

Answering Questions Most Often Asked About Conditions in Britain

This is another of a series of 18 articles on conditions in Great Britain in wartime, written exclusively for the weekly newspapers of Canada by Hugh Templin, of the Fergus 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 some of those which seem the most important and which are most frequently asked.

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 they 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 about the size and thickness of a quarter for each meal. It will not butter half a roll. On Sunday morning, I snowed 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, tuppence, 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 offal are not rationed. At the hotels one ate unrationed meat—venison, rabbit pie, grouse, chicken, guinea fowl—or such things as tripe, sweetbreads and headcheese. 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 once. They were for children only. Stores were busy but I never saw a queue 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 number 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 neighbors in to see it. The local paper heard 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. Tea is not so scarce as generally supposed.

Foods generally mentioned, besides butter, were: 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.

"Thank God For Red Cross" Writes Ont. War Prisoner

"I'm ashamed to confess that at one time when the Red Cross asked for donations, I doubted the purpose of my 'two bits.' Now thousands of prisoners of war, including myself, say, 'Thank God for the Red Cross.'" So declares Sgt. Robert Alldrick, R.C.A.F. in a letter to a Grimsby friend who turned it over to the Ontario Division of the Red Cross. It was written by Alldrick from "Camp No. 43, Lager Bezeichnung, Deutschland."

"This letter," Alldrick wrote, "may give you some idea of how much we P.O.W.'s rely on the Red Cross Society. Without a doubt the most important benefit we receive are the weekly food parcels. They add food value otherwise lacking. In our camp we have tasted English, U.S. and Canadian food, and in spite of the tasty variety of the English, the Canadian parcels are by far the most prized."

"The International Red Cross in Geneva," the letter continues, "have sent large consignments of clothes for needy prisoners. Warm woollens and blankets have made a severe winter more bearable. This supply has been supplemented by the constantly arriving parcels from relatives. Another welcome comfort are the cigarettes. The Red Cross try to provide 50 cigarettes weekly to each man, but sometimes the program is upset. They also endeavor to supply literature of all classes for our needs. Although we had no books at all on our arrival, we now have many classics and light novels. We have not neglected our religion and use a number of prayer books and Bibles for our Sunday evening services conducted by a prisoner of war."

"Medical supplies have also been sent and are in charge of two R.A.M.C. orderlies in our camp. These things all depend on transportation, and, of course, the proper organization of the Red Cross. On such a large scale, it is impossible to expect favorable results in all cases and to keep track of all shipments, besides the usual receipt forms. A Red Cross representative periodically visits all camps checking conditions."

Robert Alldrick's letter is further proof that your relatives and friends who are prisoners of war are being cared for by the Canadian Red Cross. Parcels, loaded with nourishing food, are being packed in Toronto at the rate of 2,000 an hour. Women volunteer workers are giving most generously of their time to this work. They operate as efficiently and painstakingly as men on an assembly job. In fact, it is on the assembly line principle that prisoner of war parcels are packed, with an endless chain of rollers carrying the boxes from one group of women to another. Into each box goes: 1 lb. whole milk powder, 1 lb. butter, 4 oz. cheese, 2 oz. corned beef, 10 oz. pork luncheon meat, 8 oz. salmon, 4 oz. sardines or kippers, 8 oz. raisins, 8 oz. dried prunes, 8 oz. sugar, 1 lb. jam, 1 lb. pilot biscuits, 3 oz. eating chocolate, 1 oz. salt and pepper, 4 oz. tea, 2 oz. soap.

A postcard is enclosed in each of the boxes for the war prisoners. Over 165,000 of these cards have been returned by British prisoners of war, evidence that the parcels are reaching their proper destination.

The Red Cross needs money to keep these precious parcels of food flowing to British prisoners of war. Starting May 11th, an intensive drive for funds is to be launched. It is the first appeal to the public in nearly two years. The objective of the Ontario Division is \$4,500,000. Don't fail the Red Cross. It has never failed you.

Teston and District

Teston Y.P.U. met in the church basement on Wednesday evening. The program was in charge of the Citizenship Convener.

The Sunday School pupils will give special music on Sunday, May 10, as it is Mother's Day.

The program at Laskay Y.P.U. meeting on Thursday night was under the direction of the Culture Convener, Jimmy Marwood. The topic was given by Isobel Stephens.

Laskay Choir gave special music at the evening service of King Anniversary on May 3rd. Rev. A. Carmen Hie of Earlscourt United church was the speaker.

Mrs. E. Patton of Toronto visited Mr. and Mrs. J. Watson on Friday last.

Teston W.A. will meet on May 20 at the home of Mrs. P. McQuarrie.

The Dog

I've never known a dog to wag His tail in glee he did not feel, Nor quit his old-time friend to tag At some more influential heel; The yellowest cur I ever knew Was, to the boy who owned him, true.

I've never known a dog to show Halfway devotion to his friend, To seek a kinder man to know Or richer, but to the end The humblest dog I ever knew Was to the man who loved him true.

I've never known a dog to fake Affection for a present gain, A false display of love to make Some little favour to attain. I've never known a Prince or Spot That seemed to be what he was not.

But I have known a dog to fight With all his strength to shield a friend, And whether wrong or whether right,

To stick with him until the end. And I have known a dog to lick The hands of him that men would kick.

And I have known a dog to bear Starvation's pangs from day to day

With him who had been glad to share

His bread and meat along the way.

No dog, however mean or rude, Is guilty of ingratitude.

—Anonymous.

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9.16 a.m.
a 11.21 a.m.
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a 6.51 p.m.
b 9.26 p.m.
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