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General Correspondence

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Document: Bread Returns

Tarbell, Ida M.

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Gilson Gardner

At the outset, it ought to be clearly understood that the poorest possible way to ameliorate the conditions of the poor, is by wasting our wheat. To say that a huge amount of bread should be wasted, in order to permit certain persons to obtain stale bread at half price, is about as lame economy as it would be to suggest that freight cars should spill coal along the route in order to supply needy persons with fuel.

It should be borne in mind, in regard to the suggestion that the new plan will work a profit to the master bakers, that the bakers themselves were not at first warmly inclined toward the advice of the Commercial Economy Board. The fact that they were not immediately in favor of it is sufficient to indicate that they way no increased profit in it.

The lack of regularity in the return of stale bread to the baker by the retailer inevitably means waste of our painfully limited wheat supply. We know that the returns on some days are large, on some days not so large and on some days negligible. The result has been that, lacking a regular supply of this stale bread, it has not only been diverted to the feeding of animals ~~but has actually been burned or otherwise destroyed~~. This irregularity in returns has been further aggravated by necessary slowness of collection by the baker, so that in some cases Saturday bread would not be ready for distribution by the baker until Tuesday morning.

It must not be supposed that the Commercial Economy Board is insusceptible of a sentimental point of view, as to the effect its plan will have upon the very poorest classes of people. But we do know that the poor are not wasting bread. The bread is being wasted by persons who, to quote Mr. Gilson Gardner's own words "order two loaves where one and one-half might do, with the result that I am overstocked a half a loaf which dries and is fed to the chickens or thrown into the garbage can", The crux of this matter could hardly have been better stated than Mr.

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Gardner himself states it. The time has come when there must be no bread fed to chickens or thrown into the garbage can. It is inconceivable that any householder shall be unable to systematize to the extent of using stale bread only for human consumption, or to calculate the household needs.

Here in this country the poor have immediate avenues of recourse from the want of bread, but what avenues have the Belgians and the people of France and England, whose consumption of bread is not limited to what they can save but what they can with the utmost difficulty get?

The plain fact is that the poor will not waste bread and all others must not.