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Margarine and the U.N.

by A. G. M. Bruyns
 We hear many heated arguments about margarine these days. Housewives want it because its prevalence on the market will lower the cost of living. But according to resolutions adopted by many organizations of farmers, milk, butter, cheese producers, and even by equity councils, the farmers and their advisers honestly believe that margarine, if sold freely, would ruin the dairy industry in Canada. They want the existing prohibition of this product to be continued.

In the U.S.A., margarine is not prohibited, but discriminated against. It can only be sold in its original virgin white, whereas butter is marketed in a beautiful artificial golden yellow. Thus, housewives were expected to use margarine for cooking purposes only. But now the ladies not to be outsmarted, circumvent their law quite legally, by accepting little envelopes of the colouring matter with every pound of margarine. They do this colouring in their own kitchens if they want to use it on their breakfast tables. This law, promoted by the "farin bloc", is one of the ingenious devices to "protect" agriculture at the cost of the consumers. Sunflower and soybean growing farmers in the U.S. are up in arms and complain bitterly about discrimination against one branch of agriculture for the benefit of another politically more powerful group of farmers.

There is, of course, no question about the truth of the consumers' contention that the free sale of margarine, at say 35 cents, would lower the cost of living with butter say at 70 cents a pound in Canada and \$1.00 in the U.S.A. The nutritional value of both products is practically the same. Formerly, butter was better than margarine but during the years quality and taste of the latter product has been improved so much that at present it takes experts to detect the difference. This cannot seriously be denied, not even by full page advertisements in the daily press.

The question we have to answer is therefore: "Is there sufficient weight in the farmer's belief that the dairy industry would be ruined by the free sale of margarine?"

Even before the war, nobody in Denmark would have claimed that the dairy industry there was ruined. On the contrary, it was more efficient in every way than that of any other country in the world, barring none. However according to official statistics, the Danes were the greatest per capita consumers of margarine of all nations. They had the free freedom to buy what they wanted, there where the buying was best. But their above average margarine consumption hurt the dairy industry? Nothing of the kind. It gave a lift to buttermaking. It did its part to lower the consumers' price level so that butter could be sold at a profit which is more than farmers of many "protected" nations can say. Danish agriculture, industry, transportation were able to hire labour at a lower money-wage than they could have done otherwise, could successfully compete with the whole world.

I wonder if farmers fully realize that they are consumers as well as producers. As a matter of fact they are, collectively as well as individually, more important as consumers of all non-luxury goods than any other group, 67% of the world's population being agricultural. Those who have arrogated unto themselves title to the appellation of "the masses" please take notice. Individually, the farmer has to take care of his household like everybody else. But in addition to this he has the upkeep of his land, buildings, horses and other livestock, orchard, implements, tractors and machinery, tools, fences, gates, wagons, harness, woodlot and what not. He likewise has to pay his hired help an adequate money wage, dependent on the prevailing consumers' price level. His taxes, insurance and other services are higher than average. The industrial worker has nothing but a pair of overalls, a dinner pail or a white collar apart from his family. Oh yes, we can divide the capital value of all factories by the num-

ber of industrial workers and call this the tool-value required per man. But even then, it can be seen that the average capital value per farmer is considerably higher than that of the non farmer.

A farmer may have a gross income of \$5,000, or even \$10,000, but if he wants to keep up and maintain his land and all enumerated items, he probably cannot spend more than \$3,000 or \$2,000 on his household. When consumers' prices are becoming excessive, he has willy-nilly to lay off men or to neglect this upkeep. To take margarine away from consumers is one of the reasons for the soil destroying agriculture, high cost nations are suffering from.

Labor unions are likewise tarred with this brush. They do not yet realize that their wages are not too low, but that what they have to buy is too high in price. Strikes for higher wages aggravate this condition. If labour knew this they would fight for a higher buying power of their wages. By doing so, they would not only benefit their own members, but 100 per cent of the world's population, all of them consumers. They would automatically help to improve land and forest and help to prevent all unemployment without any laws or labour codes. Now the labour union policy helps to draw fertility and humus out of the soil, destroys forests and drive rural people to the city. Trade or labour unions could be a boon to humanity instead of a destructive force.

Union labour and organized farmers can only work together as CONSUMERS which is the COMMON DENOMINATOR of all mankind. Under a consumers' economy all men would be brothers, all men would be members of one another instead of antagonists trying to get as much out of each other as they can.

Nations under a consumers economic system own each others' resources automatically. They don't need trade treaties. But when one nation lives under a producer's and another one under consumer's economy, they can never be members of one another, not even if both belong to the U.N.

If article one of the U.N. constitution reads: "only nations with a consumer's economy can be admitted as member," no one would have an axe to grind. Within a few years all nations would flock to it. They could not live without it. Such a U.N. would be the greatest moral force without security committee, international police forces or armed interference. Such a U.N. would automatically have the greatest prestige possible in the world. Now its practice is well known.

It appears to be a nice new party. Truly the ladies of the consumer's league have not only a bigger bear by the tail than they know, but they have the whole world by the tail. But ladies, don't forget: NO PRIVILEGES FOR ANYONE! Business, bonuses, trade restriction, tariffs are taboo!

Every onslaught on the consumer, in the long run, not only hurts the farmer more than the non-farmer, but in spite of the splendid work of agricultural science and all departments of agriculture it is inevitably an onslaught on soil and forest. Incidentally the mere existence of any aggressive nation immediately draws the fertility out of any country in the world. But an economic system with consumers as the articulate majority, is the natural antidote to the aggression of fascist communism.

Surely we need a change in our thinking. For instance, we are taught and are accepting it as gospel truth that the pernicious trick from the land is caused by the attraction of the bright lights. Except for some adventurous spirits this is not so. Ruralites are driven from the land. The reason for this deplorable phenomenon is that nature is limited to a certain maximum production on a given tract of land. Rural people have to quit the countryside when they have to pay more for what they need than the real value of farm products. In other words when the cost of living, the consumer's price level is too high, farm and forest become undermanned when consumer prices are higher than they should be. Every trade restriction, including the ban on margarine, makes it harder for the farmers to hire efficient help.

High "artificial" prices for farm products cause the whole price structure to rise with them. We can easily distinguish this nowadays. If Tom gets more, Dick and Harry will have to have more. If one pressure group wangles more than it is justly entitled too, all other pressure groups are ready to do the same. All of us must run faster and faster to keep up with ourselves like the Red Queen in the "Looking Glass." "We want parity prices" so say the farmers. "Everybody a cost of living bonus!" is the cry of the non farmers.

However, Parity Prices are Rarity. Prices can never be reached by increasing consumer's prices but only by lowering them. We don't

have a farm problem because the price of agricultural products is too low but because what farmers have to buy is too high in price.

Farmers of the world might get somewhere with their organizations if they did not spend their enormous energy, time and money trying to squeeze more money out of the consumers, which is principally out of themselves. The future of land and farmers, no matter in which country, lies in a consumers' economy where all producers' economy is death to land, forest, farmers and woodsmen. Can we ever expect economic harmony in the world with minimum money wages for labour, unlimited money profits for

(continued on page 9)

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