

AMERICANS TO BE RATIONED IN FEBRUARY

The following are excerpts of a broadcast by Mr. Elmer Davis, O.W.I. Director, last night.

The new system of point rationing will require the co-operation of thousands of wholesalers and hundreds of thousands of retail grocers and 1,500,000 local volunteers. To familiarize them with their parts in the programme will take time; in that time partial and mistaken stories are likely to get around as to what is going on and what is intended. So it seemed best to tell people tonight what is intended and why, even though it is not going to be put into operation till some time in February.

It is perfectly true this interval gives chiselers and hoarders a chance to stock up if they are so inclined - and if they can get away with it. But I am confident an overwhelming majority of American people are patriotic enough and sensible enough not to try to do that for it would injure the workings of a system which seems, so far as can be seen now, to be the best that can be devised to make sure our food supply is fairly evenly distributed.

Price Administrator Henderson has resigned and some people seemed to think a change at the head office of the Price Administration, which is charged with carrying out the rationing programme, means relaxation of rationing. It does not. Rationing cannot and will not be relaxed until one of two things occurs - either we have won complete victory or until men who have most carefully studied this food problem should come to the conclusion that there is some better method than rationing for using American food supply as a weapon to win the war.

Food is a weapon in all wars but in this one more than usual. The enemy has used it as a weapon negatively - looting conquered peoples of food supply and giving them back just enough to keep them alive - indeed not always even that much - hoping to weaken them physically so they could make less resistance to their oppressors. We are using our food supply as a weapon positively; so distributing it that the American Army, Navy and American people will be well nourished; so that the armies of our Allies will be kept strong too.

Fortunately food is a weapon we have more of than anybody else but that does not mean we can afford to waste it. We must use it as intelligently and efficiently as we can to bring about a speedier victory. This is not a new idea; in the case of some other commodities American people have thoroughly accepted it.

Steel, for instance, is also a weapon of which we have more than anybody else; but that does not mean we waste it or let anybody have as much of it as he wants. There are plenty of civilian needs for steel but everybody has accepted the principle that our steel production must be controlled and rationed so it can be an effective weapon for winning the war.

But why does the greatest food producing country in the world have so to deal with its food supply that we civilians cannot get as much of some foods as we want? Of course the first demand on food supply is that of our armed forces, which are constantly increasing in size. We have the best fed Army and Navy in the world and I do not believe there is a single person in the United States who objects.

Some of our food also goes to our Allies; what goes to the Allies is less than what goes to our own armed forces and to some extent this exchange of food works both ways. Some British food and a great deal of Australian food is supplied by governments of those countries to our troops stationed there.

We are sending food to our Allies because they are helping us to win the war. They are fighting and we are feeding them to win; to win victory over the common enemy of us all. If the British people had not held out singlehanded in the summer and fall of 1940 we might by this time be trying to keep the Germans out of New England or West Indies instead of trying to throw them out of Tunis. If the British people had not continued to hold out, giving our Army and Navy an advanced base in Europe we might not have been able to undertake an offensive against the Germans at all.

/The British



The British used to import most of their food and some of the usual sources of supply have been cut off. It is only common sense for us to spare some of our food to help feed the British Army that is killing the Germans whom we will not have to kill; and to help feed the British industrial population which is constantly turning out more war material that will help win the war.

This war can be won only by killing enough Germans to discourage the rest of them. Enough Japanese, too, but we can leave them out of the discussion since in the Pacific area we get food from our Allies instead of sending it to them. The Russians so far have killed more Germans than everybody else put together, that is why it makes sense for us to send food to Russia. The food we send our Allies is a direct contribution to winning the war - winning it more quickly and at less cost in American lives.

U.S.O.W.I.