

**GROCER OVERCHARGES? REPORT TO FOOD BOSS**

**Administrator Heinz Explains That Is the Way to Stop Profiteering**

By MLISS  
A careful housewife paid seventy-five cents a dozen for fresh eggs and thought she was "stung."  
She had been reading, in a cursory way, reports from the local food administration and statements from its city and State directors, Jay Cooke and Howard Heinz respectively. She had seen printed in the newspapers lists of approximate prices and she felt sure that the maximum price for eggs quoted had not been as high as seventy-five cents.  
Necessity had made a skilled economist of her, but she felt that where eggs were concerned she could not take less than the best.  
Despite this fact, however, she interrogated the dealer before making her purchase.  
"Won't you get into trouble with the food administrator if you charge such an exorbitant price for eggs?" she asked him.  
"It's not my fault," he replied nonchalantly, "talk to the farmer or the hens about it. You said you wanted fresh eggs. Storage eggs are cheaper."  
The woman talked, not to the hen or to the farmer, but to the EVENING PUBLIC LEADER.  
"What's the food administration doing?" she queried with some asperity, "what good are their price lists, printed daily, if the dealers are still permitted to gouge us? What's the idea?"  
The EVENING PUBLIC LEADER put the

query up to Howard Heinz, the State administrator, and obtained a concise explanation of what the food administration is doing, what it aims to do and how each and every housewife can help the administration and herself in the prevention of "gouging" or profiteering.  
Here is the situation in a nutshell:  
The average person who has been reading vaguely about food regulation has an idea that the food administrators have the power to fix prices. This is not true. There is no law giving them such power. They cannot say, for instance, that fifty cents is a maximum price for the best candied storage eggs and that all who are required to pay more than that are being victimized. They cannot say that no dealer can sell the best creamery butter for more than sixty cents a pound and that the dealer who does is a profiteer and liable to prosecution as such.  
In short and to repeat, they cannot fix prices.  
But what they can and are doing is to control profits.  
They can say and have said to dealers: "On such and such articles you cannot make more than 10 per cent profit; on other articles you cannot legally make more than 15 or 20 per cent. If you do you are liable to fine or imprisonment or both."  
Several times a week wholesalers and retailers in all varieties of foodstuffs meet the food administrator in the offices of the Committee of Public Safety, in the Finance Building. An experienced agent from the Department of Agriculture is present. Prices are discussed and the proper amounts of profits fixed. The lists printed in the papers are based on the results of these discussions.  
The value of these lists is this:  
By reference to them the housewife may know whether or not she is paying approximately too much. If the food administrator's list quotes "mackerel cleaned" at from 18 to 25 cents and her dealer asks her 28 or 30, de-

spite the fact that she offers to pay cash and to carry her purchases home, she is justified in suspecting him. It is her duty then to write to the food administration and lay her facts before that body. She should cite the date of her purchase, the name and the address of the dealer from whom she bought and the price she paid.  
The food administration has its department of investigation. Secret Service men are running down profiteers daily and their work will be facilitated if every housewife constitutes herself a committee of one to help prevent gouging.  
It must be remembered, however, that the food administration's prices are not concerned with the fancy grades of foodstuffs, expensively boxed and delivered. Its activities deal with the kind of edibles that Mrs. Average Woman buys and carries home herself.  
Many persons believe the food administration should have the power to fix

prices. These persons think that laws should be passed enabling Mr. Hoover and Mr. Heinz and Mr. Cooke and all the lesser food administrators to say conclusively to the dealers:  
"You can't charge over such and such an amount for such and such a thing." It sounds like the simplest solution of the problem, but the question of pro-

duction and supply and demand is in the final analysis exceedingly complex, as Germany and England found out when they both endeavored to fix prices. In Germany the plan was abandoned because it was found that production was discouraged. Prices were fixed at what seemed a fair rate to consumer and seller, but the producers lost money and

consequently threatened not to produce, and if the plan hadn't been given up, the country would have gone to the "demition bow-wow." Which wouldn't have been so bad, perhaps, seeing that it was Germany. But Germany didn't think so.  
In England, according to Mr. Heinz, when prices have been fixed on wheat

and other products, the Government, which ultimately means the people—made up the loss by providing a subsidy. And that isn't the best sort of economics.  
It would seem, then, that the economical and patriotic thing for every housekeeper to do is:  
To study the lists published in the

Deal with no dealer who charges more than these prices.  
Report every dealer who sells on a committee of public safety, food administration, Finance Building, Phila, giving essential details. Pay cash and carry home the goods. And remember that fancy prices and fancy purchases go hand in hand.

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Futrell, Benjamin, 36 N. 8th St.  
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