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Europeans Experience Severe Rationing

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Europeans Experience Severe Rationing

The rationing picture in Iowa is one of inconvenience rather than lack of quantity or quality, in sharp contrast to rationing in England and the European countries. For Iowa, situated in the center of a rich farming country, has 25 percent of the best farmland in the United States, agricultural experts estimate, and production on this land has been increased over previous years.

Food rationing in the United States and particularly Iowa means budgeting our abundance. Although the specific food product we may wish to purchase is not always available, a suitable substitute, nutritionally and quantitatively, is obtainable.

In Europe, food rationing means apportioning out the meager amount of home-produced food so that although millions may be hungry habitually, not everyone is starving.

In peacetime, European countries imported at least 10 percent of their food. This included quantities of cereals, sugar and fats and some fruit and feed for their beef and dairy cattle.

That was when a large percentage of the people farms the land. Today, of course, production has been cut and the armed forces need much of the nourishing food. The average European now is eating 84 percent less than during normal times, and even then they were not being fed adequately.

Their diets not only have suffered quantitatively, but qualitatively. Instead of their normal ratio of 78 percent vegetables in the diet to 22 percent animal food, they now consume 83 percent vegetables.

In Finland, a country better off comparatively than many of the others, professors at the University of Helsinki have cut all lectures to 20 minutes, the longest time the ill-nourished students can concentrate on a subject. Only soldier-students back from the front where they were given balanced meals could concentrate on the longer lectures.

There one legally may buy a pound of candy a year, if it is obtainable. One pound also is the limit for the practical and necessary soap. This means a person may buy about four cakes of ineffective soap a year.

There is plenty of coffee in England, where the people do not care to drink it, but almost none is available for the coffee-drinking Scandinavians. Black market coffee is available in Denmark at $16 a pound. Even ersatz coffee is rationed in Finland, although a person who visited there during the early part of the war could not see why, for he said the mixture of grains brewed for coffee was undrinkable.

The English, who have fared much better than the continental countries, have had food supply and price controls since the day war was declared. Five days after that, the Ministry of Food was organized as the sole importer of foods and the only purchaser of essential food produced at home.

English children get special attention with 14 pints of milk a week allotted to children under one year and 7 pints a week to children under 5 years as compared with the adult ration which has been as low as two glasses a week. The children under 3 also get standardized orange juice imported from the United States. They get four eggs a month instead of the one for adults but get only one-fourth of the meat.

Much food there is served on bread so that not a drop of fat or juices will be wasted, and there is no serving dish into which the monthly one-pound ration of jam, honey or molasses is put for table use. The sweetening goes directly from the original jar to the bread so that none will be lost.

Spoons in restaurants are a thing of the past. If the English tea drinker brings his own sugar to the restaurant, he stirs it in with the handle of his fork.