently in the latter war years as during the first part of the war, but as supplies of certain foods tightened, fears that some were accumulating illegal stocks again arose. Under the terms of new butter regulations which came into effect on December 20, 1942, anyone possessing quantities above the amounts allowable had to report their surplus to their local WPTB office. The 223 consumers in Ottawa who obeyed the rule reportedly possessed an average of 24 pounds each, while in Winnipeg the figure was 23 pounds. The 56 Halifax households which reported having extra butter had an average of 18 pounds in their larders, while in Edmonton respondents were less avaricious, with only 12 pounds per household.¹²⁴ These amounts, needless to say, exceeded the half-pound per person rule to which Canadians were supposed to adhere, and represented only those who actually owned up to having extra butter on hand.

“Play the game,” the *Red Deer Advocate* exhorted, using language that hearkened back to the First World War. A person who did not adhere to the rules, who hoarded or acquired rationed goods illicitly was “sabotaging the war effort of his

¹²² “Black Market Prices High,” *Globe and Mail*, April 9, 1943, p. 15; LAC, RG64, vol. 690, file 23-30, Black Markets, A.C. Collins, Food Officer, August 3, 1943; CWM, “Tires, Canned Goods, Sugar Stolen for Black Markets, Police Authorities Declare,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 20, 1943.

¹²³ CWM, “Rationed Food Theft Serious,” *Hamilton Spectator*, May 3, 1943.

¹²⁴ “Hoarding of Butter is Verified,” *Globe and Mail*, January 8, 1943, p. 1.

country, and the man who supplies him is equally guilty.”¹²⁵ The Consumer Branch even commissioned short anti-hoarding plays, one of which, “Waiting for Mary” by author Ella Monckton, contained the following scene:

Connie: Well tell us your shopping troubles. Guess they’re much the same as mine yesterday – no lard, no stockings my size, and I’d left the ration books behind!

Maggie: All that, except I did remember the ration books – and today there are no eggs. But that’s not what made me mad. It was that old Miss Powell – do you know what she did to me?

Connie (laughing): I’ll believe anything.

Maggie: Well, I wanted just one packet of raisins to make a pie for Sunday, and Mr. Bangs had six on the shelf when I went into the store. Well, while I was getting my sugar, and watching young Bert to see that he didn’t take all the coupons out of my book, Miss Powell gets in ahead of me and buys all those six packets of raisins – and there weren’t anymore.

Mrs. B: What in the world does old Em want with six packs of raisins? Didn’t know she had such a sweet tooth ... it certainly doesn’t sweeten her nature.

Maggie: She’s a food hoarder, that’s what she is. And look here Connie, I believe that’s why you and me can’t get what we want. I bet she buys everything she can get and buries it in the cellar of that great house of hers.

Connie: It’s a shame. They keep telling us in the papers and over the radio not to buy more than we need. ...¹²⁶

The press regularly detailed prosecutions for hoarding and other violations of WPTB rules, thus engaging in public shaming and inherently warning consumers, and dealers, of what could await them if they, too, gave in to the temptation. Of course, this tactic could have unintended consequences; one grocer told the WPTB that publically naming dealers who had been found guilty of black market activities simply identified them as “good outlets for the big operators” and also, presumably, as a source of illicit goods for

¹²⁵ “Play the Game” (Editorial), *Red Deer Advocate*, April 14, 1943, p. 2.

¹²⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 1446, file A-10-29-7, Consumer Branch – Educational Program, “Two Plays. ‘Waiting for Mary’ A Ten-Minute Play by Ella Monckton and ‘Libel or Label?’ by Harriett Parsons. Issued by Consumer Branch, Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Ottawa, Ontario,” undated. In the United States, the government sponsored a Broadway play entitled “It’s Up To You” that looked at the importance of food rationing and encouraged proper consumer conduct. See Robert C. Roarty, “The Federal Government’s Wartime Food Play: It’s Up To You,” *Theatre History Studies*, Vol. 19 (June 1999): 63-79.

consumers.¹²⁷ Nor were the penalties much of a deterrent. One grocer in Arvida, Quebec, crowed to a WIB correspondent that he had been fined no less than six times for ceiling infractions, though never more than \$15. The dealer then smiled and bragged that he could certainly handle punishments that trifling.¹²⁸

WPTB enforcement officers could be zealous in seeking out and punishing infractions. The eagerness with which some inspectors carried out their duties even caused a minor diplomatic incident in early 1943 when, acting on a tip, two WPTB enforcement officers raided the Montreal home of the Spanish Consul General. But while the inspectors found nothing untoward, Pedro Schwartz, the Consul General, appalled by the action, complained vigorously to Prime Minister King that the incident had caused his wife to take to her bed with “nervous upset.”¹²⁹ Schwartz was particularly irate that the WPTB had apparently been sitting on the allegations for months before acting, “disregarding the privileges and immunities accorded to me by the Exequator bearing your signature.”¹³⁰ He insisted that an official report on the affair be prepared and given to him, and demanded to know the source of the false allegations, and to be given an assurance that such an incident would not reoccur. If Canadian authorities did not comply, Schwartz threatened to turn the whole affair over to the Spanish government. Norman Robertson quickly informed Schwartz that an official investigation into the “regrettable intrusion” was underway.¹³¹ The WPTB inspectors

¹²⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 690, file 23-30, Black Markets, “Publicity re Store Conviction,” October 16, 1946.

¹²⁸ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 23 – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 30 letters received September 5-11,” September 15, 1943.

¹²⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 623, file 19-16, Enforcement, Pedro E. Schwartz to Mackenzie King, April 15, 1943.

¹³⁰ An Exequator is the official written authorization and recognition of diplomatic status given to a foreign consul by the government of the country to which they have been assigned.

¹³¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 623, file 19-16, Enforcement, Norman Robertson to Pedro E. Schwartz, April 19, 1943.

involved claimed they did not know the residence belonged to a Spanish diplomat and were simply following up a tip alleging that the apartment held “a considerable quantity of hoarded food.”¹³² The WPTB investigators stated that Mrs. Schwartz had engaged them in a conversation about the problems she was having buying “Crisco and molasses for cooking,” adding that they gave her the name of store which had supplies of these items. Only after the inspection, claimed the officers, did Mrs. Schwartz state that her husband was the Consul General of Spain. Official apologies were extended to the family and further strife between Spain and Canada was avoided.¹³³

The actions of the WPTB in raiding the Spanish Consul’s home, while not publicized, would have reinforced the image that many had of the Board as a nosy, overbearing organization quick to label Canadians as criminals for not following their many rules and regulations to the letter. One rule in particular met with ridicule and overt disobedience: the ban on lending rationed food items. According to WPTB regulations, sharing rationed foods with a non-family member during a meal was fine, but giving away half-a-cup a sugar to a neighbor was not and could lead to a hefty \$5,000 fine. “If you don’t use all your sugar,” warned the *Hamilton Spectator*, “don’t make a good fellow of yourself and slip the odd pound to a friend. The same goes for butter, tea and coffee.”¹³⁴ For many, the nature of the law – its combination of pettiness and overweening officiousness – prompted derision, a sentiment that was unearthed by the WIB’s Toronto correspondents. “The regulations against exchanging or giving away

¹³² LAC, RG64, vol. 623, file 19-16, Enforcement, F.A. Knox to Donald Gordon, April 21, 1943.

¹³³ For more on Spanish-Canadian diplomatic relations in wartime, see Graeme S. Mount, “Canada, Spain, and Espionage during the Second World War,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (December 1993): 566-575.

¹³⁴ CWM, “Good Samaritans Told Not to Help If Foods Rationed,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 3, 1943; “Swapping Food Rations Prohibited by Ruling,” *Globe and Mail*, September 8, 1943, p. 13.

rations, however, are reported not to have been taken seriously,” they reported. “All kinds of people were discussing it, mostly with a certain amount of levity. Some of the housewives thought it was a big joke, some were pretty indignant. Everyone seemed to regard it as a regulation to be broken or evaded.”¹³⁵ The *Toronto Telegram* called the rule “bureaucracy gone crazy.”¹³⁶ The *Globe and Mail* scorned the WPTB for pulling “another ridiculous boner,” one that was an outrageous and unacceptable extension of the Board’s power as it unduly “pursues the commodity into the home after it is removed from the common supply and in possession of the purchaser.” The WPTB was there to ensure that everyone had access to an equal, fair amount of a rationed commodity – what happened to that commodity once it had been legally purchased (as long as it was not re-sold) was viewed as none of the government’s business. “Regulations like this affect the mental and moral functions of the community, but have no bearing on the relation between supply and demand. They control practices and habits, and not prices,” wrote the *Globe and Mail*, which went so far as to cast the regulation as “reflect[ing the] Gestapo in action.”¹³⁷

Byrne Sanders responded to the *Globe and Mail* editorial, claiming that the paper did not properly understand the reasons behind the order. According to Sanders, sharing rationed food resulted in “some people getting more than others” which was a direct contravention of the philosophy that underpinned wartime food control. Furthermore, Sanders wrote, “the ration allowance is the maximum that can prudently

¹³⁵ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Wartime Information Board – Confidential – No. 6 – WIB Correspondents – Topics of the Week – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 18 letters received May 9-15,” May 19, 1943.

¹³⁶ CWM, “No Swapping Order Invites Law Breaking” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, September 10, 1943.

¹³⁷ “Ridiculous Rationing” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 9, 1943, p. 6.

be made available, but is always hoped, and in fact generally works out, that consumption will be below this maximum.”¹³⁸ What Saunders was getting at was that swapping rationed foods could potentially increase consumer demand above the hoped-for minimum; a similar rationale was behind the proscription against trading ration coupons. The head of the Consumer Branch also noted that it was not in fact illegal to share rationed food with friends or neighbours during a meal. In the *Globe and Mail*'s view, this small clarification did not address the bigger issue; the fact that the state had no right to tell consumers what to do with their food once it was legally obtained and paid for.¹³⁹ Public opinion, as polled by the WIB, was equally dismissive. “When the WPTB made such a fuss about one housewife lending another a cup of sugar, everyone who wasn't amused was indignant. On the heels of indignation came the thought ‘How can they stop me?’ And now with some people it is almost a game to see how much more they can get of any rationed article.”¹⁴⁰ One of the WIB's Toronto correspondents wrote that people simply did not plan to follow the rule.¹⁴¹

The WPTB responded to this criticism by explaining that the rule existed to prevent the growth of an illicit trade in legally obtained foods. The *Globe and Mail* argued – not without some merit – that the rule would have exactly the opposite effect. If people could obtain a little sugar or butter in an emergency situation from a friend or neighbour, then they would not “seek a bootlegger for additional supplies.”¹⁴² The scale of the overt contempt for the regulation caused the WPTB to rethink the ban. Therefore,

¹³⁸ “Rationing Regulations Explained Officially” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1943, p. 6.

¹³⁹ “Explanation Not Good Enough” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1943, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board – No. 26, October 6, 1943.”

¹⁴¹ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board – No. 1-36, October 13, 1943.”

¹⁴² “Ban on Food Borrowing is Black Market Check,” *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1943, p. 3; “Explanation Not Good Enough” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1943, p. 6.

in late October 1943 it announced that while the practice had always violated the letter of the law, the Board had never *intended* to prohibit minor sharing of food, adding that no active measures had ever been taken to prevent this from happening. To further clarify matters, the WPTB amended the rationing regulations to allow for the lending of rationed foods. The *Toronto Telegram* saw through the WPTB's face-saving, asserting that the only reason for the reversal was the realization on the part of the Board that no one was going to pay any attention to the rule.¹⁴³ While the controversy surrounding food lending might seem trivial, it forms an interesting commentary on the level to which Canadians were willing to countenance state intrusion into their everyday lives. Government control over the amount of a certain food that a person could obtain was fine if it was demonstrated to be necessary and if it ensured equal distribution of a scarce commodity. What went on once that food had been legally obtained, however, was a different matter; in the consumer's mind, once the ownership of that commodity had passed into their hands, the state had no right to tell them what to do with it.

Arguably, most Canadians understood the need for wartime controls and generally did their best to obey both the letter and the spirit of the laws governing food. Still, the fact that infractions were common reflects an obvious inconsistency in consumer behaviour. To some observers, it seemed increasingly clear that Canadians were not sufficiently appreciative of the grave situation unfolding overseas, or if they were, did not equate a failure to follow WPTB regulations with a lack of support for the war effort. The thrill of flouting the rules could also create a potent sense of rebellion within some individuals, with black marketing and other outlaw behaviour becoming

¹⁴³ "Prices Board Order Permits Neighbourly Borrowing of Tea," *Globe and Mail*, October 27, 1943, p. 1; CWM, "WPTB Changes its Mind and Legalizes Swapping" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, October 28, 1943.

attractive as a result of their very illicitness. Most importantly, as one WIB correspondent from New Brunswick put it, it was “hard for many to see beyond the Ration Board to Hitler.”¹⁴⁴ With Canada being so distant from the front lines, it is easy to see how the connection between one’s everyday food habits and the greater war effort could become obscured by the mass of seemingly petty rules and sometimes even pettier officials.

A Little More of This, A Little Less of That: The Uncertainty of the Wartime Food Supply

For Canadians, the later war years proved to be a roller coaster of sorts when it came to food regulation, as news of improving supplies of one commodity seemed to alternate with news of new restrictions or rumours of possible shortages of others. In a nation so accustomed to abundance, even slight levels of food insecurity could send some souls to the edge of panic. “Is Canada faced with a food shortage?” anxiously asked one columnist in *Saturday Night*.

During the past eighteen months we have seen item after item disappear from our grocer’s shelves. We have felt the gradual extension of food rationing. We have watched with amazement the total eclipse of the humble potato. Now there are rumours of poor crop prospects for this year, and we begin to wonder whether our land of plenty is fated to become a land of scarcity.¹⁴⁵

Onions were another popular yet frequently scarce item. “Only occasionally,” wrote the *Globe and Mail*, “can a housewife or a husband who prides himself on cooking find this almost essential ingredient today.”¹⁴⁶ The supply of canned foods was also precarious at times, although unlike the U.S., they were never rationed in Canada. In August 1943,

¹⁴⁴ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 16 – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 17 letters received July 18-24,” July 28, 1943.

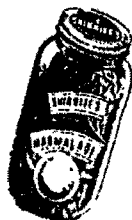
¹⁴⁵ Janet R. Keith, “Here is Our Food Situation,” *Saturday Night*, July 10, 1943, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ CWM, “Several Reasons Given for Shortage of Onions,” *Globe and Mail*, January 5, 1944.

speaking to the Canadian Institute on Public Affairs, Ken Taylor tried to calm matters by stating that further rationing was not in sight.¹⁴⁷ This positive signal was buttressed the very next day when the WPTB announced that supplies of tea and coffee were ample



It's not an infallible system, girls, but with only two coupons a month, it's an unusual man who can resist the offer of extra marmalade rations. Unfortunately, your grocer won't always be able to provide this treat for your new spare "D" Ration coupons; but when he has it in stock remember Shirriff's lively flavour and tempting tang means more value for your coupon.



**SHIRRIFF'S
MARMALADE**

Made by the makers of Shirriff's Lushes and Shirriff's New Desserts

Globe and Mail, October 19, 1943

and jellies were in supply short in many parts of the country. The makers of Shirriff's marmalade even used the scarcity as a selling point by creating a series of ads that took a facetious approach to supply difficulties.¹⁵⁰ In one ad, a gossipy wedding guest tells another that the groom was "only marrying her for her marmalade coupons."¹⁵¹ Another

enough to warrant a slight increase in the ration that would take effect September 2 when the new no. 3 ration book became valid.¹⁴⁸ Only a couple of weeks earlier the U.S. had ended coffee rationing entirely on the basis that improved shipping had led to larger stocks.¹⁴⁹

Any delight that Canadians may have felt upon hearing these happy omens was short-lived. Four days after announcing the tea and coffee increase, the WPTB informed Canadians that the rationing of jams, jellies, honey, and other sweet spreads would soon begin. This was not entirely unexpected for thanks to a poor fruit harvest jams

¹⁴⁷ CWM, "No Additional Rationing Planned for This Year, System Too Cumbersome," *Toronto Telegram*, August 18, 1943.

¹⁴⁸ "Increase of One-Third in Coffee, Tea Rations," *Globe and Mail*, August 19, 1943, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ "Coffee Rationing Ended Summarily," *New York Times*, July 29, 1943, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Ad, Shirriff's Marmalade, *Globe and Mail*, August 17, 1943, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ Ad, Shirriff's Marmalade, *Globe and Mail*, October 19, 1943, p. 5.

depicted a crowd of women storming a grocery store because the grocer had apparently acquired a case of Shirriff's Lushus dessert jelly.¹⁵² Shirriff's admitted that the light-hearted campaign was designed to prevent consumers from blaming either the manufacturer or grocers for the low supply. "That's why," the company noted, "we are trying to keep them happy by showing them the funny side of shortages."¹⁵³ Whether or not consumers appreciated the humour is unknown.

With jams and jellies short, other sweet spreads were in high demand. According to some apiarists, city folk had swarmed the countryside looking for honey and had forced the bee-keepers "almost to the point of distraction" with a buying rush that "exceeded anything in the history of the oldest bee-keeper."¹⁵⁴ Eventually, the situation forced the WPTB to suspend sales of all sweet spreads until September 2 when coupons would have to be surrendered to purchase them. In exchange for one 'D' coupon, consumers could get either six ounces of jam, jelly, honey, marmalade, apple butter, maple butter, or honey butter. One coupon could also be used to obtain ten ounces of maple syrup, molasses, or canned fruit, twelve ounces of corn or cane syrup, a half-pound of maple sugar or comb honey, or a half-pound of extra sugar. Grocers were quick to remind consumers that just because jams and jellies were now rationed, this did not mean that ample stocks would suddenly materialize on the shelves. Supplies had been so irregular over the past few months that many dealers had already engaged in informal rationing, restricting the number of jars that could be purchased at any one

¹⁵² Ad, Shirriff's Lushus, *Globe and Mail*, September 28, 1943, p. 9.

¹⁵³ Ad, Shirriff's, *Canadian Grocer*, January 1, 1944, p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ CWM, "Most Honey Already Sold to Consumers," *Toronto Telegram*, August 8, 1943.

time.¹⁵⁵ Honey producers declared that rationing of their product had come too late to be of much use as the drive to find substitutes for sugar had already cleared them out of about 60% their yearly production. Despite all this, some consumers did express optimism that the new rationing regulations would make finding sweet spreads a wee bit easier. “Perhaps now we will be able to get some – it’s been a joke looking for it lately!” was one remark reported by the *Globe and Mail*.¹⁵⁶

It is difficult to gain an overall sense of food availability in Canada during this period, as the supplies of various food products differed from region to region. For example, the Maritimes (and Halifax in particular) seemed to suffer more keenly from food shortages. This, according to a WIB source, fuelled regional resentment:

There seems to be a growing wave of complaints against the shortages - the impression being that Halifax and the Maritimes are getting the short end while others in the rest of Canada can get all they want (of unrationed commodities). It hasn't helped matters that people returning from Montreal and Toronto report the stores are well stocked with bananas, canned goods, confectionary and fruits, which are practically non-existent here. I'm not suggesting that the Nova Scotia home front is collapsing or anything like that, but people in areas where there is a large service population feel they should get better treatment in the matter of supplies.¹⁵⁷

As war weariness began to set in, consumers and dealers alike expressed annoyance over other relatively minor restrictions in the latter half of the war. Wartime supply curtailments meant that bakeries had to limit their normal offerings. The WPTB codified this in 1943, forbidding the manufacture of certain “small bakery items” along

¹⁵⁵ “Jam, Marmalade, Jelly and Honey Will Be Rationed,” *Globe and Mail*, August 23, 1943, p. 1; “Extra Sugar Available As Sweets Alternative Under New Ration Plan,” *Globe and Mail*, August 30, 1943, p. 1; “Grocers Say Rationing Won’t Help Supply,” *Globe and Mail*, August 23, 1943, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ “Women Pleased With Jam Ruling,” *Globe and Mail*, August 23, 1943, p. 11.

¹⁵⁷ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 11 – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 23 letters received June 13-19,” June 23, 1943; RG36-31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 31 – Digest of confidential reports from voluntary correspondents. Based on 21 letters received October 31-November 6,” November 10, 1943.

with cake icing.¹⁵⁸ In the interests of conserving both labour and scarce foodstuffs, a host of other regulations curbed the sorts of products bakers could offer their customers. The extension of credit by bakers was also forbidden. In August 1943 the WPTB outlined new bakery guidelines that reduced the number of items (namely “fancy products”) that could be sold. Canadians, the WPTB announced, would henceforth have to content themselves with fewer elaborate baked goods in favour of “more of the plain bread and cake product which require a lower labor output, but which have higher nutritive value.”¹⁵⁹ The casualty list contained a number of specialty rolls, including hot dog and hamburger buns, and the number of bread types that could be produced was now limited to ten. Cakes weighing less than eight ounces were forbidden, although bakers were still allowed to cut up larger cakes and sell pieces individually. Sugar-based icing was forbidden, except on wedding cakes.

The range of restrictions caused ferment in the bakery trade. Secretary of the Ontario Bakers’ Association, Robert H. Ackert, believed that the new regulations would injure the industry, especially those running smaller bakeries. Representatives of the trade, he noted, were currently in Ottawa trying to get the government to agree to certain “modifications” to the new rules. Ackert was careful to underscore the fact that the trade was not protesting “merely to favour their own ends,” but rather they had the consumers’ best interests in mind.¹⁶⁰ That Canada needed to conserve wheat products was, in Ackert’s estimation, a misconception given the huge carryover in existence. Bakers, like all Canadians, were already limited as to the amount of sugar they could use; why should they be told what they could use it for? The products turned out by

¹⁵⁸ “Ottawa Postpones Bakery Order Date,” *Red Deer Advocate*, September 15, 1943, p. 10.

¹⁵⁹ “Will Be Fewer ‘Fancy Goods’ From Bakery,” *Globe and Mail*, August 27, 1943, p. 17.

¹⁶⁰ CWM, “Changes May Be Sought in Wartime Prices Order,” *Hamilton Spectator*, August 27, 1943.

bakers, he also argued (somewhat less effectively), were of great nutritional importance. “Cake,” according to Ackert, “is one of the highest nutritional foods today and if the baking of this product is curtailed the public will be deprived of valuable food.”¹⁶¹ Bakers’ objections had an impact. On September 7 the WPTB announced that the icing ban was postponed until October 11 so that the Board could reassess the rules. This bore fruit for the bakers, as the Board did relax the regulations somewhat. The number of bread products bakers could manufacture was raised from 10 to 12, and bans on hot dog and hamburger buns were reversed.¹⁶²

Along with rationing and the need to eat nutritiously, there was yet another factor consumers had to keep in mind: the ‘patriotism’ of foods. To keep increasingly confused consumers informed as to what foods were virtuous in terms of the war effort, Dominion grocery stores began tagging certain products with a special “Victory Food” label which told consumers which items were currently ‘patriotic’ to buy.¹⁶³ According to *Marketing* magazine, the availability of foods determined whether or not they received a “Victory Food” tag – the label was given to products that the chain had ample supplies of “in hand.”¹⁶⁴ This may have been a clever way, in other words, of moving goods that Dominion had in surplus, while diverting attention from those that it could not acquire. In a related tactic, food processors sought to demonstrate patriotism by explaining why certain goods were now scarce – they had, of course, ‘enlisted’ for victory. Weston’s soda wafer crackers, consumers were told, were not “A-W-L from

¹⁶¹ CWM, “Bakery Order May Be Eased Very Shortly,” *Hamilton Spectator*, August 28, 1943; “Ban on Iced Cakes Postponed By Board,” *Globe and Mail*, September 8, 1943.

¹⁶² CWM, “Ottawa Permits Bakers to Make Hot Dog Rolls,” *Hamilton Spectator*, October 7, 1943.

¹⁶³ Ad, Dominion Stores, *Globe and Mail*, March 26, 1943, p. 12; April 2, 1943, p. 8; April 16, 1943, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ “Cheerful Side of Food Situation Shown in this Retail Advertising,” *Marketing*, April 10, 1943, p. 4.

your grocer's," they were "on duty with the forces."¹⁶⁵ The ad sought to foster continued consumer loyalty to their product by telling shoppers that if they were having trouble finding their soda crackers, it was because "most of them are going to *your son, or your husband* or that *someone close to you* in the armed forces. We're sending them the finest biscuits we know how to make. For we believe, with you, that *there's nothing too good for our men in the Service!*"¹⁶⁶ The makers of Clover Leaf Salmon used the same loaded sentiment, telling consumers that John Bull was now their "No. 1 customer," and that their product had "gone to war."¹⁶⁷

As food restrictions peaked, the culinary ingenuity of ordinary Canadians was tested as well. Advice on how get the most out of available ingredients became something of an industry. Throughout 1943 and 1944 ongoing difficulties with butter resulted in several temporary reductions in the ration; at one point in 1944 the butter ration was reduced by eight ounces per person.¹⁶⁸ Elevated demand on the milk supply continued to depress butter supplies, as did dry, hot weather, which also adversely effected milk production.¹⁶⁹ In May 1944 the temporary reduction was extended in the hopes of building up stocks to prevent a future shortage.¹⁷⁰ As the butter situation continued to deteriorate, the ration reduction was extended into August.¹⁷¹ As a result, some Canadians doubtless tried out one or another of the various butter-stretching

¹⁶⁵ Ad, Weston's, *Globe and Mail*, April 6, 1943, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Italics in original.

¹⁶⁷ Ad, Clover Leaf Sea Foods, *Globe and Mail*, April 15, 1943, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ Britnell and Fowke, p. 160; "Butter Ration Cut Ordered Owing to Decreased Output," *Globe and Mail*, February 25, 1944, p. 1. This was accomplished by postponing the dates that two March butter coupons were due to become valid, meaning that Canadians lost one week's worth of butter.

¹⁶⁹ CWM, "Tea, Coffee Ration May Be Boosted," *Financial Post*, August 25, 1944.

¹⁷⁰ LAC, RG64, vol. 1565, file WPTB Food Bulletin, "WPTB Food Bulletin," May 8, 1944; "Butter Ration Drops Again Next Month," *Globe and Mail*, May 10, 1944, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 83, file Consumer Rationing in Canada, World War II, Appendix C – Management Committee Minutes Consumer, Rationing Committee, "Ration Administration Management Committee, Minutes of Meeting," July 13, 1944; "August Butter Ration Cut To Help Build Reserves," *Globe and Mail*, July 17, 1944, p. 1.

techniques touted by the country's 'celebrity cooks.' For instance, Ann Adam shared her "Magic Butter Spread" with her readers, an interesting concoction that used gelatin, evaporated milk, water and salt to make one pound of butter go a bit further.¹⁷²

All these wartime twists and turns altered but did not overhaul Canadian food habits. The limits placed on the average diet were mild and gave rise to a certain amount of ingenuity on the part of cooks. The most dismaying aspect of this period may have been the uncertain nature of the supply; food regulation became a patchwork quilt with squares being added or removed depending on the supply situation at any given time. Consumers rejoiced in more tea and coffee but were frustrated when sweet spreads were restricted or when the ever-fluctuating butter ration was reduced yet again. With food supplies constantly changing, Canada's cooking experts were called upon to offer their advice, and the WPTB did their best to keep dealers aware of the changes. Beginning in 1942, grocers could consult the *Food Bulletin*, the *Wholesalers' Bulletin*, and the *Retailers' Bulletin* for news that pertained to their businesses. A similar publication aimed primarily at women, the *Consumers' News*, provided the WPTB with both the means to inform and exhort.¹⁷³ In the end, food consumption became yet another means of demonstrating patriotism and support for the war effort – by buying the 'right' products and by consuming them in the 'proper' manner.

'The Diet of One is the Concern of All': National Nutrition in Wartime

Not only did Canadians have to alter their eating habits to cope with various shortages and restrictions, they also had to contend with an increasing deluge of information on

¹⁷² "Today's Food," *Globe and Mail*, January 2, 1943, p. 9.

¹⁷³ LAC, RG64, vol. 23, History of the Information Branch, December 31, 1947.

proper nutrition. As noted in Chapter Four, this emphasis on healthier eating habits had been sparked earlier in the war, but as the drive to defeat the Axis intensified and as the state ratcheted up its control over the domestic food supply, there emerged a more concerted effort to improve national nutrition levels. In January 1943 the push to improve Canada's eating habits took to a much broader stage as the Department of Pensions and National Health launched a national nutrition campaign. With Canada's *Official Food Rules* as its fulcrum, the campaign involved the close cooperation of

NUTRITION--- *the deciding factor*

THE improving picture for the United Nations everywhere is raising the hopes of enslaved millions. At last we more than match the Axis in materials of war.

And all the time our most powerful weapons — superior resources — are silently at work.

In no department are we more definitely superior than in FOODS. Foods mean adequate nutrition. Adequate nutrition, in the final analysis,

means better fighting ability and greater staying power in our armed forces. It means higher stability and sterner resolution in our civilian population. It is the deciding factor in winning.

The Silverwood organization is glad to be playing its part on the food front. We export to many battle areas dairy products that help to keep fighting men fit. We distribute commodities of the same high quality to workers in war industries and to civilian homes.

Silverwood's
dairy products

SILVERWOOD DAIRIES, LIMITED

PLANTS LOCATED AT: London • Toronto • Hamilton • Windsor • Kitchener • St. Catharines
Peterborough • Brantford • Chatham • Stratford • Sarnia • Guelph • Woodstock • Elmira •
Lucan • North Bay • Sudbury • Cayuga • Cargill

Globe and Mail, January 7, 1943

'dramatization' of Canada's *Official Food Rules*, which included murals, charts and "demonstrations of nutritive foods." The Swift Packing company sponsored a pamphlet entitled "Eat Right to Work and Win," which was touted as the firm's 'contribution' to the national nutrition campaign. "In this war everyone is in the front line," it read in

several government departments, private firms, advertisers and a variety of non-governmental organizations. Through pamphlets, magazine and newspaper articles, advertisements, radio spots and film clips, the importance of maintaining health through nutrition was underscored.

In conjunction with the campaign, Eaton's department store in Toronto opened a special "Food for Fitness Exhibition."¹⁷⁴ It featured a

¹⁷⁴ Ad, Eaton's, *Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1943, p. 24.

part. “These immortal words mean that the health, happiness and strength of all Canadians must be the best possible in order to carry through to the end of the war and beyond. Food has a large part to play in helping us reach and keep these goals.”¹⁷⁵ Swift was particularly prominent in the campaign, transforming itself from a meat packing firm into “a Dominion-wide organization devoted to the conservation and efficient distribution of Canada’s food resources.”¹⁷⁶ Other companies incorporated the nutrition message into their ads as well. Silverwood’s Dairies ran advertisements emblazoned with the slogan “Nutrition – the deciding factor.”¹⁷⁷ Bell Telephone drew upon the link between nutrition and worker efficiency. “I figure that eating right is part of my job,” stated the linesman pictured in its ad. “With Bill and Slim and a lot of other linesmen in uniform, it’s up to us old-timers to keep telephone lines working.”¹⁷⁸ Proper nutrition as outlined in Canada’s *Official Food Rules* (a copy of which the linesman’s wife had put up in the kitchen), readers of the ad were informed, was key to maintaining energy. On several occasions Ann Adam devoted her ‘Today’s Food’ column in the *Globe and Mail* to the issue of nutrition, and ran a sample menu that used Canada’s *Official Food Rules* as a guideline for one day’s meals. These examples demonstrate the underlying ethos of the campaign which hinged upon the link between self-interest and the common good. What was good for the individual was good for the many. As *Maclean’s* put it, whether or not one ate a properly balanced meal was no longer a personal matter; now, “the diet of one is the concern of all.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ LAC, RG17, vol. 3670, file N-9-12 [1], “Eat Right to Work and Win,” 1942.

¹⁷⁶ “Weekly Wartime Nutrition Hints” (Ad, Swift Co.), *Globe and Mail*, June 2, 1943, p. 10.

¹⁷⁷ Ad, Silverwood’s Dairies, *Globe and Mail*, January 7, 1943, p. 59.

¹⁷⁸ Ad, Bell Telephone, *Globe and Mail*, February 24, 1943, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ “Are You Fit to Win a War?,” *Maclean’s*, January 15, 1943, p. 15.

While the wartime drive to improve national nutrition seemed beneficial, members of the Food Requirements Committee (FRC) worried that it might result in added pressure on the food supply as Canadians tried to increase their consumption of certain items. The FRC was sufficiently apprehensive that it summoned L.B. Pett to respond to its concerns. Pett stated there was no reliable way of assessing how much extra food might be needed as a result of the campaign, but “when pressed for his best guess, he added that, in consultation with Sir John [Boyd] Orr, he had arrived at estimates of increases ranging from 10 to 16% for milk, cheese, fruits, vegetables and eggs.” He did not, however, think that there would be any need for more “meat, poultry, fish, potatoes and butter,” foods whose supplies were all vulnerable in some way. Taggart, who was still at that point Foods Administrator, expressed trepidation, perhaps justifiably, that those who would most eagerly respond to the nutrition campaign were probably already eating well. These individuals would simply end up consuming “more than their actual requirements thereby aggravating the supply position.” G.S.H. Barton, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, objected to “The Canadian Nutrition Programme,” a pamphlet issued by the Department of Pensions and National Health, which implied it was good for people to eat more than their required level of nutritious foods. This point was well-taken, for “it was agreed that in any follow up campaign emphasis should be placed on having those people consuming more than their actual needs check their consumption for the benefit of those who have not yet come up to their minimal requirements.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ LAC, RG64, vol. 909, file 1-26-2-1 (Minutes of Food Requirements Committee, vol. 1), “Food Requirements Committee – Minutes of the Seventh Meeting,” December 31, 1942.

Canadians from all walks of life were encouraged to evaluate their eating habits and take steps to make them conform to the standards set out in the *Official Food Rules*, which, as the WIB pointed out, formed the “practical yardstick against which you should measure the day’s meals.”¹⁸¹ War workers were an especially important focus of the government’s campaign, as their performance, it was contended, hinged on proper nutrition. Factories were encouraged to set up cafeterias or eating counters where the employees could purchase nutritious, affordable food that would have a positive effect on productivity and morale.¹⁸² This was important for as food shortages and restrictions multiplied, packing healthy lunches from home became more challenging. A 1943 report by the Department of Pensions and National Health’s Nutrition Service estimated that a scant 15% of boxed lunches brought to work could be considered “good lunches.” Later that year, hoping to improve war worker nutrition, the Department issued a pamphlet entitled “Wartime Victory Lunches.”¹⁸³ In Hamilton, a city nutrition committee prepared a “Better Nutrition” program that would school women in the art of packing “the best possible lunch boxes for their husbands.”¹⁸⁴ Also stressed was that female war workers engaged in physically demanding industrial labour for perhaps the first time needed to reassess their food requirements. On the other hand, businessmen were warned not “to fill themselves up on starchy and sweet foods and fats.”¹⁸⁵ The *Official Food Rules* informed Canadians that vegetables were an important part of the

¹⁸¹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3638, file N-3-25-B [3], Consumer Information – Radio & Press Copies, June 3, 1943 - Dec. 30, 1943, "For Radio Use Only – Wartime Information Board – This is a weekly summary of regulations, restrictions, and supply conditions as they affect the Canadian consumer," June 14, 1943.

¹⁸² CWM, “Industry Nutrition Conscious,” *Globe and Mail*, March 8, 1943.

¹⁸³ CWM, “Food for War Workers” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, March 23, 1943; “Victory Lunches,” *Food in Canada*, July, 1943, p. 28.

¹⁸⁴ CWM, “Better Nutrition Vital In Wartime, Campaign Planned,” *Hamilton Spectator*, February 23, 1943; “Nutrition Said Key Factor in Finishing War,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 28, 1943.

¹⁸⁵ CWM, “Tired Businessman Wouldn’t Be Weary if Well Nourished,” *Hamilton Spectator*, January 29, 1943.

diet, but getting people to eat their veggies was challenging. Ann Adam pointed out that bland salads were far too frequently found on Canadian tables, and “in many a household, gaining acceptance of enough vegetables is really a major problem.”¹⁸⁶

The emphasis on nutrition altered ideas about what foods were ‘good’ or ‘protective,’ but even the way food was cooked was re-evaluated in light of wartime exigencies. A particularly wasteful way to prepare vegetables was to boil them. “We’ve poured a lot of minerals down the sink in our day, murdered vitamins, and spoiled a lot of food by overcooking it,” noted a *Maclean’s* article.¹⁸⁷ Potatoes, which Canadians were encouraged to consume daily (when they could get them) were a case in point. The best way to conserve their nutrients, Ann Adam counseled, was to serve them with skins intact either baked or in an ‘escaloped’ form.¹⁸⁸ Canadians were also told to cook vegetables only until tender, to add wheat germ to their morning cereal to increase the amount of vitamin B in their diets, and that cooking vegetables in a covered pan kept vitamins in your food.¹⁸⁹ While the nutrition campaign’s ultimate effectiveness is difficult to judge, the results of a survey of 600 Torontonians (200 male war workers, 200 female war workers, and 200 housewives) undertaken in March 1943 are worthy of note. As reported in *Saturday Night* magazine, despite months of publicity none of the respondents were able to accurately cite Canada’s *Official Food Rules*, while just one-quarter “had a general and rather inaccurate idea of the rules.” The survey revealed that fruits and vegetables were most lacking in the respondents’ diets, but that “nearly

¹⁸⁶ “Today’s Food,” *Globe and Mail*, April 22, 1943, p. 10.

¹⁸⁷ “Are You Fit to Win a War?,” *Maclean’s*, January 15, 1943, p. 37.

¹⁸⁸ “Today’s Food,” *Globe and Mail*, January 12, 1943, p. 9.

¹⁸⁹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3638, file N-3-25-B [3], Consumer Information – Radio & Press Copies, June 3, 1943 - Dec. 30, 1943, “Consumer Radio Service, Wartime Information Board, Ottawa. ‘Conservation’ Supplement, Number Two,” December 20, 1943.

everyone ate the right amount of meat – no doubt when they could get it.”¹⁹⁰

Housewives proved to be the most informed when it came to proper eating habits, followed by male war workers and, bringing up the rear, female workers, results that seemingly bore out some of Taggart’s fears. The people apt to pay attention to the campaign were those with the time to do so. Middle-class ladies spending a morning taking in the ‘Food for Fitness’ exhibit, for example, were no doubt be more aware of the new nutritional guidelines than war workers who had little free time to spend lingering in a department store. One also wonders how many war workers were among the 400 Toronto women attending the similarly titled ‘Food for Fitness’ classes run by the Health League of Canada, in which sound nutrition was taught.¹⁹¹

Other, more formal studies revealed that Canada’s national nutrition levels were generally quite good. In March 1943 the Combined Food Board decided to investigate food consumption in America, Britain, and – even though it had not yet been granted full membership – Canada. The survey considered both the amount and types of foods making up typical diets, as well as their nutritional components. The results, released in April 1944, contained few surprises. The average Briton’s diet was inferior to that of the average North American’s, and it was noted that without the productive capabilities of either the U.S. or Canada, it would most certainly be in even greater peril. When contrasted with prewar levels, all three countries had increased their consumption of dairy products, but only the U.S. and Canada were eating more meat, with Canadians leading the way with a more than 15% increase since the war’s start.¹⁹² The survey

¹⁹⁰ “Concerning Food,” *Saturday Night*, July 24, 1943, p. 27.

¹⁹¹ “Food Classes Popular,” *Globe and Mail*, March 10, 1944, p. 10.

¹⁹² “Food Levels are Gauged,” *Globe and Mail*, November 25, 1943, 2. While Britons ate far less meat, dairy products, eggs, sugar, tomatoes, and fruits than North Americans, they consumed more potatoes,

identified only one noteworthy 'deficiency' in the Canadian diet, a significantly lower consumption of vitamin C than in either Britain or the United States, a trend that predated the war. According to the CFB's estimates, in pre-war years Canadians had access to an average of 58 milligrams of vitamin C per day. Comparative figures for the U. S. and Great Britain were 99 milligrams and 112 milligrams respectively. By 1943, the Canadian quantity had risen to 61 milligrams, while in the U.S. and Britain the numbers had gone up to 106 and 127 milligrams.¹⁹³ The Canadian levels were well shy of what the U.S. Research Council considered to be "average (full) intake requirements" of 70-75 milligrams per day for adults.¹⁹⁴ Pett, who noted that this was a longstanding problem "in the Canadian diet," largely glossed over the deficiency.¹⁹⁵ Various steps had been taken to combat this deficiency from bringing oranges under the price ceiling to increasing the production of fortified apple juice. Oranges were a popular fruit but were still too expensive for lower-income Canadians who, it was reported to the Consumer Branch, "would buy them if the price were lower, and do make sacrifices to buy them for their babies and pre-school children."¹⁹⁶

The CFB's report also indicated that Canadians were buying more food than ever before, and that despite rationing and shortages, civilians were spending more of their

green and leafy vegetables, and grain products. *Food Consumption Levels in the Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944), pp. 12-13; J.P. Cavin, "Aspects of Wartime Consumption," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (May 1945), p. 33.

¹⁹³ *Food Consumption Levels*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 31, 46.

¹⁹⁵ "Never Enough of Vitamin C in Diet Here," *Globe and Mail*, April 29, 1944, p. 11; LAC, RG64, vol. 1199, file 20-1, Nutrition - General, vol. 2, C.M. Wright to Byrne Sanders, "Re. Consumption of Oranges by Low-Income Groups," August 21, 1943.

¹⁹⁶ Britnell and Fowke, p. 165; "New Process to Bring Growers Ample Reward," *Globe and Mail*, November 6, 1943, p. 15.

total income on food, something that WPTB figures confirmed.¹⁹⁷ Canadians were consuming less of certain rationed and/or scarce commodities, but as the Foods Administration reported in late 1943, “civilian food consumption as a whole is substantially above the 1936-1939 average and continues to rise steadily.”¹⁹⁸ The Dominion Bureau of Statistics released figures indicating that Canadians were eating more of almost everything, including meat, eggs, tomatoes, grain, and dairy products. The only products of which Canadians were consuming slightly less were sugar and sweets, fruits, nuts, vegetables and imported beverages such as tea, coffee, and cocoa.¹⁹⁹ That Canadians were supremely fortunate in their wartime diets was a useful propaganda tool, one that made any complaints consumers might have seem petty and churlish. In early 1944 the WIB reinforced the message that Canadians were well fed when it released a report that examined the food supplies of several countries, including Canada. It stressed that the citizens of North America and Australasia – the Allied food depots – had diets that were “extremely favourable.”²⁰⁰ People who had spent time overseas found food conditions in Canada to be quite superior to those in other nations. Upon arriving back in Canada after four years spent in Britain, one soldier expressed amazement at the rich variety of foods available. The lack of serious shortages and the full displays in food stores were a stark contrast to the British diet which, while substantial enough, suffered from serious monotony.²⁰¹ For Canadians, the war’s impact

¹⁹⁷ *Food Consumption Levels*, pp. 74-75; CWM, “Food Buying Record Is Set By Canadians During 1942,” *Globe and Mail*, November 10, 1943; “Canada Eats More Heavily During War,” *Globe and Mail*, December 10, 1943, p. 15.

¹⁹⁸ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 9, file 3-16, “Secret Cabinet War Committee Document No. 666 – Report of the Economic Advisory Committee on Canada’s Food Position,” December 1, 1943.

¹⁹⁹ CWM, “Canadian Food Consumption Has Increased in War-Time,” *Hamilton Spectator*, December 9, 1943.

²⁰⁰ “Rations Give Better Meals to Canadians,” *Globe and Mail*, January 5, 1944, p. 11.

²⁰¹ “Soldier-Sculler Home, Finds Surprising Menu,” *Globe and Mail*, February 10, 1944, p. 5.

had been light when compared with the European experience, and had even resulted in improved eating habits.

Grounds for Victory: War Gardening

Canadian nutrition was helped by the large number of individuals and families who cultivated wartime gardens. In addition, by adding to the Allied stockpile, the practice served to alleviate some of the guilt of taking food from the common pool. “Home gardens,” wrote Peter Burton in the *Canadian Home Journal*, “can play a very important part in national defense during *this* war, just as they did through all trying years of the Great War when in city town and village, householders by the thousands turned over long-established lawns and treasured flower plots and to the cultivation of vegetables.”²⁰² These ‘patriotic’ or ‘war’ gardens had indeed proved useful during the First World War, but early on in the Second World War the government dissuaded the practice, fearing that too many homegrown vegetables would upset the market for commercially grown produce. According to the *Globe and Mail*, prior to 1943 the government had “left no stone unturned to discourage” home vegetable gardening.²⁰³ The public was told that tight supplies of seeds, fertilizer and other garden materials meant that only those who cultivated vegetables for a living or experienced amateurs should undertake such a task.²⁰⁴ In 1940 the Department of Agriculture told the John A. Bruce Seed Company of Hamilton that encouraging those on relief to grow vegetables was fine, but “an organized effort on the part of other residents of our towns and cities to undertake such work might, at the present stage of the war, prove of doubtful value, and

²⁰² Peter Burton, “Wartime Gardens,” *Canadian Home Journal*, April 1940, p. 43.

²⁰³ “Government Encourages Amateurs,” *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1943, p. 11.

²⁰⁴ LAC, RG17, vol. 3373, file 1500, Victory Garden Brigade to James Gardiner, July 23, 1942.

might easily result in surplus production which would be very difficult to deal with.”²⁰⁵

In another instance, the Ottawa Horticultural Society complained that the Department of Agriculture had ‘thrown cold water’ on early efforts to popularize Victory Gardens.²⁰⁶

Despite government attempts to dissuade would-be gardeners, various organizations still urged their members to take up backyard cultivation as a tangible way to support the war effort. The Federated Women’s Institutes, for example, encouraged the formation of “Garden Brigades” to not only grow their own vegetables, but to also “influence friends in urban centres to do likewise.”²⁰⁷ In Vancouver, the similarly named “Victory Garden Brigade” petitioned the federal government to encourage the creation of home vegetable gardens.²⁰⁸

By Summer 1942 the increasingly serious shortage of farm labour began to effect commercial production, which in turn drove up the price of fruits and vegetables. Poor yields in 1943 would lead to the imposition of price controls, but until then the prices of most fresh fruits and vegetables had not been subject to the ceiling, owing to the large seasonal disparities experienced by these products.²⁰⁹ After a trip to several western cities, Byrne Sanders reported that consumers were “generally indignant” at the cost of fresh produce, which in some cases had doubled over the past year.²¹⁰ This was compounded by a tightening tin supply and uncertainty surrounding vegetable imports from the United States. All these factors prompted a shift in the government’s stance on

²⁰⁵ LAC, RG17, vol. 3373, file 1500, G.S.H. Barton to J.G. Muir, October 16, 1940.

²⁰⁶ LAC, RG17, vol. 3374, file 1500(5), William M. Cavaye to G.S.H. Barton, December 14, 1942.

²⁰⁷ LAC, MG28 I316, (Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada), vol. 9, file 10 (Federated News, 1943-55), “Federated News,” July 1942.

²⁰⁸ LAC, RG17, vol. 3373, file 1500, Victory Garden Brigade to James Gardiner, July 23, 1942.

²⁰⁹ Britnell and Fowke, pp. 328, 338; *Report of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, January 1, 1944 to December 31, 1944* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1945), p. 22; “High Cost of Fruit, Vegetables Due to Increased Farm Wages,” *Globe and Mail*, August 11, 1942, p. 13.

²¹⁰ LAC, RG64, vol. 1447, file A-10-29-10, Reports (Annual, Consumer & Progress) “Progress Report of Consumer Branch,” August 24, 1942.

Victory Gardens. In a letter to R.W. Mayhew, a Liberal M.P. from Victoria, British Columbia, G.S.H. Barton defended the government's policy but admitted that circumstances were changing – the labour issue alone might “by next spring make it necessary to adopt an entirely different attitude, and encouragement of vegetable production in urban home gardens may become necessary.”²¹¹ By 1943 the government's about-face on the issue of Victory Gardens was complete. In February it actively promoted a “Grow All You Can” campaign, a move that pleased those in the horticultural community.²¹² The manager of *Canadian Horticulture and Home* magazine thanked Barton for finally recognizing the important role that home gardens could play in the war and pledged the periodical's support for the campaign.²¹³ This shift was further solidified when the Agricultural Supplies Board (ASB) released a pamphlet, “The Wartime Garden,” which stated that there was “a greater need for home production of vegetables now than at any time during the war. Every available bit of land that is suitable should be put into a garden.”²¹⁴

Char Miller, in writing about the American experience of Victory Gardens, characterizes the movement as one that combined ‘frontier’ individualism with national communal goals; Americans “were encouraged to become self-sufficient to benefit the state.”²¹⁵ One can also apply this to the Canadian experience. Growing one's own vegetables could result in a smaller grocery bill, a larger more reliable supply, as well as nutritional benefits derived from a greater consumption of fresh vegetables. Given the

²¹¹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3373, file 1500, G.S.H. Barton to R.W. Mayhew, August 6, 1942.

²¹² “Government Encourages Amateurs,” *Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1943, p. 11.

²¹³ LAC, RG17, vol. 3374, file 1500(5), G.W.M. Mundy to G.S.H. Barton, February 16, 1943.

²¹⁴ LAC, RG17, vol. 3374, file 1500(6), Agricultural Supplies Board, Pamphlet “The Wartime Garden,” 1943.

²¹⁵ Char Miller, “In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice During WWII – Victory Gardens,” *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 2003), p. 395.

importance of vegetables to the diet, it was easy to link Victory Gardens to another great wartime preoccupation: proper nutrition. If enough vegetables were grown, preservation meant that consumers would be able to draw upon the fruits of their labours into the winter months. The state benefited as well. Fewer items would have to be trucked to stores, taking some pressure off rationed fuel supplies. In addition, ‘digging for victory’ meant that more of the produce from large commercial growers could be diverted for military use.²¹⁶ Home vegetable gardens could provide another key benefit, for as the Consumer Branch pointed out, the high costs of fruits and vegetables led to “poor consumer morale” and discontent.²¹⁷ “The higher the price of the product in the shops, the wider the smile of the man who grows his own ... or the woman,” wrote Ann Adam.²¹⁸

As the movement grew in popularity, it would have been hard for those with enough land to ignore the call. Encouragement to grow vegetables at home became a ubiquitous part of wartime life, and even emerged from the most unlikely of sources, for example Fine Foods of Canada, makers of the ‘Green Giant’ brand of canned vegetables. The company placed advertisements in periodicals such as *Saturday Night, Life* and *Canadian Homes & Gardens* containing tips on “How to Grow Your Own Peas” and “How to Grow Your Own Corn” and produced a pamphlet entitled *The Green Giant’s Secrets in Growing Peas and Corn*.²¹⁹ While this appeal to the greater good was probably sincere, there were other, rather more narrow motives as well. Shortages

²¹⁶ “Victory Gardens,” *Claresholm Local Press*, April 8, 1943, p. 6.

²¹⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 24, Weekly Progress Reports, WPTB, “Weekly Progress Report, No. 56,” July 26, 1943; LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, Field Reports, No. 1-36, “Field Reports – Wartime Information Board, Ottawa – No. 18,” August 11, 1943.

²¹⁸ “Today’s Food,” *Globe and Mail*, August 25, 1943, p. 8.

²¹⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 889, file 21 (Advertising General, vol. 1), “Circular Letter to Canadian Retailers from Fine Foods of Canada,” February 18, 1943; Ad, Niblets Corn, *Saturday Night*, March 27, 1943, p. 23.

of tin and supply disruptions meant that companies like Fine Foods had to do something to keep their name, and brands, in the consuming public's mind. Lacking product to sell, it sold itself by selling the war effort. Once things got back to normal, it was believed that the public would return to the 'Green Giant' and to the convenience of processed vegetables from a company that had proven its patriotism.

Many businesses latched on to the garden campaign as a means to sell their products, a tactic that made more sense for some than others. It was certainly logical for Canadian Humus Products to tell the public "Food is Ammunition! Grow Vegetables for Victory." But it made less sense for the Evangeline Shops, purveyors of women's fashions, to urge customers to "grow your own 'rations' right in your own back yard."²²⁰ Eaton's did its part to encourage gardens and its sales by opening a Seed Department in its stores.²²¹ Not to be outdone, its rival Simpson's opened a "Victory Garden Shop" that sold everything from seeds and fertilizer to Vigoro plant food to various rakes and trowels.²²² Seed and hardware retailers reported record sales.²²³ Several newspapers organized Victory Garden contests. The *Winnipeg Free Press* announced it would be handing out prizes ranging from \$10 to \$20 for various types and sizes of vegetable gardens.²²⁴ In addition, some communities established committees to apportion out idle lots to those who wanted to cultivate a Victory Garden.²²⁵

²²⁰ Ad, Canadian Humus Products, *Globe and Mail*, March 11, 1943, p. 7; Ad, Evangeline Shops, *Globe and Mail*, May 31, 1943, p. 12.

²²¹ Ad, Eaton's, *Globe and Mail*, April 3, 1943, p. 24.

²²² Ad, Simpson's, *Globe and Mail*, April 15, 1943, p. 11.

²²³ "Victory Gardens Army Has Mushroom Growth," *Globe and Mail*, May 1, 1943, p. 15.

²²⁴ "Victorious Vegetables," *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 1, 1943, p. 3.

²²⁵ CWM, "Sign Up as a Victory Gardener To-Night," *Hamilton Spectator*, April 13, 1943; "Many Persons Are Planning Victory Gardens For Spring," *Hamilton Spectator*, March 4, 1944; "Need Vegetables as War Creates Lack of Imports," *Hamilton Spectator*, March 6, 1943.

In September 1943 the Department of Agriculture sent out inspectors to gauge the response to the Victory Garden campaign in various parts of the country. The movement was compared to the last attempt to encourage mass cultivation of vegetable gardens, the relief plots of the Depression. It was discovered that the amount of land cultivated as Victory Gardens was considerably less than that which had been cultivated as relief gardens. The inspectors thus concluded that “the appeal to patriotism together with individual fears of possible food shortages were not as potent as absolute necessity in promoting home gardening.” Also of some concern was the extent to which home gardens were indeed cutting into commercial vegetable dealers’ sales. The inspectors reported that wholesale and retail dealers “report a very appreciable lack of demand during the past few months which is attributed to home production.” The decrease was most evident in Ontario and Quebec, and least noticeable in the Maritimes; in Halifax, Victory Gardens seemed to exist “in name only.” The campaign was strong in Montreal where approximately 15,000 gardens were depressing the market for commercially grown vegetables. Ottawans created some 2,000 Victory Gardens, and in Toronto about 45 acres were dedicated to the cause, an acreage that corresponded to only “50% of that worked by relief families during the years 1937-38.”²²⁶ The numbers were much better in the west. Winnipeg had an estimated 800 acres of Victory Gardens, while Calgary boasted 207 acres. In all, the government estimated that 115,000,000 pounds of vegetables had been grown in Canadian Victory Gardens in 1943. Potatoes had proven

²²⁶ LAC, RG17, vol. 3709, file W-5-45, Memo from R.M. Scott, Chief Markets Information to Mr. Shaw, September 21, 1943.

to be the most popular vegetable, making up 37% of total production. Tomatoes and carrots followed at 14% and 10%, respectively.²²⁷

Still, Victory Gardens had proved useful, and in early 1944 the ASB's Wartime Gardens Committee laid out plans for the coming year. They would involve the cooperation of the provincial agricultural departments, along with another national advertising blitz.²²⁸ As an Allied victory began to look ever more likely, gardeners were encouraged to keep up their production because the food crisis wrought by the war was unlikely to end along with the fighting. Indeed, the popularity of Victory Gardens peaked by war's end, and global food needs prompted the government to encourage Canadians to continue tending their plots well into the peace.

Conclusion

When compared to other countries involved in the Second World War, Canada got off lightly when it came to food restrictions. At its peak, sugar, butter, tea, coffee, meat and preserves were subject to coupon rationing in Canada. Shortages of these and other commodities were common but generally not severe, and while everyone had to adjust their eating practices to meet wartime consumption needs, the shift was not overly onerous. Canadians actually ended up eating more and paid greater attention to proper nutrition than they had in peacetime. In some cases diets became more varied as people were motivated to try new foods and new methods of culinary preparation. Government agencies, namely the WPTB, while by no means flawless, functioned well enough to ensure that Canada's food stocks were equitably parceled out and that Canadians were

²²⁷ "Victory Garden Production High," *Halifax Herald*, April 29, 1944, p. 1; CWM, "Survey Shows Victory Plots Huge Success," *Globe and Mail*, April 29, 1943.

²²⁸ LAC, RG17, vol. 3628, file B-23-1-1, Agricultural Supplies Board, Miscellaneous, "Agricultural Supplies Board, Minutes of Meeting," January 25, 1944.

well nourished. Individual citizens, subjected to an almost ubiquitous barrage of information and propaganda, by and large accepted the small food sacrifices they were asked to make. For civilians on the home front, doing with less or without was a contribution that could be made several times a day, and which gave them the sense that they too were helping to end the war.

And yet acceptance of hardship and sacrifice was not unconditional. Many Canadians questioned the reasons behind the moves that constricted their eating habits, not because they were selfish, but because they understood that the issue of food was of great consequence to winning the war. One can readily understand the unease with which some civilians greeted each new regulation, each tightened restriction, and every rumour that (rightly or wrongly) stated another foodstuff was imperilled. Consumers openly questioned certain aspects of Canada's price and regulatory systems, but that should not be taken as an indication that if faced with genuine hardship the country's resolve would have crumbled. Consumers may have occasionally demonstrated less than virtuous behaviour in the marketplace, but for the most part they obeyed the rules. The postwar years, however, would continue to pose significant challenges. Would the desire to win the peace, and all that it entailed in terms of food 'sacrifice,' be as strong as the desire to win the war?

Chapter Seven
***Weapon of War, Agent of Peace: Canadian Food and
Agriculture in the Postwar World***

We in Canada are likely to think of hunger as a “gnawing” sensation that sends us with all speed to the nearest restaurant, or to the ice-box. We are surprised when we hear from a “displaced person” that chronic hunger does not make itself felt in the stomach, but in the head. After a few months of inadequate diet your mind is robbed of all thought except that of finding something to eat. With that as your main desire you can’t concentrate on producing goods for export, or on the moral issues in life. How different that is from the “shortages” which plagued Canada in recent years: scarcity of steaks, salad oils, lettuce and sugar.¹

– *Royal Bank of Canada Monthly Letter*, 1948

Introduction

Germany’s surrender in May 1945 followed by Japan’s capitulation in August brought the Second World War to an end. But for the Allies, winning the war was simply a precursor for yet another battle as establishing a productive, peaceful world in the aftermath of the conflict would be just as crucial and almost as difficult. It was also a job that needed to be taken seriously by the people as well as their elected leaders.

Herbert Hannam, for one, was certain that “unless we are prepared to meet the problems of reconstruction intelligently, it is possible for us to lose the war for freedom – even after gaining victory on the battlefield.”² This remark, made during an address before the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs (CIPA) in August 1942, reflected a general understanding that the Allies, once victorious, could not simply abandon war-torn populations to their fate, a notion that was driven by both the forces of humanitarianism and pragmatism.

¹ “The World’s Food,” *Royal Bank of Canada Monthly Letter*, November 1948, p. 1.

² Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG28 I66, (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), vol. 131, H.H. Hannam, *Speeches, 1933 to 1942*, H.H. Hannam, “Agriculture in the Reconstruction Period,” Address before the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs, at Lake Couchiching, August 22, 1942.

Improving conditions in the distressed areas of Europe was absolutely necessary if the Allies were to eclipse the influence that, it was feared, opposing ideologies could wield. Food could indeed shape the future, one that the western powers hoped would be grounded in the democratic values and free-market economics in whose name they were fighting the war. Meeting postwar needs was crucial, even if this meant that many of the wartime institutions, controls, restrictions and informal codes of conduct that had evolved over the previous five years had to remain in place, temporarily at least. Just how acceptable this would be to the Canadian public was unknown as the war's end brought with it a natural desire for 'normalcy.' Civilians on the home front had been willing to change their daily habits and forego certain comforts as part of the war effort, but after years of uncertainty and conflict Canadians craved peace in every sense of the word. When it came to food, the Canadian public's willingness to sacrifice in wartime had been adequate but tinged with a degree of self and group interest. How much was the public willing to sacrifice in the postwar era? War was no longer an active force, and threats to global stability, such as hunger, were not as immediate, their dangerous implications less easily recognized.

To what extent did postwar circumstances test the bounds of Canadian interests in the realm of food? Certainly, on an individual level, many Canadians understood the necessity to assist those in need, but at the same time there was also a strong desire to 'move on.' The government's delicate balancing act during wartime did not disappear with the return of peace, but became more difficult. It was up to the state to balance the competing forces at operation within the Canadian food system by enacting policies that would help alleviate some of the misery overseas while also making sure that the

domestic transition from war to peace was as smooth as possible. The overseers of Canada's wartime economy had managed to navigate the shoals of public opinion, and the controls that had been put in place to ensure economic stability had worked well. There had been problems, some complaining and even evasion of the rules, but no great calamities had ensued. Canadian farmers and consumers had responded to wartime appeals, while at the same time keeping a sharp eye on their own welfare. The public had largely accepted broad curbs on personal freedom, seeing it as essential to the greater good. They had done so, however, as a nation at war, an impetus that would soon be gone.

Canadian Food and the Perils of Peacetime: The Dilemma Over Meat

Journalist Rex Frost wrote in the June 1945 issue of *Saturday Night* that there could be “no permanent peace while hunger stalks in Europe.”³ Indeed, it took little imagination to suppose that upon the conclusion of peace, one of the most pressing issues would be that of food.⁴ Feeding the liberated peoples of Europe was not merely a humanitarian act. Astride the noble motivations lay the belief that human misery could breed dangerous political and social upheaval, and in the aftermath of war a crisis of critical proportions was indeed unfolding overseas. Years of destruction had left Europe's agricultural infrastructure seriously impaired, its transportation networks in tatters, and its normal channels of trade devastated. Warfare had had a calamitous physical impact on farming, destroying both land and labour that would have gone toward producing

³ Canadian War Museum (CWM), Rex Frost, “Canada, Too, Faces a Shortage of Food,” *Saturday Night*, June 22, 1945, in *Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War* (hereafter cited as CWM).

⁴ Ralph E. Birchard, “Europe's Critical Food Situation,” *Economic Geography*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 1948), p. 277.

foodstuffs. In addition, Europe teemed with masses of displaced persons and populations that had been malnourished for years, circumstances that presented a potentially great burden for North American food supplies. In 1944, estimates indicated that in the first postwar year, around eight million tonnes of food would have to be sent to Europe to meet relief needs.⁵ Nor was it a situation that could be fixed quickly; by 1948, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that only a handful of European countries were approaching prewar feeding standards.

Most importantly, the notion that the Allies would aid the dispossessed in the aftermath of war was not simply an implicit assumption, but a promise made by no less than Prime Minister Winston Churchill in August 1940.⁶ In 1941 the Inter-Allied Committee on Postwar Requirements had been set up to study such matters and two bodies concerned with postwar food and agriculture were established under the auspices of the United Nations. These were the FAO, which grew out of the Hot Springs Conference, and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). While the FAO was intended to be a permanent organization with a broad mandate, UNRRA had as its specific purpose the supplying of relief to the newly freed lands of Europe.⁷ Food distribution was UNRRA's largest task, taking up close to one-third of its total resources. Canada would contribute to worldwide food relief efforts through these bodies, but most of the nation's postwar food shipments would continue to go to Britain under a series of bilateral contracts.

⁵ *UNRRA: Organization, Aims, Progress* (Washington: UNRRA, 1944), p. 8.

⁶ "The Road to Victory," *Times (London)*, August 21, 1940, p. 4.

⁷ C.F. Wilson, "Canada, Food, and the United Nations," *Canadian Banker*, Vol. 51 (1944), p. 70; LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 31, file UNRRA, L.B. Pearson, "UNRRA On the Threshold of Action: An Overview," *A Program on United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation* (Washington, 1944), pp. 1, 23.

Prior to the end of the war, it seemed as though Canadians were ready to continue sacrificing in peacetime. In June 1944 the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) polled them as to whether “food rationing should be continued in Canada after the war in order to send supplies to the United Kingdom.” 70% of respondents answered ‘yes,’ while 24% said ‘no’ and 6% were undecided. The highest percentage of respondents answering ‘yes’ was in British Columbia (89%), followed by the Prairies (80%) and Ontario (79%). The Maritimes (69%) and Quebec (44%) expressed the lowest support. There was no appreciable difference between men and women, with 69% of male respondents and 72% of females expressing acceptance of postwar rationing to feed Britain. There was also very little difference in rural and urban respondents: 70% of farmers answered ‘yes,’ as did 71% of respondents living in cities with a population of over 100,000. There was, however, a significant degree of variance according to income and education levels. 78% of those in the ‘upper income’ group answered ‘yes,’ but only 65% in the ‘lower income’ group did so. 76% of college-educated respondents answered in the affirmative compared to 62% of those with a public (grade) school education. Also noteworthy was that approval for postwar rationing fell slightly when the question was posed differently. When asked “Do you think that food rationing should be continued in Canada in order to send supplies to people in Europe when they are freed from German occupation,” 66% of total respondents answered ‘yes.’ Based on the poll results, the WPTB report concluded that “sizable majorities approve the continuation of food rationing after the war, to supply the United Kingdom and liberated Europe,” but that “Quebec, and possibly the Maritimes as well, might require some ‘selling’ on this score.”⁸

⁸ LAC, RG64, (Wartime Prices and Trade Board), vol. 444, file 10-88, Public Opinion Polls, “A Nation-

As the war's end approached, the WPTB made it clear that there would be no automatic or speedy end to wartime controls. In fact, it was probable that relief needs might even intensify the current regulations governing food consumption. For a year Canadians had enjoyed restriction-free meat, but in March 1945 the government admitted that European demands for food might force an end to that suspension.⁹ According to a report that appeared in the *Hamilton Spectator* conditions in many parts of Europe "held the lively threat for the Dominion of a return to meat rationing."¹⁰ Donald Gordon disclaimed any responsibility for the decision to ration meat, arguing that it was a matter of high policy that would be determined "at the very top level, with the Board looking after only the mechanical details."¹¹ Gordon's circumspection proved well-founded, for the decision to re-impose the meat ration would turn out to be more torturous than the initial one made in the midst of the war.

On its own, the global need for more meat may have been enough to force the return of rationing to Canada, but actions taken by other Allied countries, particularly the U.S., influenced the decision as well. As historians such as Amy Bentley and Harvey Levenstein demonstrate, Americans did not, in the immediate postwar period, distinguish themselves when it came to famine relief. As Bentley argues, not until the Soviets began exerting influence in Eastern Europe did the U.S. government begin to move seriously, clearly to prevent Communism's spread. Previously, U.S. officials were reluctant to continue imposing restrictions on the American people.¹² Plagued by

Wide Survey of Canadian Attitudes Toward Wartime Ceilings and Rationing," June 1944.

⁹ "Ration Meat If Necessary Within Six Weeks – Ottawa," *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1945, p. 2.

¹⁰ CWM, "European Needs May Yet Force Rationing Return," *Hamilton Spectator*, March 14, 1945.

¹¹ "Meat Rationing Policy Question, Gordon Declares," *Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1945, p. 22.

¹² Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 143-144.

shortages, the American public had continuously chafed against food restrictions, especially those on meat, a situation that only got worse as the war approached its conclusion.¹³ In March 1945, in the midst of yet another meat shortage, a baleful feeling had arisen that Americans were “going on short rations while people in Europe are being fed too well.”¹⁴ In addition, because Britain had recently released some of its emergency food stocks to help liberated Holland, Belgium, and France, rumours circulated that Britain was sitting on large stocks of food obtained from the U.S. via Lend-Lease.¹⁵ Shortly thereafter Britons were shocked to learn that not only was the United States cutting its domestic meat ration by 12%, but that it would also be curtailing its meat exports to the U.K. by 87%.¹⁶

The American opinion that Britain was sitting on stocks of food, along with the move to cut meat exports, prompted great consternation in the U.K. Churchill refuted the charge in Parliament, arguing that Britain’s food reserves were under 6,000,000 tons, far less than the 700,000,000 ton figure being quoted in the U.S. Moreover, since Britain was distributing food to the newly-liberated peoples of Europe, that number would decrease to about 4,750,000 tons by the summer.¹⁷ British resentment was also

¹³ According to an April 1943 Gallup Poll, Americans had the greatest difficulty dealing with meat rationing. See *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971, Vol. One* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 381. See also Meg Jacobs, “‘How About Some Meat?’: The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (December 1997): 910-941. For general insight on the place of meat in American society, see Roger Horowitz, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) and Barbara E. Willard, “The American Story of Meat: Discursive Influences on Cultural Eating Practice,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (August 2002): 105-118.

¹⁴ “People in U.S. Feel Europe’s Civilians Fed Too Well While Americans Go Short,” *Ottawa Citizen*, March 14, 1945, p. 13.

¹⁵ “U.S. Cuts Meat Supply To Britain By 87 P.C., Home Rations Trimmed,” *Globe and Mail*, March 19, 1945, p. 1.

¹⁶ “Coming Meat Cut Worries Britain,” *New York Times*, March 19, 1945, p. 3; CWM, “Reduction in Meat Supplies Will Seriously Hurt Britain,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 19, 1945.

¹⁷ “British Food Stocks,” *Times (London)*, March 22, 1945, p. 4.

fuelled by the fact that Americans (like Canadians) had access to quantities of food that would make “Britons’ mouths literally water.”¹⁸ American food supplies might have been at their thinnest in 1945, but Americans were still eating extraordinarily well in comparison with their Allies across the Atlantic.¹⁹ Even with meat rationed, Americans still ate more meat per capita than Canadians, where meat consumption was unrestricted. The *Times* scathingly noted that “the American table groaned as much in 1944 as it ever did, and it is against that phenomenal year that present supplies are being set and the verdict of ‘shortages’ and ‘near-famine’ is being pronounced. Such famine conditions would be warmly welcomed in devastated Europe, and in Britain, too.”²⁰

If in some Americans’ estimation Britain was too well fed, then Canada must have seemed like a land of unimaginable decadence. Meat-hungry Americans had not been pleased when Canadian meat rationing had been lifted in 1944. In light of Canada’s decision, the Office of Price Administration (OPA) tried to head off public dissatisfaction by increasing the amount of meat available to civilians under the points system.²¹ By 1945 Canada was increasingly viewed by some Americans as a wartime food utopia where scarcity simply did not exist. For example, in February *Time* magazine wrote about the waves of Americans who were “sweeping the shops of Windsor bare,” with meat being a prime target.²² In just one day that month U.S. customs officials in Detroit were forced to call in 15 extra inspectors to cope with 17,500 returning shoppers, “arms laden with bacon, beef, ham, canned meats, chicken

¹⁸ “John Bull Bewildered Over Report Uncle Sam May Cut His Meat Ration,” *Ottawa Citizen*, March 20, 1945, p. 2.

¹⁹ Bentley, p. 151.

²⁰ “The American’s Food – Little Evidence of Scarcity,” *Times (London)*, March 21, 1945, p. 4.

²¹ “Can’t Drop Meat Curbs, Agencies Say,” *Washington Post*, March 2, 1944, p. 8; R. Warren James, *Wartime Economic Cooperation* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1949), pp. 377-378; “OPA Makes Reductions,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1944, p. 12.

²² “Rush to Buy,” *Time*, February 12, 1945.

and even rabbit.” The *New York Times* furthered the image of Canada as a land of food abundance, claiming that Canadians were enjoying “a plentiful supply of meat at reasonable prices,” along with copious amounts of butter and milk. “Even small neighborhood markets display a complete line of meats and the visitor rubs his eyes in astonishment the first time he sees such a display, but the scene quickly becomes commonplace,” the paper remarked.²³ U.S. politicians were not above using the characterization to score points at home. The charge that Canada could easily spare more meat for European needs was heard more than once during a U.S. Senate investigation into American food problems. Montana Senator Burton K. Wheeler wondered why so much American meat was going to Europe when Canada had “all kinds of meat” for which it had no market.²⁴ Minnesota Senator Henrik Shipstead complained that Britain could obtain American meat under Lend-Lease while Canadian sellers made substantial profits. Still others voiced displeasure at Canada’s alleged refusal to send meat to the supposedly hard-pressed United States.²⁵ James Gardiner refuted these charges, pointing out that Canadian meat consumption compared favourably to America’s, and that an offer made the previous autumn to ship cattle to the U.S. was rebuffed.²⁶

Alarmed at dwindling U.S. willingness to help feed Britain, the U.K.’s Minister of Food, J.J. Llewellyn, and its Minister of Production, Oliver Lyttleton, told President Franklin Roosevelt that Canada would increase its overseas food shipments and that

²³ “No Meat Scarcity is Seen in Canada,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1945, p. 5.

²⁴ “Holding Profit Sin is Charged to OPA in Meat Shortage,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1945, p. 1.

²⁵ “Meat Packers Blame Bowles for Shortages,” *Washington Post*, March 27, 1945, p. 1.

²⁶ “Says U.S. Packers Bar Canada’s Meat,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1945, p. 8.

they would be travelling to Ottawa to discuss the matter with Canadian officials.²⁷ The meat fiasco was such that during a news conference called to discuss the distribution of relief in Europe, Lester Pearson, then serving as chairman of UNRRA's supply committee, had to remind reporters that the topic at hand "was UNRRA, not meat."²⁸ He took the time, however, to emphasise that Canada had pledged to send 33,000,000 pounds of meat to Europe, while most of that previously promised by the U.S. had been cancelled. He also stressed that over the previous year Canada's per capita meat consumption had fallen 8 pounds below that of the U.S.²⁹

The acrimony over meat was a troubling signal that postwar relief might not be a straightforward proposition, and would require as much international cooperation and compromise as had the war's prosecution. As VE day approached, making sure that Europeans were adequately fed was in everyone's interests. In a late March editorial the *Washington Post* deplored the bickering between nations and called for everyone to consider the bigger picture:

The eye is apt to lose sight of this vital job because of the distractions created on both sides of the Atlantic by dead cats of controversy. In Britain there seems to be an open season for pharisaism. The London *Economist* talks of America living 'at the expense of' Britain. Earl Winterton, in a foolish debate in the House of Commons, speaks of American 'moral responsibility' to make up Britain's depleted stockpiles. The pharisaism in Britain is matched by air-flailings in the United States. The Chicago *Sun* finds the Canadians eating well, and others feel Canada is not doing her duty to the United Nations. The Canadians are left free to retort that what the *Sun* and other observers are really noting is that the Canadians kill their cattle while we leave them on the hoof.³⁰

The next day *Post* columnist Marquis Childs took a similar line, chiding Americans for their selfish nature. "So," he wrote, "here we are looking jealously into each others'

²⁷ "More Canada Food Pledged to Britain," *New York Times*, March 30, 1945, p. 17.

²⁸ "UNRRA Goods Sped to Needy Peoples," *New York Times*, March 31, 1945, p. 10.

²⁹ "UNRRA Gets Bulk of Meat From Canada," *Washington Post*, March 31, 1945, p. 3.

³⁰ "Passing the Buck" (Editorial), *Washington Post*, March 30, 1945, p. 8.

windows. Canada has a porterhouse steak for supper tonight. We haven't had a porterhouse steak on our table for five weeks and therefore we are resentful and angry."³¹ According to Childs, "political pressure" from U.S. cattlemen, not Canadian avarice, had kept Canadian beef out of the country, and perhaps the American consumers' reluctance to do with less meat was more to the point. This was a sentiment with which even the First Lady appeared to agree. When asked about reports that civilians in Britain and Canada had access to greater amounts of butter and meat than Americans, Eleanor Roosevelt retorted that she "knew little about the food situation in Canada, but it would do everyone good and stop a lot of talk if Americans had to eat British rations for one month."³²

These circumstances placed pressure on the Canadian government to increase the nation's meat shipments to the British, both to make up for the loss of American supplies and to counter the perception that Canada was not doing its fair share. There were also, undoubtedly, humanitarian motives afoot as well. The spectre of a newly-liberated Europe degenerating into further chaos was surely not a welcome one, and questions as to Canada's response soon arose. If Canada needed to increase the amount of meat shipped overseas, would a return to meat rationing be necessary, and if so would it be an acceptable step for the government to take? Canadian public opinion *appeared* to be firmly in support of sending more food overseas, but to what lengths were people actually willing to go? Both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* expressed their support for such a move. "The British," argued the *Globe and Mail*, "have suffered so much that none but callous isolationists would prevent the sending of more meat, no

³¹ "Washington Calling," *Washington Post*, March 31, 1945, p. 4.

³² "She Doesn't Have a New Easter Bonnet," *Washington Post*, March 30, 1945, p. 12.

matter what this country may have to do without.”³³ The *Star* expressed similar sentiments. “Whatever Canada can do to help make up the deficiency which will arise for British families, the Canadian people will want to see done.”³⁴ The contents of a Wartime Information Board (WIB) memorandum on public opinion and meat rationing presented to the Cabinet concurred, asserting that “further restrictions which may be deemed necessary will, if suitably presented, be accepted without complaint by the great majority of Canadians and will exert a beneficial influence on civilian morale in general.” The rationale behind this rested upon the theory that active participation, through individual sacrifice of some sort, gave Canadians “a personal stake” in the outcome, thus rendering further assistance more likely.³⁵ Another factor that, in the WIB’s estimation, pointed toward public acceptance of meat rationing was the deluge of bad press that Canada was receiving in the United States which left the impression that selfish Canadians were oblivious to the suffering of others.

But perhaps the most crucial element factoring into the government’s decision on meat rationing was the looming federal election. Loathe to take action that risked adversely affecting his government’s standing among voters, King noted in his diary that: “The Cabinet is willing enough to have our people undergo a measure of privation to help the starving peoples of Europe. We cannot afford, however, to carry this to a point in the next three months which would result in the government destroying itself and committing hari kari.”³⁶ The cabinet had to decide which was worse: not re-

³³ “Let Canada Help Fill the Need” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, March 20, 1945, p. 6.

³⁴ CWM, “Help Others From Our Plenty” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, March 20, 1945.

³⁵ LAC, RG2, (Privy Council Office), series B-2, vol. 36, file F-30, 1943-45, “Wartime Information Board – Special Memorandum to Members of Cabinet – Public Attitudes Towards a Possible Extension of Meat Rationing,” March 22, 1945.

³⁶ LAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Diaries, April 3, 1945.

imposing meat rationing and risking charges that Canada was shirking its responsibilities abroad, or re-imposing the ration and risking political wrath at home. The potential impact that meat rationing could have on the Liberal's electoral performance in Quebec may have been a further reason why King moved so cautiously on this issue. The WPTB itself was opposed to the scheme, feeling that insufficient public support existed to carry out the program effectively.³⁷ Maintaining the status quo initially turned out to be the preferable course of action for the King government, that is until the election was over.

Public opinion is not an exact science, however, and there was always the danger that the government might have misread it on this issue. Some of Canada's largest newspapers disagreed with the prevarication going on over meat rationing and pressed for action. The *Globe and Mail*, already on record as a supporter of a return to meat rationing, pursued the issue with vigour. Reporter Judith Robinson flatly accused the Liberals of cowardice in refusing to ration meat. "Enter here, to the tune of 'One Meat Ball,' Canada's own Mr. Gardiner. 'If Britain asks' for more meat, Minister of Agriculture Gardiner says, Canadians will try to send more. By rationing? Mr. Gardiner does not go as far as that. He just says Canadians will try."³⁸ In the following weeks the *Globe and Mail* printed many letters to the editor urging that meat rationing be adopted once again. One writer reminded King's government that no one had suffered during the first round of meat rationing; thus, far from hurting Liberal chances

³⁷ Christopher Waddell, "The Wartime Prices and Trade Board: Price Control in Canada in World War II," Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, 1981, pp. 482-483. This is at odds with some reports from the WPTB and WIB that indicated support for meat rationing. See LAC, RG36-31, series 31, vol. 27, file Field Reports, 1-65, "Field Reports, Wartime Information Board, No. 12," March 1945; RG36-31, series 31, vol. 27, file Information Briefs, "Information Briefs, Wartime Information Board, No. 55," March 19, 1945.

³⁸ Judith Robinson, "Canada Afraid to Ration Meat Supply, On Election Eve, to Help Britain," *Globe and Mail*, March 28, 1945, p. 6.

in the coming election, a move back to meat rationing would be construed by the electorate as “a gesture of ordinary decency” that would “inspire admiration, approval and wider support.”³⁹

The government took some steps to aid Britain short of meat rationing. In the wake of the American decision to curb meat exports, Canada announced it would send 250,000,000 pounds of beef to Britain in 1945, almost 150,000,000 pounds more than had been despatched in 1944.⁴⁰ But more, rationing’s proponents argued, could be sent if Canadian consumption was curbed. As pressure to make a decision mounted, the cabinet discussed all the possible ramifications. On March 23 cabinet members examined a Food Requirements Committee (FRC) report on the global meat situation, which indicated that global needs outstripped global supply by over 4½ billion pounds. The FRC recommended a return to meat rationing *if* the government wanted to cut Canadian consumption in light of this alarming shortfall.⁴¹ In spite of this sobering assessment, Gardiner opposed bringing back the meat ration. Within days he presented cabinet with figures outlining meat consumption levels in different countries and pointed out that “without rationing the Canadian figure was substantially below the American.” He also stressed the fact that Canada’s first attempt at meat rationing had not created any “additional supplies for export and resulted in the over-burdening of facilities.” Others disagreed. The situation in liberated Europe, T.A. Crerar reminded his colleagues, was such that “starvation and civil disturbances” could ensue. He pointed to an FRC report stating that meat rationing could result in an extra 200 million

³⁹ “No Canadian Emaciated by Meat Shortage” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, April 3, 1945, p. 6.

⁴⁰ CWM, “Canada Acts to Partially Offset British Food Crisis,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 27, 1945.

⁴¹ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, March 23, 1945.

pounds per year being sent overseas. The decision was again deferred, pending discussions with British food officials.⁴²

On April 2 J.J. Llewellyn and Oliver Lyttleton met with members of Canada's cabinet. The food situation in Europe was critical, they said, and it posed both "political dangers" and a humanitarian catastrophe.⁴³ The people of Britain also faced further reductions in their food rations unless "substantial relief" was forthcoming from North America. The British officials suggested that Canada send a representative to the food discussions being held in Washington later that week; the cabinet offered to send Gardiner. Llewellyn and Lyttleton apparently made "a profound impression on the Canadian government," including, it seems, Gardiner. In the wake of their visit, the Minister of Agriculture said that rationing should be adopted if it could help the global supply.⁴⁴

On April 3 cabinet resumed its discussions on the meat issue with Crerar outlining the FRC report. King took his usual pragmatic line, telling his cabinet that "there was an old saying that charity begins at home. This was a case of charity in the proper sense of the word." Alluding to the upcoming election, he noted that the question of rationing had to be considered "in regard to our own position as a government" or else they "could help no one." For Europe, King was prepared to advocate a broad level of assistance "short of anything that would destroy our own chances as a govt. of carrying out the policies we were proposing." If there was the slightest possibility that meat rationing would adversely affect his party's fortunes, then the decision would be deferred. Seeking perhaps a course of action that might do until

⁴² LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, March 27, 1945.

⁴³ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, April 2, 1945.

⁴⁴ CWM, "Closer to Meat Rationing" (Editorial), *Hamilton Review*, April 6, 1945.

the election was over, Crerar suggested a issuing voluntary appeal to Canadians to reduce meat consumption, with rationing to follow if this did not work.⁴⁵

The final say obviously lay with King. Clearly, given that it was such a divisive issue and with the prime minister not willing to make any overly controversial moves at this time, meat rationing would not be brought back until the election had passed. Thus, in true King style, the decision was made to avoid making a decision at least until its political costs could be minimized. The cabinet, however, realized that with Gardiner leaving for food discussions in Washington, a position of some sort had to be established.⁴⁶ Cabinet decided that in Washington Gardiner “would listen but would not commit us to anything,” and let it be known that Canada “could not consider meat rationing while the election was on.” If pressed, Canada would take the line that it would increase meat shipments through voluntary restrictions and meatless days. If, after three months this failed to produce more meat, rationing would then be considered. The subject was undoubtedly a tiresome one. In his diary, King vented his frustrations with both the meat issue and with Britain, remarking that they were “being imposed upon in Canada by the British trying to be made to solve their problems at our expense every time.”⁴⁷

While King and his cabinet struggled to come up with a way to avoid the issue until they were on safer political ground, the reasons for their stalling were painfully obvious. Both the press and the public were well aware that the election factored into the inaction, and to some, the villain of the piece was James Gardiner.⁴⁸ In one of the

⁴⁵ LAC, WLM King Diaries, April 4, 1945.

⁴⁶ LAC, RG2, series A-5a, vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, April 4, 1945.

⁴⁷ LAC, WLM King Diaries, April 6, 1945.

⁴⁸ CWM, “Canada May Boost Meat To Britain and Europe,” *Financial Post*, April 27, 1945.

Globe and Mail's regular editorial forays into the meat question, the question of Gardiner's culpability in holding back the ration was addressed. "Obviously the only way by which Canada immediately can increase meat to Britain and Europe is through curtailment of her own unlimited consumption," the paper wrote. "It is equally obvious," it continued, "that the principle, if not the only, obstacle to rationing meat for this purpose is Agriculture Minister James G. Gardiner."⁴⁹ The *Globe and Mail* also seized on Gardiner's suggestion that the decision on meat rationing was really up to Donald Gordon, a disingenuous statement that the *Globe and Mail* termed "another shabby political manoeuvre."⁵⁰ As Gordon had already pointed out, cabinet had to decide the issue, not the WPTB. Finally, the paper took issue with Gardiner's argument that the since the first round of meat rationing had not secured any extra meat for Britain, there was no reason to bring it back now. Instead, it pointed out that the motive behind Canada's first effort to ration meat was not to send more overseas, but to ensure the equitable distribution of Canada's domestic supply. In this respect, Canada's first meat ration had been a success, and to say that it had failed to produce extra meat for Europe was to retroactively assign it a goal to which it had never aspired. The fact that the first ration amount had been so generous effectively undercut any pretence that 'conservation' had been at the heart of meat rationing.⁵¹

The June 11 election saw the Liberal government retain a slim majority, winning 125 of 245 seats. With the difficult electoral fight over, the unsettled and unsettling issue of meat rationing was among the topics returning to both the government's and the public's attention. Within days, the *Globe and Mail* had resumed its attack over the

⁴⁹ "Rationing Can Provide Aid" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, April 12, 1945, p. 6.

⁵⁰ "Rationing Not Up to Mr. Gordon" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1945, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

continued absence of meat rationing.⁵² Gardiner, it argued, no longer had any excuse with which to “insult the Canadian people by clinging to a policy which implies that they selfishly refuse to share what they have with their allies.” The assistance that Canada could offer to hungry Europeans by re-imposing meat rationing, according to the paper, was the reason such a policy should be enacted. In addition, as the WIB had already pointed out, meat rationing to alleviate hunger overseas could exert a positive effect on Canadian morale and could boost the nation’s image abroad, particularly in the United States. “In recent weeks we have learned the truth of this from the misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Canada’s position in the United States,” the paper wrote:

No explanations about our per capita meat consumption being less than that of the American people, however factual, will overcome the misunderstanding arising from the fact that they are rationed and we are not. All this nation has done in the war, and our agricultural contribution is by any standard one of our finest efforts, will count for little should the American impression that Canada is shirking go abroad.⁵³

It was, arguably, a bit of stretch to suggest that all of Canada’s wartime contributions would be sullied by the absence of meat rationing. The *Toronto Telegram* certainly disagreed with the *Globe and Mail*’s position. Arguing that pressure from the U.S. was not a valid reason to reinstate meat rationing in Canada, the paper contended that American complaints over Canada’s so-called refusal to stint themselves had more to do with the United States’ own meat difficulties; the “uproar” over the so-called shortage (and any blowback that involved Canada) would shortly abate.⁵⁴ The *Telegram* faltered a bit in its unquestioning support of Gardiner. Unlike the *Globe and Mail*, it did not

⁵² CWM, “Rationing Will Return Only as Extreme Resort,” *Hamilton Spectator*, June 12, 1945.

⁵³ “Mr. Gardiner Can Act Now” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, June 18, 1945, p. 6.

⁵⁴ CWM, “More Meat for United Kingdom Only Warrant for Meat Rationing Here” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, June 27, 1945.

take issue with Gardiner's view that meat rationing would not result in decreased meat consumption. It used this spurious fact to support its valid contention that the only good reason to bring back the policy would be to ensure that Britain got more meat.

Despite their different viewpoints, both papers had great confidence in the amount of meat available in Canada, but what they may have not known was that the country's meat supply was starting to feel the pressure of increased postwar demand. While politicians and the press debated what might today be referred to as the 'optics' of meat rationing, external circumstances were conspiring to force the state's hand. In what was no doubt a convenient turn of events for King's government, during a late June cabinet session Ilsley noted that Canada's meat situation was "becoming increasingly serious" and that distribution problems were again putting pressure on the price ceiling, resulting in increased violations and the possibility of "black market operations of serious dimensions."⁵⁵ On June 28 the cabinet reconvened to discuss yet another FRC report. The FRC concluded that the main points in favour of meat rationing were still "humanitarian, i.e., in the interests of the liberated countries in order that our obligations to the other members of the CFB could be fulfilled," and "that the good name of Canada should be maintained in the United States." To these a new reason was added, namely "to prevent maldistribution within Canada and a serious deterioration in the price situation." But even with 'distribution' and 'price problems' present as scapegoats for meat rationing, the cabinet remained hesitant. Ilsley suggested that further consultation "with the experts" was needed; therefore cabinet named a committee, consisting of the Ministers of Finance, Justice, Labour, Fisheries, National

⁵⁵ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, June 26, 1945.

Health and Welfare, National War Services and the Secretary of State. Notably absent from this list was the Minister of Agriculture.⁵⁶

The special cabinet sub-committee on meat rationing worked quickly, and on June 29 met in Ilesley's office to compile a list of recommendations. Meat rationing should return as soon as the WPTB had everything in place to do so. Moreover, Canadians should be asked to decrease the amount of meat they ate, an appeal that would be buttressed by the imposition of not one but two meatless days on Wednesdays and Fridays. Finally, it was recommended that the government make a concerted effort to explain these initiatives to the public, along with the announcement that meat rationing would be re-imposed "as soon as possible." The cabinet accepted these recommendations, and preparations began.⁵⁷

On July 6 King broke the news that meat rationing would be returning to Canada, news that was widely expected. The announcement was carefully crafted. It first drew attention to Europe's desperate food situation and the steps Canada had already taken to alleviate hunger overseas. He then pointed to the alarming recent decline in livestock slaughterings at "inspected plants, which provide the only meat which, under present arrangements, the government can direct into export markets." The reduction in supply coupled with an increase in demand meant that action needed to be taken. King also contrasted this new round of meat rationing with the previous one which had been imposed mainly to ensure fair distribution in Canada rather than to alleviate "suffering on an appalling scale" overseas. It would take a couple of months for the WPTB to prepare for the measure, but the urgency of the situation was such that

⁵⁶ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2636, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, June 28, 1945.

⁵⁷ LAC, RG2, series B-2, vol. 36, file F-30, 1943-45, "Meeting of Sub-Committee to Discuss Meat Ration," June 30, 1945.

Canadians were asked to act immediately by voluntarily reducing their meat consumption to a level “as low as adequate nutritional standards will permit.”⁵⁸

Within days Canadians learned some of the particulars of the new meat rationing system. The first difference was the in the ration’s size. The former meat ration of two pounds a week had been very generous; the new amount would have to be much less if the goal of sending more meat overseas was to be achieved. The aim of the new ration was to reduce the average Canadian’s annual meat consumption from approximately 141 to 131 pounds. Accordingly, the ration figure would be around one-and-a-third pounds of meat per person per week. Unlike the first time when a large variety of meat products had been left un-rationed, this time only poultry and fish were to be ration-free. In addition, circular blue-coloured meat ration tokens were to be introduced, with eight equaling one ration coupon, thus enabling the consumer to purchase smaller quantities of meat. If the amount of meat purchased did not take up the whole coupon, the dealer could now give the customer ration ‘change’ in the form of tokens. Twice weekly meatless days were slated to begin on July 13 that the WPTB estimated would save some one million pounds of meat per week. The government also devised a system whereby farmers would be allowed to slaughter animals for themselves or their neighbours without needing a permit. Any surplus meat, however, could only legally be sold to someone possessing a valid slaughter permit who was then expected to properly document the sale with the authorities and stamp the meat with their permit stamp.⁵⁹ Farmers, despite being nominally subject to the same regulations as city folk, were in

⁵⁸ CWM, “World Needs Force Return to Meat Ration – Mr. King,” *Toronto Star*, July 6, 1945.

⁵⁹ CWM, “Pound and Third Per Week For Each Person Allowed,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 7, 1945; “Canada to Use Tokens in New Meat Rationing,” *Toronto Star*, July 7, 1945; “Two Meatless Days to Save Million Pounds Per Week,” *Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1945.

practice left to their honour since theoretically they could eat as much meat as they could produce. As the *Hamilton Spectator* noted; “Whatever surplus meat is made available for overseas relief by rationing of Canadian civilians will be to a great extent at the expense of urban appetites.”⁶⁰ The WPTB recognized this and focussed on trying to keep farmers from selling meat ‘under the table.’

‘Everyday a Meatless Day’



Globe and Mail, September 18, 1945.

While the announcement of the second meat ration came as no surprise, reaction was mixed. The *Globe and Mail* was pleased that the government had finally acted, but was unable to resist aiming a final blow, expressing indignation that “the petty partisan considerations of an election should have stood between the nation and its duty,

⁶⁰ CWM, “Hope to Keep Unauthorized Slaughtering Under Control,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 13, 1945.

delaying aid to hungry Europe for six months.”⁶¹ Public reaction to the much stricter second meat ration, which would take effect on September 10, was rather more ambiguous than it had been in May 1943. As the WPTB’s Information Branch put it, the impending return of meat rationing met with “a varied reception; producers and retailers are somewhat disposed to criticize, but consumers seem to be generally philosophical about both rationing and meatless days.”⁶² According to a public opinion survey conducted for the WPTB in July 1945 (the month the government announced a return to meat rationing), 92% of respondents believed that rationing had “done a good and fair job of distributing things that are scarce.”⁶³ However, only 57% believed that “Everything now rationed needs to be rationed,” a figure that was 4 points higher than in March, but 12 points lower than in June 1944. Approval of meat rationing was just 56%, with 36% disapproving of the move. According to WIB reports, the return to meat rationing was not unanticipated or especially welcome; Canadians were simply resigned to it. A minority thought that it was “unnecessary or unhelpful” or questioned its effectiveness. There was a feeling that the government had stalled on the issue because of “political considerations.”⁶⁴ Some hoped this move would end American allegations that Canada was not doing its fair share, but others voiced bitterness that American opinion may have influenced Canadian policy on meat rationing. The WIB also noted many Canadians expressed pessimism about public willingness to curb the amount of meat they ate.

⁶¹ “Welcome Though Late” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, July 7, 1945, p. 6.

⁶² LAC, RG64, vol. 1536, file Trends, 1944-1945, “Trends – A Review of Opinion – WPTB – Information Branch, Ottawa, No. 28,” July 1, 1945-July 15, 1945.

⁶³ LAC, RG64, vol. 444, file 10-88, Public Opinion Polls, “Report No. 3, Canadian Opinion in July, 1945 – Nation-wide Attitudes Towards Inflation, Price, Distribution and Supply. Opinion Research and Press Analysis Section, Information Branch, Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Ottawa, August 31, 1945.”

⁶⁴ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, Information Briefs, “Information Briefs, Wartime Information Board, No. 64,” July 23, 1945.

The slightly lower support for meat rationing was certainly understandable. With the conflict in Europe over and the war in the Pacific racing to a conclusion, war-weary civilians naturally expected a return to normalcy. As the state soon discovered, curtailing liberties was far easier in the heat of war than during peace. If the government wished to continue its economic controls then it would have to convince Canadians as to the practical and moral importance of extending humanitarian aid to the liberated peoples of Europe, a task it quickly undertook. In exhorting Canadians to abide by the new meat protocols, J.L. Ilsley asserted that if Canada's Allies "were left hopeless and helpless we shall have jeopardized the peace so hardly won." If on the other hand Canada extended further aid, "we shall have helped promote the kind of co-operation upon which the future peace of the world depends. Proper nourishment is a prerequisite to political stability in Europe on which economic recovery depends."⁶⁵ The late August issue of the *Food Bulletin* contained a reminder for dealers as to why the meat ration was returning. "One hundred million men, women, and children in Europe are in dire need of food," it noted. "By sending them meat Canadians can help repair war damage to body and mind."⁶⁶

Sending food to hungry Allies was one thing, but how would Canadians feel about feeding defeated enemies? Public opinion polls conducted for the WPTB suggested that by July 1945 a large majority of respondents (73%) accepted that rationing was needed to assist Europe. When that assistance was extended to Germans,

⁶⁵ "Put Housewife on Honor No Meat Tuesday, Friday," *Toronto Star*, July 17, 1945, p. 2.

⁶⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 1565, file WPTB – Food Bulletin, "Food Bulletin – Special Ration Supplement," August 27, 1945.

however, the number dropped to just 37%.⁶⁷ That some Canadian meat might find its way to Germany was something Donald Gordon acknowledged was possible. When pressed on the issue, the WPTB Chairman also declared that the Allies could not let the German people starve, to which one reporter interjected: “Why not?” Gordon appealed to both pragmatism and compassion, arguing that a lasting peace would not be achieved if the Germans simply went hungry. The notion that they should be abandoned to their fate Gordon condemned as inhumane. “Persons who had been in the Canadian Army overseas knew it was impossible to stand by and watch women and children starve,” he said.⁶⁸ Still, in early September, with meat rationing slated to begin in Canada, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, G.S.H. Barton, assured Canadians that none of the meat being shipped to Europe from Canada would end up in either Germany.⁶⁹

Once Canadians had been informed of the new edicts, government officials did not delay in applying moral suasion. A week after the new meat restrictions were announced, J.G. Taggart, who was still head of the Meat Board and as such was responsible for fulfilling meat export demands, asked Canadians to respect the new rules and to approach their meat consumption in a newly abstemious manner. While the new ration was not slated to begin for some weeks, Taggart re-iterated King’s request that the public immediately begin “self-imposed rationing.”⁷⁰ The very last thing Canadians should do, Taggart warned, was to replicate past behaviour by engaging in pre-ration

⁶⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 444, file 10-88, Public Opinion Polls, “Report No. 3, Canadian Opinion in July, 1945 – Nation-wide Attitudes Towards Inflation, Price, Distribution and Supply. Opinion Research and Press Analysis Section, Information Branch, Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Ottawa,” August 31, 1945.

⁶⁸ “Rationing Here to Help Germans,” *Globe and Mail*, July 25, 1945, p. 4. On food and living conditions in postwar Germany, see Manfred J. Enssle, “The Discipline of Food Scarcity in Postwar Stuttgart, 1945-1948,” *German Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (October 1987): 481-502.

⁶⁹ “Says Meat Rationing Here Will Stem Europe Hunger,” *Toronto Star*, September 1, 1945, p. 5.

⁷⁰ CWM, “Canadian Meat Ration May Last for 18 Months,” *Hamilton Spectator*, July 13, 1945.

binge buying. Ilsley also encouraged consumers to cut down as much as possible, taking to the airwaves in late August about the need for meat rationing.⁷¹

Criticism was not long in arriving, much of it voiced by cattle traders who expressed the opinion that rationing was simply not needed. Less than a week after the announcement that meat would once again be rationed, the National Livestock Exchange contested the need for such a move, claiming that the country's supplies were large enough to cope with the increased demand – without rationing. Donald Gordon refuted their claims, and took particular issue with their assertion that the sole reason for the policy was to appease the Americans, a charge he termed “ridiculous.” Canada, Gordon argued, was rationing meat for humanitarian reasons, pure and simple.⁷² Despite Gordon's remarks, the feeling that U.S. opinion factored rather largely into the decision continued to reverberate. The *Claresholm Local Press* argued that “meat rationing is being adopted, not because it is expected to be of any use, but because this country is criticized in the U.S. for not having it.”⁷³ This was also the line taken by E.R. Bond, head of the Ontario-based Middlesex Beef Cattle Producers. In a letter to the *Globe and Mail*, he contended that “the real reason” for meat rationing was “pressure brought by the consumer of the United States on the Government at Washington, because we in Canada were getting more meat to eat than they.”⁷⁴

In the face of continuing unrest, a joint meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the WPTB's Beef Cattle Advisory Committee was convened to discuss

⁷¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 153, file Speeches – Meat Rationing, “‘What Does Victory Mean to Prices Board Controls?’ Broadcast by Honourable J.L. Ilsley, Minister of Finance and Mr. Donald Gordon, Wartime Prices and Trade Board on National Network,” August 24, 1945.

⁷² “Thousands Doomed Despite Canada Meat Help – Gordon,” *Toronto Star*, July 12, 1945, p. 3.

⁷³ “Meat Rationing Idea Not Popular” (Editorial), *Claresholm Local Press*, July 19, 1945, p. 1.

⁷⁴ “Real Reason for Meat Rationing is Declared Pressure By U.S.” (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, August 11, 1945, p. 6.

the issue of meat rationing from a producer perspective. Any goodwill that might have accrued from such a meeting was undercut, however, by the fact that it was scheduled to take place on September 10, the very day on which the new meat ration was to take effect. The implications of this did not please Herbert Hannam who charged that meat rationing was being imposed “before the committees concerned had had the opportunity of discussing the matter with Ottawa officials.”⁷⁵ But mindful of public opinion, Hannam specifically pointed out that the criticism being levelled at meat rationing did not mean that farmers either opposed or did not understand the importance of sending more food overseas. “Farm people,” he noted, “realize just as fully as any other group of citizens that Canada has a definite responsibility to aid the food program for the liberated countries of Europe and they are quite ready to make necessary sacrifices.”⁷⁶ But with Canadian beef production at an all-time high, Hannam argued, many producers worried that rationing would clog up processing plants, overwhelm export facilities and ultimately drive down prices.

Meat dealers generally loathed the prospect of having to cope once again with rationing regulations. In Hamilton members of the meat trade unveiled plans to organize “a Dominion-wide protest body” against rationing.⁷⁷ With the start of meat rationing looming, the WPTB held a series of meetings to head off such criticism and secure the cooperation of Canada’s meat dealers. Many of these meetings, however, devolved into protests, as angry butchers voiced their discontent. At one such gathering in Chatham, Ontario, such “sharp criticism” was levelled at the WPTB that the meeting

⁷⁵ LAC, RG17, vol. 3628, file B-23-5, Agricultural Advisory Committee, “Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes, Meeting at Ottawa, September 10-12, 1945.”

⁷⁶ CWM, “Says Rationing Granted Support,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 15, 1945.

⁷⁷ CWM, “Butchers and Slaughterers Oppose Government Action,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 4, 1945.

was halted in order to “end the barrage.”⁷⁸ At another meeting in Toronto, O.W. Rodomar, the WPTB’s Deputy Rationing Administrator, declared that his elderly mother in Russia was “starving” and that he was powerless to stop it. The Russian-born Rodomar went on to say that he himself had experienced starvation after the First World War, and that he knew first-hand of the suffering that many in Europe were now facing. How much impact his words had is hard to judge but the resolution put forward at the meeting proposing that the government postpone meat rationing was withdrawn.⁷⁹

Telegrams beseeching the government to reconsider its meat rationing plans poured into WPTB offices, and as this opposition gained prominence the government began feeling heat even from some of its own members. During the first Liberal caucus meeting held after the June election King was confronted by criticism of both the WPTB and rationing. Not surprisingly, the disapproval was levied by MPs representing beef-producing regions in Ontario and the West.⁸⁰ The first anti-rationing salvo in the House of Commons was fired from the opposition benches when Manitoba Conservative James Arthur Ross argued that “no reasonable explanation” had yet been provided for the new rationing measure.⁸¹ Clearly the re-imposition of meat rationing was going to be problematic, thereby justifying King’s pre-election caution.

In mid-August the matter was complicated further when news broke that the U.S. was contemplating ending its meat ration, a particularly ironic step given the role that U.S. pressure had played in the reintroduction of meat rationing in Canada.⁸² VJ Day

⁷⁸ CWM, “Wholesalers, Butchers Storm at Meat Rationing Conference,” *Globe and Mail*, September 7, 1945..

⁷⁹ CWM, “Mother Starving, Official Asserts,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 6, 1945.

⁸⁰ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 12, 1945.

⁸¹ “Meat-Rationing Issue Up in Commons, Caucus,” *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1945, p. 3.

⁸² “Canada Won’t Heed U.S. in Rationing of Meat,” *Toronto Star*, September 10, 1945, p. 1.

had scarcely come and gone when the American government announced the end of combat would result in greater amounts of meat for civilian use. In August, Clinton Anderson, the U.S. Secretary of State for Agriculture, stated that America would probably be able to drop the meat ration in the fall if beef marketing was heavy enough.⁸³ WPTB officials were quickly assured by their American counterparts there were no immediate plans to terminate the meat ration. Further, the U.S. would not undertake any “radical changes” without first giving notice to Canada.⁸⁴ But such reassurances were short-lived as President Harry Truman’s sudden cancellation of the Lend-Lease program was a further complication.⁸⁵ As the *Toronto Telegram* put it, it was now “all the more imperative that Canada should not let Britain down.” The *Toronto Star* contended that meat rationing was a matter of national pride, and it was essential that Canada uphold its reputation as a compassionate, or humane, country.⁸⁶

When meat rationing finally began in September, there was no small degree of confusion and resentment. Dealers were not happy to have to contend, yet again, with the headache of rationing. Butchers had to be very precise when slicing cuts, as the amount of meat sold had to match the amount of coupons and tokens taken from customers. As well, the new coupon/token scheme took some getting used to. One grocer summed up the system by remarking sarcastically: “Euclid, I know. Calculus, I know. Einstein’s theory of relativity I’ve heard about. But meat rationing, no!” In London one butcher shop remained shut most of the day so that its operator could ‘work

⁸³ “U.S. Meat Plans Worrying Ottawa,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 18, 1945, p. 1; “Meat Rationing May Stop in Fall, Anderson Declares,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1945, p. 1.

⁸⁴ “U.S. Informs Canadians Meat Ration Will Stay,” *New York Times*, August 21, 1945, p. 15.

⁸⁵ “Lend-Lease Halts; Allies Needs Put on Purchase Basis,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1945, p. 1.

⁸⁶ CWM, “No Reason for Jack Canuck to Copy Uncle Sam’s Example” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, August 25, 1945; “Necessity for Meat Rationing” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, August 27, 1945.

out' the new system.⁸⁷ Despite having weeks to prepare, the WPTB reported that many meat dealers still had not picked up the ration tokens they needed to use as coupon 'change.' In Hamilton, anti-ration dealers called for a week-long shutdown of butcher shops. Several Victoria butchers threatened to stop selling if the government persisted with meat rationing.⁸⁸ In Saint John, New Brunswick, members of the Retail Merchants' Association called for meat shops to stop selling on September 24 if the government did not rescind its ration policy.⁸⁹ Most such threats, however, did not transpire.

The vocal opposition to meat rationing, whether backed up by action or not, did not go unnoticed. The *Globe and Mail* felt that it was only natural that those in the trade would find the measure inconvenient, but the paper was taken aback at the narrow considerations that lay, it believed, at the heart of the hostility. It found the attitude "strange" and "so largely based on self-interest ... [and] pressed with such persistence."⁹⁰ There were others, however, who did not find the opposition so surprising. "One hardly needed to be a prophet to see that the return of meat rationing in Canada would explode into a volcano of opposition public opinion," wrote the rather more populist *Claresholm Local Press*. While the actual ration itself was not exactly harsh, the public was weary of rationing and the "army of snoopy administrators ... telling them what they can and what they can't do."⁹¹ Eric Ellis, Chairman of the Hamilton Meat Dealers Association and one of the driving forces behind the meat ration protest, complained that in his district "the board has seven inspectors, also shoppers –

⁸⁷ CWM, "Butchers Find Trouble With Rationing System," *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1945; "Protest-Strike Over Meat Ration Dealers' Threat," *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1945.

⁸⁸ CWM, "Some Forget Their Books, Others Disregard Tokens," *Hamilton Spectator*, September 10, 1945; "Local Butchers May Shut Shops as Protest Note," *Hamilton Spectator*, September 11, 1945; "Meat Retailers May Stop Sales," *Hamilton Spectator*, September 11, 1945.

⁸⁹ "Butcher Strike Threat Growing Over Rationing," *Globe and Mail*, September 12, 1945, p. 2.

⁹⁰ "Small Cause to Complain" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1945, p. 6.

⁹¹ "The Meat Rationing Volcano" (Editorial), *Claresholm Local Press*, September 13, 1945, p. 1.

one, a grey-haired lady – out trying to find ‘some poor butcher trying to make a dime.’”⁹² Food retailers were, no doubt, weary of being watched, at times furtively, by the state.

With the war over, these were some troubling indications that the public’s will to sacrifice was waning. The *Claresholm Local Press* claimed that the Canadian people were “sullen” at the prospect of meat rationing, and opposition swirling around the policy did not help. “The butchers say it is not necessary. The primary producers of beef say it is not necessary and not apt to conserve any quantity of beef for export. The people feel that now the war is over no new restrictions should be forced upon them.”⁹³ King was also sceptical of Canadians’ willingness to accept continued controls. As he noted in his diary, if the U.S. ended rationing, Canada would have to respond similarly, even in the face of Europe’s serious food needs.⁹⁴ However, the WPTB, remaining steadfast behind meat rationing, said it had received in correspondence “nothing but commendation from every class of the community in touch with us with the exception of retailers.”⁹⁵ Yet, the government was compelled to meet with representatives of the meat trade, a decision that, according to the *Globe and Mail*, was the result of the “somewhat hysterical campaign of opposition [to meat rationing] ... in this Province [Ontario].”⁹⁶

The government seemed willing to weather a certain amount of opposition from within the meat trade, since it appeared that enough consumers backed meat rationing, at

⁹² CWM, “Threaten to Go On Strike September 24 to End Control,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 14.

⁹³ “Canadians Sullen Over Meat Rationing” (Editorial), *Claresholm Local Press*, September 6, 1945, p. 1.

⁹⁴ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 13, 1945.

⁹⁵ “Rationing Effect Told By Taylor,” *Globe and Mail*, September 17, 1945, p. 17.

⁹⁶ “Self-Interest Should Count” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 15, 1945, p. 6.

least tepidly. *Saturday Night* magazine, for one, could scarcely credit the idea that any Canadian would refuse to help feed a hungry world:

The arguments based on inconvenience to dealers and to the public are, if taken by themselves, unworthy of the people of a great and wealthy nation which has felt little or nothing of the economic hardships of the war. The average serving of meat in a good-class restaurant in England at any time during the last three years has been less than half than what is habitually served in the same grade of establishment in Toronto and Montreal. The diet of the British people today is scantier even than it was in the year before the Victory days and is made so by their sacrifices in aid of the rescued peoples of Europe. That Canadians could be unwilling to accept the small inconveniences of a rationing system, if these will in any way alleviate the deficiencies of the British diet, is more than we can believe.⁹⁷

Certain middle class women's groups were especially vocal in their support, and Byrne Sanders, "Canada's Mrs. Consumer," bolstered this by terming the meat ration "a matter of national honor."⁹⁸ The President of the Canadian Federation of University Women reported that her members were "heartily in favour of meat rationing."⁹⁹ Still, female support was not unanimous. In a letter to the *Globe and Mail*, one woman questioned the apparent unanimity on the issue of meat rationing that the leaders of the National Council of Women had ascribed to its members, wondering when, exactly, such a vote had been taken.¹⁰⁰ Another letter from the head of the Women's Voluntary Service War Savings Stamp Committee stated that "If it alleviates the privations of starving European countries, I am all in favor of meat rationing. If we are rationing meat merely to make a bid for United States friendship, I think it is very wrong and that we are wasting our time."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ "Rationing Problem" (Editorial), *Saturday Night*, September 29, 1945, p. 1.

⁹⁸ "Meat Curb Deemed Matter of Honor," *Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1945, p. 9.

⁹⁹ "Women Approve Meat Rationing" (Letter), *Globe and Mail*, September 21, 1945, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ CWM, "Says That Meat Rationing Was Not Discussed" (Letter), *Hamilton Spectator*, September 24, 1945.

¹⁰¹ "Women Think Rationing Necessary, Poll Reveals," *Globe and Mail*, September 18, 1945, p. 7.

The lacklustre cooperation demonstrated by many butchers apparently took its toll. Within two weeks of meat rationing, packers were reporting significant decreases, ranging from 20-33%, in the amount of meat being purchased by dealers. On September 19 representatives of the meat trade held all-day meetings with government officials in Ottawa, proceedings from which the press was barred. The Retail Merchants Association presented an alternative plan that would see the government acquire the meat needed for export directly from the packers and use the WPTB apparatus to fairly apportion whatever was left amongst consumers using “the regular channels of trade.”¹⁰² The meetings were amicable, but the government announced that the meat rationing plan would remain in place. The only concession granted to meat dealers was a temporary removal of certain items from the ration list, mostly products that butchers were having difficulty selling such as “fancy meats, kidneys, livers, hearts and tongues and blood sausage.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² CWM, “Meat Retailers Propose Suspension of Rationing,” *Hamilton Spectator*, September 20, 1945.

¹⁰³ “Several Meats Lifted From Ration List,” *Globe and Mail*, September 22, 1945, p. 1.

Things became more complicated when the United States announced that, as of September 30, consumers would be able to buy the three lowest grades of beef without surrendering any ration points.¹⁰⁴ Naturally, this step prompted criticism in Canada. One representative telegram to Ilsley argued that the U.S. stance on meat rationing made Canada's own policy "ridiculous."¹⁰⁵

Despite the anger simmering in certain quarters, on September 24 a threatened nation-wide butchers' strike did not materialize. In Montreal, however, a sizable group of dealers not only closed their shops, they also tried to force others to do the same by employing heavy-handed tactics.¹⁰⁶ In light of this intimidation, the Verdun branch of the Canadian Legion considered



Globe and Mail, September 27, 1945

forming groups to protect the city's butcher shops from the mob.¹⁰⁷ Donald Gordon, calling the marauders in Montreal "a bunch of hoodlums," asserted that most Canadians were "strongly in favor of meat rationing."¹⁰⁸ That same day Ilsley decided the time had come to bluntly confront the criticism. In a comprehensive speech detailing the meat

¹⁰⁴ "No Points Required After September 30, Food Officials Say," *Washington Post*, September 22, 1945, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 638, file 19-32-4, vol. 2, Special File on Meat Rationing, S.J. Roscoe to J.L. Ilsley, September 23, 1945.

¹⁰⁶ CWM, "Intimidation in Montreal" (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, September 25, 1945.

¹⁰⁷ "No Fear of 'Meat Vigilantes' Closing Stores in Toronto," *Toronto Star*, September 26, 1945, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ "No Escape From Ration, Dealers Told," *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1945, pp. 1-2.

situation at home and abroad, the minister implied that those opposing meat rationing were 'quitters' who did not understand that though armed combat overseas had ended, the "food war" still raged.¹⁰⁹ He stressed that appalling food levels in many parts of Europe threatened widespread starvation. He noted that Canada was part of a global trading community and needed to safeguard both its reputation and its economic interests. James Gardiner, usually opposed to anything that might compromise farm incomes, endorsed Ilsley's case for meat rationing, while adding that Canadian farmers would not be able to produce more cattle and hogs in the short term since feed grain crops were expected to be the poorest in almost a decade.

The *contretemps* in Montreal did not result in greater support for anti-ration forces, rather the opposite. The actions taken by some meat dealers, argued the *Globe and Mail*, were disgraceful, indicative of an "inhuman selfishness" more characteristic of "our late enemies" than Canadians. Montreal's unpleasantness was a disgraceful culmination of a rather inglorious reaction to the re-imposition of the meat ration; "it was time," the paper argued, "we pulled ourselves together, and determined such shameful episodes will not occur again."¹¹⁰ The Retail Merchants Association responded to Ilsley's speech and the Montreal uprising by going "on-record as officially disassociating" itself "from any action which directly or by implication, constitutes defiance of the law."¹¹¹ The Montreal strikers also found themselves *persona non grata* in Ottawa as the cabinet refused the meat dealers' request to meet with the government.¹¹² The Canadian Congress of Labour, with miners in Alberta and British

¹⁰⁹ "Only Shooting Has Stopped, Food War Still On – Ilsley," *Toronto Star*, September 25, 1945, p. 7.

¹¹⁰ "Disgraced, For What?" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1945, p. 6.

¹¹¹ "Shops Will Not Close in Toronto," *Globe and Mail*, September 27, 1945, p. 1.

¹¹² LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2637, Cabinet Conclusions, September 27, 1945.

Columbia striking for larger meat allotments, publicly backed meat rationing only days after the unpleasantness in Montreal.¹¹³

Uplifting words emanating from the federal government could not disguise the fact that the re-imposition of meat rationing had proven more problematic than had expected. At September's end, the WPTB's Information Branch issued a grim summary of the problems that the government had encountered. "Retailers across Canada are calling for abandonment or modification of rationing," it read. "Threats of strike action and of non-compliance with the regulations are pouring in from many centres; strikes among butchers have already taken place. Disapproval of rationing in its present form has already been voiced in House of Commons debates. ..." Some of the comments the report cited included: "'Wasteful and uneconomic,' 'will put the small dealer out of business,' 'takes too much time and extra work.' ... 'too much dictatorship.'"¹¹⁴ Necessary firmness aside, the WPTB was not averse to reforming the ration system if it would result in greater efficiency, greater cooperation, and more meat for export. As waste was a major concern for many meat dealers, the WPTB adjusted coupon values to provide consumers more of the cheaper meat cuts per coupon though fewer of the higher quality cuts.¹¹⁵

The truce was threatened on November 22 when Gardiner informed cabinet that after weeks of speculation, the United States was about to end rationing, a move that many feared would create agitation for similar action in Canada.¹¹⁶ King sent off a message to President Truman expressing Canadian misgivings about the rumoured

¹¹³ "Labor Council Sees Rationing as Only Course," *Globe and Mail*, September 28, 1945, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 1536, file Trends, 1944-1945, "Trends – A Review of Opinion – WPTB – Information Branch, Ottawa, No. 32," September 30, 1945.

¹¹⁵ CWM, "Put More Expensive Types in Higher Ration Category," *Hamilton Spectator*, October 5, 1945.

¹¹⁶ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, November 22, 1945.

changes. The end of meat rationing in the U.S. would, King wrote, “raise questions of policy in Canada.” Given Europe’s needs, Canada intended to maintain meat rationing, and since “the decisions of each country will react on the neighbouring Government,” King asked the U.S. to defer any plans to ease rationing pending further consultations.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, the message reached Truman only after the President had announced an end to rationing (or so the Canadian authorities were told). As of November 24 sugar remained the only food commodity rationed in America.¹¹⁸ Canadian authorities, greatly annoyed at the speed at which the U.S. decision had been made, were left scrambling to respond. There may have been an element of ‘tit-for-tat’ present, for as Pearson pointed out, American officials had not been pleased in 1944 when Canada had suspended meat rationing with very little notice.¹¹⁹ Still, *Time* quoted an unnamed “top Canadian civil servant” who called the American decision to de-ration “a hell of a Christmas present to the people of Europe.”¹²⁰ Canada’s government decided not to make any changes to its own ration regulations, a move buttressed by the fact that, according to the WPTB, there had been “no noticeable reaction on the part of the Canadian public to the announcement that the U.S. had abandoned meat rationing.”¹²¹ Still, in confirming that the *status quo* would remain, King pointed to differences in the Canadian and American meat supplies, not the least of which was the fact that Canada had much greater overseas meat commitments to fill. Canadian meat exports comprised

¹¹⁷ Mackenzie King to Harry Truman, November 22, 1945, *DCER*, vol. 11, part II, p. 1673.

¹¹⁸ “Red-Point Rationing Ends; Supplies Found Adequate,” *New York Times*, November 24, 1945, p. 1.

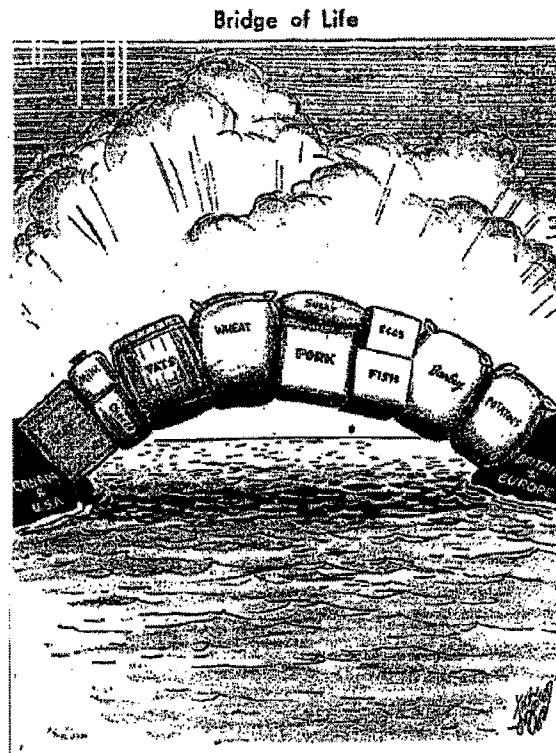
¹¹⁹ Lester Pearson to Norman Robertson, November 27, 1945, *DCER*, vol. 11, part II, p. 1675.

¹²⁰ “A Hell of a Christmas Present,” *Time*, December 3, 1945.

¹²¹ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, November 23, 1945; “Red Point Rationing Ends; Supplies Found Adequate,” *New York Times*, November 24, 1945, p. 1; LAC, RG64, vol. 151, file Ration Administration, “Report No. 55,” December 19, 1945. The lack of a response from Canadians might have had something to do with the fact that the U.S. move to de-ration meat had been widely expected.

almost a third of the country's entire supply and close to half of all its inspected meat. By comparison, the U.S. exported only five percent of its total meat supply.¹²² The U.S. decision, while potentially inconvenient for the Canada, held out the possibility of disaster for Europe, where food problems were becoming critical.

“A Relatively Painless Austerity Program”



Globe and Mail, February 9, 1946.

While ordinary Canadians were settling down to less meat on their tables, Canadian officials were digesting a Dominion Bureau of Statistics report on the global food situation. It made for grim reading:

Nearly all the staple food supplies of the world will be in short supply this year, as a result of lowered farm production, reduced carry-over of old stocks, and disrupted distribution agencies. ... Excessive rain and cold hampered fall and

¹²² "Meat Ration Will Remain, Says Premier," *Globe and Mail*, November 24, 1945, p. 1.

winter sowing. Drought conditions developed last spring throughout the Mediterranean area and continued through the growing season, while some parts of the Continent near the North Sea had excessive rainfall during the grain harvesting season with some reports telling of crops rotting in the fields. Eastern Europe has suffered major dislocations in her agricultural activities during and since the war. Not only have military operations left their mark but also extensive social changes, population transfers, land reforms, altered farm controls and heavy losses of livestock, farm machinery, and transport vehicles.¹²³

The result of this litany of woe was, predictably, an acute crisis situation in 1946, circumstances which made Canadians' complaints about rationing seem rather ignominious. Wheat production, which the Canadian government had endeavoured to keep down during the war, was now the cornerstone of relief efforts and as such was a highly sought after staple. In Summer 1945, the International Wheat Council estimated that meeting Europe's needs would require imports of over 15 million tons of wheat before July 1946.¹²⁴ In February 1946, Britain issued "urgent appeals" to Canada and the United States for more food, placing specific emphasis on cereals.¹²⁵ As decreased shipments from the U.S. had contributed to a grain shortfall, bread rationing loomed in Britain. Finally, an UNRRA report stated that while many parts of Europe had "skirted the brink of disaster," a far more perilous period loomed in Spring 1946. "Under such conditions," the agency reported, "UNRRA food imports will represent for many food-shortage regions the difference between a sustenance diet and one at the starvation

¹²³ LAC, RG64, vol. 1356, file European Food Situation, "Monthly Review of the Wheat Situation," Dominion Bureau of Statistics, October, 1945.

¹²⁴ "Anatomy of Failure," *Time*, April 29, 1946. The International Wheat Council (created in 1942 by the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and Argentina) was an inter-Allied body set up to direct world wheat surpluses to areas that needed relief.

¹²⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 1685, Draft Minutes – Wartime Prices and Trade Board, "WPTB Draft Minutes – Meeting," February 7, 1946; LAC, MG28 I66, vol. 19, Foods Administration, 1941-1946 "International Food Situation," talk by Kenneth Wilson, editor, *Financial Post*, CBO broadcast, February 17, 1946. For more on the American response to the food crisis, see Barton J. Bernstein, "The Postwar Famine and Price Control, 1946," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (October 1964): 235-240.

level.”¹²⁶ The American government, which had ended most food rationing and subsequently had to decrease the amount of foodstuffs it could send overseas, responded to the crisis. It launched a voluntary ‘share-the-food campaign’ under former president Herbert Hoover who, during World War I had served as head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the American Relief Administration, and also held the post of U.S. Food Administrator.¹²⁷

Canada’s once enormous wheat supply was dwindling. Since 1944 Canada had been exporting around one million bushels of wheat per day; at this rate Canada’s reserves would be depleted by July 1946.¹²⁸ The world wheat shortage, King felt, had vindicated his previous opposition to Canada’s wartime wheat reduction policy, as now Canadians needed to “make some further sacrifice to help keep the people [of Europe] from starving.”¹²⁹ A February memorandum on the world food problem argued that the major focus had to be on increasing the amount of wheat available, and that as such, Canada should adopt “a vigorous nation-wide campaign for food conservation” and a series of measures to increase the amount of wheat available for export.¹³⁰ These included tax relief incentives for farmers in exchange for discharging farm-stored wheat and limits on the amount of grain that could be used for distillation purposes.¹³¹ Also

¹²⁶ *UNRRA Monthly Review*, March 1946, p. 1.

¹²⁷ For a comprehensive account of Hoover’s activities see George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover, vol. 2: The Humanitarian, 1914-1917* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983) and *vol. 3: Master of Emergencies, 1917-1918* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

¹²⁸ Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in Great Britain, February 10, 1946, *DCER, vol. 12*, p. 544; Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister, February 13, 1946, *DCER, vol. 12*, p. 545.

¹²⁹ LAC, WLM King Diaries, February 7, 1946.

¹³⁰ Memorandum from Privy Council Office to Secretary to the Cabinet, February 7, 1946, *DCER, vol. 12*, p. 541.

¹³¹ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, February 13, 1946.

stressed was that King himself should announce these measures to underscore their importance.¹³²

James Gardiner arrived back in Ottawa from an overseas trip just as the cabinet was deciding what steps Canada could take to ease the food crisis. Gardiner argued that the situation in Europe was not “nearly as bad from that point of view as they were represented,” a position that rather shocked King.¹³³ Gardiner’s attitude was indeed strange given that he had just attended a United Nations conference where the delegates had been informed that “almost a billion persons, or half the world’s population, are ‘in danger of or actually facing famine.’”¹³⁴ The agriculture minister had also been working on a series of food contracts with the British, and hinted that he had been engaged in tough bargaining. Canada, he stated, would do everything possible to help feed Britain, but he also noted that “co-operation is not a one-way action.”¹³⁵ The *Globe and Mail* took Gardiner to task for this remark, suggesting that it was unseemly in light of the food shortfalls.¹³⁶ The minister’s attitude was also dangerous for the cognitive dissonance it could produce; the government was using starvation imagery and tales of hunger to encourage support for continued food controls, something that did not match Gardiner’s words or apparent attitude towards the British.

While the government was deliberating, news about the food crisis overseas proliferated. Editorials and other items appeared urging Canadians to cut back on food

¹³² “Minutes of an Interdepartmental Meeting – World Food Crisis,” February 13, 1946, *DCER*, vol. 12, p. 547.

¹³³ LAC, WLM King Diaries, February 7, 1946.

¹³⁴ CWM, “The World Food Crisis” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, March 9, 1946.

¹³⁵ “Canada Pledges Full Aid; Give Britain ‘All We Have’ – Give-Take Need Hinted by Gardiner,” *Globe and Mail*, February 8, 1946, p. 1.

¹³⁶ “He’s At it Again” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1946, p. 6.

in order to help those overseas.¹³⁷ Surely, if circumstances were as bad as they seemed, it would only be a matter of time before the state ratcheted up food restrictions. Women's Regional Advisory Committee (WRAC) representative H.M. Detwiler informed Byrne Sanders that people were wondering "why the propaganda about the scarcity of food in Britain and Europe unless the Government is going to do something about it. The feeling here is that the situation cannot be as bad as it is painted, or something would be done immediately." Canada was still rationing several food commodities, but a palpable desire to 'do something more' was present among some segments of society. "The women," Detwiler continued, "naturally are greatly concerned that people are threatened with actual starvation in Europe, that famine is on the horizon in India, that the people in Britain are again, voluntarily, reducing their own ration and giving up their quota of rice and making many other sacrifices, while we are still living on the fat of the land in Canada."¹³⁸ Those who wished to assist would not have to wait long for state direction. When the new parliamentary session opened in March, the speech from the throne indicated that world hunger would lead the government's agenda. Canada's export-dependent prosperity, after all, required peace and global stability to flourish, and likely neither would come about if half the world's population were malnourished.¹³⁹

On March 17 King outlined the steps Canada would take in the form of a nine-point plan for famine relief, a program that combined both compulsory and voluntary

¹³⁷ CWM, "If Canadians Eat Less Cake There'll Be More British Bread" (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, February 7, 1946.

¹³⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 35-1, Consumers Representatives General, vol. 1, H.M. Detwiler to Byrne Sanders, February 26, 1946.

¹³⁹ "Canada Gives World Food Priority in Program as Parliament Opens," *New York Times*, March 15, 1946, p. 8.

measures.¹⁴⁰ All producers were encouraged to “maximize” their production for the next several years.¹⁴¹ The wheat extraction rate remain unchanged, but Canadians, who during the years of wheat surplus had been urged to consume more bread, were now asked to conserve grain products since the amount of wheat available for domestic purposes would be reduced by ten percent.¹⁴² The supply of wheat available for distilling would be cut in half, and efforts would be made to improve the transportation of wheat.¹⁴³ Even though the war was now over, the public was encouraged to continue with their Victory Gardens. In essence, relatively little was being asked of Canadians as nothing in the plan required onerous sacrifices. Nevertheless, the program was lauded by the *Toronto Star* which argued that it would “improve nutrition and provide more wheat for the hungry in Europe and Asia,” especially if everyone chipped in. “There is no limit to the amount of good that can be done by people of good-will.”¹⁴⁴ The *Globe and Mail* also saw that this as a step in the right direction; that the practice of “self-denial” in the consumption of wheat products would have a positive effect.¹⁴⁵

As a corollary to the conservation plan, the government established the Food Information Committee (FIC) to provide encouragement and direction to the public.¹⁴⁶ One of its radio spots declared “[i]f food can be called a weapon of war, then it is an even more potent instrument for peace. Hungry people are not in a mood to reason –

¹⁴⁰ CWM, “A Nine-Point Program for Famine Relief” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, March 19, 1946.

¹⁴¹ “Food Plan’s Nine Points,” *Globe and Mail*, March 18, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁴² The extraction rate refers to the amount of wheat grain left in the flour after the milling process. In the case of whole wheat flour 100 pounds of wheat yields 100 pounds of flour, thus equating to a 100% extraction rate. If 100 pounds of wheat results in 80 pounds of flour, the extraction rate is 80%. Increasing the extraction rate thus ‘stretches’ the amount of flour obtained from wheat, but the quality and properties of the flour will change, something that not all consumers appreciate.

¹⁴³ “Canada Plans to Ship More Food; Will Cut Home Milling of Wheat,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1946, p. 12.

¹⁴⁴ CWM, “A Nine-Point Program for Famine Relief” (Editorial), *Toronto Star*, March 19, 1946.

¹⁴⁵ “Self-Denial Only Choice” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, March 19, 1946, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, March 21, 1946.

men cannot sit at the peace table with unbiased minds while their fellow-countrymen go hungry. If we are to avoid the horrors of hate and its consequences tomorrow, we must help to feed the world's hungry today." Canadians were then informed of the steps they could take to help. "The less we use of staple foods made from wheat, meat, eggs and cheese," went one appeal, "the more of those foods will be sent to hungry nations."¹⁴⁷ The FIC also disseminated appeals from political leaders. Justice Minister Louis St. Laurent, for example, appealed to Francophones over the CBC's French-language network, that "Peace cannot be built on human misery."¹⁴⁸ Canadians were also habitually reminded that, when it came to food, they had not really endured great hardships compared to so many others during the war and now the peace.¹⁴⁹

Another unofficial part of the Canada's mild postwar 'austerity program,' though not publicized, involved butter. By 1946 continuing problems with domestic production meant that Canada would have to *import* butter if current ration amounts were to be maintained. Accordingly, a deal was struck with Britain to divert some of its own butter stocks to Canada. But as the food crisis in Europe worsened, the cabinet had second thoughts about this, and with good reason. As the image of a well-fed nation such as Canada taking food *away* from a hungry Britain was certainly not one that the government wished to promulgate, the move to divert British butter was put off.¹⁵⁰ Instead, the butter ration was temporarily reduced.¹⁵¹ The ongoing butter dearth was wearisome; one woman from Merrickville, Ontario, vented her frustrations in a letter to

¹⁴⁷ LAC, RG36-31, vol. 27, Food Information, "Spot Announcement Food Information Committee of the Government of Canada, Radio Spot No. 16," undated.

¹⁴⁸ "St. Laurent Appeals for Food; Can't Build Peace on Misery," *Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1946, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ "Canada and the Food Crisis" (Editorial), *Olds Gazette*, April 18, 1946, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, February 6, 1946.

¹⁵¹ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2637, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, February 9, 1946.

King, pleading for the authorities to begin “looking after the interests of Canada. We are helping the Russians and the British and dear know who else but charity begins at home and this butter and sugar shortage – and other shortages – is menacing the life of Canadians,” she wrote. “Oh for a piece of toast with butter on it in the morning!”¹⁵²

For some, however, simply consuming less food on a daily basis did not go far enough. Those who wished to take more direct action could contribute to charities such as the well-established ‘Save the Children’ fund or they could send individual food parcels overseas. Coupon donation drives and the gathering of food items for bulk shipment overseas were some of the other things undertaken by individuals and groups, though not all these efforts made the Canadian authorities happy. Schemes of any sort that physically collected food for eventual shipment overseas were officially frowned upon because of the difficulties connected to overseas transport. The logistics involved with such programs required no small degree of interagency cooperation and state assistance, all of which diverted scarce resources. Another problem with these campaigns, as the *Financial Post* pointed out, was the hodgepodge nature of the food collected. It often ended up being something that was neither desired nor needed by the recipients, making this an ineffective use of time and money.¹⁵³

One such example was Kate Aitken’s well-intentioned “Food for Britain” campaign. Using her radio show as a rallying point, Aitken urged her listeners to drop off donated food at Tamblyn drug stores during the month of April. The food would then be collected and shipped overseas. The high-profile campaign attracted the WPTB’s attention, and when asked about it Aitken claimed to have received a permit to

¹⁵² LAC, RG64, vol. 639, file 19-33, Food Rationing, Mrs. J.H. Beamish to Mackenzie King, April 3, 1946.

¹⁵³ CWM, “Collecting Canned Goods Doesn’t Help Feed U.K.,” *Financial Post*, March 9, 1946.

export the food. This prompted consternation, as other charitable groups had been denied such permission.¹⁵⁴ Ken Taylor contacted Aitken to say that no evidence of an export permit could be found. The food items being collected were mainly tinned fish, fruits, and jam, along with chocolate, cocoa, dried fruit, sugar, powdered milk and eggs; Canada Packers was also donating \$200 worth of canned meat. Many of these foods required specific permission to export which, Taylor noted, would usually be denied. Aitken claimed to have received promises from the British to ship this food free of charge, something else Taylor could not verify.¹⁵⁵ It appeared a misunderstanding had arisen when Aitken had asked J.L. Ilsley for permission to send parcels of food overseas, which Ilsley had taken to mean small individual packets, not large bulk food shipments. In total, twelve cases of food, weighing around 1440 pounds, would be prepared. Aitken's sponsor, the Tamblyn drug store chain plus the Red Cross, would pay for the shipping costs to Britain.¹⁵⁶ Some fifteen tons of food was collected, enough, according to Aitken, "to feed a little community of children all spring and summer."¹⁵⁷ She was later apologetic about the way the campaign had been conducted. "I'm extremely sorry if we have been out of order," she wrote to the WPTB. "In view of the shortage of food in Britain, and the fact that the British Ministry of Food is apportioning the food, I hope no unpleasantness may arise."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, Harriet Parsons to Mme. de la Durantaye, March 27, 1946.

¹⁵⁵ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, Ken Taylor to Kate Aitken, April 5, 1946.

¹⁵⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, Byrne Sanders to Kate Aitken, April 8, 1946.

¹⁵⁷ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, Statement by Kate Aitken, May 2, 1946.

¹⁵⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, Kate Aitken to P.L. Browne, July 17, 1946.

Coupon donation received government encouragement because it was much less disruptive, requiring little in the way of extra resources. The movement began, by all accounts, spontaneously in British Columbia in late Winter 1946. In Victoria alone 6000 ration coupons (mainly for meat) were donated between the 15th and 20th of March “in the hope that this would enable the Government to send more food to England.”¹⁵⁹ The campaign quickly spread throughout the country, and soon Canadians found themselves urged to give up part of their meat ration. By April the movement had official support from the government, and local ration boards were instructed to accept the coupons.¹⁶⁰ Yet Donald Gordon had reservations. The image of thousands of loose coupons floating around could not have been a happy one for the WPTB’s Enforcement Division. To prevent the coupons from ending up on the black market, only groups registered as official war charities could help collect the coupons, and then only with permission from the local ration board.¹⁶¹ Another danger linked to the campaign was that industrial workers (who had been agitating for larger meat rations) might take this as proof that non-labourers were getting too much meat while they received too little. Yet with just 125,000 meat coupons surrendered to the WPTB by mid-June, this did not demonstrate that many Canadians were unable to consume their meat allotment.¹⁶²

Canadians may have had to put up with rationing, wheat restrictions and food conservation, but when contrasted with conditions in Europe, Canada’s “relatively

¹⁵⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, W.K.G. Colquhoun to Donald Gordon, April 2, 1946.

¹⁶⁰ CWM, “Ask Canadians Donate Coupons,” *Hamilton Spectator*, April 12, 1946.

¹⁶¹ “Plan Collecting Spare Coupons To Send More Meat to Europe,” *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1946, p. 8.

¹⁶² LAC, RG64, vol. 1222, file 37-4, Food Collections for Europe, Byrne Sanders to Ken Taylor, June 26, 1946.

painless austerity program” was just that.¹⁶³ When Herbert Morrison, Britain’s deputy prime minister, came to Canada in May 1946 looking for increased food commitments, all he got was a vague promise that the situation would be regularly re-assessed.¹⁶⁴ This was not good enough for the *Toronto Telegram*. “Two simple questions confront the federal government and the Canadian people,” it wrote. “Have we done all that can be done to reduce our consumption of wheat and flour? Has everything been done that can be done to prevent the waste of food?” It would have been “a finer display of humanitarianism” if the government had agreed to enact further restrictions on domestic consumption.¹⁶⁵ But the government had to walk a finer line in peace than it had in war. Indeed, as meat grew increasingly scarce the black market flourished, and reports of “panic-buying of meat” emerged.¹⁶⁶ Others blamed farmers for purposefully keeping livestock off the market in order to force a price increase. One unnamed minister quoted in *Toronto Star* declared that “Isn’t it a shocking thing that Ontario producers should band together to hold their cattle off the market at this time of a world food shortage?”¹⁶⁷ Packers refused to buy cattle at the prices being asked by many farmers as they would not then be able to sell the meat at the ceiling price without losing money.¹⁶⁸ In Toronto the problem prompted Mayor R.H. Saunders to send an urgent telegram to Donald Gordon requesting his presence at a special meeting about the meat situation

¹⁶³ “Concern Felt Over Washington Pressure On Wheat, Beef Prices,” *Globe and Mail*, May 20, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ CWM, “Ottawa Answers Flat ‘No’ To Appeal by Morrison for Greater Famine Aid,” *Toronto Telegram*, May 21, 1946; LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2638, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, May 20, 1946.

¹⁶⁵ CWM, “This Country Can Do More to Alleviate Famine” (Editorial), *Toronto Telegram*, May 21, 1946.

¹⁶⁶ “Panic-Buying of Meat Starts; Black Market Termed Out of Control,” *Globe and Mail*, April 19, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ CWM, “Meat Crisis Said Wedge in Price Control Fight,” *Toronto Star*, April 20, 1946; “Shortage, Not Price To Blame, Gordon Says,” *Toronto Star*, April 29, 1946.

¹⁶⁸ “Packers Refuse to Buy Cattle as Holdout on Beef Market Continues,” *Globe and Mail*, April 23, 1946, p. 4.

with H.D. Anger, the Board's Chief Enforcement Officer.¹⁶⁹ Gordon argued that the shortage was seasonal and temporary and said that no changes would be made to the price ceiling. J.G. Taggart rebuked consumers for complaining about the lack of meat, contrasting Canada's abundance with the food crisis in Europe.¹⁷⁰

But those tetchy consumers represented a market for meat that several dealers were willing to fill regardless of the law. Consumers were more willing than ever to bend the rules; a July 1945 WPTB poll had revealed that only 55% of respondents believed that underground purchases were "against the national interest."¹⁷¹ Butchers were indeed buying meat on the black market for in many cases it was the only way demand could be met. This was made clear at "an uproarious meeting of 350 Toronto and suburban butchers" held in late April 1946. Both H.D. Anger and Robert Saunders were present, but this did not keep the assembled butchers from being quite open about their dealings in the underground economy. The President of the Toronto Retail Butchers' Association put forth a resolution calling for the members to forswear buying on the black market, but only half of the assembled dealers supported the motion. All, however, backed a motion calling for the WPTB to place a ceiling on cattle prices.¹⁷² In early May the black market rumblings became too much for the WPTB which ordered a special investigation. A commissioner, J.D. McNish, was appointed, and anyone with

¹⁶⁹ LAC, RG64, vol. 638, file 19-32, vol. 9, Meat Rationing, Robert H. Saunders to Donald Gordon, April 24, 1946.

¹⁷⁰ "Meat Short, So What? Europe's Ill-Fed Benefit," *Globe and Mail*, April 26, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ LAC, RG64, vol. 444, file 10-88, Public Opinion Polls, "Report No. 3, Canadian Opinion in July, 1945 – Nation-wide Attitudes Towards Inflation, Price, Distribution, and Supply. Opinion Research and Press Analysis Section, Information Branch, Wartime Prices and Trade Board," August 31, 1945.

¹⁷² "Butchers Won't Pledge Black Market Boycott," *Globe and Mail*, May 1, 1946, p. 1.

information pertaining to the underground trade in meat was urged to appear at the inquiry.¹⁷³

Of course, blaming the black market for the beef shortage was disingenuous. The fundamental reason behind the scarcity was that the major packinghouses were simply not buying and processing enough cattle, in large part because they could not make enough money under prevailing prices. The *Canadian Forum* pointed out the absurdity of the situation, noting the large amount of cattle present on farms and the fact that consumers had both money and the desire to buy beef – and yet there was none.¹⁷⁴ The government's caution, however, was perhaps justified in light of the dramatic inflation that had occurred after the First World War. On May 26 the WPTB finally took steps to increase the amount of beef moving into the market by abandoning price ceilings on certain carcass grades. While the retail ceiling remained, the change would enable butchers to legally offer higher prices to wholesalers who could then in turn offer higher prices to farmers, thereby increasing the amount of cattle being sold.¹⁷⁵ The change had an immediate effect as the major packing firms resumed large-scale buying of cattle. Less pleased, butchers protested that if they were to pay higher prices to the wholesalers for their meat, which they still had to sell at the retail ceiling, their profit margins would shrink. "The packers and the farmers are getting all the gravy," complained one dealer. "If there is to be an increase in the price of meat, why shouldn't the consumer be asked to bear his share, instead of putting all the burden on the retailer?"¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ "WPTB Orders Black Market Meat Probe," *Globe and Mail*, May 11, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ "Profits Before Food" (Editorial), *Canadian Forum*, June 1946, p. 51.

¹⁷⁵ "Packer Ceilings Off, More Beef Seen," *Globe and Mail*, May 27, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁷⁶ "Packers Buy Heavily as Retailers Protest Effect of Meat Order," *Globe and Mail*, May 28, 1946, p. 5.

The Board was not insensitive to the demands of retailers; the WPTB knew that the situation was inequitable. Indeed, Donald Gordon was reportedly in sympathy with the butchers.¹⁷⁷ On July 3 the Board announced that a new price schedule for beef would take effect later that month. The ceiling on certain grades of carcasses that had been removed in late May would be re-imposed but at rate two cents higher than before the suspension. Retailers would also be allowed to pass on any increase over one cent to consumers. The end result would be slightly higher retail beef prices, anywhere from two to six cents per pound, a change that angered some consumers. Winnipeg's Housewives' Consumer Association planned a protest that would include a weeklong beef buying 'strike.' Special tokens were prepared, upon which were emblazoned the slogan "I bought no beef today," that were to be given to butchers when other meats were purchased.¹⁷⁸ Similar actions were planned by the Toronto Housewives' Consumer Association. One annoyed dealer remarked that the women "would be better off doing the dishes and minding their own business."¹⁷⁹ Still, the campaign spread as Vancouver became the site of a "Buy-No-Beef" consumer strike of its own.¹⁸⁰

No matter what measures the government took, it seemed that members of one part of the food chain found themselves at a disadvantage relative to the others. Most had few qualms about expressing their indignation. Controlling the economy in wartime had been challenging, but nearly all Canadians accepted that sacrifice was essential to attain victory. In peacetime the government's ability to maintain support for its policies depended largely on its ability to mobilize support around a humanitarian crisis, but the

¹⁷⁷ "Meat Prices Adjustment Seen Near," *Globe and Mail*, June 14, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ "Beef Prices Up Monday Two-Six Cents," *Globe and Mail*, July 17, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ CWM, "Weeks Boycott of Beef Urged by Housewives," *Toronto Star*, July 19, 1946.

¹⁸⁰ "Buy-No-Beef Campaign," *Globe and Mail*, July 27, 1946, p. 7.

population, weary of sacrifice and eager to enjoy the fruits of victory, saw this crisis as far less immediate and intense.

“Frustration’s Stepchild”: The Western Farmers’ Revolt

An agrarian counterpart of sorts to the sporadic consumer protests of the immediate postwar years occurred in 1946. Farmers had spent the war producing as much food as they could despite serious shortages of both labour and equipment. Their spokespeople had agitated fiercely for greater farmer participation in agricultural policy formation, and they had never hesitated to make their needs and demands known to both the government and the public. There had been instances where farmers had sought to turn circumstances to their advantage, such as withholding beef cattle in the hopes of better prices, but in general the agricultural community had not engaged in any elaborate actions – such as strikes – that might have jeopardized Canada’s wartime food production. Many western farmers had already switched their political allegiance from the Liberals to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and with the war over, some less moderate segments of organized agriculture had lost their reluctance to adopt more ‘radical’ tactics. By late Summer 1946, as a wave of labour unrest spread through the Canadian workforce, certain western farmers decided that they too could demonstrate their power by striking.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Unions had grown in size and strength during the war, buttressed by the federal government’s introduction of P.C. 1003 in 1944 that established collective bargaining rights for labour. Once the war had ended, labour leaders felt that the time was right to exert some of their newly-gained power to increase postwar wage rates and to justify their value to members. Accordingly, the period between 1945 and 1947 was a flashpoint of labour unrest in Canada, with 1946 standing out as a particularly active year with 133,000 workers walking off the job, resulting in a total of 4.46 million days lost (between January 1 and October 31). See Peter S. McNinnis, *Harnessing Labour Confrontation: Shaping the Postwar Settlement in Canada, 1943-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 99-100, and Desmond Morton and Terry Copp, *Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour* (Ottawa: Deneau & Greenberg, 1980).

While the strikers issued broad demands, the most immediate cause of their revolt was the Anglo-Canadian wheat agreement. In July 1946 Britain's new Minister of Food, John Strachey, had attended the inaugural meeting of the International Emergency Food Council in Washington, D.C. On the way, he stopped in Canada to negotiate a new wheat agreement.¹⁸² Britain was already buying Canadian wheat at a discounted price. As of September 1945 it was paying \$1.55 a bushel, though a higher price could have been extracted given world demand and the price of \$1.70 then being quoted on the Chicago Wheat Exchange.¹⁸³ In part to placate producers, the Canadian government also announced a \$1 per bushel floor price intended to last until 1950. But now, one year later, the British, about to enact highly unpopular bread rationing, wanted to secure a long-term wheat deal with Canada, ideally at the same low price. Gardiner, mindful of the way wheat prices had buckled after the First World War, was just as eager to secure a market (and a minimum price) for the immediate postwar years.

Under the terms of the new contract Britain agreed to buy 600 million bushels of Canadian wheat from August 1946 to July 1950 but at prices well below market levels.¹⁸⁴ For 1946 and 1947, the \$1.55 price would remain, while the remaining years would see the Britain pay between \$1 and \$1.25 a bushel. In total, Canada was to ship over 630 million bushels of wheat to the U.K. The agreement was entered into on the presupposition that Britain would continue to be a major destination for Canadian

¹⁸² "Mr. Strachey Going to Canada," *Times (London)*, June 15, 1946, p. 4. The IEFC replaced the defunct Combined Food Board. See "Combined Food Board Ends Work Tomorrow; 19-Nation Council Will Continue Program," *New York Times*, June 30, 1946, p. 13.

¹⁸³ Britnell and Fowke, p. 219.

¹⁸⁴ Bruce Muirhead, "The Politics of Food and the Disintegration of the Anglo-Canadian Trade Relationship, 1947-1948," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, Vol. 2 (1991), pp. 219-220.

foodstuffs, a false premise as it turned out.¹⁸⁵ The government also reinforced the monopoly position of the Canada Wheat Board by announcing a new five-year wheat pool. This was significant as it represented a substantial shift in Liberal policy, namely acceptance of state control over wheat marketing and a concomitant rejection of private wheat trading in Canada. Given the uncertainty that surrounded postwar trade, Gardiner believed that a lower price was worth taking in exchange for a measure of security. Hannam agreed and came out in favour of the deal, supporting Gardiner's contention that what farmers lost by selling at a lower price was offset by the stability of having a secure market for several years.¹⁸⁶

But Hannam's approval was not shared by all in the agricultural community. The terms of the agreement were strongly criticised by the Alberta Farmers' Union (AFU), which was upset that the \$1.55 price was only assured for two years, something it wanted guaranteed for five.¹⁸⁷ The financial editor of the *Globe and Mail*, Wellington Jeffers, argued that the government had made "a profound and needless mistake" in entering into such an arrangement with the British.¹⁸⁸ Jeffers, who wanted market forces to determine price, contended that if the world price of wheat rose considerably above the \$1.55 mark, Canadian wheat growers would be livid at the lost income. On the other hand a dip in the world price would create dissension amongst the British. Another part of the deal that roused misgivings was the fact that once purchased, Britain could do what it wanted with the Canadian wheat, even sell it at a higher price to

¹⁸⁵ Gregory P. Marchildon, "Canadian-American Agricultural Trade Relations: A Brief History," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), p. 247.

¹⁸⁶ "Wheat Agreement is What Farmers Wanted: Hannam," *Globe and Mail*, July 27, 1946, p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ "Billion-Dollar Wheat Agreement Signed With U.K.," *Globe and Mail*, July 26, 1946, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ "Finance at Large," *Globe and Mail*, July 26, 1946, p. 18.

another country.¹⁸⁹ George Bickerton, former President of the Saskatchewan branch of the United Farmers of Canada (UFC), believed that the pact could place Britain “in the position of waging a wheat-price war in competition with the country from which the wheat will be bought at below-market level.”¹⁹⁰ The Winnipeg Grain Exchange took out large advertisements decrying the agreement as “state socialism” for which the government had “no mandate from the people.”¹⁹¹

The controversy over the wheat deal intensified in mid-August when the AFU voted in favour of a non-delivery strike. The farmers asked for the appointment of a board to investigate parity prices (that reflected the cost of production and enabled the farmer to make a profit), along with a five-year guaranteed wheat price at \$1.55. Also on their list of demands was a “satisfactory floor for livestock, poultry and dairy products;” a rollback on farm equipment prices to 1944 levels; various tax reform measures that would benefit farmers; the eradication of the Grain Exchange; and a modification to “grossly unfair freight rates.”¹⁹² On September 2, it was announced that the 20,000 members of the AFU and over 80,000 Saskatchewan farmers who belonged to the UFC would cease to deliver their produce as of September 6.¹⁹³ The *Globe and Mail* reported that the government was “baffled” but “not greatly concerned” with the prospect of a farmers’ strike.¹⁹⁴ The strike was in no way sanctioned by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), and the strikers did not have the overt support of any

¹⁸⁹ “Debate Said Certain On Wheat-Pact Terms With ‘Inadequacy’ Basis,” *Globe and Mail*, July 29, 1946, p. 11.

¹⁹⁰ “Agreement Re Wheat May Cause Discord,” *Globe and Mail*, August 1, 1946, p. 23.

¹⁹¹ Ad, Winnipeg Grain Exchange, *Olds Gazette*, August 1, 1946, p. 2.

¹⁹² “Farmers’ Union Locals Here Vote to Strike If Necessary,” *Fairview Post*, August 14, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁹³ “100,000 Prairie Farmers To Stage Strike Friday, Union Head Announces,” *Globe and Mail*, September 3, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ “Ottawa Showing Little Alarm on Farm Strike; Exports Only Affected,” *Globe and Mail*, September 4, 1946, p. 3.

major political party. The actual size of the two organizations' membership was open to question, and there was no guarantee that all members would join the action. In practical terms, the strike might make a dent in Canada's exports. The CFA, however, was placed in a very awkward position. It shared many of the AFU's aims – notably a higher price for wheat – but it did not support the methods being employed as they were not compatible with the CFA's more moderate philosophy to work its way into the policy-making process via lobbying, not open confrontation.¹⁹⁵ The AFU-CFA division also reflected a broader schism that existed within Prairie agriculture – namely, that between smaller and larger farmers. As David Monod notes, larger, successful producers tended to support the moderate and conformist tactics of the CFA, while smaller, “more desperate” farmers were willing to undertake radical action to make their voices heard.¹⁹⁶

Talks between farm representatives and government officials at Ottawa failed to avert action. Within days striking farmers were picketing creameries, livestock yards and grain elevators and ‘persuading’ others not to deliver their produce. Some farmers who tried to cross the pickets had their pigs ‘escape’ out of the backs of their trucks, while others had their cream dumped on the ground.¹⁹⁷ In the Alberta town of Magrath, strikers displayed a large blackboard upon which they wrote down the names of the farmers who were defying the pickets. In Lethbridge one farmer used a toy gun to try to get through the lines. Several protesters were arrested, and when the strike was

¹⁹⁵ “Gardiner Return Hints Showdown on Farm Strike,” *Globe and Mail*, September 21, 1946, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ David Monod, “The End of Agrarianism: The Fight for Farm Parity in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1935-48,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 16 (Fall 1985), pp. 120-121.

¹⁹⁷ “Alberta Pickets Stop Delivery of Produce as Farm Strike Starts,” *Globe and Mail*, September 9, 1946, p. 1.

extended to include milk deliveries, authorities promised to provide, if necessary, armed escorts for dairy farmers.¹⁹⁸

Official reaction to the strike was rather muted. In his diary, King predicted that the strike would “be a real fizzle” and that the farmers would eventually regret their action.¹⁹⁹ He felt, not unreasonably, that it was all “part of the fibre of the days.” Alberta Premier Ernest Manning pressed King to take action, but he refused to do anything until Gardiner and Ilsley (who were both abroad) returned to Ottawa. M.J. Coldwell, leader of federal CCF, decried the King government’s cowardice for refusing to appoint the price commission asked for by the striking farmers. They were simply afraid, argued Coldwell, that the result would be a recommendation for higher guaranteed prices for farmers.²⁰⁰

The *Globe and Mail* argued that while the strike itself would probably prove futile, the fact that it was occurring “is indicative of the farm unrest which has developed under a controlled price system.”²⁰¹ But the problem was not that prices were controlled; the unpredictable nature of agriculture meant that a certain measure of state intervention was welcome. The strikers’ demand for parity prices was really an appeal for consistency in how those prices were formulated plus increased farmer participation in the process. E.E. Roper, leader of the Alberta CCF, advanced this argument when he decried the government’s “fixing ceiling prices on farm products without either consulting organized agriculture or establishing any scientific basis for the

¹⁹⁸ “7 Already Convicted in Prairie Farm Strike; Police Guard Dairymen,” *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 1946, pp. 1, 2.

¹⁹⁹ LAC, WLM King Diaries, September 6, 1946.

²⁰⁰ “Ottawa Afraid of Farm Facts, Coldwell Charges,” *Globe and Mail*, September 19, 1946, p. 3.

²⁰¹ “Frustration’s Stepchild” (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, September 9, 1946, p. 6.

determination of prices.”²⁰² This was in line with the demands that the CFA, and organized agriculture in general, had been making for years.

The strike did not ‘fizzle’ as King had hoped. As it continued more pickets went up, more confrontations ensued, and more arrests were made. Before long, shortages of meat and dairy products occurred in parts of Alberta while packing plants began to feel the effects as livestock marketing dried up and large layoffs ensued.²⁰³ Restaurants and butcher shops were forced to close as supplies dwindled. Gardiner’s return to Canada did promise some movement, as the strike was reportedly the minister’s first priority. Agreeing with the government’s stance that it should not give into the strikers’ demands, Gardiner decided to point out to the farmers that a farm price ‘fact-finding body’ already existed in the Agricultural Prices Support Board (APSB).²⁰⁴ Gardiner also noted that there was a possibility that the Food Board Advisory Committee, chaired by Hannam, would serve the APSB in the same capacity.²⁰⁵ The farm strike leaders rejected Gardiner’s arguments and noted that the APSB did not deal with wheat, the western farmer’s most important commodity. They however agreed to take their case to Ottawa where they encountered “very cooperative” officials, including Gardiner himself. There they were told that the APSB would appoint one member from the AFU and one from the Saskatchewan branch of the UFC to act in an advisory capacity, a promise of greater consultation that quelled the western unrest.²⁰⁶ The strike leaders believed that they had achieved at least some of their objectives, but behind the scenes the CFA, fearful that

²⁰² “E.E. Roper Reports on Farm Strike,” *Nanton News*, September 12, 1946, p. 4.

²⁰³ “Some Towns Without Milk on Prairies,” *Globe and Mail*, September 12, 1946, p. 1; “Four Packing Plants Laying Off Employees; Result of Farm Strike,” *Globe and Mail*, September 14, 1946, p. 15. The striking farmers offered to help the laid off workers find jobs on farms.

²⁰⁴ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2638, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, September 24, 1946.

²⁰⁵ “Gardiner Tells Farmers Price Fact-Finding Plea is Matter for Board,” *Globe and Mail*, September 26, 1946, p. 15.

²⁰⁶ “Ottawa Promise Brings Suspension of Farm Strike,” *Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1946, p. 1.

the radical element within the farm movement would undermine its own position, was lobbying the government to ignore the promises made to the strikers.²⁰⁷ It is a measure of the CFA's stature at that point that Gardiner did just that; the two farmers that he later appointed to the APSB did not come from farmers' unions – in fact, they were not even from the west. Instead, after consulting with Herbert Hannam, Gardiner named Eric Kitchen, a dairy farmer and former Secretary-Treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and J.A. Proulx, a mixed farmer from Quebec.²⁰⁸

While the wheat deal had been the catalyst, the farm strike was really about marginal western producers fighting to stay alive as farmers. As such, it served as a powerful indication of the anxiety that such individuals felt about the postwar years. "The recent Western farmers' strike," Seymour Lipset wrote in 1947, "in Saskatchewan at least, was largely a movement of the small poorer farmers. Small farmers contend that the present government guaranteed price of wheat is a profitable one for the big farmers, but not for them."²⁰⁹ Their fears, as it turned out, were justified as many small producers could not compete with the larger, increasingly industrial, technology-driven farms. The strike also underscored the fact that 'agriculture' cannot be subsumed into a monolithic whole; it highlighted class divisions within the sector that were just as powerful as divisions based on region or commodity. While farmers all across Canada shared the same basic goals for agriculture – adequate incomes, favourable policies, political influence and respect – there existed no small measure of discord over how best

²⁰⁷ Monod, p. 140.

²⁰⁸ "Gardiner Names Two Farmers to APS Board," *Globe and Mail*, January 15, 1947, p. 15. When Gardiner did finally add western representatives, the unions found themselves shunned once again, in favour of CFA-affiliated groups. See Monod, p. 140.

²⁰⁹ Seymour Lipset, "The Rural Community and Political Leadership in Saskatchewan," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (August 1947), p. 428.

to achieve their objectives. The strike had involved an estimated 50,000-60,000 farmers but it had been limited to Alberta and Saskatchewan, and most farm organizations, despite general sympathy with the strikers' aims, in no way had supported the means employed to reach them.²¹⁰ During the war, via the CFA's leadership, farmers had achieved a much greater degree of participation in farm policy formulation. The adoption of more radical tactics by certain segments of the farm movement threatened to jeopardize the gains that had been made through moderate, lobby-group, pressure. And there *were* gains to safeguard. Compared to their experience during the prewar years, Canadian farmers had done well under the wartime agricultural economy. The total worth of the subsidies and other supports paid to farmers between September 1939 and December 31, 1946 stood at \$437 million.²¹¹ In addition, as economic historian Gregory Marchildon points out, the government was not approaching farm issues on the basis of temporary political expediency; indeed, the state's role in agriculture continued to expand in the postwar years.²¹²

Another contentious issue in the postwar years concerned export markets. It had been Gardiner's longstanding hope that the U.K. would continue to provide a lucrative market for Canadian produce after the war. Canada's farmers had other ideas, however, and the postwar decline in food exports to Britain, thanks in part to farmers reverting to prewar patterns of production, was considerable.²¹³ For example, throughout the war,

²¹⁰ The 50,000 number is quoted in Carrol Jaques, *Unifarm: A Story of Conflict & Change* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001), p. 12. David Monod puts the number at 60,000. See also D'Arcy Hande, "Parity Prices and the Farmers' Strike," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Autumn 1985), pp. 89-90.

²¹¹ LAC, RG17, vol. 3400, file 1500-1-36, "The Wartime Subsidy Program of the Dominion Department of Agriculture, September 1939 to April 1947," June 1947.

²¹² Marchildon, p. 246.

²¹³ Rebecca Taylor, "U.K.-Canada Trade Relations 1945-1950: An Anatomy of Decline," *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1999), p. 225.

Canada had supplied Britain with the bulk of the nation's bacon needs, and in order to do so Canadian hog production had skyrocketed as farmers were spurred on by government subsidies, an assured market, and endless moral suasion to grow more hogs. By war's end, Canada had shipped close to 3 billion pounds of bacon to Britain. In the postwar years, however, the amount shipped to an even-hungrier Britain declined precipitously. Freed from the pressures of the war, many farmers reverted to their traditional products, especially in the west where wheat and other crops once again took priority. The 1946 contract called for Canada to ship 450 million pounds of pork to the U.K., but actual deliveries only amounted to 272 million pounds. In 1947, some 350 million pounds were promised, but only 225 million pounds made it across the Atlantic. By 1950, of the 60 million pounds promised, only 31 million were delivered.²¹⁴

A similar story occurred with beef. Prior to the war the Department of Agriculture had viewed Britain as "the ideal terminus for Canadian beef exports," a position that brought it in direct confrontation with beef farmers who preferred to sell in the U.S. market.²¹⁵ Farmers again took this position in the postwar years, correctly arguing that wartime sales of beef to Britain had been subsidized by the Canadian government and thus could not be sustained; it was an "artificial" market.²¹⁶ Inevitably, Britain would once again turn to other and cheaper sources of supply. Still, Gardiner wished to entrench sales of Canadian beef to Britain in peacetime, a desire that, initially at least, seemed feasible. The 1946 contract called upon Canada to deliver a minimum of 60 million pounds of beef, but thanks to high production close to 120 million pounds

²¹⁴ Britnell and Fowke, p. 451.

²¹⁵ Max Foran, "The Price of Patriotism: Alberta Cattlemen and the Loss of the American Market, 1942-48," *Great Plains Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 2001), p. 21.

²¹⁶ Britnell and Fowke, p. 272.

was shipped. Buoyed by this performance, in 1947 the minimum delivery was raised to 120 million pounds but with cattle marketing down and curbs on domestic consumption lifted the Meat Board could only manage to export a paltry 40 million pounds. The 1948 contract minimum was set at 50 million pounds. Meanwhile, aware that they could get much better prices in the U.S., Canadian beef farmers exerted intense pressure on the government to re-open the cattle trade with that country. When the U.S. announced in 1948 that under the terms of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, it would be increasing the amount of cattle imported into the nation, Canadian producers believed that they would be able to take advantage of this change. Gardiner had other ideas. Still desperate to maintain the British market, the minister created a furor when he informed beef farmers that Canada would not be exporting any cattle to the U.S. Canada's fate, he argued, was linked to Britain. He argued that Canadian producers could only hope to gain a small segment of the total U.S. import quota, and that opening up the border would ultimately drive up the consumer price of beef at home.²¹⁷

Over the next six months, however, Gardiner repeatedly gave the impression that the end of the embargo was in the offing which only exacerbated the high domestic price of beef as farmers held back cattle in anticipation.²¹⁸ As a result, only 17 million pounds of beef were shipped to the U.K. before the contract was cancelled in July. A variety of circumstances merged in Summer 1948 that favoured the resumption of cattle exports to the U.S., not the least of which was King's last-minute refusal to enter into a comprehensive trade pact with the U.S. The re-opening of the U.S. border to Canadian cattle on August 16, 1948, as Max Foran points out, "was a recognition that Canada had

²¹⁷ "Irate Stock Growers Get No Hope From J. Gardiner," *High River Times*, January 22, 1948, p. 1;

"Cattle Embargo is Price Control, Gardiner Says," *Globe and Mail*, January 16, 1948, p. 11.

²¹⁸ "Is It Yes or No?" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, June 14, 1948, p. 6.

not completely closed the door to the multilateral trade arrangements so favoured by the United States.”²¹⁹ Another fear – that cattle exports to the U.S. would result in higher consumer prices – had also lessened as prices on both sides of the border grew closer. In any event, there was no great jump in the consumer price of beef as many had feared.²²⁰ It was also the final nail in the coffin for Canada’s beef trade with the U.K., and yet another indication that Gardiner’s dream of close postwar trade links with Britain was, ultimately, a futile one.²²¹

All of this was taking place at a time when both Canada and Britain were suffering from dollar shortages that would prove detrimental. Amidst overall economic hardships and trade struggles with Canada, in late 1947 Britain attempted to reduce the amount of food imported from Canada by renegotiating a series of contracts. The British, in King’s words, were now “quite unwilling to purchase more than a fraction of what they have contracted to take from Canada – bacon, eggs, and the like.” As he had at the beginning of the war when Britain showed a reluctance to buy Canadian, King expressed his bewilderment at the situation. “It does seem strange,” he wondered, “that she should buy bacon, poultry, etc. from Australia and other countries in light of the fine treatment we have given her in the past.”²²² Canada countered by threatening to increase the price at which Britain was buying Canadian wheat, and the British backed off. Ironically, at the same time that British officials were in Canada trying to reduce

²¹⁹ Foran, “The Price of Patriotism,” p. 25.

²²⁰ Ibid, *Trials and Trials*, p. 204.

²²¹ Britnell and Fowke, pp. 271-272.

²²² LAC, WLM King Diaries, December 11, 1947.

the amount of food imported from the nation, Canadians were busy donating food parcels to a variety of ‘food for Britain’ campaigns.²²³

“Junk That Ration Book”

While agriculture as a sector would always require a certain amount of state intervention and direction, food prices, distribution, and consumption eventually had to be de-controlled, a process that would unfold gradually over several years. On January 31, 1946 the WPTB announced that price ceilings would be removed from some 300 products, although as the *Globe and Mail* pointed out, the “[f]oods affected were mainly luxury items little used on the average dinner table.”²²⁴ A further group of products were freed from ceilings in March.²²⁵ A bigger question, at least in terms of food supply, had to do with rationing: when could Canadians hope to see it end? Dealers and presumably consumers too would not be sad to see it go. By the autumn of 1946 government officials had already begun to debate the utility of continued meat rationing. The Canadian Retail Federation (CRF) and the Retail Merchants’ Association (RMA) both reported “numerous enquiries” about the government’s plans, prompting the CRF to ask the WPTB whether it could “look forward to an early abolition of meat rationing.”²²⁶ In October the Department of Agriculture advanced the argument that meat rationing “was not essential to the fulfillment of existing commitments for exports

²²³ See, for example, Toronto’s ‘Food for the People of Britain Campaign,’ *Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1947, p. 15; November 15, 1947, p. 11.

²²⁴ “Ease Stabilization Controls on Wages and Many Goods,” *Globe and Mail*, February 1, 1946, pp. 1-2. Some of the food items included cocoanut, horseradish, olives, and various preserved or dehydrated fruits and vegetables. See “Price Ceilings Lifted,” *Globe and Mail*, February 1, 1946, p. 3.

²²⁵ Price controls were lifted from a variety of spices, fruit juices, pickles, popcorn, potato chips, caviar, canned seafood products and some canned vegetables. See “Ottawa Lifts Control on New List of Goods,” *Globe and Mail*, March 16, 1946, p. 15.

²²⁶ LAC, RG64, vol. 638, file 19-32, vol. 9, Meat Rationing, E.F.K. Nelson, Assistant General Manager, Canadian Retail Federation to J.H. Thompson, Administrator, Distributive Trades, October 9, 1946.

and could be abandoned.”²²⁷ Also factoring into the decision was the fact that Donald Gordon did not believe that the price ceiling would hold “far into the next year.”²²⁸ At the same time, however, it was felt that the state should retain control over the distribution of pork to make sure that enough bacon was available for Britain. Gordon disagreed, feeling that meat rationing should not be ended until all export-related controls could be dropped as well. In the end, cabinet ultimately decided that meat rationing would be dropped sometime in early 1947, “as soon as present undertakings to UNRRA and needy areas had been fulfilled.”²²⁹ Food officials in the U.K. were anxious that any actions taken by Canada not threaten export shipments. In cabinet, King read out a statement from the British Minister of Food to this effect.²³⁰ By mid-December, the importance of fulfilling bacon exports led the cabinet to postpone any removal of meat rationing for several months. Keeping it intact for a while longer was not something that would, according to Ilsley, “arouse any public opposition.”²³¹

²²⁷ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2639, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, October 2, 1946.

²²⁸ LAC, WLM King Diaries, October 9, 1946.

²²⁹ Memorandum by Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 8, 1946, *DCER*, vol. 12, p. 1451.

²³⁰ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2639, reel T-2364, Cabinet Conclusions, October 8, 1946; Minister of Food to Minister of Agriculture, October, 1946, *DCER*, vol. 12, 1946, pp. 1450-1451.

²³¹ LAC, RG2, series A-5-a, vol. 2639, reel T-2365, Cabinet Conclusions, December 19, 1946.

In March 1947 Donald Gordon made it clear to D.C. Abbott, who had succeeded J.L. Ilsley as Finance Minister, that the time had come to change the way meat was controlled in Canada. Gordon pointed out that meat rationing was an expensive affair, costing the WPTB \$750,000

annually and requiring the services of 250 employees. According to Gordon, the structure was beginning to break down as the departure of knowledgeable personnel had “reached a point where an efficient ration system [was] not possible.” At the same time, however, he noted that the level of public awareness and



Globe and Mail, January 10, 1947

distress over continuing British food problems would make wholesale abandonment of meat rationing difficult from a political perspective. After ‘selling’ postwar meat rationing by highlighting its key role in moving greater amounts overseas, to terminate it while Britain’s situation was still uncertain might leave the government open to criticism. With these factors in mind, Gordon urged scrapping consumer coupon rationing entirely while maintaining control over the distribution of meat and with retaining meatless days, “where the major saving in meat consumption is now taking place.” He also urged that this be accompanied by “a modest publicity drive” to get the public to voluntarily reduce the amount of meat they consumed. These changes, in

Gordon's estimation, would virtually eradicate the "administrative burden" of meat rationing, while not endangering the amount of Canadian meat available for overseas use.²³² On March 21 the cabinet approved these measures, and five days later Abbott announced to Parliament that as of April 1, 1947, meat would once again be free of ration restrictions. The removal of meat left butter, sweet spreads, and sugar as the only food commodities still rationed in Canada. The *Globe and Mail*, as high-minded as ever, did not approve of the move. In its opinion the government had never exerted enough pressure on the public to effectuate a real reduction in consumption, and had never really tested the limits of Canadians' ability or willingness to sacrifice for those overseas. The end of meat rationing, the paper charged, was merely the result of political weakness.²³³

While food controls were on their way out, the heightened consumer awareness that wartime regulation had generated remained, especially among women. The somewhat dreary daily tasks that they had always performed had been imbued with prestige in wartime, an apotheosis that took its highest form with the establishment and subsequent work of the Consumer Branch of the WPTB. As Magda Fahrni put it, Canada's women had been made "aware that their ordinary work had acquired new worth during the war."²³⁴ A direct outcome of that new sense of power came in 1947 when the Canadian Association of Consumers (CAC), was established.²³⁵ Almost immediately, the CAC found itself ranged up against farm interests as the newly formed

²³² LAC, RG64, vol. 638, file 19-32, vol. 9, Meat Rationing, Donald Gordon to D.C. Abbott, March 7, 1947.

²³³ "While Others Are in Need" (Editorial), *Globe and Mail*, April 1, 1947, p. 6.

²³⁴ Magda Fahrni, "Counting the Costs of Living: Gender, Citizenship, and a Politics of Prices in 1940s Montreal," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (December 2002), p. 490.

²³⁵ The CAC was later renamed the Consumers' Association of Canada; see Fahrni, p. 491, and also Jonah Goldstein, "Public Interest Groups and Policy: The Case of the Consumers' Association of Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 1979), p. 142.

group became heavily embroiled in the postwar fight to legalize margarine so that consumers could have access to a cheaper and plentiful butter substitute. As this was something agricultural lobbyists were not keen to see, the battle to end the margarine ban set urbanites against farmers. The farmers lost this battle. In 1948, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the CAC, margarine was legalized in Canada.²³⁶

In June 1947, less than a week after Ken Taylor “denied categorically” that the rationing of butter and sweet spreads would not be ending anytime soon, both were, in fact, de-rationed, leaving only sugar and molasses.²³⁷ At the same time, dealers were happy to learn that a wide range of foodstuffs, including honey, cheese, ice cream, apples, cherries, plums, canned soup, poultry and jams, were freed from price control regulations. Consumers got their turn to cheer later in the summer when meatless days were cancelled.²³⁸ Then, on November 3, 1947, sugar and molasses were removed from the ration list. Five years of controlled consumption had come to an end, meaning that Canadians, wrote the *Globe and Mail*, could finally “junk that ration book.”²³⁹

Conclusion

The end of war did not mean the arrival of normalcy; indeed, the food system in the immediate postwar era remained a site of endless variance. Widespread hunger overseas prolonged the wartime food demands that had been placed on Canadian producers and consumers, entailing the continuation of restrictive protocols and

²³⁶ This story has been explored elsewhere. See W.H. Heick, *A Propensity to Protect: Butter, Margarine and the Rise of Urban Culture in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991).

²³⁷ “Butter Rationing End Not Sighted, Taylor Insists,” *Globe and Mail*, June 4, 1947, p. 1; “Butter Ration Lifted; Ceilings Off Foods,” *Globe and Mail*, June 10, 1947, p. 1.

²³⁸ LAC, RG64, vol. 638, file 19-32, vol. 9, Meat Rationing, “WPTB – Press Release, C-600, Meatless Days,” August 14, 1947.

²³⁹ “Junk That Ration Book, Lady, Your 5-Year Headache is Over,” *Globe and Mail*, November 3, 1947, p. 10.

regulations. The most obvious example of this concerned the re-imposition of meat rationing in 1945 which proved far more torturous for the King government than it had been in 1943 when the war still raged and meat was short. The public's response in 1945 was much less accommodating, with meat dealers and cattle producers in particular resisting the measure. At the same time, word of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Europe prompted many Canadians to engage in spontaneous acts of charity such as coupon donation and food drives. In 1946 the government announced a plan designed to fight the food crisis, which rested primarily on a variety of grain conservation measures and that asked little in the way of sacrifice. Food consumption was gradually de-regulated, and in 1947 the last items were taken off the ration list. Canadians retained a measure of consumer awareness as a result of the war experience, and decided, as had farmers and other economic sectors, that non-partisan lobbying could be an effective way of safeguarding their specific group interests.

Despite obstacles, farmers had managed to increase production over the course of the war, while the CFA had forged a place for organized agriculture within the making of state policy. There remained, however, more than a vestige of anger and unrest, especially on the Prairies, the site of a farmers' strike in Autumn 1946. While the roots of the ferment were long-standing, the proximate cause was the Anglo-Canadian wheat deal struck by James Gardiner; western farmers were unhappy with the terms of the contract, especially the price at which the wheat was to be sold. The wheat contract was part of a larger battle fought by Gardiner to maintain a lucrative postwar food trade with Britain, but thanks to Britain's dollar shortage and the existence of cheaper markets, this proved impossible. In the postwar years, to the dismay of those

who lamented the 'loss' of Britain as a primary partner, and to the cheering of others, mainly farmers, Canada's economic prosperity became inextricably entwined with that of the United States.

Chapter Eight - Conclusion

The Second World War had a transformative impact on Canada. Having been put to the test as never before, the nation that emerged was significantly different from the one that had entered the conflict in 1939. The pressure of supporting the war effort had created a variety of social, economic and emotional strains, and while those on the home front had not faced the same level of danger or degree of privation as those who had served overseas, civilians had hardly been untouched by the conflict. To counter the superficial impression that the Canadian home front had emerged unscathed, towards the end of the war the Wartime Information Board (WIB) issued a pamphlet targeted at those returning from the battlefields. Entitled “Canada in the Last Five Years,” the booklet summarized the war’s effects on Canadian society, preparing the returnees for what they would find once they got home. In outlining the changes, the WIB admitted that the obvious signs of war were absent; there were “no bomb craters, no rows of ruined houses” on Canadian soil. Civilians on the home front still had access to “all sorts of food.” Still, various staples such as sugar, tea, coffee, butter, sweet spreads and meat had all spent time on the ration roster, while shortages of these and other foodstuffs had cropped up periodically, and indeed continued to crop up until well after the war had ended. The idea that “Canadians don’t know there’s a war on,” the WIB argued, was actually quite wrong:

To many repats who have been saying to each other, ‘When we get home we’ll be through with queuing; we can eat ice-cream every day; buy what we want; and get a couple of cups of java anytime we feel like it,’ it comes as something

of a shock to find that queuing is very much in vogue in Canada, that ice-cream is scarce and sometimes unobtainable, that for years one cup of coffee to a customer has been the law, and even now, while you can get two cups, you can't get sugar or cream for the second at the restaurant. ... Shortages astonish some of the boys and girls who have been away for years. Prisoners of war find it hard to climb down from one pound of butter a week to a third of a pound, though they appreciate the still great variety of food. They notice that out-of-season fruits and vegetables are no more...

What the WIB was trying to get across was that the war had suffused the lives of Canadians in a myriad of ways, and this included food. Canada's food system had been disrupted, and as in the First World War, but to a much broader extent, the government employed regulation to impose fairness. Of course, the war's effect on the Canadian diet was not entirely negative especially in comparison with other belligerent nations. Rationing and shortages had been inopportune, but the problems related to the food supply had not been enormous, and with a wealth of other products to choose from and more money in their pockets, many Canadians ate better during the war than they had previously. Canadian food security was never threatened; at best consumers were faced with a temporarily altered foodscape that featured fewer luxuries and reduced supplies of staples. Overall food consumption soared, a direct result of the increased physical activity levels of Canadians supporting the war effort and a stronger emphasis on nutrition.

The hungrier domestic population placed added pressure on a food supply already striving to feed both a military at war and Canada's allies overseas. Balancing these demands certainly required consumer cooperation, but most of the extra food had to come as a result of intensified agricultural production. Canada's farmers, emerging from a decade of economic disaster, managed after a period of adjustment to tailor their

production to the dictates of the war effort. This, the WIB also noted, had not been easy.

During wartime Canada has doubled her total output of agricultural products in spite of losing one out of every four farmers and farm workers to industry or the armed forces. At present 750,000 women are working on farms. In addition, the farmer has had to cope with shortages of agricultural machinery, fertilizer and other commodities necessary to agricultural production.¹

Canadian farmers fought the war by working harder and growing more food than they ever had previously despite serious obstacles that could have placed the entire Allied war effort in a vulnerable position. The problems faced by farmers were counterbalanced by a convoluted web of price supports and government subventions designed to get producers to grow the types of foodstuffs most needed. Directing Canada's wartime food supply was no simple task, but despite the headaches and the constant stress associated with such an undertaking, no great disasters resulted.

Any success in the realm of food and agriculture during the war cannot be ascribed to elaborate prewar planning on the part of Canadian authorities. The First World War had demonstrated beyond a doubt the vital importance of adequate food supplies in fighting modern, total wars, but despite this precedent, Canadian officials did not exhibit much resourcefulness in preparing food plans in the event of another conflict. Clearly, as an agricultural nation producing a large exportable surplus and with a relatively small population, any new war would oblige Canada to supply food. The Canadian government, however, did not take the initiative when it came to gathering information about Britain's own food plans in the event of another war. Indeed, Ottawa had seemed reluctant to do so even when pressed by the British themselves. Doubtless

¹ Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), RG36-31, (Wartime Information Board), vol. 28, file WIB Releases, "Canada in the Last Five Years (1939-1944)," undated.

many factors played a role in this, but it is valid to suggest that the subject was simply overlooked in the wake of more 'pressing' issues, something no doubt compounded by the isolationism that marked the Department of External Affairs at the time.

The prewar lack of interest displayed by the Canadian government met its ironical counterpart in the lackadaisical attitude shown by the British in committing to Canadian food purchases at the start of the war. Looking after their own interests first, the British sought to buy strategically, and if this left Canada out in the cold, so be it. The slow pace of British purchasing in Canada at the conflict's outset bedeviled King's government, whose attempts to drum up sales to Britain met with limited success until the circumstances of war (and advantageous Canadian financial terms) pushed the British to increase purchases in Canada. Until that happened, however, Canadian farmers found themselves sorely disappointed. That a world war had once again broken out was not viewed as a happy event by any means, but for farmers whose fortunes had taken a severe downturn in the 1930s, a silver lining lay in the potential for economic gains thanks to the conflict. Out on Canada's farms, memories of what had happened during the First World War when both demand for food and prices had soared were sharp. At the same time, 'sacrifice' was the word of the day, and no one wanted to be seen as profiteering from the misery of others. Farmers were indeed presented with a grand opportunity to eradicate the depredations of the Depression, but in doing so they had to walk a very fine line between profits and patriotism.

Making the most of the war's opportunities without seeming unduly rapacious was the dilemma confronting farmers. Simply deluging the government with a chorus of disparate complaints was not the answer; offering constructive criticism and making a

substantive contribution to the agricultural policy-making process could be far more productive while not alienating the non-farming population. The recently-formed Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), sensing an opportunity to position itself as the national voice of farmers, stepped into the leadership vacuum and provided the means for producers to have a say in the management of Canada's food supply in war and peace. Gaining the government's attention was not effortless; CFA leader Herbert Hannam's initial attempts to insert his organization, and by extension the farmers of Canada, into the farm policy arena were rebuffed. But persistence coupled with the growing, vocal dissatisfaction of farmers with the government's handling of agriculture provided an opening that Hannam and his organization could exploit. By 1941 an overwhelming sense of frustration bred by a variety of annoyances and exacerbated, perhaps, by the fact that the hoped-for prosperity of war was slow in arriving had settled over the agricultural sector. Hannam and the CFA seized the moment, using the confrontation between Gardiner and farmers at London, Ontario, to vault into the spotlight as agriculture's main voice.

The CFA was able to parlay their increased status within the agricultural community into greater influence with respect to federal policy, a relationship that continued into the postwar era. The Department of Agriculture, according to Norman Ward and David Smith, came to see the CFA as "agriculture's senior spokesman."² External circumstances helped as well. As the war intensified so too did the demand for food, and gradually organized agriculture was brought into the decision-making process with representatives on several key agricultural boards and committees. The Federation

² Norman Ward and David Smith, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 332.

later faced postwar challenges from other, more narrowly-based organizations representing the interests of various commodity producers. The CFA's dominance was also challenged by the emergence of another national farm group – the more progressive National Farmers' Union.

During the war, farmers at the grassroots level had two broad concerns: prices and labour. Learning from the previous war, the government knew that the cost of living had to stay stable and that inflation needed to be carefully managed. This entailed the application of a sweeping series of state economic controls, including a retail price ceiling. This ceiling, many farmers argued, froze prices at an artificially low level, hampering their quest to pull themselves out of depressed conditions. On the other hand, the price freeze benefited farmers in that it kept down the costs of things that they had to buy. The potential negative effects of the wartime price controls were largely mitigated by an array of state subventions and subsidies, as agricultural policy during war had to take on an interventionist character, whether the government liked it or not. This involvement was necessitated by the nature of wartime food needs, animal protein as opposed to cereals. Getting farmers to raise more livestock and more feed grains required practical incentives. Thanks in no small part to the support structure that was established, in general farmers fared well. Cash receipts for farm products almost doubled between 1939 and 1945, and continued to grow after the war. Farm incomes also more than doubled during the same period.³

³ “Cash receipts from farming operations, Canada and by province, 1926 to 1974;” “Realized farm gross income, Canada and by province, 1926 to 1974;” “Realized farm net income, Canada and by province, 1926 to 1974;” “Total farm net income, Canada and by province,” *Historical Statistics of Canada*;
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectiona/toc.htm>.

Labour posed the other, and perhaps the most vexing, wartime obstacle faced by farmers. Given the hard, physical nature of farm work and the relatively modest wages on offer, agriculture's competition with industry and the armed forces for manpower was hardly a fair fight, and it was lost early on. Labour management in general was not an area of great distinction for the Canadian government, as its fumbles with manpower mobilization left farmers playing catch-up for most of the war, forcing them to rely on a rag-tag assortment of emergency farm help cobbled together from a variety of disparate sources. The contention that the government was not doing enough to keep experienced labour on the farms was accurate, while the few plans that the authorities put in place did not always go far enough. The federal government seemed content to rely on *ad hoc* volunteer labour schemes administered by the provinces and municipalities. Further, officials' assumption that anyone, even green city folk, could step in and do a farmer's job with minimal training did nothing to win the hearts and minds of the agricultural classes. That farmers were able to increase their yields and provide the increased amount of food needed to fight the war and win the peace can, in the end, be put down to hard work and perseverance, not brilliant mobilization schemes hatched by the state.

At the other end of the food chain, consumers were told that they, too, had an important role to play in feeding Canada's allies by altering their consumption patterns. In wartime, Canadians were exhorted to think about food in a more communal manner, to see it part of a larger pool that was to be shared out (theoretically at least) amongst those engaged in the struggle against the Axis powers. The initial reaction on the part of consumers, however, was far from abstemious. The memory of First World War inflation impelled consumers to stock up on potentially threatened commodities, and

indeed that memory was used by some advertisers as a way to increase sales. The guardians of wartime morality in the state and the media worked to remind people that their actions, rational when viewed as part of their own narrow interests, were not good for the broader war effort. The state, through the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB), codified wartime protocols surrounding food, legally harnessing the Canadian diet to the service of war.

The same clamp-down on prices that angered farmers pleased consumers as it kept them from having to pay higher prices even for foods that were now in shorter supply. There was a trade-off, of course; the WPTB also enacted regulations designed to manage the supplies of certain foods by restricting the amounts available to consumers. Initially, the prospect of rationing and shortages seemed incongruous with Canada's historic food abundance, but within a relatively short time consumers came to realize that their eating habits were now subject to the whims of a world at war. Supply problems, whether due to production difficulties or distributional snags, affected various food products. As these incidents mounted, the idea of rationing came to seem less foreign to Canadians used to having the nation's, and indeed the world's, bounty close at hand. Perceptions of food, food buying and eating had to be adjusted to accommodate this new reality. Between 1942 and 1947 sugar, tea and coffee, butter, meat and sweet spreads were all rationed for varying periods. Initially, consumers were on their honour when it came to sticking within the ration regulations, circumstances that did not please everyone as some consumers and sellers inevitably took advantage of the situation to subvert the principle of equitable distribution upon which the programme was based. Through a campaign of exhortation, the state attempted to get all Canadians to adopt a

more ascetic approach to food, but stricter distributional controls in the form of coupon rationing eventually had to be introduced.

The food sacrifices that Canadians were called upon to make were never unduly severe, but despite this a minority engaged in activities that countermanded both the spirit and the letter of the laws surrounding wartime food consumption. Such conduct took many forms, some more noticeable than others. Throughout the war, for instance, panicky consumers precipitated 'runs' on certain items, rushing to corral large supplies of foods that were in short supply or about to be regulated in some way. Hoarding was practiced on both a large and small scale, and rather than go without, some turned to the black market to obtain desired foodstuffs. The WPTB sought to reign in such rebellious behaviour, using propaganda to portray scofflaws as unpatriotic, selfish and on par with the very enemy Canada was trying to defeat. The Board also used its own team of investigators and legal advisors to root out and prosecute violators, but given the vast size of both the WPTB's mandate and the nation it had to police, the number of individuals working to enforce the rules was unsuitably small. A few high-profile cases periodically made it into the headlines but Canada's jails did not swell with butter-hoarders and ration-chisellers who generally received light fines. While some inside and outside the WPTB voiced concern over the slaps on the wrist meted out by the courts, the Board, mindful of its image, did not want to be viewed as a draconian entity invading the everyday lives of citizens lest it lose the cooperation of the law-abiding majority. This was something that it risked anyway; as Canadians grew increasingly war-weary, they also became less tolerant of the regulatory web that governed food consumption and of the board that administered it. As the war dragged on, disdain and

in some cases open disobedience marked public reaction to the WPTB and its edicts. The black market continued to flourish into the postwar years as rationing and other regulations were maintained without the moral weight of the wartime crisis behind them.

The war saw the attempted emergence of a new, if temporary, culture of consumption, predicated on restraint, flexibility in the face of ever-changing circumstances of supply, and nutrition. Canadians were exhorted to approach their eating habits with the needs of the war in mind, namely to eat ‘patriotically.’ This did not mean stinting themselves; fuelled by larger appetites and larger pay cheques, Canadian food consumption actually rose during the war. While the link between national strength and effective eating habits had been made prior to the Second World War, until 1941 it fell to non-governmental agencies to take up this crusade. As the war grew in intensity, so did the notion that both military and civilian health had to be safeguarded through proper nutrition. Taking their lead from the British, the government sanctioned the manufacture of bread enriched with thiamine and launched a campaign to raise nutritional awareness. The war also saw the appearance of Canada’s first food guide, the *Official Food Rules*, put together under the auspices of the Department of Pensions and National Health. Food companies gladly seized on nutrition as a means to sell their products, while at the same time selling themselves as strong supporters of the war effort. Canadian nutritional health was also helped by the large number of Victory Gardens that were cultivated at the (belated) urgings of the government. Thus it was that despite shortages, rationing and other inconveniences, Canadians managed to further improve their eating habits over the course of the war.

Postwar food needs proved to be almost as pressing as those of wartime, which meant that food could not be immediately freed from the maze of regulation that had been built up. With a few exceptions, Canadians had responded well to wartime food controls. But as the war's end approached the authorities were unsure as to how the public would handle continued regulation in peacetime. Britain's worsening food position in 1945 prompted the re-imposition of meat rationing, and the difficulties the Canadian government encountered in relation to this decision was an early signal of just how dicey imposing 'wartime' controls in peacetime could be. It formed a sort of litmus test that would measure just how far the public was willing to countenance further state intrusion into their daily lives. The decision whether or not to again ration meat in light of Britain's increased needs was compounded by political factors, namely the looming federal election. Sensing that the time was not right to implement such a potentially divisive policy, the politically-savvy King decided to avoid the issue until after the election was over. While certainly pragmatic, this strategy prompted criticism from those who believed that it was Canada's duty to help Britain, no matter the consequences for the Liberal government. The move to control meat consumption, made after the Liberal victory in June 1945, was the subject of far more disapproval than the first round of meat rationing implemented in the heat of war. Consumer reaction was lukewarm; while the public accepted the need to help overseas, it was weary of restrictions. Farmers worried that a glut of meat would ensue and prices would drop. Dealers hated the idea; some organized protest groups, called for strikes, and even, in the case of Montreal, engaged in mild violence to get their point across. The adverse reaction of many meat producers and dealers served as an indication that patience with

continued regulation was wearing thin in some quarters, but the government, to its credit, stuck to its guns and rode out the unrest.

The onset of a food crisis in Europe in 1946 may have been a factor in dampening criticism as the worsening misery overseas put Canadian grumbling over mild restrictions in a very uncharitable light. In response to the reports of widespread hunger proliferating in the press, the Canadian government launched a food conservation campaign and created a Food Information Committee (FIC) to direct it. Nothing in the government's plan, however, really amounted to much in the way of added sacrifice. Therefore some Canadians felt the need to do more, which they did by contributing to various charities, sending parcels of food overseas and by donating coupons so that extra meat could be freed up.

Despite serious financial obstacles, the Canadian government, and especially Minister of Agriculture James Gardiner, wanted to keep Britain as an important export market for foodstuffs in the postwar years even if that meant taking lower prices. But a victorious yet economically devastated Britain simply could not afford to buy as much from Canada, at least not if cash was required as payment. As Anglo-Canadian trade relations eroded so too did Britain's willingness (and ability) to purchase foodstuffs from Canada. As they had during the war, Canadian officials tried to accommodate Britain as far as was possible, but after extending billions in aid to the UK over the course of the war Canada's largesse was wearing thin. The postwar food contracts with Britain, especially the long-term wheat deal signed in 1946, gave rise to mixed feelings among producers. While some applauded the terms, others were unhappy with the financial returns that would accrue. The month-long farmers' strike that occurred on the

Prairies in September 1946 indicated that certain segments of the farming community lacked confidence in the way the federal government was handling agricultural policy, and served as a troubling reminder that some producers felt that the bulk of wartime prosperity (as enjoyed by other economic sectors) had passed them by. With the British market dwindling, the larger American market on Canada's doorstep proved a tantalizing alternative. As exports of food to Britain fell in the immediate postwar years, the U.S. market rose in importance, reflecting an accelerating re-orientation of the Canadian economy from the North Atlantic to North America.

Viewing the food sector as an integrated whole during the war is a difficult task given the bureaucratic convolution with which this aspect of Canada's war effort was managed. Too often throughout the conflict, those in charge of the production and the distribution of the food supply seemed to be on opposing teams, which, in a broad sense, they were. For a nation supposedly drawing together to fight a 'total war,' politics and power struggles between those supplying and those demanding food created a frequently combative situation. Part of the explanation for this lies in the very nature of the food system – an inherently competitive and complex arena that makes it next to impossible to have a "food policy" *per se*. This was exacerbated by the fact that, despite the positive outcome of the war for Canadians, throughout the war years the external conflict in which Canada was engaged was paralleled by a bevy of internal disputes. Cultural, political and economic tensions pulled at the fabric of wartime Canada, a situation from which the food sector – from the farm to the fork – was not spared. At the best of times, the food system is a riot of contending interests; in war, with a mass of

regulatory protocols added to the muddle, it would have been something of a miracle had no grumbling been heard from farmer, grocer or consumer.

Another problem concerns the legacy of the Second World War in terms of food. As historians such as V.C. Fowke, George Britnell, John Herd Thompson and Ian McPherson argue, for Canadian agriculture the Second World War was not so much an agent of change as a hastener of trends that were either already present within the sector or ones that would have inevitably occurred. For instance, the pull of urbanization and industry would doubtless have had attracted many rural residents, especially those of a younger generation, with or without the war. This was part of a broader shift within the sector; as people left agriculture, the number of Canadian farms grew smaller, but the total area of land devoted to farming remained relatively constant, meaning that remaining farms grew larger. This trend continued apace in the postwar decades. The number of farms in Canada in operation during the Second World War stood at 733,000; there are approximately 250,000 today. That fewer hands could handle the same amount of labour came as a result of the technological advances that had gathered speed in the interwar years, suggesting that a rural exodus would have inevitably taken place.

As early as 1948, the *High River Times* lamented what it saw as a troubling trend: the emergence of less diversified “power farming” consisting of bigger, technology-driven farms employing fewer workers, which led not only to a net loss of population, but also to a loss of another, less quantifiable sort:

It has often been said that in these days the people who live on the land are the last stronghold of sanity. They are in constant touch with the immutable laws of nature. They are still capable of awe at the majesty and power of natural forces. They deal in reality instead of theories and vague idealisms. They are closest to the root sources of everything by which man continues to live and move and have his being. For that reason it is sad to learn of any loss of farm population. ... Perhaps this exodus from the farms is all part of this changing world to be

chalked up to 'progress' and the mechanical age. But the long term loss may outweigh any conceivable gain.⁴

The *High River Times* was prophetic. In the postwar years, corporate farming – farms as mechanized units of production turning out specific commodities for processors feeding the consumer desire for 'convenience foods' – took root in Canada as agribusiness threatened to completely eradicate traditional modes of agriculture, namely the family farm. Of all the changes that occurred in postwar agriculture, this alteration in the nature of farming might be the most fundamental and certainly the most controversial. It remains the subject of heated debate within the agricultural sector as it has become entwined with issues relating to the environmental and public health aspects of farming.⁵

The postwar years did see increased government intervention in agriculture, but it took on a different character than that employed in wartime. The controls and subsidies that encouraged the production of needed farm products were scaled back and were replaced by policies designed to control production in the form of various supply management schemes. Still, in many nations the shortages of the Second World War left an unforgettable mark; the second half of the 20th century saw the advent of an era of surpluses. In Britain, for example, the 1947 *Agriculture Act* propped up production through various supports such as minimum prices and deficiency payments. Eventually, helped along by Marshall Plan funds, European agriculture re-emerged and was further assisted by the political and economic integration that took place on the continent in the late 1950s. Fuelled by a desire to never again experience the hunger that plagued war-

⁴ "Bigger Farms" (Editorial), *High River Times*, January 8, 1948, p. 2.

⁵ See Stuart Laidlaw, *Secret Ingredients: The Brave New World of Industrial Farming* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003).

torn Europe, food security was now the goal, and the heavily protectionist Common Agricultural Policy that emerged led to the accumulation of vast reserves of food and consequent trade wars. Thus, in the postwar era Canada had to contend with new and powerful competitors in the global marketplace.

More difficult to judge (and certainly worthy of further study) is whether or not the war had any long-term influence on the Canadian diet, or if it simply entailed temporary changes? The *Official Food Rules* released in 1942 have survived, becoming in 1961 the less authoritarian-sounding *Canada's Food Guide*. But did the war, as M.F.K. Fisher contend, really cause consumers to look at their food in a different way? In the short-term, perhaps. In her analysis of *Chatelaine* magazine, historian Valerie Korinek notes that in the 1950s many of the publication's readers espoused "a philosophy that did not prioritize conspicuous consumption," a mindset that extended to food.⁶ Still, by the 1960s the Canadian diet was well on its way to becoming dependent on mass-produced, processed food products, a trend that had begun earlier in the century, and one that continued after the years of war-induced constraints. If anything, as the war years moved further away in time and as the pace of modern living intensified, Canadians turned to the heavily processed items that proliferated on their grocers' shelves. The alimentary lessons of war, if any, were quickly forgotten in an era of surplus and abundance. Food simply became another resource to be extracted from the landscape and transformed via modern, industrial means. For urban consumers already alienated from the world of the farmer, this trend arguably helped reinforce the

⁶ Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 218.

divide that had grown up between rural and city folk, rapidly becoming two new solitudes within the Canadian mosaic.

Table 1: Canadian Agricultural Production (units in millions)

		1935-39 ¹	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Wheat	Bu.	312.4	540.2	314.8	556.7	283.7	435.5
Oats	"	338.1	380.5	305.6	652	482	499.6
Barley	"	88.9	104.3	110.6	259.2	215.6	194.7
Mixed Grains	"	38.5	43.1	48.7	68.6	35.7	57.4
Flaxseed	"	1.5	3	5.8	15	17.9	9.7
Hay and Clover	Tons	13.6	14.1	12.6	16.1	17.2	15.1
Alfalfa	"	2.1	2.6	2.7	3.7	3.9	3.8
Milk	Lb.	15,282.1	15,999.3	16,549.9	17,488.6	17,519.1	17,604.8
Butter	"	254.8	264.7	285.8	284.6	311.7	298.3
Cheese	"	119.9	145.3	151.9	207.4	166.3	180.2
Evap. Milk	"	90.8	135.9	166	185.8	178.4	179.5
Condensed Milk	"	13.4	14.4	24.6	23.1	26.9	33.7
Milk Powder	"	26.1	33.8	34.8	37.8	37.4	46.7
Pork	Lb.	625.1	865.4	1,060.8	1,189.1	1,395.7	1,504.6
Beef	"	703.7	717.5	812.1	822.5	893	961
Veal	"	122.2	130	134.1	123.6	118.5	126.1
Mutton/Lamb	"	61.6	52.6	58.6	56.7	62.2	63.5
Eggs	Dz.	219.5	235.5	244.5	280.7	315.6	360.9
Poultry	Lb.	-	219.1	220	258.7	265.3	315.2
Tree Fruit	Bu.	16.7	15.4	14	16.6	14.7	20.3
Berries	Qt.	36.1	42.5	33.8	28.6	27.7	21.4
Grapes	Lb.	42.8	52.7	47.2	74.9	53.8	60.2
Potatoes	"	3,863.2	4,230	3,905.2	4,288.2	4,354.1	4,940.9
Tomatoes	"	500	516.9	719.7	557.8	460.7	964.2
Other Veggies.	"	1,060	1,017.1	1,052.1	1,508.3	1,129	1,411.1

Source: *Canada at War*, November 1945, p. 54.

¹ Average.

Table 2: Canadian Share of UK Imports (%)

	Wheat	Flour	Bacon	Cheese	Apples
1939	33	61	18	25	34
1940	48	71	55	27	32
1941	81	94	76	20	99
1942	82	99	72	18	55
1943	95	93	83	26	100
1944	88	67	79	22	93
1945	92	73	83	31	42
1946	86	88	74	25	66
1947	82	74	74	12	44

Source: George Britnell and V.C. Fowke, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1935-1950*, p. 108.

Table 3: Exports of Canadian Farm Produce to Britain, 1942-45

		1942	1943	1944	1945
Apples	bbl	81,888	134,672	339,475	258,535
	\$	243,747	654,299	1,635,716	1,393,797
Canned Fruit	lb	6,561,129	80,165	499,510	4,209,548
	\$	271,038	8,906	64,552	648,489
Canned Vegetables	lb	4,915,612	132,016	349,597	1,672,597
	\$	315,655	13,973	26,454	118,754
Wheat	bu	90,086,714	96,832,260	80,704,650	113,313,762
	\$	77,518,820	98,314,434	100,162,587	163,349,684
Oats	bu	-	-	-	6,625,475
	\$	-	-	-	3,578,759
Rye	bu	-	-	-	39,878
	\$	-	-	-	51,293
Oatmeal and Rolled Oats	cwt	272,141	314	297,513	626,113
	\$	1,086,486	1,832	1,338,462	2,796,069
Wheat Flour	bbl	4,666,781	7,629,669	5,629,659	6,040,988
	\$	20,742,992	39,082,010	36,127,410	42,266,839
Bacon and Hams	cwt	5,249,519	5,603,093	6,923,103	4,460,693
	\$	99,723,878	115,344,888	147,268,341	95,359,210
Fresh Beef	cwt	-	3,856	980,800	1,843,777
	\$	-	60,365	18,942,277	36,548,926
Butter	cwt	-	70,892	2	-
	\$	-	2,940,098	66	-
Cheese	cwt	1,313,740	1,266,047	1,288,729	1,328,554
	\$	24,558,965	25,895,674	26,319,221	27,123,611
Milk, Processed	cwt	9,434	6,605	2,676	25,460
	\$	248,699	155,166	25,803	377,780
Eggs	\$	9,101,095	14,371,882	21,224,833	43,025,812

Source: *Canada Year Book*, 1946, pp. 540-545.

**Table 4: Index Numbers of Wholesale Prices and Prices Paid by Farmers, 1926-1950
(1935-39=100)**

	All Commodities	All Farm Products	Field Products	Animal Products	Eleven Factor Index ²
1929	124.6	140.8	137.2	144.4	127.9
1930	112.9	119.5	105.8	133.3	117
1931	94	78.9	65	92.7	100.9
1932	86.9	65.5	60.4	70.5	93.3
1933	87.4	69.3	69.3	69.2	89.8
1934	93.4	83.4	80.5	86.5	95.5
1935	94.4	89.2	84.4	94.1	95.4
1936	96.7	97.9	102.2	93.7	98.1
1937	107.8	117.4	128.9	106	105.3
1938	102	102.9	100.9	104.8	101.7
1939	99.2	92.6	83.7	101.5	99.3
1940	108	96.1	85.4	106.7	106.8
1941	116.4	106.6	88.9	124.4	116.1
1942	123	127.1	109.7	144.6	131.6
1943	127.9	145.4	129	161.8	143.4
1944	130.6	155.3	144.5	166.1	148
1945	132.1	166.4	162.5	170.2	152.1
1946	138.9	179.5	177.9	181.2	157
1947	163.3	192.2	184.1	200.2	170.4
1948	193.4	232.1	200.6	263.7	197.4

Source: *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace*, p. 466.

² Based on prices of farm implements, building materials, gasoline and oil, feed, fertilizer, twine, seed and hardware, plus tax rates, interest rates and farm wage rates.

Table 5: Cash Income by Commodity (Million \$)

	Grains and Other Crops ³	Livestock ⁴	Dairy Products	Poultry Products
1926	556	192	118	64
1927	524	193	119	71
1928	618	209	121	79
1929	484	212	118	79
1930	271	156	110	72
1931	178	111	107	52
1932	186	79	88	36
1933	191	413	90	36
1934	232	111	96	42
1935	234	130	99	43
1936	256	146	107	48
1937	263	183	113	48
1938	296	155	121	47
1939	344	177	113	48
1940	303	221	120	52
1941	327	291	160	64
1942	364	374	225	97
1943	535	437	255	120
1944	852	499	276	132
1945	689	489	280	153
1946	730	463	297	146
1947	863	493	336	169

Source: *Supplement to Handbook of Agricultural Statistics: Trends in Canadian Agriculture*, pp. 25-26

³ Wheat, oats, barley, rye, flax, potatoes, fruits, tobacco and other miscellaneous crops.

⁴ Cattle, hogs, and sheep.

Table 6: Major Agricultural Subsidies Paid by Federal Government (million Canadian dollars)

	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948
Wheat Acreage Reduction	22.4	22.8	31	9.5	.8	.1		
Prairie Farm Income	.9	18	.1					
Feed Freight Assistance	2.1	10	16.2	16.2	16.8	19	20	18.3
Feed Storage Assistance			1	2.7	1	.9	.4	
Feed Grain Drawbacks		.5	2	8.1	7	7.4	20.5	
Fertilizer Subventions		1	1	2.7	1	.9	.4	
Lime Subventions				.3	.2	.3	.3	.4
Milk for Fluid Consumption		5.8	5	12.8	12.7	14		
Milk for Concentration			.5	2	1.9	2.1		
Milk for Cheddar Cheese			.8	4.3	4.3	4.9	.5	
Butterfat		12.2	16	23.6	23.7	21.7	4.1	
UK Cheese Contracts	1.8							
Hog Premiums				14.1	10.7	5.9	4.9	5.1
UK Bacon Contracts	2.3							
Freight on Livestock			.1					
Sheep and Wool Programs			.2	.1	.1	.1	.1	
UK Egg Contracts		.9						
Apples	5.4	2.9	1.7	1.2	.4	1	3.3	2.8
Berries for Jam		.1	.2	.5	.6			.3
Vegetable Canning Crops			.9	2.5	1.8			
White and Yellow Beans			.4	.3	.4	.3		
Potato Price Supports			.7			.2		
Totals	34.9	73.2	77.8	100.9	83.4	78.8	54.5	26.9

Source: *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace*, p. 440.

Table 7: Domestic Disappearance of Selected Foods, Per Capita⁵

	Beef	Pork	Canned Meat	Fancy Meats	Milk	Butter	Cheese	Eggs	Apples	Potatoes
1936	55.1	41.4	1.5	5.9	.85	30.9	3.81	21.8	-	197.5
1937	54.6	42.5	1.5	6.2	.83	31.4	3.75	21.6	22.6	211.7
1938	57.2	37.7	1.3	5.7	.89	30.9	4.02	20.9	19.8	173.2
1939	53.2	38.4	1.6	5.1	.88	30.9	4	21.4	28.9	166.1
1940	54.5	44.7	1.1	5.5	.81	30.4	3.87	20.1	29.4	213
1941	58.5	51.6	2.3	5.9	.81	30.1	4.79	20.2	19.8	173.7
1942	60.7	58.9	2.1	6.2	.87	31.5	4.36	21.7	30.5	189.1
1943	62.8	62.3	2.3	6.7	.93	26.2	5.20	22.2	26.4	190.6
1944	65.7	62.6	1.9	6.9	.97	28.1	5.18	22	30	166.6
1945	67	52.7	3.4	5.7	.98	27.1	5.58	21.6	12.8	162.9
1946	68.8	43.5	3.3	4.5	.97	24	5.06	21.8	30	152.6
1947	64.8	52.4	3.5	5.9	.93	26.2	6.19	22	28.8	151.7
1948	59.2	48	2	5.4	.87	26.7	4.84	20.8	22.4	168.4
1949	56.7	55	4.2	5.1	.85	22.1	5.27	19.3	28.7	152.7

Source: *Canada: Production, Trade and Prices for Principal Agricultural Products, 1925-1958*, pp. 60-63.

⁵ Expressed in pounds, except for milk (pints per day) and eggs (dozens).

Table 8: Average Retail Prices for Select Foods (¢)

	July 1914	August 1918	August 1939	November 1941	September 1943	December 1945	December 1948
Beef, Sirloin (lb)	24.6	39.2	27.9	33.9	40.1	43	69.3
Bacon (lb)	27.7	55.7	32.5	48	50.8	51.8	84.6
Eggs (1 doz.)	27	53.8	30.4	53.3	53.4	56	64.6
Milk (qt)	8.5	12	10.9	12	10.3	10.3	17.5
Butter (lb)	31.5	55	27.3	36.6	37.8	39.7	72.2
Bread (lb)	4.3	8	6.3	6.7	6.7	6.7	9.4
Flour (lb)	3.7	7.6	3.3	4.1	4.1	4	6.1
Sugar (lb)	5.5	11.2	6.5	8.1	8.1	8.1	9.1

Source: *Canada at War*, November, 1943, p. 7; *Urban Retail Food Prices, 1914-1959*.

A NOTICE TO WOMEN **WHO BUY BREAD**

A New War Measure

Some day you may walk into your grocer's and find him "sold out" of Christie's Bread for the day. You will be disappointed, because you are unable to get what we sincerely believe to be the finest loaf of Bread in Canada; your grocer will be disappointed because he was unable to serve you and because he has lost a sale.

The Reason . . .

In an effort to abolish waste, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board has brought down—through Will H. Harrison the Bread and Bakery Products Administrator—the following regulation: "Returns or the changing of bread in stores for customers has been prohibited as a method of eliminating what has amounted to considerable waste of material in the Baking Industry." Your grocer obviously will order only what Christie's Bread he can sell each day.

How You Can Help . . .

You can help both your grocer, who is now operating under increasingly difficult conditions, and your country—by telling your grocer AHEAD of time how many loaves of Christie's Bread you will require each day. This is a simple matter to arrange and you will find your grocer eager to co-operate with you in working out a suitable plan. Bear in mind particularly your week-end requirements!

Please remember that this regulation in no way affects the quality of Christie's Bread. Each loaf you buy will continue to be, as in the past, delicious, wholesome, flavourful. Remember, too, that when you buy Christie's Bread your grocer has only four different types of Christie loaves to carry instead of the fifteen allowed by the Government regulations. This means that all four types have a constant turnover.

ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP WIN THE WAR, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, IS WORTHWHILE



Baked by CHRISTIE'S BREAD LIMITED

Globe and Mail, March 27, 1942

Sorry

WE CANNOT GIVE YOU ALL YOU WANT

If your favorite Neilson Chocolate Bar is sometimes not on hand, please don't blame your dealer — he is rationed just as you are for certain foods.

Why not choose any of the other Neilson Chocolate Bars he has? They are all full of energy-restoring nourishment, so much needed these days.



Plain chocolate;
mild and dark
with lots of Almonds

Neilson's

Globe and Mail, December 19, 1942

The food industry had to cope with shortages and rationing as well. In order to maintain customer goodwill, many manufacturers used ads to remind consumers of this fact.



**What!.. No
Weston's Biscuits!**



WE'RE sorry madam, if some-
times you are unable to get
Weston's English Quality Bis-
cuits at your grocer's. But with
Weston's, the war rations come
first.

We are doing our bit for the country by
meeting the "service" needs of the United
Nations—as we all must. Most of the biscuits
we are making are going to the armed forces.

For instance, the crews that bake Weston's
famous Soda Biscuits are now turning out
fortified "Iron Rations" for the troops.

Between the production of war orders, we
hope to be able to supply your grocer with a
limited quantity of

Weston's
ENGLISH QUALITY BISCUITS

Weston's English Quality
Biscuits are being supplied
to the armed forces of our
country.

Weston's Biscuits are
being supplied to the
armed forces of our
country.

*Thank You
Madam!..*



**FOR UNDERSTANDING
THAT THE "FORCES"
DESERVE PRIORITY**



SOMETIMES your grocer may not be able to supply you
with Weston's English Quality Biscuits. The men and
women of our fighting forces in Canada and overseas need
biscuits too, and we know you'll agree that their needs
come first.

**VICTORY BONDS DESERVE PRIORITY
ON YOUR DOLLARS**

Thousands of young Canadians in our armed forces are
offering their lives that Canada and freedom may live. We
at home are only being asked to lend our money, and this
we must do to the very limit of our ability. For Canada's sake
Work — Save — Lend for Victory. Buy Victory Bonds.



Weston's

ENGLISH QUALITY BISCUITS

Globe and Mail, September 8, 1942

Globe and Mail, October 22, 1942

Wartime Restrictions on Sugar and other ingredients—

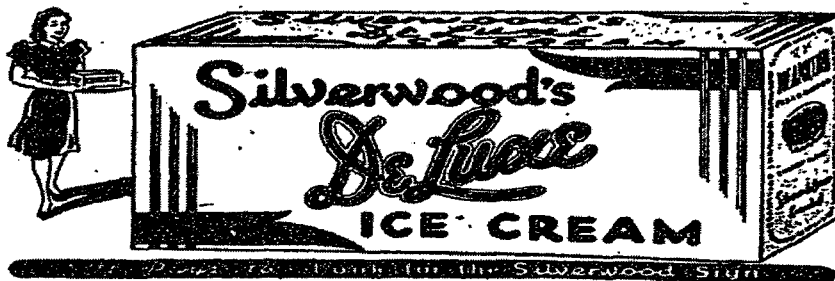
make it impossible to fill ALL the demand for
Silverwood's Ice Cream.

If your dealer has to say "Sorry!", please re-
member, it's not his fault.

We just can't guarantee to make as great a
QUANTITY as we could sell.

But we can and do guarantee to maintain the
same high QUALITY.

While the war is on, we know you will agree
on the necessity of conserving sugar and butterfat
for our fighting men.



Globe and Mail, November 25, 1942

As important as civilians were to the war effort, ads such as these left no doubt as to whose needs took priority in a world at war.



THIS FAMOUS WHOLE WHEAT CEREAL IS "FOOD FOR HEALTH IN PEACE AND WAR"

The authoritative booklet prepared by the Canadian Medical Association, recommends "whole grain cereals" as one of the essential "protective" foods that you should eat every day. Shredded Wheat is a "whole grain cereal"—it is 100% pure whole wheat in its most palatable form. Two Shredded Wheat with milk and fruit contain no less than eight vital food values: Three Vitamins (A, B, and C), Iron, Calcium, Phosphorus, Proteins and Carbohydrates . . . Give your family this "protective" whole wheat cereal daily. It's mighty good to taste—and costs only a few cents a serving.

THE CANADIAN SHREDDED WHEAT COMPANY, LTD., Niagara Falls, Canada

SHREDDED WHEAT

THE CANADIAN HOME OF SHREDDED WHEAT

LOOK FOR THIS FAMILIAR PACKAGE AT YOUR FOOD STORE

MADE IN CANADA - OF CANADIAN WHEAT

Toronto Star, June 20, 1940

Nutrition became an abiding concern during wartime and advertisers took advantage. This 1940 ad for Shredded Wheat ties the product to the widely-circulated *Food for Health in Peace and War*, a pamphlet compiled by the Canadian Medical Association's Committee on Nutrition.



"Since becoming a war-worker I've learned the importance of proper diet. To do our jobs well, we war-workers need extra quantities of protective minerals and vitamins that salads supply. And after a busy day a refreshing salad hits the spot too—especially when it's topped off with REAL mayonnaise."

EVERYBODY knows that salads help protect health and efficiency. But until you've used *real* mayonnaise you don't know how really good a salad can be. Hellmann's Blue Ribbon *Real* Mayonnaise isn't just another salad dressing. It's *real* mayonnaise—all mayonnaise—made from finest ingredients, *double-whipped* to tempting creaminess. The delicate blandness of Blue Ribbon *Real* Mayonnaise points up salad flavour, adds zest and increases your enjoyment.

OCEAN SALAD

- 1 pound flaked cold cooked fish
- 3 tablespoons Hellmann's French Dressing
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 2 tomatoes Lettuce Parsley
- Five Hellmann's *Real* Mayonnaise

Any cold fish may be used, but fish that flakes nicely like cod, haddock or halibut is most satisfactory. Remove bones, pick fish into flakes, placing it in French dressing. Set away in a cold place. When about to serve chop celery and add to fish. Arrange crisp leaves of lettuce in cup shapes on a platter. Place one serving of fish in each cup and cover with generous amount of Blue Ribbon *Real* Mayonnaise. Garnish with sprig of parsley. Decorate platter with sliced tomatoes.

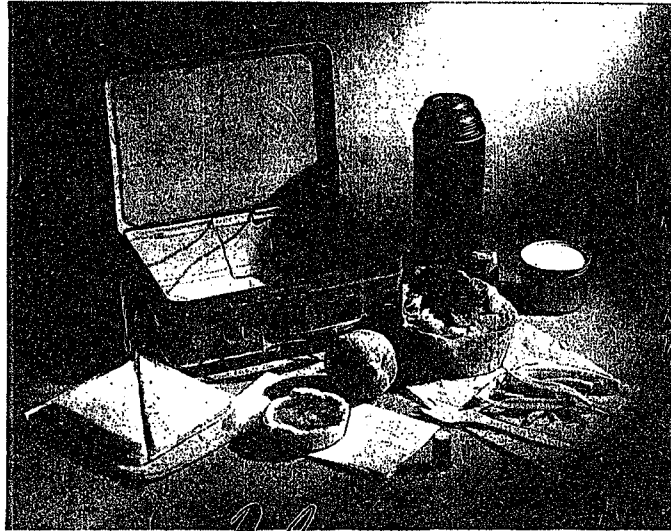
Hellmann's Blue Ribbon Sandwich Spread makes delicious sandwiches.

H7A-42

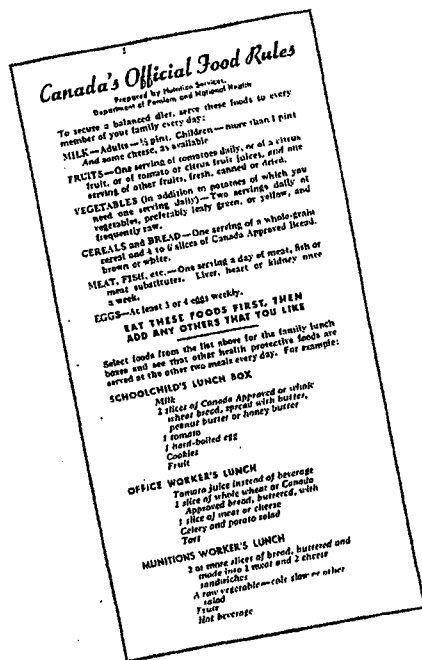


Globe and Mail, July 3, 1942

The demands of war coupled with a food supply under stress gave Canadians additional reasons to eat a nutritionally-balanced diet. This ad for Hellmann's informs us that the mayonnaise's "delicate blandness" is just the thing to "zest" up salads – a key source of nutrients for civilians busy propping up the war effort.



Live Up THE LUNCH BOX!



Globe and Mail, August 12, 1942

Food has a new importance. The right food, and enough of it, will help win the war. The government says, "the lunch box is coming to the fore in Canada's war effort because the worker's efficiency depends partly on what he eats, and thousands of Canadians today are carrying their lunches to factories, offices and schools."

When it comes to the question of what you eat—you're the doctor; but the wives and mothers who pack the lunches are the ones who have to use their imagination and good sense. On this page are a few approved suggestions, but they only hint at the possibilities.

At this season, luscious Canadian fruits and vegetables, rich in vitamins, help to live up the lunch box, help to provide the health and stamina that will roll out munitions, help to keep workers on the home front strong and build sturdy bodies for the growing children who must face anxious days ahead.



This ad from Simpson's gets straight to the point – the 'right food' will win the war. Also included in the ad is a copy of Canada's *Official Food Rules*, first released in 1942.

"I figure that **EATING RIGHT**
is part of my Job"

"With Bill and Slim and a lot of other linemen in uniform, it's up to us old-timers to keep telephone lines working. And that means we have to keep on the job, too. Not just routine maintenance, either, but emergency calls at all hours and in all weather—usually bad!

"My wife and I figure eating right is part of my job and she sees to it that I and the whole family get lots of the milk and greens and other foods they tell us we need to keep away from colds and sickness.

"My wife's got a copy of Canada's Food Rules tacked up on the kitchen wall—says they help to keep her on the right track—and inside the budget, too—when she's planning meals."

CANADA'S FOOD RULES

MILK—Adults: one-half pint. Children more than one pint. Add some cream.

FRUITS—One serving of apples daily, or of a citrus fruit, or of tomatoes or citrus fruit halves, and one serving of other fruits, fresh, canned, or dried.

VEGETABLES—In addition to potatoes, of which you need one serving daily—Two servings daily of vegetables, preferably leafy green, or yellow, and frequently raw.

CEREALS and BREADS—One serving of a whole grain cereal and four to six slices of Canada-approved bread, brown or white.

MEAT, FISH, EGGS, etc.—One serving a day of meat, fish, or meat substitutes. Liver, heart, or kidney once a week. Eat at least three or four weekly.

PLUS OTHER FOODS YOU WISH . . .

EAT RIGHT- FEEL RIGHT
Canada Needs You Strong

On Active Service



Giving Words to Words

PUBLISHED IN SUPPORT OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Globe and Mail, February 24, 1943

LOYAL CITIZENS DO NOT HOARD!

Hoarders are people who buy and store away goods beyond their immediate needs.

They want to be in an unfair position over their neighbors.

Hoarders are traitors to their country and their fellow citizens, because by creating excessive and unnecessary demands for goods, they slow down the war effort.

There is no excuse for "panic buying" and hoarding. Everyone will have enough, if no one tries to get more than a fair share.

Hoarding must stop! Every unnecessary purchase makes it more difficult for Canada to do a full war job.

THERE'S A LAW AGAINST HOARDING

It is against the law to buy more than current needs.

Violation of the law is punishable by fines up to \$5,000, and imprisonment for as long as two years.

**AVOID ALL UNNECESSARY BUYING — AVOID WASTE
MAKE EVERYTHING LAST THE LONGEST TIME POSSIBLE**

In cases where it is advisable for you to buy in advance of your immediate requirements—such as your next season's coal supply—you will be encouraged to do so by direct statement from responsible officials.

THE WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD

OTTAWA, CANADA

Globe and Mail, April 13, 1942

To help maintain adequate supplies, hoarding was quickly made illegal. In order to ensure compliance, the WPTB tried a variety of tactics to get their message across. In this poster, the Board emphasizes communal notions of 'fair shares' and civic mindedness.

"THE HOARDER"

**PUBLIC ENEMY
NO. 1**

People who buy more of anything than they currently need, and merchants who encourage them to do so, are sabotaging the war effort, and are therefore public enemies.

Loyal citizens do not hoard. They buy only for their immediate needs. They cheerfully adjust their standard of living, realizing that their country's needs must come first. They do not try to gain unfair advantages over their neighbours.

Are you a hoarder or a loyal citizen? Are you hampering Canada's war effort by unnecessary buying? Or are you co-operating to the best

of your ability to save Canada from such horrors as Hong Kong?

If Canadians do their duty, there will be no more hoarding. Everyone will get a fair share of the goods available. More food can be sent to Great Britain. More raw materials—more manpower—will be available for making guns, tanks, planes and other armaments to back up our armed forces.

In cases where it is advisable for you to buy in advance of your immediate requirements—such as your next season's coal supply—you will be encouraged to do so by direct statement from responsible officials.

**WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD
OTTAWA**

Globe and Mail, April 22, 1942

This WPTB poster ratchets up the rhetoric, drawing a clear link between a person's consumption habits and their status as a 'good' Canadian. In the binary worldview set out here, hoarders are disloyal saboteurs whose refusal to put the common good ahead of their own selfish interests made them enemies of the state.

Don't be a **CUPBOARD QUISLING!**

"Cupboard Quislings"! Is that too hard a name for people who selfishly lay in unnecessary stocks of clothes or food, or other goods for fear of shortages?

No! The name is not too hard, even though it may be earned through thoughtlessness. For in reality they are doing, in a petty, mean way, what the Quisling does in the open.

Anyone who buys more than is necessary for current needs—

Is breaking his country's law for personal advantage.
Is betraying his loyal neighbours and those who are not so well off as he.

Is, in effect, depriving our fighting men of the munitions and supplies they must have to defend us.

Is hindering our war effort and helping our enemies.

Loyal citizens avoid putting unnecessary and abnormal strains on our factories. In time of war, loyal citizens do not spend one dollar more on civilian goods than is absolutely necessary for current needs.

The law provides for fines up to \$5,000 and imprisonment up to two years for hoarding; and hoarding is just another word for unnecessary selfish buying.

In cases where it is advisable for you to buy in advance of your immediate requirements—such as your next season's coal supply—you will be encouraged to do so by direct statement from responsible officials.

THE WARTIME PRICES AND TRADE BOARD

OTTAWA, CANADA

Globe and Mail, May 12, 1942

This poster reminded Canadians that hoarding did not necessarily have to be equated with a deliberate, planned campaign. Consumers could find themselves acting as "Cupboard Quislings" through simple carelessness.

It Pays to Shop
at **EATON'S**



Your Garden—
**GROUNDS
for
VICTORY**

You hear a lot about Victory Gardens these days... and that's no idle term. Because growing food right in your own backyard can play a vital part in pulling for victory. It helps out the professional farmers meeting government quotas... it relieves the strain on shippers and packers. Besides, it's good, healthy enterprise... and profitable. And so food tastes quite like what you have grown yourself. **EATON'S Garden Groves** aims to plant you firmly on the right track... with the proper tools for this job of delving for vitamins and victory!

BASEMENT



- 1. Spade "D" handle socket type \$1.25.
- 2. Four-prong Digging Fork with "D" handle 75c.
- 3. Four-prong Sooty Wrecker or Cultivator. Long handle, adjustable, with 1/2 in. steel tip \$2.50.
- 4. Tarp Edger. Long handle, sharp cutting blade 50c.
- 5. Lawn Mower with 4-in. blade \$1.50.
- 6. Dutch Hoe with 4-in. blade \$1.50.
- 7. Cultivator—adjustable prong cultivator with 4-in. blade \$1.50.
- 8. Dandelion Hoe with 1000 4-in. blade 75c.
- 9. Garden Hoe—black handle with 4-in. blade 75c.
- 10. Rubber 12-inch, collectible metal head, in canvas design \$1.50. 14-inch collectible rubber double back 80c.



- 11. Three-prong Garden Hoe 12-inch handle, 10-inch blade \$1.50.
- 12. "Wrecker" Growing Season—long handle, 10-inch blade, 10-inch spring \$1.50.
- 13. "Wrecker" Soil Conditioner—10-lb. bag \$1.00, 20-lb. bag \$2.00.
- 14. Garden Hoe—black handle, 10-inch blade \$1.50.

**"GREAT OAKS FROM
LITTLE ACORNS GROW"**

There's something about seeds and shrubs that whets the embryo gardener's energies. Certainly, there's everything that gardeners could wish for in the Seed Department, on the Fifth Floor. Seeds, bushes, perennials, fruit trees... and fine No. 1 grasses, Government quality grass seed. So pop into the inspiring spot behind the gratometer, and plan your planting before the 24th of May.

SEEDS AND SHRUBS, Fifth Floor

T. EATON CO.

Also at EATON'S College Street
STORE HOURS: 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, including Saturday.
Telephone Order Service: 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Ext. TR. 2411.

Globe and Mail, May 19, 1942

As the global food supply tightened, Canadians were encouraged to grow as much of their own food as possible. It did not take long for firms such as Eaton's and Simpson's to identify a new marketing niche.



SIMPSON'S VICTORY GARDEN SHOP

Opens Thursday

Adjoining Simpson's Parking Garage on
Richmond Street, Opposite the Store

This year, with the government urging everyone with a suitable plot of ground to produce as much food as possible, you'll want to give special care to the planning of your garden. At Simpson's Victory Garden Shop you'll find everything to get things off to a good start—seeds, fertilizers, implements, interesting and helpful displays showing how to lay out your garden in a way to give your family a balanced vegetable diet all Summer. Visit Simpson's Victory Garden Shop Thursday—talk with Simpson's gardening experts—ask for free government handbook and planting chart which discusses varieties of vegetables and rotary planting methods.

WEBB'S PEDIGREE ENGLISH SEEDS, PACKAGE 10c

LETTUCE (Wonderful)	PARSNIP
RADISH (Crimson White Tip)	LEEK
LETTUCE (Grand Rapids)	BROCCOLI
RADISH (White Icicle)	BRUSSELS SPROUTS
CUCUMBER (Long Green)	CRESS
ONION (Yellow Globe Danvers)	BEANS (Scarlet Runner)
BEETS (Detroit Dark Red)	ONION (Bunching)
CORN (Golden Bantam)	MUSKMELON (Paul Rose)
BEANS (Yellow Wax)	RUTABAGA (Swede Turnip)
	CITRUS (Red Seeded)
	PEAS (Second Early)

STEELE BRIGG'S SEEDS

SPINACH (Biscorniale) 5c and 10c	POLE BEANS (Kentucky Wonder) 1/2 lb. 30c; 1b. 50c
LETTUCE (Leaf & Head) 5c	ONIONS (Yellow Sweet Spanish) 10c
SWISS CHARD (Lacin) 5c	ONIONS (Small Round Silverkin) 5c
EARLY PEAS (Little Marvel) 10c	CORN (Golden Bantam) 10c
CARROTS (Half Long Scarlet Nantes) 5c	CUCUMBER (Wine Spine or Boston Pickling) 5c
EARLY CABBAGE (Danish Ballhead) 5c	SQUASH (Winter Green Hubbard) 5c
TOMATOES (Ponderosa Heartleaf) 5c	SQUASH (Acorn or Table Green) 5c
CARROT FLOWER (Snowball) 10c	GREEN PEPPERS (Harris Early) 5c
BEANS (Green Bountiful or Yellow Wax) 10c	RED PEPPERS (Long Thick Red Cayenne Type) 5c

ALSO A COMPLETE LINE OF GRASS SEEDS, FLOWER SEEDS, SHRUBS, EVERGREENS, ROSE BUSHES AND INSECTICIDES

FLORANITE, THE SAFE NON-BURNING FERTILIZER	VIGORO PLANT FOOD
10 lbs.70	1 lb.10
20 lbs. 1.30	10 lbs.95
50 lbs. 2.20	25 lbs. 2.30
100 lbs. 3.75	

Choose Proper Tools in Simpson's Basement

3-PIECE GARDEN TOOL SET—2.95
12-tooth long-handled rake.
3-prong 18-handled digging fork.
Standard D-shaped spade.

GARDEN STAKES
About five inches square, sharpened at one end, drilled for wire or rope.
36 inches long, each 12c. 42 inches long, each 15c. 48 inches long, each 18c.

FAN RAKES
Flat spring-steel teeth that are easy on the lawn. Long hardwood handle. Each 50c.

DANDELION RAKE
Spring-steel head and saw teeth to comb lawn free of dandelion heads and small debris. Long, strong handle. Each 1.15.

LONG-TOOTH WIRE RAKE
Handy rake with twenty-four round spring-steel wire teeth. Long handle. Each 30c.

TROWEL FORK OR WEEBLES
Made of strong stamped steel. Each 15c.

Please orders filled on all items — Tel. 5111
Simpson's Basement

Globe and Mail, April 15, 1943

**plant a
Victory Garden**

This year grow your own "rations" right in your own backyard. We can't sell you seeds or garden tools, but the Evangeline shops CAN sell you the right: Sunshine Fashions and accessories that march right along in step with wartime economy.

- ◆ 113 Yonge at Adelaide
- ◆ 751 Yonge at Bloor
- ◆ 1438 Yonge at St. Clair
- ◆ 414 Eglinton at Castleknock
- ◆ 636 Danforth at Pope

In Hamilton—King and John Streets.

EVANGELINE SHOPS

Globe and Mail, May 31, 1943

Victory Gardening became a popular theme for advertisers looking to link their products to the war effort. Some made more sense than others, although it is possible that some Canadian women really did grow more vegetables as a result of wearing "Sunshine Fashions" from the Evangeline Shops.

come on Young Canada!



*Make it a **USEFUL** Summer
... join us in helping Ontario Farmers
produce **FOOD for VICTORY***

YOU have an important place in Canada's War Effort—a place that you and thousands like you can take without interrupting your education—a place for which no one else is available. You can help produce essential food for victory by spending a patriotic wartime holiday working on Ontario farms. Join the Farm Cadet or Farmerette Brigade of the Farm Service Force now. Be a part of this vast organization—recognizing that food is as essential as armament in winning the war. Wear the insignia of the Farm Service Force! Let your name appear on its Honour Roll. Volunteer **TODAY!**



ONTARIO INTER DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE — AGRICULTURE —
LABOUR — EDUCATION — AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR, OTTAWA

Globe and Mail, June 19, 1942

As the military and civilian defence jobs drained workers from the countryside, farmers had to rely on a variety of emergency labour schemes to secure enough help. The Ontario Farm Service Force was one of the most elaborate.



... We won't Eat if YOU don't help Ontario Farmers THIS SUMMER!

No longer can anyone sit back calmly with the knowledge that Canada is a great storehouse of foodstuffs that our fighting forces and we at home are sure of ample food supplies. The beef shortage and the rationing of foods are evidence that supplies are growing scarce.

There are two reasons for present and threatened food shortages. First, our nation is exporting more food than ever before in her history. Second, our farmers are short-handed. They need help because agricultural workers have left them to join the armed forces and to work in munitions plants at wages higher than the farmer can pay.

Because of the nature of his work, the farmer's greatest need for help comes with seeding in the spring and ends with late harvesting in September. There are two very difficult peaks to get over with haying and harvesting in the Summer when the demand for manpower on the farm is tremendous.

Experience or no experience, YOU CAN HELP. There's an Ontario Farm Service Force Brigade in which you can serve regardless of age, sex or occupation. Five of the Brigades are outlined here. Study them now and fill in the coupon below for further information today!

Farm Commandos Brigade

Members of the Farm Commandos Brigade are men (or women) who are regularly engaged in urban occupations, but who will give evening time, a half day or a day a week to help local farmers with seeding, haying, harvesting, threshing, silo filling and other types of farm operations which require substantial but brief increases in manpower. Over 1,000 people in Ontario actually undertake this work at non-profit farm hands lost customer—merchants, clerks, professional men, mechanics, electricians and others from all walks of life and of all ages. Many will be needed this year. Minimum pay is twenty-five cents an hour and those who feel charitably inclined turn their earnings over to their favourite charities. Write for information.



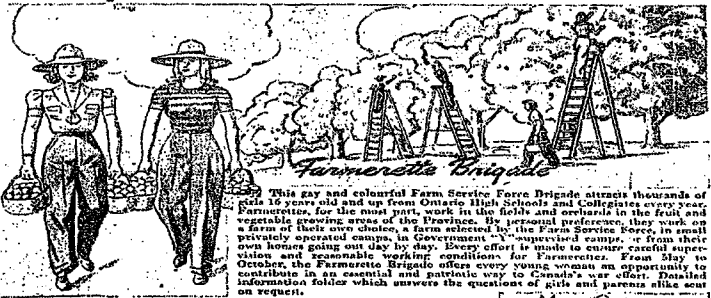
Farm Cadet Brigade

Young men from 15 years of age upward are needed on Ontario farms to help with seeding, planting and harvesting of farm crops; feeding and care of livestock including the care and handling of horses; feeding and care of poultry; hoeing of roots, corn, vegetable crops, etc. Farm Cadets commence working as early as April 23rd and are required by individual farmers as late as October 1st. The Farm Service Force places them on selected farms with every regard for their welfare.



There is "HELP WANTED" A C.B.C. Presentation produced with the cooperation of the Ontario Farm Service Force, every Wednesday 7:30 P.M. CBL-CXCL

This gay and colourful Farm Service Force Brigade attracts thousands of male 16 years old and up from Ontario High Schools and Colleges every year. Farmettes, for the most part, work in the fields and orchards in the fruit and vegetable growing areas of the Province. By personal preference, they work on a farm of their own choice, a farm selected by the Farm Service Force, in small privately operated camps, in Government supervised camps, or from their own homes going out day by day. Every effort is made to ensure careful supervision and reasonable working conditions for Farmettes. From May to October, the Farmette Brigade offers every young woman an opportunity to contribute in an essential and patriotic way to Canada's war effort. Detailed information folder which answers the questions of girls and parents alike sent on request.



Women's Land Brigade

These are the women who work from six months to one year round on poultry, dairy or mixed farms. From 20 years of age upward, they undertake milking, feeding and care of stock, field work, haying, stoching grain, threshing, working with horses and tractors. Girls or women who are willing to engage in this type of work should write for full information to the Director of the Farm Service Force. Extreme care is taken to see that members of the Women's Land Brigade are placed in congenial situations with maximum opportunity to learn the job and without due consideration will be given for health and physical limitations.



Holiday Service Brigade

Here's a brigade for selected persons who have a week to a month of holiday with you. Many members of this brigade will arrange with relatives or friends in the country to spend their holiday working with them during the peak of haying, harvesting and threshing. If you want to help and have no farmer relatives or friends, the Ontario Farm Service Force will undertake to assign you to a congenial farmer. Thousands of Ontario citizens spent their holidays working on farms last summer, but more than ever will be needed this year. Why not join them? Write for full information today.



ONTARIO FARM SERVICE FORCE, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

I am interested in doing what I can to help Ontario farmers this summer. Please send me information on the Brigade checked below:

Farm Cadet Brigade Farm Commandos Brigade

Farmettes Brigade Holiday Service Brigade

Women's Land Brigade

Name..... Age (if under 21).....

Address.....

Post Office..... Phone.....

DOMINION-PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE ON FARM LABOUR AGRICULTURE - LABOUR - EDUCATION

Globe and Mail, April 7, 1943

Reflecting, perhaps, the increasingly serious nature of the farm labour shortage, the three sunny youths of 1942 are gone, replaced by these intense young members of Canada's armed forces.

HELP SAVE THE CROPS!

Professional men! Store keepers! Retired folk!
Industrial workers! Housewives! Young men at home!

The Food Front Needs Your Help!

There is a serious shortage of farm help in Ontario which, if not overcome, will definitely reduce the amount of food available this Fall and Winter.

Here is What You Do!

Give one day a week!
Give half a day a week!
Give some of your evening hours!
Spend your holidays at farm work!

You can help to HOE—HAY—HARVEST. You will be paid a minimum of 25c per hour. You will be given transportation to your work and given such meals as are required. You will find the work not too arduous and in most cases a pleasant change and a healthy recreation.

For full information and registration form apply at
Farm Commando Brigade Headquarters,
Room 206, City Hall, Toronto.

Important! There is an immediate need for tractor drivers and teamsters at 50c an hour to help in delayed seeding! The need is urgent—so please register at once!

This advertisement donated by T. EATON CO. in the interests of the Ontario Farm Service Corps.

Toronto Star, June 7, 1943

As the labour shortage worsened, everyone was encouraged to pitch in. Such appeals frequently painted farm work in a rosy light, as in this notice extolling the labour as “not too arduous ... a pleasant change and a healthy recreation.” Farmers may have disagreed.



There's a job for you on the food production front—right in the fields of Canada—if you have a few days, a week or a month to spare this summer.

If you are a school teacher, a student, business or professional man, office or factory worker, storekeeper or clerk, what a change! : : : what a holiday! Work; yes, plenty of it; but delightful work in the clean open air of the healthful farm lands, work that will add immeasurably to the benefit of your holiday—work for your country now in the throes

of its greatest food struggle:

That food is there on the farms—there for the gathering: The farmers are painfully short of help. Their sons are in the fighting forces, their daughters in the war factories.

Won't you lend a willing, helping hand and enjoy a happy, useful holiday. Talk it over with the Special Local Committee established in your district; with the nearest Employment and Selective Service Office, or write now to the Provincial Director of Farm Labour at the capital of your Province.

Published in the interest of the Canadian farmer, the agricultural and food producing industries and the Canadian people by

The CANADA STARCH COMPANY, Limited
MONTREAL • TORONTO

Globe and Mail, August 9, 1943

This ad propounds farm work as being “delightful” and “healthful,” a great way for the urbanite to spend their holiday.



SOLDIER OF THE SOIL

THIS year the Canadian Farmer urgently needs help. He needs your help to produce the food so necessary for victory. Many thousands of farm workers are serving in the Forces, so that the farmer—the Soldier of the Soil—is short-handed, but short-handed as he is, he is called upon to produce more food than ever before. Food is one of the most powerful weapons of war. Grains, eggs, bacon, beef, fruit, vegetables—FOOD to feed our armies, our allies and our people we must have.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You may be a school teacher, student, business or professional man, an office or store clerk—no matter what you are, if you have a few hours, days, weeks, or months of free time this summer, you can do your country and the farmer a great and patriotic service by helping out on the farm. You may be inexperienced, but you still can help. You will find work on the farm healthy and congenial. It will give you the satisfaction of feeling that you have brought Victory nearer.

What you should do NOW:

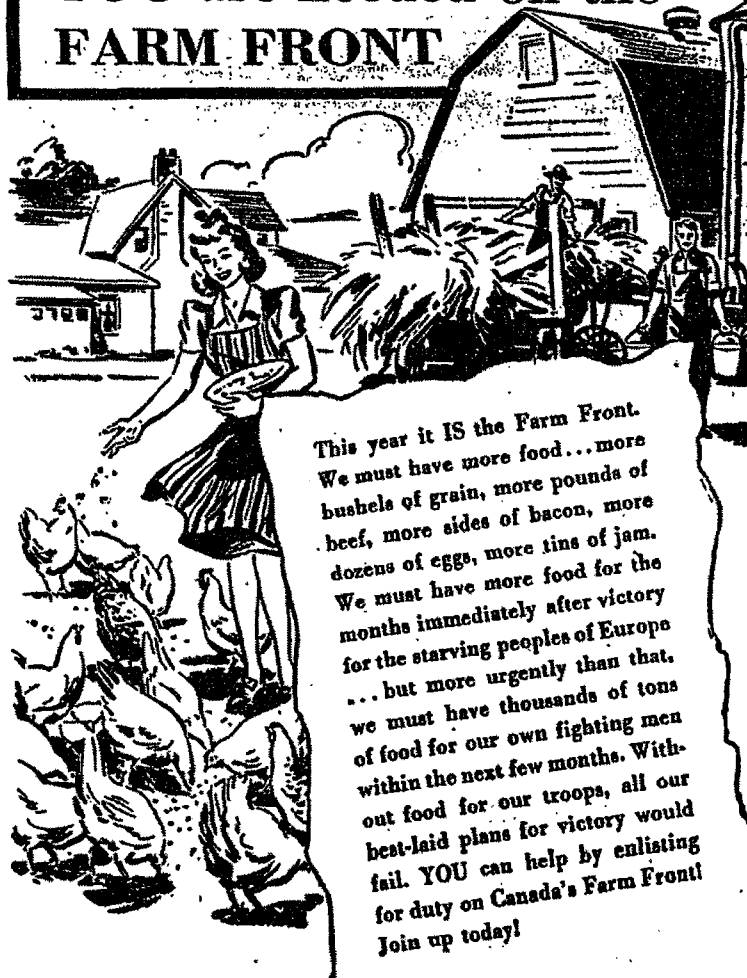
Consult any special local committee or office established to deal with farm labour placements in your city or town; or Write the Director of the Dominion-Provincial Farm Labour Program at the capital of your province; or Call in touch with your nearest Employment and Selective Service Office.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

HUGHES MITCHELL
Minister of Labour

A. MACNAMARA
Director, National Selective Service

YOU are needed on the FARM FRONT



This year it IS the Farm Front.
We must have more food... more
bushels of grain, more pounds of
beef, more sides of bacon, more
dozens of eggs, more tins of jam.
We must have more food for the
months immediately after victory
for the starving peoples of Europe
... but more urgently than that,
we must have thousands of tons
of food for our own fighting men
within the next few months. With-
out food for our troops, all our
best-laid plans for victory would
fail. YOU can help by enlisting
for duty on Canada's Farm Front!
Join up today!

This is what YOU should do! ACT NOW!

Consult any special local committee or office established to deal
with farm labour placements in your city or town;

or
Write your Provincial Director of Farm Labour at the
Capital of your province;

or
Get in touch with your nearest Employment and
Selective Service Office.

*This advertisement, prepared by the Dominion Department of Labour,
is sponsored as an aid to the joint Dominion-Provincial
Farm Labour Program, by*

STEELE, BRIGGS SEED CO.
LIMITED

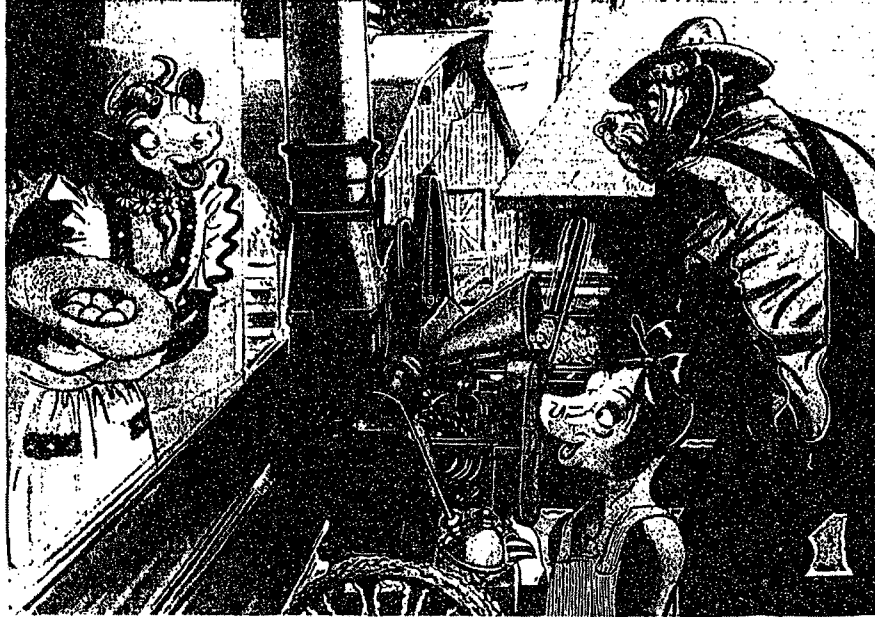
TORONTO

WINNIPEG

REGINA

EDMONTON

Globe and Mail, July 24, 1943



"Cheer up," laughed Elsie, "Canada needs farm commandos in the worst way!"

"WELL, Canada got one of the worst when you made me give up my vacation to work on this farm," beefed Elmer, the bull.

"But put-leeze, Elmer, I'm being very serious," asserted Elsie, the Borden Cow. "I want you to give this farm commando job all you've got. Canada can't win this war or shorten it by a single day without the Canadian farmer."

"This hard work is shortening my days!" growled Elmer.

"Nonsense!" contradicted Elsie. "That kind of exercise is good for you—and the Canadian farmer needs every bit of extra help he can get—and he needs it right now! That's why we're calling for help on everyone who has even half-a-day to spare. Every hour of useful farm labour now will count next winter."

"What are you getting out of this?" queried Elmer suspiciously.

"I'm getting a great deal," smiled Elsie honestly. "All milk producers are! The more good feed for us cows that workers like you put into that silo, the more milk every bossie in Canada will give!"

"So I'm doing this for you, am I?" snorted Elmer.

"Yes, you are—and for Canada too—we need more milk for children and for grown-ups! And there's another very important reason—"

"What's that?" asked Elmer.

"Milk and Cream to make ice cream—not only for civilians—but Canada's Armed Forces and War Workers, too! Why, Borden's supplied over 300,000 pieces of MelOrol ice Cream last month to the Armed Forces! Now, all kiddies need milk—but some don't like drinking

it—well, they can get what they need through Borden's delicious Ice Cream."

"Get me another pair of overalls—looks like more chores for old Elmer," he snorted bucking into the job. "We farm commandos will take care of those shortages! Tell all the fellows in Canada they've got to back me up with some good hard work!"

"I will, dear," said Elsie, "and if it's Borden's it's got to be good hard work!"

-if it's Borden's it's got to be good

Consult your
LOCAL COMMITTEE OFFICE
established to deal with
FARM LABOUR

© The Borden Co. Ltd.

THE BORDEN COMPANY LIMITED

Globe and Mail, August 23, 1943

In this rather surreal ad, Borden used their bovine mascots to encourage Canadians to get out to the farms.

An Urgent Appeal..

... to those who live in the City

Your Help is Needed on a Farm:

Right near your own home, you'll find a farm where farm-help will be more than appreciated, essential to the war effort, and paid for!

There's work to do . . . in planting, gardening, feeding cattle and poultry, milking, gathering in early fruit and vegetables. Agricultural produce is needed in greater and greater quantities for our Armed Forces, for the people of Britain, for our Allies and for home use.

Everybody can help . . . office and factory workers, business girls . . . there's work and fun for everyone! If you can spend a week or two on a farm— arrange to do it now. The change will do you good!

WHAT TO DO:

Consult any special local committee or office established to deal with farm labour placements in your town or city, or write to your Provincial Director of Farm Labour at the Capital of your Province, or get in touch with your nearest Employment or Selective Service Office.

Globe and Mail, June 20, 1944

This ad issued by Bright's Wines appealed specifically to city dwellers, urging them to volunteer as part-time emergency farm help.

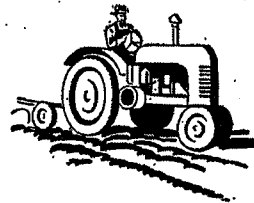
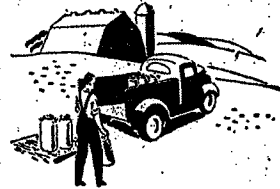
Vacation FOR VICTORY

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED
ON THE FARMS THIS SUMMER



IT'S healthy, pleasant work, "helping out" on a Canadian farm! Thousands of Canadian students from high schools and colleges, and thousands of office workers and war workers on vacation... both men and women... are needed to help Canadian farmers solve the manpower shortage—and bring in the crops for Victory.

There will be vegetables to tend, hoe, and weed... sunny orchards to work in: Vegetables and fruits must be harvested... apples and other fruits for home use and for overseas... vitamin-rich vegetables for our armed forces and for Canadian workers. You can do your share!



At poultry farms and dairy farms, there will be milking to do—feeding cattle and poultry—delivering fresh products into town, for home markets and shipment overseas. You'll be paid, for your work of course—extra vacation earnings—and you'll be helping fill the manpower shortage.

Driving a tractor is tricky work—but if you can drive a car, you can do it. The experience you gain will be worthwhile to you... as well as a source of increased income. Plan now to make your contribution to Victory, by helping in this real way!



HOW TO ARRANGE YOUR VICTORY VACATION

Consult any special local committee or office-established to deal with farm labour placements in your town or city, or, write to your Provincial Director of Farm Labour at the Capital of your Province, or, get in touch with your nearest Employment or Selective Service Office.

Spend at least a part of this summer helping on a Canadian farm—near your own home.



CONTRIBUTED TO THE WAR EFFORT
HIRAM WALKER & SONS, LIMITED
Globe and Mail, July 12, 1944

DOMINION FOOD FRONT



Jean Duval, Home Economist and Director of Dominion Stores
Home Minister

A weekly review of food news and food facts.

CANADIANS ARE EATING BETTER THAN KINGS

"HOSPITALITY NEED NOT BE RATIONED" says Jean Duval



Unrationed hospitality flows warmly from this tray of colourful fruits, assorted biscuits and cheeses.

It's fun to arrange your platter of tempting good things — make a picture with them! And it's no trouble at all to serve these refreshments... a few napkins, plates and small knives are all you need for either around-the-table service or a casual table.

Your guests will make a little ceremony of choosing their favourite biscuits or slices of crisp melba toast — delicate cream cheese or sophisticated cheese with nip and author-

ity — and fruit to add its refreshing juiciness to the feast. Even clearing-up is no trouble, when you have selected these simple but knowing foods to your guests.

Try a smaller fruit-and-cheese platter on your family, too — in place of more usual desserts. It's easy on the sugar-ration, the digestion and the budget!

Jean Duval

How are we doing for food — with your shortages crowding up almost every supply — leaving spaces on the store shelves and items to be scratched off the shopping list?

Ask any citizen of the United Nations — except the U.S. They would be amazed that we even spoke of food "shortages." To the British, French, Norwegians, Dutch — all lovers of good eating — our ordinary meals would appear luxurious to the point of extravagance.

It is a simple fact that Canadians enjoy on their tables many foods that kings, dukes, and counts in other nations are doing without. Our own Royal Family goes without things, of which we Canadians get second helpings!

There is another reason why you might think food rationing isn't so bad — you have become accustomed to it because of the shipping shortage. But there still is plenty to eat. Plentiful variety, too.

Dominion Stores' shelves now lack some of these things. It is natural for a customer to feel disappointed when something out of stock spoils her meal planning.

But with Canadians' food "shortages" are an inconvenience — not a hardship! And Dominion Stores, through the services of Jean Duval, is constantly suggesting ways to avoid inconvenience — by the use of tempting and nutritious alternatives for things that are in short supply.

THANKSGIVING SPECIALS

<p>ONT. BLUE CONCORD GRAPES Now at their best in well filled baskets. Excellent for making jams and jellies, and fine for table use. 6 Qt. Basket 27c 5 FOR 70c</p>	<p>EATING APPLES ONTARIO SNOWS Highly Coloured Good Flavour 6 qt. 39c MCINTOSH REDS Fancy Large 125's From Br. Columbia Doz. 25c</p>
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<p>MURFEE POTATOES QUEEN Carefully selected to meet the highest standards of quality and size. Every bag guaranteed — Buy with confidence. 10 POUND SHOPPING BAG FULL 25c</p>

<p>Excellent Quality NEW JERSEY SWEET POTATOES 3 lbs. 19c</p>
--

<p>WELL CURED ONT. NO. 1 COOKING ONIONS ... LOW PRICES 10 lbs. 25c 5 lbs. 13c</p>

<p>LARGE WHITE CELERY 2 stalks 9c</p>	<p>CRISP CLEANED CARROTS 3 lbs. 10c</p>
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<p>SELECTED WASHED PARSNIPS 3 lbs. 14c</p>	<p>SELECTED WASHED TURNIPS 2 lbs. 5c</p>
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MEATS FOR THANKSGIVING

<p>FRESH SPRING LAMB LEGS lb. 33c</p>	<p>FRESH ROASTING CHICKENS lb. 35c 5 to 6 lbs. Average</p>
<p>LOINS Flank or lb. 29c</p>	<p>CHOICE BOILING FOWL lb. 29c 4 to 5 lbs. Average</p>
<p>FRONTS lb. 21c</p>	<p>DOMINION HIGH QUALITY BREAD 2-DAYS 15c White, Brown or Cracked Wheat</p>

DOMINION

We reserve the right to limit quantities to normal weekly family requirements.

Help Canada's War Effort. Take part of your share in War Savings Stamps.

Toronto Star, October 8, 1942

Canada may have been at war, but as this ad for the Dominion grocery chain indicates, the supply difficulties the nation suffered were, in the end, quite minor.



**THE GREEDY EYES...
THE HUNGRY EYES
ARE ON US!**

© We sit down three times a day to tables rich with food . . .
We enjoy the plenty of the farms and orchards and gardens of Canada . . .

A plenty known by no people in the world today except our American neighbors!

The eyes of the world are on us and our riches:

The *greedy* eyes of Hitler and Mussolini and Hirohito . . .

The *hungry* eyes of the enslaved peoples, looking to us for help!

To protect our plenty . . . to guard the health of our children . . . and to provide for the peoples who have the right to ask our help—that's something we must *pay* for!

Already thousands of Canadians have given up their jobs and homes and lives to pay for it . . .

But this is total war! EVERY man, woman and child must pay his full price . . . even if it's only *lending* the money . . . even if it's only buying one more Victory Bond than you thought you could afford!



Published in the interests of Victory by

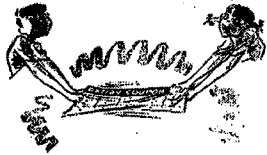
Globe and Mail, October 30, 1942

This ad, ostensibly to encourage the buying of Victory Bonds, served as another powerful reminder of just how fortunate Canadians were when it came to food, even in the midst of "total war."

THE EMBATTLED HOUSEWIFE Takes Command On the Meat Front

By ANN ADAM

Simpson's asked Ann Adam, author of "Today's Food," representing daily in the Globe and Mail, to prepare this page for the benefit of its subscribers.



Useful Coupon-Stretching Tricks

Try cuts from every group—beef—which cuts give you the greatest yield in servings—or in other satisfaction.

Stretch a well-flavored meat loaf with more bread or other cereal foods than you need to supply.

Stretch a mince meat pie by using vegetables and gravy and by baking it on a broader dish to give more of the meat-flavored crust.

With your great pot-meat, cook more vegetables, make more gravy.

Put vegetables in the pan with your roasted beef, lamb, veal, poultry or meat loaf, to pick up the flavor of the meat.

Stuff everything eatable—the broiled roast—the chop slice to make a pocket—the roasted meat loaf—the double-decker hamburger—the baked fish or pulsed fillet—the spaghetti—the thin slice of roast, etc.

Make most the stuffing in all sorts of vegetables which are naturally hollow or can be scooped out.

Combine beans with a little meat to supplement it with their good flavor—baking potatoes and extend the meat flavor... or in chili con carne, bean-and-meatage casserole, meat loaf with steamed layers, bean patties fried in meat dripping.

Separate protein bean drippings from the little bacon you serve to give bacon flavor to another dish. It will help to dress part of a vegetable platter, to put the pork flavor into a bean fish.

Cook some vegetables in a stew and be lavish with the gravy.

The meatloaf angle to layer a little meat through a big casserole (with help from a suitable sauce)... to double the bulk of a stew (in it, or as a handsome border)... to play up leftovers... to provide the bulk under a more meat sauce, to give multi-course satisfaction.

Bread will make large or individual cases to hold meat-essence... stuffings... meat to go under or border sweet dishes... loaf cups for savory filling... crumb extenders... sandwiches (filled, loaves, sliced in round and fried)... and the introduction of some new and different breads will focus more attention and favor on this food as a satisfying accompaniment for anything and everything.

Use bally substitutes such as dumplings, breaded dough, popovers, macaroni bowls and shells, noodles, Yorkshire puddings, meat points, to make tremendous servings with less meat.

Simpson's

Globe and Mail, May 26, 1943



Meat Rationing Calls Up All Cooks

Meat Rationing takes us out of the cadet ranks. We've had our preliminary training... our early discipline, our adjustments, our development in responsibility.

With sugar, tea and coffee rationing, we learned about limitation... about avoiding waste... about the significance of food-stuffs carried to us over dangerous seas.

With butter rationing, we faced a few facts about the strain on our own production to meet the huge national needs, the amazing growth of our national appetite.

With meat rationing, we undertake to share what has been all ours... to cut down a little, that we may feed our own troops everywhere... help prevent Britain's already low meat level from a threatened drop... supply the ships that put in at our ports... .

The Embattled Housewife now takes over, on the food front... and her job is bigger, finer, than perhaps she knows.

She—and only she—can make meat rationing a success from her family's point of view... and make her family a success from the national point of view.

She—and only she—can buy, care for, cook and serve meat to make the ration seem as adequate as it really is.

She—and only she—can do a superb job of keeping up stout morale, of building and maintaining health and vitality with the right foods, of swinging her whole household sturdily into line as "troops behind the troops"... all out for Victory.

To Every Home— Some Good Can Come of Meat Rationing

Maybe the ration allows about the same amount of meat you've always used

Then you'll gain in bringing interesting new dishes to the family table, enlarging your variety... because your ration coupons don't entitle you to any definite cuts and if your butcher can't supply the old familiar now and then, you'll take a new cut and find out just how to use it to fullest advantage.

Maybe the ration allows more meat than you've been buying

Then you'll learn, in the flood of helpful information that will attend meat rationing, how to measure your family's actual need of tissue-building foods for positive health... how to make finest use of the thriftiest cuts... how to make your family's dinner a treat and an uplift, by adopting clever menu-making and flavoc-giving and food-stretching tricks that will come to you on the flood of information meat-rationing will set flowing.

Maybe the ration allows less meat than you've been accustomed to use

Then you will gain (while you wait for the return of more ample supplies) in knowledge of cuts of meat that are not perhaps familiar... you will introduce new dishes... you will extend your judgment of flavor—which is not rationed... you will remember wonderful dishes you've eaten abroad, and work some of their tricks into "extending" your available meat... you will feel that it's worth while to rise to the challenge of keeping up your family's morale and enjoyment by every good device for sketching meat and the flavors of meat. And you will no doubt preface the main course with a satisfying soup—supplement with a salad—follow it with ration-wise sweets for satiety. It's all your very definite war-job... and your success with it will be sweet.

Meat was the most complex food item to be rationed in Canada, but no consumer could plead ignorance. Advice on how to understand and cope with meat rationing proliferated.

Your **DOMINION** Store

Photographic Beef Ration Guide

As of May 27, 1943

From now on you will use the brown Spare Coupons "A" in your present Ration Book when buying meat. Each person is entitled to use two of these coupons a week, in the order they are numbered, during periods specified by the Ration Board. A family of two people will have a total of 4 coupons a week; a family of three people, 6 coupons per week; four people will have a total of 8 coupons per week—used to eat.

ILLUSTRATING 25 STANDARD BEEF CUTS, WITH RATION COUPON VALUES

Below each photo is shown, the pounds per coupon you are entitled to buy, also the number of coupons required for the two meat popular weights sold. Keep this Dominion Stores Beef Guide. It will help you to conveniently select your weekly purchases. Bring your Meat Coupon to **DOMINION STORES**, where the rankled experience and knowledge of over 300 Meat Experts are ready to serve you with the utmost in meat value and quality.

EXTRA COPIES FREE

Extra copies of this special **DOMINION STORES** "Beef" Ration Guide, printed on highly salted paper are available free to those desiring them. Write to **DOMINION STORES LIMITED**, "Meat Ration" Division, Toronto, Montreal or Halifax.

<p>ROLLED RIB ROAST (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 4 Coupons 4 1/2 lb. Roast 6 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>SIRLOIN POINT ROAST (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 4 Coupons 4 1/2 lb. Roast 6 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>ROLLED BRISKET (Boneless) 1 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 3 Coupons 5 lb. Roast 5 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>PRIME RIB ROAST 1 lb. per coupon 8 lb. Roast 6 Coupons 11 lb. Roast 7 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>BLADE ROAST 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 3 1/2 lb. Roast 3 Coupons 5 lb. Roast 4 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>
<p>ROLLED RIB ROAST (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 4 Coupons 4 1/2 lb. Roast 6 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>ROLLED CHUCK ROAST (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 4 Coupons 4 1/2 lb. Roast 6 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>SHORT RIB ROAST 1 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 3 Coupons 5 lb. Roast 5 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>SIRLOIN STEAK 1 lb. per coupon 1 lb. Steak 1 Coupon 2 lb. Steak 2 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>CHUCK ROAST 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 3 1/2 lb. Roast 3 Coupons 5 lb. Roast 4 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>
<p>ROLLED RIB ROAST (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 4 Coupons 4 1/2 lb. Roast 6 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>ROUND STEAK 3/4 lb. per coupon 1 1/4 lb. Steak 2 Coupons 2 1/4 lb. Steak 3 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>SHOULDER ROAST (Round Bone) 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 3 1/4 lb. Roast 2 Coupons 5 1/4 lb. Roast 4 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>PORTERHOUSE STEAK 1 lb. per coupon 1 lb. Steak 1 Coupon 2 lb. Steak 2 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>BRISKET POINT (Boiling) 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 5 lb. Piece 4 Coupons 8 1/4 lb. Piece 6 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>
<p>FLANK STEAK (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 3 1/4 lb. Steak 1 Coupon 1 1/2 lb. Steak 3 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>HIND SHANK (Boneless) 2 lbs. per coupon 1 1/4 lb. Piece 2 Coupons 3 lb. Piece 4 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>RUMP ROAST (Round End) 1 lb. per coupon 5 lb. Roast 5 Coupons 7 lb. Roast 7 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>WING STEAK 1 lb. per coupon 1 lb. Steak 1 Coupon 2 lb. Steak 2 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>SHORT RIBS (Boiling) 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 2 1/4 lb. Piece 2 Coupons 3 1/4 lb. Piece 3 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>
<p>STEWING BEEF (Boneless) 3/4 lb. per coupon 1 1/4 lbs. 2 Coupons 2 1/4 lbs. 3 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>HAMBURGO STEAK 1 lb. per coupon 1 lb. 1 Coupon 2 lbs. 2 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>RUMP ROAST (Square End) 1 lb. per coupon 3 lb. Roast 3 Coupons 5 lb. Roast 5 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>FRONT SHANK 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 8 lb. Piece 4 Coupons 8 1/4 lb. Piece 5 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>	<p>PLATE BRISKET 1 1/4 lbs. per coupon 2 1/4 lb. Piece 2 Coupons 5 lb. Piece 4 Coupons More Quality per Coupon at Dominion Stores</p>

Tear out FOR FUTURE REFERENCE
DOMINION STORES LIMITED

Globe and Mail, May 27, 1943

To help consumers, the Dominion chain published a special guide indicating the various meat cuts and their corresponding coupon values.

LOBLAW'S SIMPLIFY MEAT RATIONING









- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| GROUP A...
SLICED SIDE BACON
SLICED BACK BACON
COOKED HAM | GROUP B...
CUBE STEAKS
VEAL CUTLETS
PORK TENDERLOIN
ROUND STEAK
BUTT CHOPS | GROUP C...
PORK CHOPS
CENTER CUT CHOPS
LAMB CHOPS
CENTER CUT
VEAL CHOPS
PORTERHOUSE
and WING STEAK | GROUP D...
BLADE ROAST
BRISKET
BEEF & PORK SAUSAGE
PORK SAUSAGE
LEGS OF LAMB |
|---|--|--|--|

Refer to Government Chart for Complete List of Rationed and Unrationed Meats.

Loblaws' efficiency simplifies meat rationing and will make your purchasing plans easier. Each Loblaws Market will have a Meat Display case as illustrated above, which serves as a meat guide and explains the various coupon values and variety in the RATIONED GROUPS.

Each divided section of the Meat Display case represents one of the Government's established groups, such as GROUP "A," GROUP "B," etc. In addition there will also be a display of NON-RATIONED MEATS which will prove a valuable help in planning wartime meals.

Shop with Confidence at Loblaws

Commercial Quality PRIME BEEF		Commercial Quality PRIME BEEF	
 PRIME RIB ROAST 31¢ 1 lb. Per COUPON	NON-RATIONED MEATS DUTCH SALAMI - lb. 37¢ LIVER & CHEESE LOAF - lb. 35¢ MAC. & CHEESE LOAF - lb. 28¢ DUTCH STYLE LOAF - lb. 26¢ BRUNSWICK SAUSAGE lb. 35¢	 SIRLOIN Steak or Roast 38¢ 1 lb. Per COUPON	 PLATE BRISKET 25¢ 1 lb. Per COUPON
 PORTERHOUSE ROAST 39¢ 1 lb. Per COUPON	 WING ROAST 39¢ 1 lb. Per COUPON	 SHORT RIBS 19¢ 1 1/2 lb. Per COUPON	

It's improved

LOBLAW'S

BREAD

FRESH BUN FLAVOUR
 GOLDEN BROWN THIN CRUST
 CREAMY FLAKY TEXTURE

2 for 15

24 OZ. LOAF

NOW AT ITS BEST—ARRIVING FRESH DAILY

ONTARIO GROWN **ASPARAGUS**

NEW CROP LOUISIANA **GREEN BEANS** lb. 23¢

CALIFORNIA AND FLORIDA **VALENCIA ORANGES AND FLORIDA SEEDLESS GRAPEFRUIT**

A Good Selection to Choose From in Every Store

THE FAMOUS WINTER GARDEN BREAD—CALIFORNIA

New Bunch CARROTS 2 19¢

SELECTED IMPORTED **TOMATOES** lb. 25¢

CALIFORNIA JUICY **LEMONS** doz. 39¢

A Limited Quantity of Ordinary Quality..... lb. 19¢

LARGE BBS 248

ARRIVING FRESH DAILY

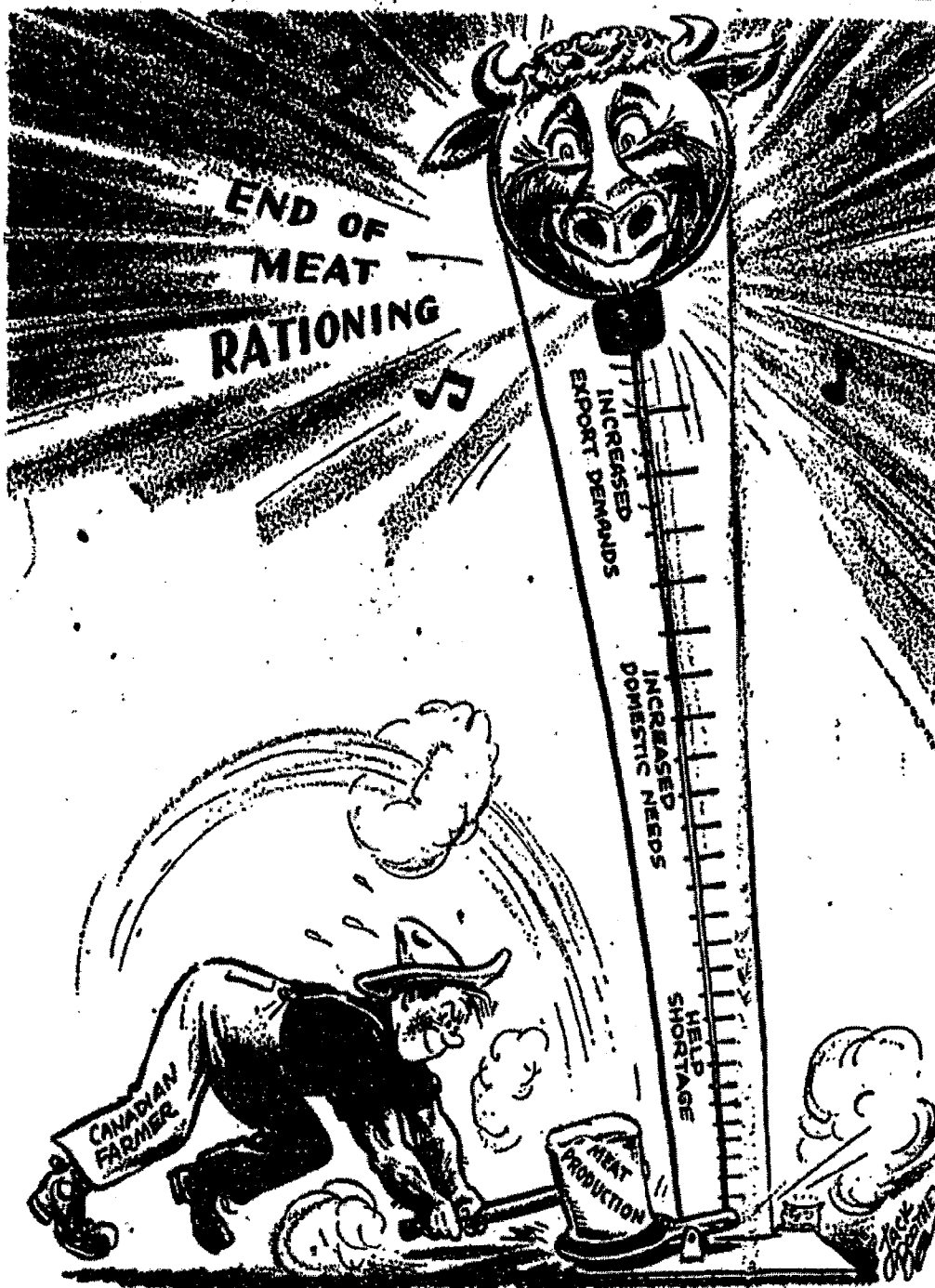
- OUTDOOR RICHARD
- LEAF LETTUCE
- GREEN ONION
- BOTHWICK TOMATOES
- ROTHOURE CUCUMBERS

GREEN CABBAGE NEW CROP MISSISSIPPI lb. 13¢

Globe and Mail, May 28, 1943

Dominion's competitor Loblaws' also endeavored to make meat buying in the age of rationing as easy as possible.

The Strong Man of Canada



Globe and Mail, March 2, 1944

The suspension of meat rationing in March, 1944 pleased many Canadians, and this editorial cartoon from the *Globe and Mail* credits farmers for the move.

Your **DOMINION** Store

RATIONING SUSPENDED

**BUY ALL
YOU WANT**



SIRLOIN
STEAK or ROAST
lb. **39¢**

NO COUPONS — BUY YOUR FAVOURITE STEAKS — ROASTS — CUTS



- PRIME COMMERCIAL BEEF •
- PRIME RIB ROAST ^{FREE} lb. **29¢**
- TENDER ROUND STEAK - lb. **35¢**
- RUMP ROAST ^{ROAST OR} - lb. **35¢**
- SHORT RIB ROAST - - lb. **29¢**



GROCERY FEATURES

LEAN MEAT BLADE Roast lb. **27¢** ^{MEATLESS} SHOULDER Roast lb. **28¢**

LENTEN SUGGESTIONS

Globe and Mail, March 3, 1944

Loblaws
FOR **MEAT**
PERFECTION

Special Boneless Shoulder ROAST lb. **28¢**

Special SHORT RIB ROAST ^{GROSS OR} lb. **29¢**

MEATY BLADE Roast lb. **27¢**

PRIME RIB ROAST lb. **30¢**

Round Steak or Roast lb. **36¢**

SIRLOIN Steak or Roast lb. **39¢**

PORTERHOUSE STEAK or ROAST lb. **42¢**

MEINE SAUER ^{10¢} **10¢** **SMOKED WIENERS** ^{27¢} **27¢** **SPICED PORK LOAF** ^{21¢} **21¢**

GRADE "A" BOILING FOWL lb. **35¢**

NOTE !

MEAT RATIONING
Has Been Temporarily
Discontinued

It is now possible to purchase your full family requirements at Loblaws.

WINTER-FED LAMB FRONTS lb. **24¢**

LAMB RACKS or SHOULDERS ^{NECK OR} lb. **29¢**

ALL BEEF ITEMS ARE COMMERCIAL QUALITY

Globe and Mail, March 3, 1944

LOBLAWS

FOR **Pork**
THAT YOU WILL ENJOY!

COMMERCIAL QUALITY BEEF

"SPECIAL" - MEATY **BLADE Roast** lb. **27c**
 "SPECIAL" - CROSS ON **SHORT RIB Roast** - lb. **29c**
 "SPECIAL" - IDEAL POT ROAST **Boneless SHOULDER** lb. **28c**
 "SPECIAL" - 3-LITTLE PIG **Pork Sausage** - lb. **29c**
Pork Sausage Meat lb. **29c**
IS TURNING SMALL LINK
Country Sausage 2 lb. **45c**

"Special" FRESH LEAN PORK LOIN ROASTS END CUTS lb. **34c**
 CENTER CUTS or CHOPS lb. 39c
BUTT PORK ROAST - lb. **33c**
 "SPECIAL" - FRESH LEAN - HOCK OFF **PORK SHOULDERS** - lb. **26c**
 SWIFT'S TASTY **Brunswick LIVER SAUSAGE** - lb. **35c**

Globe and Mail, March 24, 1944

THIS WEEK TEMPTING, TASTY, DOMINION ROASTS OF

PORK

SPECIAL DOMINION PORK LOIN ROASTS **33c** lb.
 Centre Cuts & Chops lb. 37c

GROCERY FEATURES

SPECIAL AMES SHREDDED WHEAT 2 7/8 lbs.	17c
SPECIAL COFFEE	
WARRANTY SAUCE 10 7/8 Oz. Jar	25c
SPECIAL MALTED SWISS STUFFED OLIVES 5 1/2 Oz. Jar	25c
SWISS STUFFED OLIVES 5 1/2 Oz. Jar	30c
PURE ORANGE MARMALADE 7 1/2 Oz. Jar	31c

PRIME COMMERCIAL BEEF

BLADE ROAST - MEATY	27c
SHORT RIB ROAST	29c
SHOULDER Roast Boneless	28c
RUMP ROAST - MEATY	33c

Globe and Mail, March 24, 1944

With meat rationing suspended, grocers were quick to tempt consumers with the promise of appetizing cuts of all kinds.

I'M GLAD WE CAN STILL GET LIPTON'S IN THESE DAYS OF RATIONING!

YES, AND IT'S THE SAME PRICE WHEREVER YOU SHOP

Also LIPTON'S TEA GOES FARTHER... Makes every coupon more valuable and every cup more satisfying

Globe and Mail, November 12, 1943

ED SMITH'S

FROM THE HEART OF THE NORTHWESTERN

JAM

NOW THERE'S A REAL TREAT TO GET WITH MY D COUPONS

Globe and Mail, November 26, 1943

BOVRIL
HELPS YOUR
MEAT RATION!

YOU can help your meat ration with the concentrated beefy goodness of BOVRIL.
A little BOVRIL much improves soups, gravies, stews, hot-pot, shepherd's pie, left-overs, etc.
BOVRIL adds rich meaty flavour to meatless dishes like spaghetti and macaroni: In fact, you can use less meat if you add a little BOVRIL before or during cooking. (Mix with a little hot water and stir in).
BOTTLED BOVRIL, spread thinly, makes a deliciously beefy sandwich spread, with or without cream cheese or butter: delightful on hot toast. Try it!

IT'S GOOD MUMMY!

BOVRIL
"MEETS" THE RATION!

Globe and Mail, November 10, 1943

Rationing gave advertisers a new theme with which to sell products.

Joe Says



Be a Good Citizen — Avoid the "Black Market"

A "Black Market" in anything, from an automobile tire to a jar of marmalade, is bad medicine for a country. It may cause inflation and inflation would send prices skyrocketing so high that the average one of us would be left holding the bag —with nothing in it.

No, sir! Let's all be good citizens and stick to our ration books. Ration books are the greatest preventive we have against inflation and all the distress that would follow. By the way, they have inflation in China—eggs are one dollar each.



Contributed by

Dow
BREWERY — MONTREAL

LET'S ALL DO MORE TO WIN THE WAR

Globe and Mail, June 26, 1944

With a shady black marketer lurking in the background, "Joe" extols the virtues of citizenship and fairness in wartime. Dow's hometown of Montreal had perhaps the most extensive black market in Canada.

CANADA'S WAY OF LIFE...



Over *Three Million*
Canadians Live on Farms!

THE Canadian farmer has become the
World's largest exporter of foodstuffs.

He is a landowner, a free man, free as the air
he breathes. His industry and initiative remain
invaluable to Canada's war effort, and to
Canada's progress after
the war.

Imperial Bank of Can-
ada likes to do business
with farmers—solid men,
independent, worthy of
trust. They are the "key"
men in Canada's way of
life.

SERVICE TO FARMERS

Farm Loans
Savings Accounts
Banking by Mail
Victory Bonds
Chequing Accounts
Safety Deposit Boxes
Safekeeping
Money Orders
Farm Sale Notes

**IMPERIAL BANK
OF CANADA**

"The Bank For You."

Globe and Mail, July 3, 1944

Farmers had come through for the Allied cause, but the postwar years would see far fewer people following "Canada's Way of life" as urbanization and industrialization continued apace.

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William Lyon Mackenzie King (MG26 J4)

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Farmers' Advocate
Farmer's Magazine
Financial Post
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Hamilton Review
Hamilton Spectator
High River Times
Maclean's
Marketing
Monthly Review of the Bank of Nova Scotia
Montreal Gazette
Nanton News
New York Times
Olds Gazette
Ottawa Citizen
Ottawa Journal
Quarterly Review of Commerce
Red Deer Advocate
Royal Bank of Canada Monthly Letter
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