

Hoover Discusses High Cost of Sugar

(Copy of telegram sent by Mr. Herbert Hoover to Senator Capper of Kansas, in answer to his telegram asking Mr. Hoover the cause and remedy for the present sugar shortage.

Hon. Arthur Capper, Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C.

I am in receipt of your telegram of May 6 asking for information on the sugar situation, its cause and remedy. The present sugar position is due simply to bad business administration. Last September the administration could have bought the Cuban sugar crop at six and one-half cents per pound for raw sugar. This would have given twelve cent sugar to our consumers, together with our domestic production, would have furnished in excess to our demands. As the result of the failure to act in this matter, we are participating in the world shortage of sugar due to decreased European production, and we are subject to unparalleled speculation and profiteering. The use of sugar is an absolute essential in our households and the present situation discriminates terribly against the poor. The increase in price is imposing an additional tax on our people of about fifty dollars per annum, since on the eight billion pounds of sugar we consume per annum, the present price will cost our consumers over a billion dollars more than last year.

As at least one-half of our sugar must come from foreign sources, our merchants are bidding against European governments for its purchase. The profiteering is international. The situation is as much disliked by the vast majority of our manufacturers and distributors as by the public, for they do not like even to be accused of profiteering. This situation cannot be remedied by the Attorney General's conception that forces of this character can be handled by putting a few people in jail.

Something could be done to remedy matters if our government even now entered into negotiations with the large European governments, to stop bidding against each other and to secure our fair share of the available supplies. Aside from inflation of price, an undue share will otherwise go to Europe because their purchases are still being carried on under the direction of their governments, and our merchants have not the resources to compete with such organization for forwarding supplies and

thus our fair share is seriously jeopardized. It may be too late to accomplish this.

The second thing that could be done to break this gigantic bubble of speculation would be to reduce consumption through immediate rationing of the non-essential consumers. Over one-third of our sugar is used by the candy, sweet drinks, and other manufacturers of non-essentials. During the war, these trades patriotically co-operated in public interest in such reduction and themselves found substitutes for their sweeten-

ing materials for the maintenance of their trade. They would no doubt co-operate again.

It is no use crying over spilt milk, but simply to show that these measures are feasible, I need only to recount that they were carried out for two years by the food administration and equalization board, of which I was chairman until last July. The impending situation was anticipated by the board and myself last July. The continuation of control and insurance of our supplies through the purchase of the Cuban crop, as in the

two previous years, was recommended. When this proposal failed, the board recommended the alternative and less efficient methods outlined above. If it were put in action even

now, it would frighten speculators out of this market and would quickly moderate the price.—Herbert Hoover.

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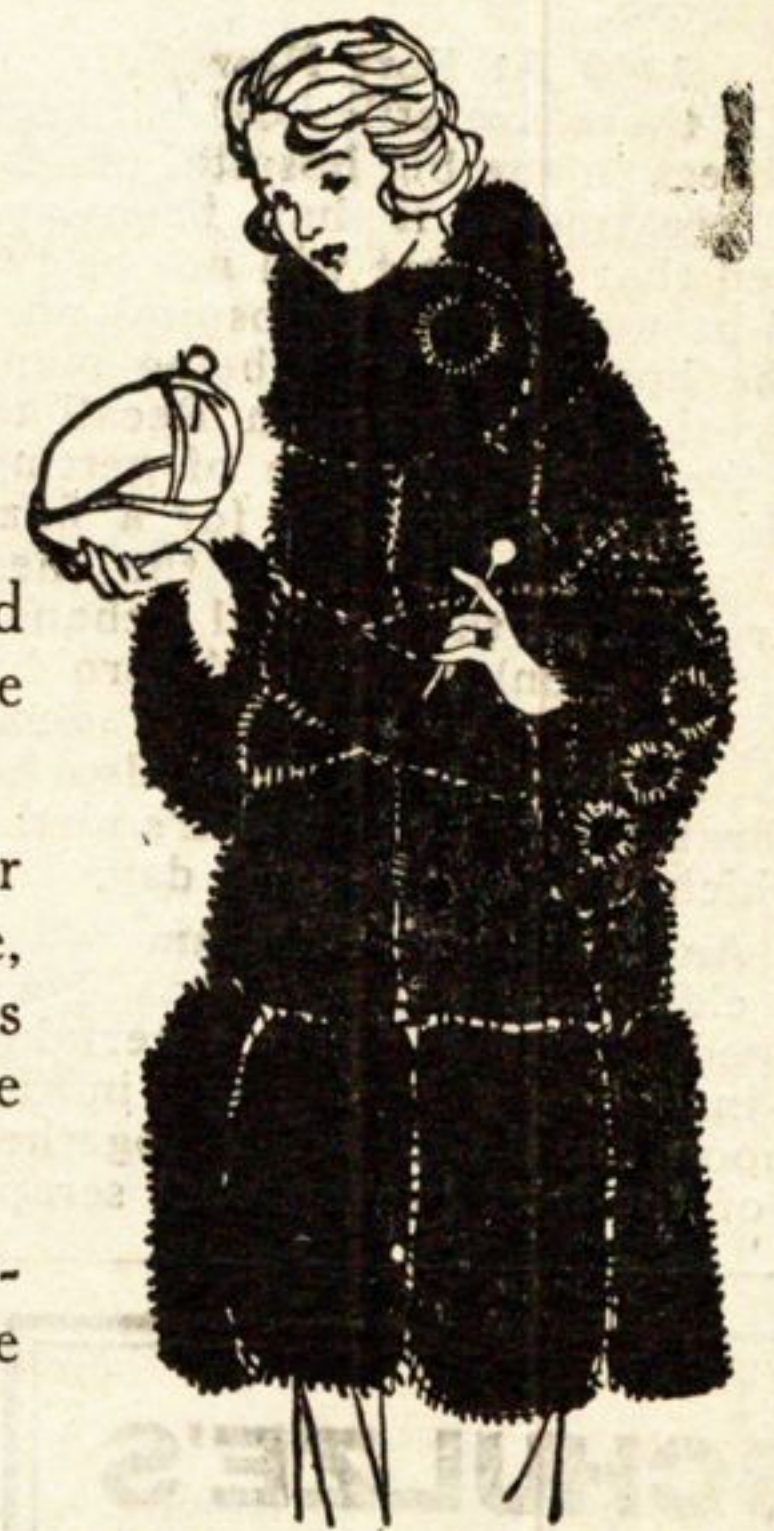
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