

Agriculture Carried on Bravely Under Difficulties in Wartime Great Britain

Farmers Told What to Raise. Essential Foods Come First. Quality of Farm Stock Improved. Farmers are Given Protection in Several Different Ways.

This is the 14th in a series of articles on conditions in wartime Britain and parts of Europe, written for the weekly newspapers of Canada by their own representative, Hugh Templin, of the Fergus News-Record.

No doubt many readers of Canadian weekly newspapers would like to know something of agriculture in wartime Britain, and how the farmer fares. Travelling with a group of editors of city papers, I had not as much opportunity to study farming conditions as I would have liked, but I was able to pick up a good deal of information in trips outside London.

The farmers in Britain fill just as important a place as the soldiers or the munition workers. One hears that said sometimes of Canadian farmers, but while there may be some doubt in Canada, there is none in England and Scotland.

Before the war, more than half the food consumed in Britain was imported, either from Denmark and other European countries, or from Canada and other places across the ocean. Not only that, but some of the fodder for animals was imported and a large part of the chicken and hog feed.

The people of Britain must eat. All imports from Europe have been cut off, except occasional shipments of oranges from Spain and Portugal. All imported food must be brought from Canada or farther away. That costs money and lives. Shipping space is precious. It cannot be used for animal foods or bulky articles such as packaged breakfast cereals. And every ton of extra food that can be produced in Britain is desperately needed. Cost has become a secondary consideration.

Farmers Told What to Raise

A few months before the war actually started, a bonus of some \$800 an acre was offered to farmers for every acre of new land brought under cultivation.

A Canadian, travelling in England for the first time, gets the idea that every acre of land is in use. There are no unsightly fence-corners. For that matter, there are few fences. Evidently wood and fencing materials are scarce and so hedges are used. Most fields are smaller than in this country and the farms all look neat and tidy. But evidently, there was much waste land, not only on large estates but on small farms. Swampy pieces have been drained; meadows that were in grass for hundreds of years have been turned over by the plow and actually millions of acres of extra land are cultivated.

What the farmer grows on his land in wartime is not left to his judgment. Every country has its War Agricultural Committee, and these, in turn, appoint committees in all districts. These committees are not made up of politicians, but of working farmers, land owners and farm workers. The agricultural colleges have been closed, and professors and other experts serve as full-time advisers on these committees.

Every farmer is interviewed every year or oftener. He is told what he must grow. The committee may even go so far as to give him a plan of his fields, telling him what to plant in each field.

That sounds drastic, and is drastic. Actually, in practice, the system is largely voluntary, because nearly all farmers are willing and anxious to cooperate as a patriotic duty. They pride themselves that they still live in a democratic country and because their own neighbors are on the committees, the plan works largely as a voluntary co-operation. But to an outsider it looks rather different. If a farmer will not co-operate, the committee has power to force him to do so. If he is entirely incompetent to produce more, he may be taken from his farm. A few rugged individuals have been gone to jail.

Essential Foods Come First

If the British farmer does not produce more, many people will go hungry and some may starve. Therefore, the committees concentrate on the production of those foods which will go farthest toward feeding as many as possible, and they try to cut out waste of all kinds. Wheat and potato production seems to have soared. Oats

are largely grown and alfalfa seemed to me to be a favourite crop. The growing season last year was excellent, with a damp summer and a long, sunny autumn. The second crop of hay and alfalfa was excellent.

I saw strange objects in many of the fields, which I took to be stacks of hay or grain wound around with what looked like tar paper and netting. I learned that they were temporary silos. Emphasis is being put on ensilage as the best method of producing the most cattle feed.

There are other makeshifts. A process has been discovered for making a pulpy feed out of straw on farms with sufficient water supply. Straw or chaff is cut up, soaked in caustic soda solution and then washed for a long time in running water. It takes the place of turnips. School children are paid to gather acorns to feed to the pigs.

Quality of Farm Stock Improved

Live stock is controlled by the committees as thoroughly as field crops. For instance, an attempt has been made to weed out inferior cows, lessening then number, while keeping up the milk supply. Sheep are also considered essential. Hogs have been reduced drastically in numbers. They used much imported feed. So did the chickens. Besides, it doesn't take so long to build up their numbers again. As a result, pork and eggs are very scarce. All owners of poultry flocks with more than 50 birds must sell their eggs to the Government. They get a certain wheat ration in return. Those with less than 50 hens can dispose of the eggs as they like. Many town and village families keep a few hens, or even a pig, feeding them the scraps.

Or a pig may be kept by a "club," with several neighbours providing scraps and having a share in the hog.

The number of tractors in use in England surprised me. Many of them were made in Canada. In a country where gasoline and fuel oil are decidedly scarce, I did not expect to see so many tractors, but this was another evidence of the desperate need of food. Private cars have almost disappeared from the road but tractors are kept going long hours.

There is one handicap which those farmers close to airports or along the main roads suffer, which might not be thought of by one who had not seen their countryside. These fields are full of traps for planes and sometimes for tanks as well. These are of several types, but all take up space and it must take time and trouble driving around them in seeding, tilling and harvesting operations.

Farmers observe the same blackout regulations as people in towns and cities. I am not sure that this is compulsory, but it is the wise thing to do. There are many instances in earlier months where hostile pilots have seen a gleam of light from a farm and have dropped a bomb on the chance that it might be a factory. There have also been some instances where farmers were attacked in daylight raids and their stock machine-gunned from the air.

Farmers Are Given Protection

In many ways, the British farmer is probably better off than ever before. His hired man is in the same position. Prices of all kinds of farm produce are set by the Government high enough to ensure a profit. And wages of farm laborers are also set. When I was in England in October, the time was approaching when the minimum farm wages would be set for 1942. The hired men were asking for 60 shillings weekly, and seemed likely to get about 55 shillings, or about \$13.00.

Farmers' sons, if not entirely exempted from conscription, enjoy the same standing as munition workers. Farm help is scarce, of course. During the harvest months last fall, many experienced farmers, now with the Canadian Army in England, were sent to farms near their camps to help out. They did a good job. One farmer reports that they were far better than any hired help he could get in his own country, working far longer hours ungrudgingly.

One of the Women's Auxiliary units in Britain is the Women's Land Army. It is not as popular as some of the



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COMMISSIONER S. T. WOOD
Head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Photo by Karsh, Ottawa.

other branches of the service, possibly because the khaki uniform does not look as well as the Air Force or the Women's Royal Naval Services. Their jobs may lack some of the glamour, too. Put there is no doubt about their usefulness. I suppose that in some cases they take the place of hired men, but those I saw seemed to be working in threshing gangs, going from farm to farm in groups.

There is some grumbling and complaining, of course. We heard one poultry farmer say that he was almost out of business, in spite of the scarcity of eggs. He could not get enough feed for his rather large flock. And he didn't think the distribution of eggs was well carried out, some of them going bad. In other cases, the county committees evidently guess wrong. As so often happens with farm produce, an article that is scarce one year will be overgrown the next. In the spring of 1941, onions were seldom to be had at any price. Last fall, there were too many onions and a danger that some would rot.

Vegetables were plentiful and they helped fill out many a meal in Britain in the past few months. Literally millions of persons were growing vegetables in their private gardens or "allotments." They had sacrificed many of their flowers, though nearly every garden still had roses, and the blooms in September and even in October must have cheered many English eyes, as they did those of a Canadian visitor.

About the time I left England, Prime Minister Churchill wrote to a mass meeting of farmers and farm

workers:

Never before have farmers and farm workers carried such a heavy responsibility as you do in this struggle. Never before have you responded to the country's call as you have done in the last two years. It is due in small measure to the efforts you have made, in spite of many difficulties, that we find ourselves today in a better position on the food front than at any previous time since the war started.



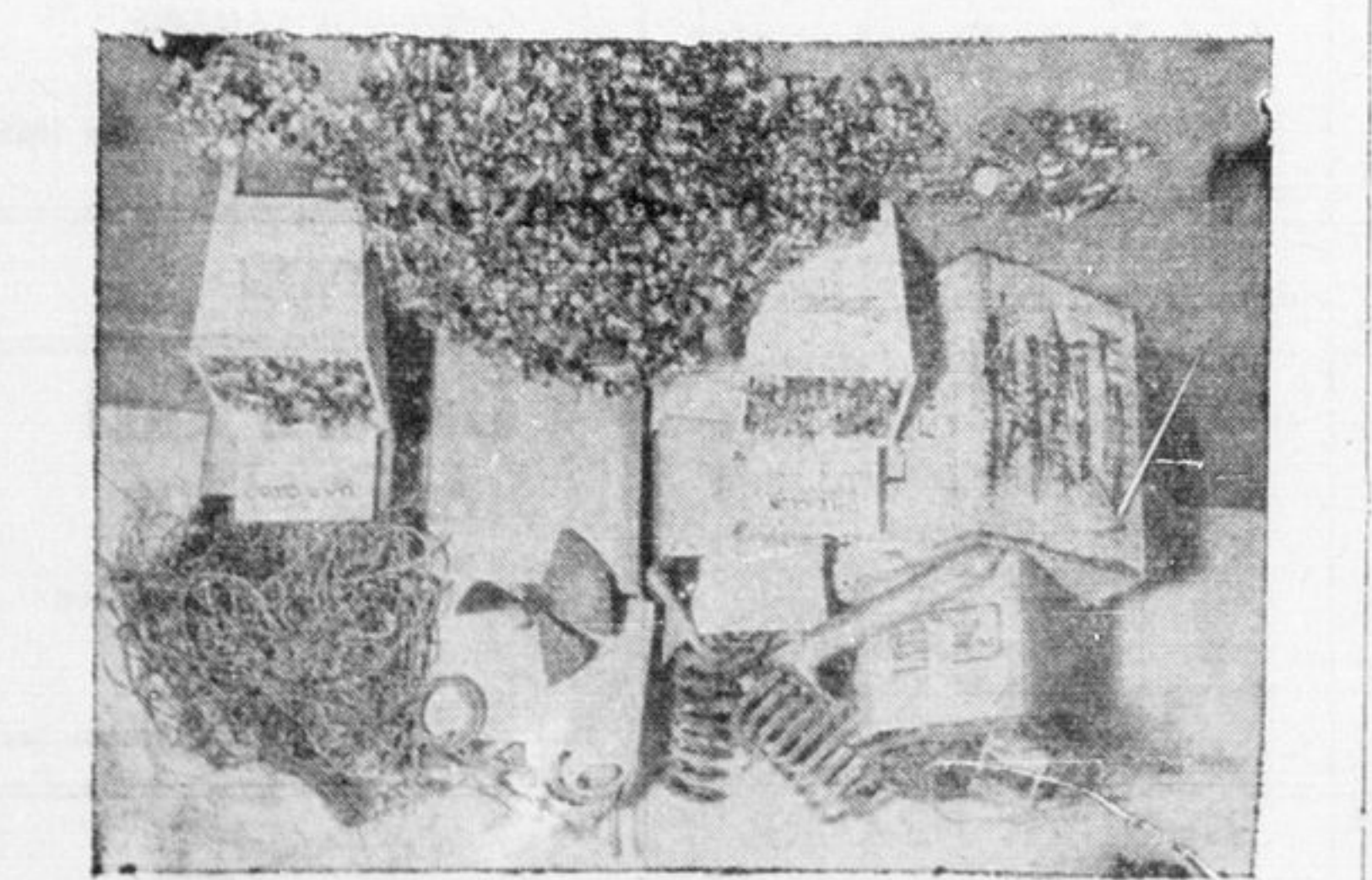
Rail Workers Tell Their Own Story Of Wartime Transport



Employees of the Canadian National Railways told the story of wartime transportation in Canada in the fifth of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Dominion-wide series, "Voices of Victory." Men and women whose first interest is to see that vital munitions, supplies and raw materials are moved quickly and safely to where they are needed described their part in the National System's big war job. They included a freight train conductor, a car tracer, a roundhouse mechanic, a car accountant, a dispatcher, a track foreman, a troop commissary car chef, and a woman mechanic from the National Railways Munitions plant. The broadcast was conducted by T. O. (Wik) Wiklund, Supervisor of Feature Broadcasts for C.B.C., and M. (Spook) Sinclair, who presented the participants with appropriate souvenirs.

Photos show (upper left) Albert Bargman receiving a big supply of house paint from (Wik) after he had told how the food is prepared and served in C.N.R. troop trains. Napoleon St. Pierre, foreman, (upper right) tells of his vital track maintenance job. Josephine Skull, (lower right) instructress of women machine operators at the war plant is interviewed by "Spook."

OLD BRASS ADDS "BRASS" TO HYDRO CLUB WAR FUND.

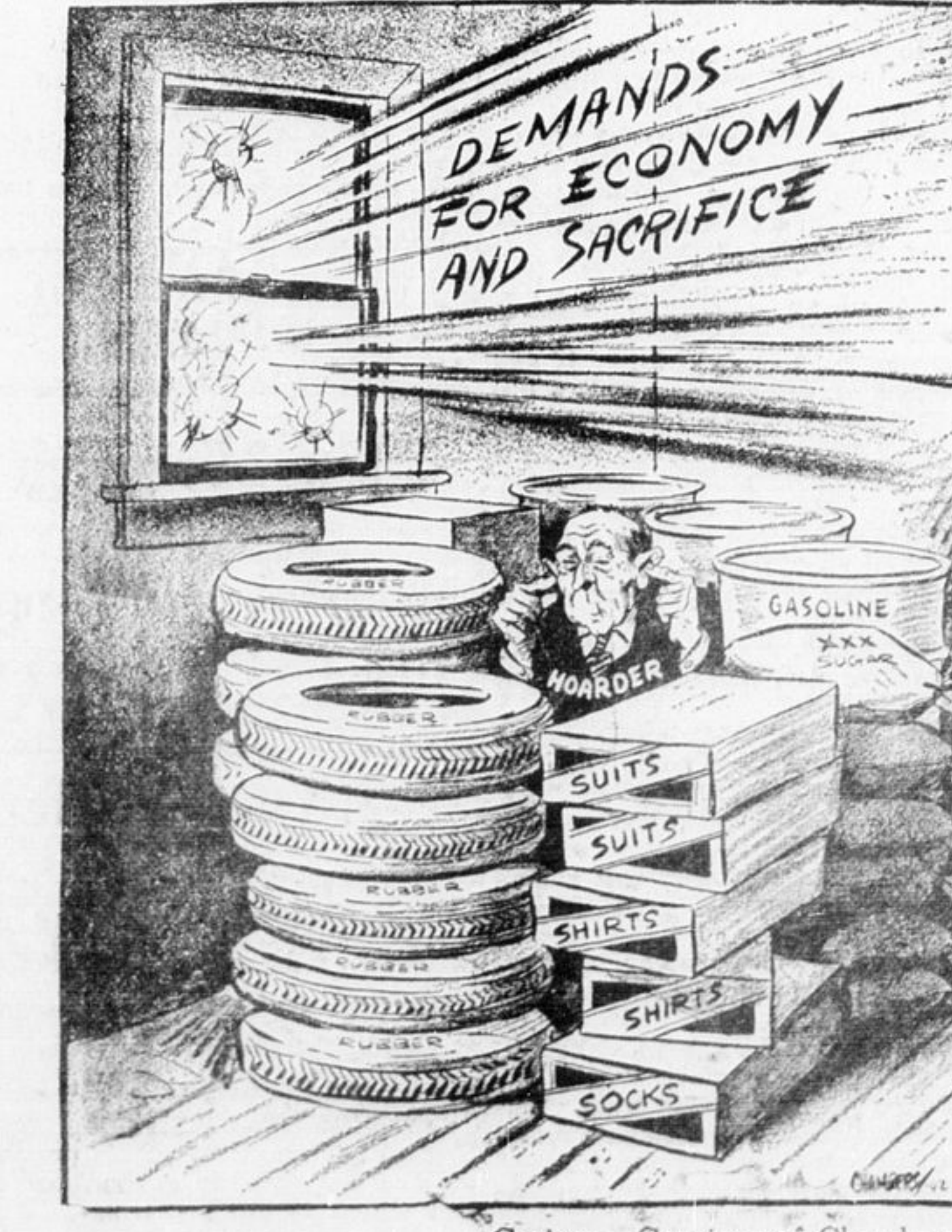


Yes, these shiny, little gadgets in the foregoing are old lamp bases—three thousand of 'em. And during these days when all types of scrap material, including brass, are valuable in helping win the war, these bases can be reprocessed and used again in making new light bulbs. Within less than two months, the Ontario Hydro-Electric Club, comprising employees of The Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, has collected between eight and ten thousand old lamp bases. This collection represents the voluntary efforts of employees at the Hydro Administration Building alone. Proceeds derived from the sale of old bases to lamp manufacturers are turned over to the Club's Consolidated War Services Fund. In the background of the above reproduction is an assortment of scrap materials which will be turned over by Hydro to the salvage authorities.



JOSEPH T. THORSON
Minister of National War Services
Ottawa.

A SKULKING TRAITOR



Cartoon—Courtesy of Chambers, Halifax Herald.

Ottawa Journal—Hitler hasn't much luck with the Russians, but when he needs a victory he can always crack down on the men of Vichy.

Sudbury Star—Another couple of ways to help the war effort would be to open the shirt at the neck, and shut the face at the chin.

Keep Him Bottled Up For The Duration



Cartoon—Courtesy Moez, Winnipeg Tribune