Essay Competition 1941

2nd Prize C

Betty Hibberd

145 Neill Road
Sheffield 11
Yorkshire

Abbeydale Grammar School
for Girls, Sheffield.
Is the war making any difference to your food supplies? If so, give the reason.

As soon as war broke out, every sensible person expected a change in our food supplies—we then thought the allowances to be meagre and they came as a shock when we were used to consuming two pounds of butter per family of three for instance. Now we have arrived at the stage where we are thankful for what we can get. We are used to rationing by now and housewives are making the best of a bad job.

Many commodities have disappeared altogether, and are either not available, or they have found their way under the counter, out of the range of the now lynx-eyed shopper. These goods are mostly luxuries, which we can quite well do without. Salmon, for instance. So day you feel yourself lucky if you so much as see a salmon tin label. This is one of the "under-counter" products, which is usually given to the "first come, first served". For instance, Mrs. Jones obtains her rationed goods from her grocer and asks softly, "Has the salmon come please?" Mr. Brown, the grocer, looks round. "Ha! ha! he espies Mrs. Smith, who is not rationed at his shop for everything. She will have to be careful. After nodding in answer to Mrs. Jones' question, he dives under the counter, and, with the air of a conjurer producing a rabbit out of a top hat, he
Brings forth a small tin of salmon and slides it into Mrs Jones’ basket. Eruptions follow. Mrs Smith has unfortunately, as the grocer thinks, seen the salmon. She asks for a tin, but finds that because she is not registered for everything, Mr Brown is afraid that he cannot let her have any. Then she proceeds to the other shops where she obtains the rest of her rationed goods. She asks there but refusal again follows; and so the poor dog had none. The shortage of salmon is easily explained. Most of our supplies in fact nearly all come from Canada. Separating Canada from Great Britain is the Atlantic Ocean which is, or was alive with U. Boats and mines fields and all the ocean troops of war, waiting for unwary ships. Why fill the hold of a ship with tin of salmon, when it can be filled with Canadian weapons of war? Mrs Smith can quite well go without salmon, but Britain cannot win without weapons.

The name also applies to tinned fruit, which comes from America as well as Canada. Butter was one of the worst difficulties and the situation seemed to look blacker as time went on. A large majority of our supplies of butter came from Holland, Sweden and Denmark, and, as these countries became over-run by the Nazis so, in consequence, did our butter ration decrease. Housewives thought of every possible way in which to make the small amount...
allowed, took longer and go further. If the
man of the house was in the works, he had
to have sandwiches to take with him.
Besides the butter, there was also the prob-
lem of what was to go inside the sand-
wiches. Salmon was unobtainable, sardines
were scarce and eggs were out of the
question. It will be a great day when
you can ask what is for tea and not
receive the answer, “jam”. Quite a number
of people were able to make jam this year
by using the extra sugar that was allow-
ed. On the other hand, many refused to
pay the extortionate prices, which were
asked for certain fruits. It was very
queer that as soon as the prices of the
fruits became controlled, one never saw
the said fruit again. This state of
affairs was noticed and pointed out by
many.

Queues were really started by the
fact that one had to eat something, and
the articles one would have liked to buy,
were usually scarce. In this respect some
queues were unavoidable because of the
scarcity of unrationed goods, and it was
again a case of “first come, first served.”
Some queues however were unnecessary. An
example of this is the perfectly true story
of a man asking a woman at the end of
a queue what she was queuing for. The
woman replied that she did not know,
but she was hoping for the best. Going to
the beginning of the queue the man asked,
the same question. "Growing?" answered the woman, "eh, mister, we're chars, waitin' for t' shop t' open, so's we can che-an' t' shop out."

Several countries which before the war supplied us with food are now rending us armaments. Australia sent us wheat, meat, dairy produce and fruit and now she is doing her utmost to supply our needs by making aircraft and munitions. We can do without a certain amount of fruit and meat, and our own farmers are doing their best to give us wheat for our bread and butter, milk and eggs. Pastry-making has been cut down considerably, and so we can use the flour and land to make more wholesome and sustaining goods which we now need, if we are to keep our war effort up.

India is now getting the most out of her natural resources and sending the products to us. These articles need shipping space, and so we have to use rice, tea and sugar, if we want manganese for some, jute for rudding and hides for rendering purposes. The same applies to South Africa, New Zealand, Canada and all our Colonies. South Africa sends us increasing supplies of chrome and manganese, to feed the great machines in our factories and so it is only natural that our former supplies of fruit and sugar should
become less. Our colonies send us rubber, tin, copper and oil and in consequence sugar, tea, coffee and cocoa are commodities carefully treasured by every housewife. South Africa and the Colonies mine that precious metal gold which we need more than ever in wartime, to help to pay for the war. New Zealand provided us with butter and cheese and meat and fruit, but more tanks, more guns, more aircraft, more ships are the order of the day now.

We are not merely in need of food, as many countries in Europe are today, and we ought to be thankful for this. It is doing us good to go without some commodities and to eat sparingly of others. We should not mind eating less if we can thus help to win this dreadful war. The war must certainly by has made a difference to our food supplies but we can take it.

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