

1814 N St., N. W.

July 16, 1917.

Mr. Gilson Gardner,
The Washington Bureau,
637 Mumsey Building,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Gardner:-

I promised you that as soon as I had a moment I would tell you how I look at the points raised by you in your letter of June 25th in regard to bread returns.

You ask if I do not think the result of this new practice is distinctly a hardship to the poor and of profit to the baker, rather than economy of bread or wheat. No, I do not. In the first place one of the chief causes in this country of high prices is the habit of wastefulness. Waste of any kind comes out of the poor, in my judgment. In so far as we can bring about careful handling of the products of the world we can extend consumption in the groups which are poorly supplied. Waste, in my judgment, is a crime against the poor. In this matter of bread returns I have no doubt that temporarily there will be in places a hardship worked. You never make a change in general economic practice that it does not at the time work hardships and inconveniences all around, and, of course, the greatest hardship comes to the poor. In this case it is not as though the supply of returned bread was at all regular. It is most irregular. There are many days when there is none at all. Those days when picnics and luncheons and dinners sweep the shelves everywhere clear for sandwich purposes. There are other days when there is an accumulation of returns. There is no way of letting the people who would be glad to avail themselves of this accumulation know about it. They may come or they may not, according to their convenience. That is, the returned bread sold to the poor has nothing steady about it. It is this irregularity of returns that causes so much of the bread to be diverted to the feed of animals.

You write a little as if you thought that this change had been instituted by the bakers. The bakers as you must know at first opposed this as men always oppose a change of any kind. They have come in almost unanimously with a better understanding of why it is done and assurances that the cooperation of the public was to be asked. As I understand it, now the only opposition from the bakers is from those who had built up a big business in chicken feed, using their own and other stale bread they could pick up.

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You say that you are wasting bread because you cannot determine at the moment of your purchase how much you need, and that you purchase two loaves where one and one-half would do, with the result that you waste half a loaf. Now, my dear Mr. Gardner, think a minute. According to your own statement you consume three loaves of bread in two days. Why not buy two loaves one day and one the next. Did not that occur to you?

No, I am all for the no return bread plan, because I believe it is in the interest of the great body of struggling men and women to whom the question of the loaf of bread is always the serious one.

Very sincerely yours,

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