

# Food Shortage Nothing New

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To read some of the misleading statements being made about the world food situation, you might conclude that this is the first time people ever went hungry and that the productiveness and prosperity of the United States are prime causes of world starvation.

Facts are that human history is sprinkled with stories of famine, interspersed with wars intended to gain access to food supplies, but no other country in history ever has done as much to eliminate world hunger as our country has done.

Solutions proposed by emotional bubbleheads are just as far in error. They want to enter into a worldwide "put and take" food reserve with Communist, Socialist and uncivilized, nonproductive countries, giving them control over our food resources.

## Food Means Power

"The man, or class of men, who controls the supply of essential foods, is in possession of the supreme power," Mary G. Lacy wrote in 1923. At the time she was librarian for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Miss Lacy made the statement in a pamphlet titled "Food Control During Forty-Six Centuries." It has been reprinted by the American Meat Institute, Chicago, whose president, Richard Lyng, says: "We can always learn from history."

Miss Lacy said that as far back as the fifth dynasty in Egypt, which historians place

at 2830 BC, an inscription on the tomb of the monarch Henjy says: "I was lord and overseer of southern grain in this nome."

## Famine Struck

About 1700 BC, a famine struck what we now call the Mideast. Joseph, who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, was placed in charge of grain conservation by the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Multitudes of people from surrounding countries, including the family of Joseph which became the first Israelites, came to Egypt to buy food. Eventually, they spent themselves into slavery because Egypt's food reserves gave her tremendous power.

"The safeguarding of the food supply has therefore been the concern of governments since they have been in existence," Miss Lacy said 52 years ago. "They had to exercise this control in order to hold the supreme power, because all the people need food, and it is the only commodity of which this is true."

## Controls Worsen Situation

What the history of food over 46 centuries shows is that when food supplies run short or prices get high, government takes over and controls make the situation worse.

Three hundred years before the Christian era, a Chinese historian wrote that the principle of equalizing the price of grain was implemented in a system of "constantly normal granary." The idea didn't originate with Henry Agard Wallace during the Depression.

Miss Lacy said that Xenophon tells us that in ancient Greece, a knowledge of the grain business was considered to be one of the qualities of a statesman. There might be a correlation, because our Congress includes very few men with a knowledge of the grain business and very few statesmen.

## Rome Had High Prices

"Rome, not having the foresight to prevent it, found herself confronted at the close of the third century of the Christian era with a condition of high prices which was very menacing," the writer continued. In his effort to bring prices down to what he considered a normal level, Diocletian set up a price control system for 700 or 800 different items and also for wages.

Results of this effort were recorded in Latin in 314 A.D. by L. C. F. Lactantius, who wrote:

"After that the many oppressions which he put in practice had brought a general dearth upon the empire, then he set himself to regulate the prices of all vendible things. There was also much blood shed upon very slight and trifling accounts; and the people brought provisions no more to markets, since they could not get a reasonable price for them; and this increased the dearth so much that at last after many had died by it,

the law itself was laid aside."

## Bungling Blamed

Food supplies and government bungling were blamed for the downfall of the Dutch Republic in 1585. In 1770 and again in 1866, the government of India caused shortages of grain by edicts that held the prices so low that production fell below needs.

According to William B. Weedon's "Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789," published in 1890, "the colonial history of the United States affords many instances of the failure of fixed prices to remedy the evils they were designed to cure."

In summary, Mary G. Lacy wrote: "The history of government limitation of price seems to teach one clear lesson: that in attempting to ease the burdens of the people in a time of high prices by artificially setting a limit to them, the people are not relieved, but only exchange one set of ills for another which is greater."