

Sugar Rationing

On and after January 26, throughout Canada, it became illegal for consumers to purchase more than three-quarters of a pound of sugar per person a week, a limit of two-weeks' supply being imposed. Any one having a stock of sugar on hand in excess of this quantity was put on his, or her, honour not to purchase any more till it had been used up, with special provision made for people living in districts remote from shopping areas, who were granted some concessions. In announcing the regulations the War-time Prices and Trade Board, appealing to citizens to co-operate with the department, issued this warning: "Vigorous steps will be taken to punish wilful infractions of the law; the penalties provided are imprisonment for as long as two years and a fine up to \$5,000."

It was emphasized that there was "no reason for heavy buying of sugar," the amount on hand being adequate to meet all reasonable demands and the price ceiling protecting the consumer against any increase in cost. Notwithstanding, on the very first day the new system was put into force, there was a heavy raid on the grocery stores in all localities by panicky customers determined to get their share, and in many cases, much more than their share of the commodity. Purchases of twenty pounds were common, and even fifty and hundred pound sacks of sugar were secured in direct violation of the rationing law. The Government had relied upon "the loyal support of the public," pointing out that unnecessary hoarding was not only an infringement of the regulations, but "also a betrayal of the war effort and consequently an offence against decency." The War-time Prices Board chairman, Mr. Donald Gordon, found it necessary to remind the public that there were teeth in the law and that wilful evasion would not go unpunished.

Yesterday, in Toronto, four persons were convicted of buying more than their legitimate supply of sugar, three of them having purchased one hundred pounds each and the other fifty pounds. The magistrate, imposing fines of \$5 or five days in jail on each offender, expressed the hope that it would be a lesson not

only to them, but to "others who may gain information as to what happened." The special prosecutor for the War-time Prices and Trade Board, Mr. Dalton Wells, did not press for extreme penalties, but he suggested that the accused "must be made to realize they must co-operate with the Government and with their citizens." Whether a paltry fine of \$5 is sufficient to bring home such a realization either to those immediately affected, or others who may feel disposed to withhold co-operation as they did, is open to serious doubt. The lenient action taken by the magistrate in this particular case must not be regarded as a criterion of the fate of future offenders; the Government has let it be known that it means business and that if gentle methods do not suffice, more drastic action will assuredly follow. A new significance is given to the old advice: "Let the purchaser beware!"

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