

Answering Questions Often Asked About Britain

This is the 15th of a series of 15 articles on conditions in Great Britain in wartime, written exclusively for the weekly newspapers of Canada by Hugh Tompkins, of The Progress News-Record.

Having completed the first dozen stories in this series, perhaps I should take time this week to answer the questions most often asked me since I came back to Canada. I shall not attempt to answer them all, of course, but only four of those which seem the most important, and which are most frequently asked.

What Changes in the War-Making in Great Britain?

This was my first visit to England and therefore I cannot answer from my own experience, but among my fellow travellers were several who had been born in the British Isles, or had visited them on several occasions. During my stay in England, I met people of all classes. My hosts included titled persons, various degrees of businessmen and rank-and-file workers. I travelled by air and by rail, with people of all classes. I wandered away from the group to talk to people who were working in their gardens, to the men and women running machinery in the factories. I met many former Canadians now living in England.

It seems to be unanimously agreed that the changes in Britain have already been great; that more are still to come, and that things can never be the same again as they were before the war began.

A great levelling process is taking place. Money is of little use if it cannot buy luxuries. Rationing applies to all. No matter how many suits of clothes a man had before the war, he can buy only the same number now as the humblest laborer. True, the quality will be better, but even that distinction tends to disappear.

During more than three weeks in London, I saw only two young men dressed in formal evening clothes, not counting the waiters in the hotel. These two were in an underground station and they were drunk. They were pointed out to be as a bad example by a constable. Yet in the days before the war, a Canadian cabinet minister was refused admission to the dining room in the hotel where I stayed because he was not in evening clothes.

An incident happened during my stay in Britain that shows the Germans have no idea what a change they have wrought in England. One night, they dropped a spy by parachute. Evidently, he expected to move in society. He was dressed in tails and his outfit was complete even to white spats. The outfit marked him at once, and he had the further misfortune to drop in a mud puddle and spill his spats. He was picked up before he had time to hide the small wireless transmitter he carried. His clothes cost him his life!

Even their pleasure travel in automobiles was limited to the distance one could go on three gallons a month. Since then, it has been prohibited. While I was in England, the distinction between first and third classes for railway travel was abolished and there is now only one class. Rich and poor suffered alike in the bombing. That perhaps, did more to break down distinctions than anything else. Everyone physically able to do so must take a turn at fire-watching.

It is said that income and other taxes amounted almost to conscription of wealth. I cannot say whether that is true, but it is obvious that wealth can no longer obtain many luxuries, and a great levelling process has been taking place. And I did not hear any complaints about it.

Is Rationing of Food and Clothing Fair to All?

This question can be answered without hesitation. I do not see how rationing restrictions could be more fairly applied. There are a few loopholes, but these are not important. An honest effort is made to see that everyone gets equal privileges. Food allowances of all rationed staple foods are alike, for rich and poor. No amount of influence can get any more. The British people are obviously not starving, but I do not think they really get enough to eat. At least, a Canadian feels the sudden change in diet.

Take butter, for instance. No matter where one eats, the allowance is the same, two ounces a week. That allows a slice of butter for each meal and still not butter half a roll. On Sunday morning, I showed the family the butter allowance for one meal. I used six of them, or two days' ration, on one slice of hot toast.

It is hard to find anything for breakfast in Britain. I never ate an egg while I was there. The ration is two eggs a month per person in the London district. In fact, I saw only one person eating an egg in almost a month. There are no packaged cereals. They came from Canada and are too bulky to ship. Oatmeal could be obtained occasionally when one could get milk with it. The

sugar ration is one-third the new Canadian ration. Fried tomatoes seemed to be the staple breakfast food last fall, sometimes with one slice of fat bacon.

Meat is severely rationed. The allowance is limited by the price paid, one shilling (ten cents) a week per person. That would mean a roast on Sunday and shepherd's pie once or twice on following days. There are two exceptions. Game and fowl are not rationed. At the hotels one ate unrationed meat venison, rabbit pie, grouse, chicken, guinea fowl or such things as tripe, sweetbreads and heart-chose. English sausages are amazing things. They look like sausages but taste like nothing on earth. I tried them twice, the second time to see if they could possibly be as bad as I thought they were the first time. There was no improvement.

Bread and vegetables were not rationed. With so many growing their own vegetables last year, and with a favorable season, there was no scarcity of vegetables. I saw oranges for sale only. They were for children only. Stores were lined up to buy food, although there were line-ups in the early mornings where cigarettes were sold, three to a customer.

What to Send in Parcels of Food to Britain

What is sent to Canadian soldiers in Britain is largely a matter of individual preference. The weight allowance is liberal and there are few restrictions. An officer at Canadian Army Headquarters in London suggests butter, sugar, marmalade, fruit juice (all in cans), razor blades, garters and braces. Another suggests candy, particularly chocolate. I asked many soldiers what they would like and got few other suggestions. They seemed to be well supplied with cigarettes, though there were many complaints about cigarettes going astray. I imagine that it is not so much what is in parcels for soldiers that counts, so much as the fact that they are sent regularly. They like to know that the people back home have not forgotten them.

Parcels for civilians in Britain must be chosen carefully. The weight limit is five pounds, including the wrapping and package. There are some restrictions about the contents of packages which may be sent and the contents. If the parcel does not comply with the restrictions, it will not be delivered. The person to whom it is consigned will be notified, but the contents will be turned over to some organization. That is worse than not sending a parcel at all.

Civilians in Britain appreciate the parcels sent them even more than the boys in the Armed Services. They are more in need of the extra food. A pound of butter received from Canada, for instance, doubles the ration for one person for two months. There is a definite rule that no person in Britain may write to ask that food be sent, but you can be sure it will be welcomed.

I asked many civilians what they would like most, if parcels were sent them from Canada. Invariably butter headed the list. It can be bought in cans. I heard of one old lady who received a two-pound tin of butter from Canada. She called the neighbor in to see it. The local paper bought the story and printed it. Two months later, she still had her butter unopened, a treasure beyond price.

Not more than two pounds of any one substance may be sent in a five-pound parcel. Do not send clothing. The person who receives it will be forced to give up clothing coupons, and possibly have to pay duty as well. Don't send cigarettes to civilians either, since the duty is high. Ten is not so scarce as generally supposed. Foods generally mentioned, besides butter, are: canned meats, particularly ham products, fruit concentrates in tins, cheese, peanut butter, vitamin B1 tablets.

If you are sending to a lady, put in a few hairpins, bobby pins or safety pins. They are unbelievably scarce in Britain. And it is said that younger ladies might like a lip-stick. Are Many Canadian Soldiers Marrying British Girls? Perhaps this is a subject that I should not discuss. It seems to be a ticklish one. One of the other editors on the trip wrote about it in a woman's magazine, and got a great deal of hot letter from some Toronto woman who says I should be writing for N.Y. I saw a quite rude in her remarks, not only about me, but also about Canadian girls.

Yet the subject is one of interest and I don't see why it should be kept secret. Canada has sent some two hundred thousand of her young men over the ocean. Every one that marries in Britain will not be free to marry a Canadian girl if he returns. And allowances and pensions to his wives overseas must amount to a considerable item in time.

Many Canadian soldiers are marrying English girls. Some are marrying Scottish girls. The commanding officer of one Ontario Battalion told me that over one hundred of his boys had married since reaching England.

That is a higher percentage than would have married in that time if they had stayed in Canada.

This officer had no objection. The soldiers could not marry without his permission. He insisted on interviewing the prospective brides before he gave it. He said they were invariably fine types of girls, who would be a credit to Canada after the war. If he did not think so, he withheld permission to marry.

I do not think the proportion of Air Force men getting married overseas is large.

The reason seems obvious. The Air Force is continually in action. There is nothing monotonous about life in the bomber or fighter squadrons. In the Army, some of them have been in Southern England for more than two years, training for a fight which has never come.

Some of them are billeted in private homes and have become practically "one of the family." Others get acquainted with girls at dances and entertainments put on for the troops.

For the Canadian girl who has sent her soldier overseas, there seems to be but one precaution to take, send a continuous stream of letters, mixed occasionally with boxes or photographs. And letters are more important than boxes.

Subsidy To Be Paid On Commercial Fertilizers

Announcement was recently made by the Federal Government that a subsidy will be paid on commercial fertilizers used in the production of pasture and hay crops; spring cereal crops; field corn and root crops such as mangels and turnips. The amount of this subsidy will vary with the analysis of the fertilizer; for example, on a mixed fertilizer like 0-12-6 the bonus or subsidy is \$3.60 per ton while on 2-12-6 it is \$4.40 per ton and on a ton of 2-12-10 it is \$5.20. This subsidy is calculated on the basis of 40 cents per unit of nitrogen, 20 cents per unit of available phosphoric acid and 20 cents for each unit of potash.

In view of the fact that the lack of hay and pasture would appear to present a real problem on many Halton farms and in view of the fact that our supply of Western feed grain is becoming limited and with the likelihood of even less of these Western supplies being available next winter, it would seem as if Ontario farmers will have to be more dependent on home grown supplies and consequently in the opinion of officials of the Halton Agricultural War Service Committee commercial fertilizers would appear, under normal conditions, to have real possibilities of stepping up the productivity of hay and pastures and also of cereal crops. The response from commercial fertilizers is naturally much greater on soils high in organic matter. Consequently if commercial fertilizer can be used to supplement top dressings of barnyard manure more economical and positive results can be expected. If meadows and pastures are to be top dressed with commercial fertilizer this Spring, the job should be done after the frost is out and before the land dries up for Spring seeding. Usually there is a week or so in early April when the warm spring rains occur before seeding. That is the time to sow fertilizer on hay and pasture lands.

If the meadow or pasture consists of a mixture of clovers and grasses then a mixed fertilizer such as 7-12-6 or 3-10-5 may be applied at ground level at least 200 lbs. per acre. Another application which is excellent would be 60 to 70 lbs. per acre of 11-18. Ammo Phos and 25 lbs. of 60% Muriate of Potash. This latter application can be applied with a cyclone seeder. If manure for top dressing is available then the addition of 20 or 40 lbs. per load of superphosphate is excellent. In general it should be pointed out that applications of commercial fertilizers give best results when applied in the Fall prior to the month of October.

Pasture and hay are, according to many of our most successful farmers, stated to be the most valuable crops produced in mixed farming districts. Unfortunately, too often, they are the most neglected. Certainly good pasture and plentiful supplies of hay provide the most economical sources of food production of milk.

According to our information a new handy booklet entitled "Recommendations for Soil Management and Use of Fertilizers" is now available and can be secured upon request from the Agricultural Office in Milton. In view of the crisis faced by the Empire, maximum production with the labor and tools available must be our objective. By contributing to the war effort with plentiful supplies of food the individual farmer is doing his bit and at the same time helping himself in a monetary sense.

SCOUTS FOR CANADA LONDON, (CP)—Four British Boy Scouts, at the special invitation of the Canadian Boy Scouts' Association, will tour Canada shortly to demonstrate the part scouts of Britain have played in Civil Defence.

WAR 25 Years Ago

President Wilson Called for Declaration of War at Historic Session of United States Congress April 5, 1917

BY H. H. GORDON Canadian Press Staff Writer "The world must be made safe for democracy." This famous phrase, at the time an inspiration, but blunted later by the actual course of events, was flung out 25 years ago by President Woodrow Wilson in calling upon the United States Congress for a declaration of war on Germany.

Two months earlier the United States had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany following the German government's decision to adopt a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. During the intervening period American anger was fanned by the torpedoing of United States merchantmen and disclosure of a German attempt to persuade Mexico to join the Central Powers.

President Wilson asked for the declaration of war at a special session of Congress on April 2, 1917. A formal declaration was signed by the President April 6 after a House vote of 373 to 50 and a Senate vote of 80 to 6.

Though the rupture with Germany was initiated by a Democratic president and passed by a congress in which the Democrats had a small majority, the President had behind him a nation welded into virtually a unified whole.

Wilson's Policy Through more than two years of war Wilson made every effort to maintain a neutral position. During this time his policy had caused annoyance in Allied countries where conditions in the United States were only partly understood. There were isolationists then as there were at the start of the Second World War and in addition considerable opposition was based on inherited distrust of European monarchies.

At the time the President decided on intervention in the war some of this opposition had been removed by the overthrow of Russian autocracy and its apparent replacement by a more democratic regime. There was also widespread sympathy with Britain and France and feeling was intense over German treatment of the people of Belgium and other countries.

President Wilson's address to Congress was one of a series of brilliant speeches made early in 1917 in which he set out the American position. He made it clear that the United States would not fight a war for conquest and would seek no indemnities for itself and no material compensation for sacrifices that might have to be made. "The world must be made safe for democracy" was the phrase he used to sum up American aspiration.

Battling through rain and snow, the Canadian Corps under command of Gen. Sir Julian Byng captured Vimy Ridge 25 years ago. Hailed as one of the outstanding achievements of the Canadians in the First World War, the taking of the strategic heights overlooking the Plain of Down on April 9, 1917 set off the big British offensive along the Scarpe and Ancre valleys.

The Canadians showed their mettle as at Ypres and the Somme. Plans for the battle had been prepared with meticulous care and the various objectives were carried with machine-like precision. The victory was a costly one, more than 11,000 men being posted as killed, wounded or missing out of nearly 100,000 taking part but the number killed was low compared with the list of wounded.

In the Battle of Arras, of which the operations at Vimy Ridge formed an important part, no fewer than 17 divisions were employed by Sir Douglas Haig, with 980 heavy guns, 1,890 field pieces and a few tanks. The four divisions making up the Canadian Corps, together with the 5th Imperial Division, were deployed over a front of 7,000 yards in the Vimy area.

For weeks artillery had blasted strong German defenses across the ridge and so well had the gunners done their work that within 40 minutes after the Canadians leaped from their positions at dawn on that Easter Monday the whole of the enemy first-line system had been stormed and captured.

Before the day ended the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions and the Imperial Division had completed the "push" of the Germans in their allotted areas. But the 4th Division, operating on the northern extremity of the ridge, met with serious opposition from the enemy concentrated on a huge mound, dubbed "The Purple."

From their entrenchments at this point the Germans poured a devastating machine-gun fire that held up the Canadians until April 12. The stronghold was captured after a heavy artillery bombardment followed by a sharp hand-to-hand struggle with the bayonet.

Congratulations were showered on the Canadians from all over the Empire and Allied countries. The late King George V in a message which was read to all ranks said Canada would be proud "that the taking of the coveted Vimy Ridge has fallen to the lot of her troops."



HELP THE MAN IN UNIFORM

You can help the man in uniform, merely by saving regularly. Because when you save you increase the flow of labour and material from civilian to war production.

And when you lend accumulated savings to the country in War Savings Certificates and war loans, you help Canada supply to our fighting men the arms and equipment they need. Seize this patriotic opportunity!

Pull your full weight! Start saving NOW!

To Save is Practical Patriotism

THE CHARTERED BANKS OF CANADA

A place for YOU in Canada's War Effort



Volunteer today!

Join the Farm Service Force and help Ontario farmers produce food for Victory. Be a Farm Cadet or a Farmerette and make a real contribution to Canada's War Effort this Summer. Hundreds of farmers have registered their need for help already, and more are registering every day. Last year more than 14,000 young men 15 and up and young women 16 and up, pitched in and lent a hand. Thousands more are needed this year. Get full particulars from your High School Principal, Y.W.C.A., Y.M.C.A., or write Ontario Farm Service Force, Parliament Bldgs., Toronto. Volunteer TODAY!

CREST: Farm Service Volunteers are entitled to wear this distinctive 3" Crest (right) supplied on application to the Ontario Farm Service Force.



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