

Outstanding Nutritionist Addresses Ottawa Nurses

Sir John Boyd Orr Speaks on What to Eat to be Healthy Under the Auspices of the Canadian Medical Association; Gives Views on Nutrition, Agriculture and Other Problems

Ottawa, April 18—Sir John Boyd Orr, outstanding Scottish expert on nutrition, urged democracies all over the world—the British Empire, the United States, and the Scandinavian countries—to unite in a policy of food plenty as the only sure foundation for permanent peace.

Sir John spoke under the auspices of the Canadian Medical Association to the annual convention of the Victorian Order of Nurses, before a distinguished audience which included Hon. C. G. Power, minister of National Health and Pensions, members of parliament, senators, and members of the National Research Council.

He said the widespread and growing interest in nutrition was due to recent remarkable scientific discoveries which had revolutionized our ideas on the influence of food on health. It had been found that a number of diseases which are prevalent in all countries are due to deficiencies of vitamins or mineral salts in the diet.

If we would insure that every person in any country, especially the mothers and children, enjoyed a diet fully adequate for health, the next generation would be free from a great deal of the ill-health which afflicts the present generation and would enjoy a much higher standard of health, with the enjoyment of life which health brings.

To attain the new standard of health we need a new standard of diet which will provide a sufficient amount of all the food substances which the body needs to attain its full inherited capacity for health and physical fitness. Such a diet consists very largely of the "protective foods", such as milk, butter, cheese, eggs, fruit and vegetables.

In the United Kingdom, due partly to the spread of the new knowledge of nutrition—partly to the rise in the standard of living which enables more people to purchase a better diet, and largely to the excellent social and public health work which supplies protective foods free or at reduced rates to necessitous families, there has been a great improvement in the diet of the United Kingdom in the last twenty years. The consumption of protective foods excepting milk has increased by about fifty per cent. Accompanying the improved diet has been a remarkable improvement in health. The worst forms of malnutrition, such as bad rickets and scurvy in infants have almost disappeared. Compared with the pre-war period the infant mortality rate has been reduced from about 100 to 57. Tuberculosis has been reduced by about a half. Children leaving school today are about 2 inches taller than their parents at the same age, and the expectation of life has been increased by as much as seven years. This shows how easily life can be saved and health improved.

But even though there has been such a great advance, the diet of the poorer half of the population was still not up to the standard required for perfect health, and there is still a good deal of ill-health and poor physique due to faulty diet.

The position in other countries is no better. A recent survey in the United States has shown that nearly the same proportion of families is subsisting on a diet not good enough for health. A recent survey done in Toronto seems to indicate that a similar state of affairs exists even in Canada, where there is

such a wealth of foodstuffs. Faulty diet is due partly to ignorance and partly to poverty. Strenuous efforts are being made to spread the new knowledge of nutrition so that housewives may spend the money available for food to better advantage.

The other obstacle to better national health is poverty, and that is more difficult to get over.

If any nation is going to have the whole population, including the poorest fed on an adequate diet, the national supply of protective foods must be increased, and the retail price must be brought within the purchasing power of all classes, including the poorest.

But the farmer cannot afford to sell foodstuffs at a lower price. Agriculture in the United Kingdom—and the same is true to some extent in all countries—has been living off its capital in past years, and the farmer must have a bigger price if the additional foodstuffs we need were to be produced.

This brings us to the crux of the problem of national health and physical fitness. We need the money to bridge the gulf between what the farmer needs and what the poor can pay. The finding of the money is the job of the economists and the financial experts. Nobody now believes that the money cannot be found.

If the money were found and a national food policy were adopted to call forth all the additional protective foods we need and to get these foodstuffs consumed, there would be a great improvement in national health and physique, and our agricultural problem of finding markets would disappear.

A healthy, vigorous race and a prosperous agriculture are the only sure foundations of national greatness and national prosperity.

Sir John said that he had advocated such a policy in his own country, and believed that such a policy would suit the whole British Empire. If the United Kingdom set about producing all the protective foodstuffs it needed, they would have very little land available to grow wheat or to produce sugar, which could both be grown cheaper in other parts of the Empire.

If all the Dominions set about bringing their own national dietaries up to the level needed for health, they would consume a great deal of the protective foods for which they are now seeking an external market, and the United Kingdom would be able to absorb all that surplus, because it could not—at least for many years—produce anything like the amount of foodstuffs needed, and it would have to increase its imports of wheat not only to make good the reduction in wheat acreage in the United Kingdom but to feed to

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animals and transform into milk, eggs and bacon.

We need an Ottawa conference to consider ways and means of producing all the foodstuffs which the 500 million inhabitants of the British Empire need, and of devising food policies to enable the foodstuffs to be distributed and consumed. Such an imperial policy would bring prosperity to agriculture and this prosperity would overflow into industry and commerce, with increased inter-imperial trade.

The United States and the democratic countries in Europe are faced with the same problem. It would be a great day for the world if the British Empire and these other great nations could combine in a new policy in which the interest of trade and the promotion of human welfare would be reconciled.

The 19th century economic system is

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breaking down under a burden of wealth which it cannot get distributed and used. Nations have adopted shortsighted economic measures of national self-sufficiency involving restrictions on production and trade. These measures make for the permanence of poverty and discontent in a world of plenty.

That road leads to disaster. It is a race, essential of life. A new policy along these lines would be a new gospel to the poor and a new hope to agriculture and trade. We might well give a lead to a distracted and fear-ridden world, and other democratic guiding it towards the new age of plenty, beginning with food, the first condition of world peace.

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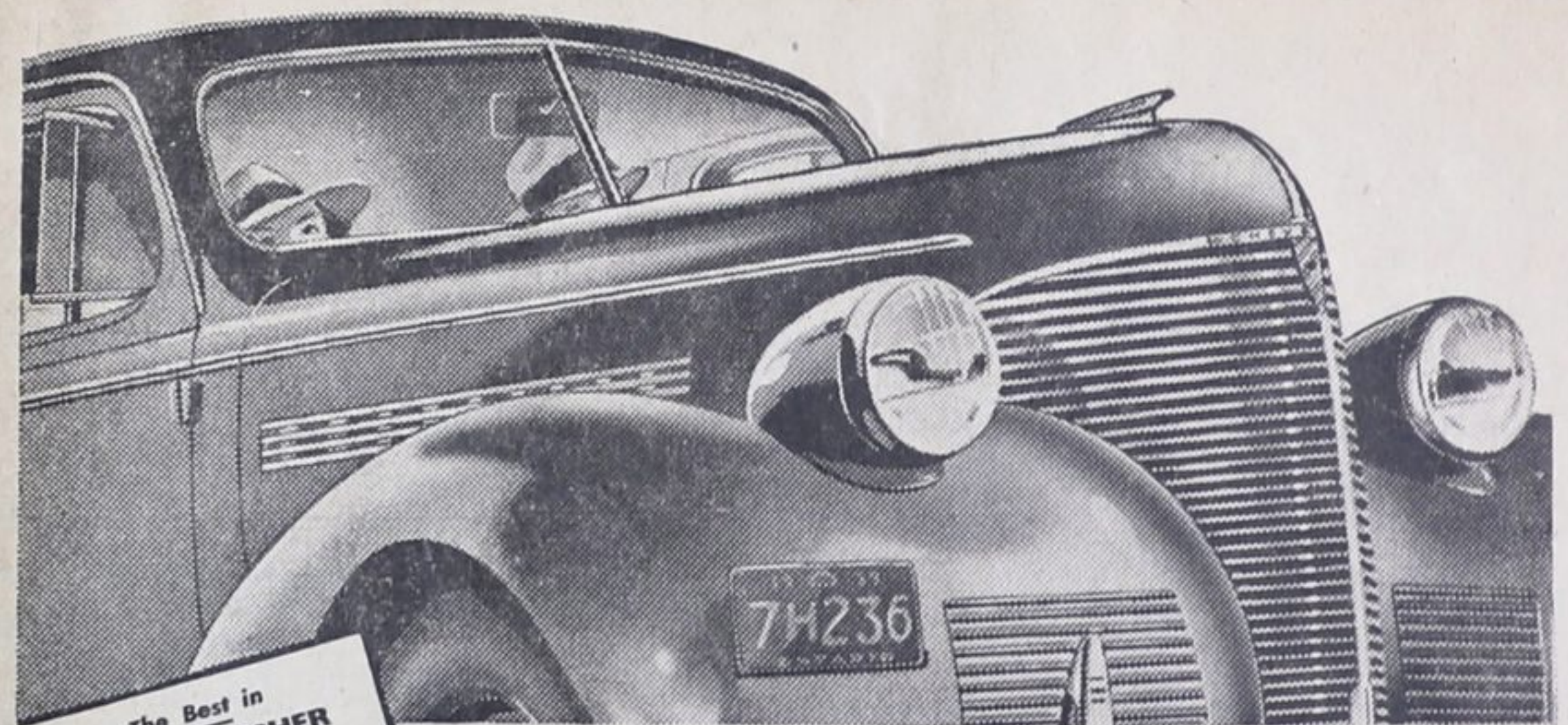
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