

What Causes the Present High Price of Sugar?

Trust Charges It to Crop Shortage, but Some Others Think Differently.

At Any Rate, the Consumers Are Making Up What the Trust Had to Disgorge.

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.

WHAT is the cause of the present high price of sugar? The sugar trust says it is crop shortage. The housewives shrewdly suspect that the canning season has something to do with it and aver that this is not the first time sugar has gone up at canning time. Certain newspapers assert that there is no crop shortage and broadly intimate that there is a twofold cause for the increase, one the canning season aforesaid and the other being an effort on the part of the trust to get even for the congressional investigation into its affairs and the government prosecutions for short weights and other frauds whereby the American Sugar Refining company was induced to give up, not without loud shrieks of anguish, a sum exceeding \$2,000,000.

Now, \$2,000,000 is quite a chunk of money, and if there is anything that harrows the soul—no, not the soul; a trust has no soul—if there is anything that harrows the pocket nerve of a trust it is giving up dollars without a comeback. Thus it was that the wise men said, "Never mind; just you wait," that being the way wise men usually talk. "The trust will get all this back, and more." Were the wise men real I-told-you-so prophets? Is the trust now taking back that \$2,000,000 with interest at the rate of 208 per cent every two or three days? Is it? Well, nobody knows for sure, but there is a whole "parcel" of folks that have more or less violent opinions to that effect.

Incidentally it is not the sugar trust that is now emitting the shrieks. Yet the shrieking is good, and there are quite a few people who are rising to the occasion in magnificent form. Among them are the owners of canning factories and retail grocers, likewise several million housewives, to say nothing of that much stepped on individual, the ultimate consumer.

Below is a sample yell, and there are others. This particular ululation comes from Pittsburg, the grocers having printed it on the wrappers and paper bags in which they send sugar to the various households:

The tariff on sugar benefits nobody but the sugar trust. Were it not for the tariff and the trust this package would cost you 2 cents a pound less. Urge your congressman to vote for removal of the tariff on sugar. If he doesn't do it don't return him to congress. It isn't our fault.

If that sort of thing should happen all over the nation it ought to start something.

As to Crop Shortage.

As to the crop shortage proposition, the following figures recently made public by the official statistician of the sugar trust may furnish a little light: On Sept. 21 there were on hand in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore 165,594 tons of sugar. The amount afloat, en route to this country, was estimated at 285,000 tons, an increase of more than 86,000 tons over the amount afloat at the corresponding date last year. Yet with this large amount of raw sugar on hand and the larger quantity in sight the output of the trust refineries for the first three weeks of September was 37,000 tons less than for the corresponding period in 1910. In other words, the trust refineries are running at about half capacity.

From the trust's own figures it follows as a moral certainty that the rise in price is due to reduced supply. That is an old trust trick, to shut down factories for the purpose of forcing up the cost of goods to the consumer.

One rather interesting claim made is that the trust is heavily interested in beet sugar, and therefore the higher price was manipulated so that the beet sugar crop might be marketed at the advanced figure. Some concept of the vast profits now received may be formed when it is realized that the trust income is \$200,000 per day more than it was on late June prices. This would mean \$4,000,000 per month, and approximately three months have already elapsed.

The People Paying.

Evidently the \$2,000,000 paid to the government because of those doctored scales is being taken back from the dear people with something like 1,000 to 1,500 per cent interest. It must be understood that this \$6,000,000 per month is in additional profits. It is to be presumed that the trust was making a fair profit before. It was at least keeping the wolf from the door. Practically every man high up in its councils had become so many times a millionaire that he regarded a man with merely one million as a piker.

The plain fact of the case is that the trust was charging 2 cents per pound more for sugar late in September than it was late in June. Even at this rate it was selling only to its own customers. The independent refiners were selling at a yet higher figure, however, but gave an excuse that they could not get raw sugar. In effect they charged that the trust had cornered the supply. Some color is

lent to this view by the fact that on Sept. 22 the American Sugar Refining company (the trust) bought approximately 1,500,000 bags of raw sugar from Louisiana planters at a cost presumably of \$20,000,000, which was said at the time to have been altogether the biggest deal in the history of the Louisiana sugar industry.

It would seem that when President Washington B. Thomas of the trust told the congressional investigating committee last summer that his concern would soon "hold an umbrella" over the entire sugar field he was not uttering an idle threat. The umbrella is up, and its shadow is darkening every home in the land.

"Circumstantial Evidence."

Nobody appears to have an idea that a trust would be too good to get back at the dear public in return for prosecutions, investigations and the like. Of course it is next to impossible to prove that any trust has done so, for the reason that only those on the inside know to a certainty, and they won't tell. In matters of this sort we have to depend on circumstantial evidence. Yet men have been hanged on

him. He has no more show than the father of a large family of fashionable daughters. They all get his money, and all he gets is an amused or commiserating smile. The ultimate consumer is the original good thing.

If he kicks, and that is the sole right or privilege left him, he gets it harder than ever. Only because he objected to corset spring scales he now has to pay 2 cents a pound more for his sugar. In the old days he kicked about the Standard Oil trust and had to pay 1 cent a gallon more for kerosene, to say nothing of the added tariff on gasoline and the byproducts. When the \$20,000,000 fine was assessed against the Standard an official of the company was asked if he thought the payment of the fine would affect the dividends.

"Oh, I don't think so," he replied. "The price of oil can be raised, you know, and then the people can pay the fine."

The Beef Trust.

Then there is the beef trust. About a year ago the federal grand jury indicted ten heads of the trust, and a few months later a federal judge refused to quash the indictments. The price of beef has been going up ever since. Not satisfied with that, the trust has also boosted pork. The ordinary four legged pig is now worth so much he can be almost as aristocratic as the two legged kind.

It would take too long to go through a list of all the corporations charged with putting up prices because somebody had the effrontery to try to make them obey the law. If any of the heads of big business ever go to jail I wonder just how high prices will go.

The investigation of the sugar trust last summer brought out some rather sensational evidence, a part of which bears directly on the matter of restricting output to raise prices. Claus



Photo of Claus Spreckels copyrighted by American Press Association.

proof that was less conclusive. So widespread is the belief that other trusts have done this very thing that it has become a truism, a bromide, a joke. The public prints have been filled with such charges.

Indeed, no governmental agency goes after the corporations without realizing that the public will be the ultimate sufferer. When the states have agitated equal taxation the stock argument has been made that the patrons of the corporations would have to pay the increased taxation levied on the railroads and the trusts. That the public pays the freight is now generally accepted as that two and two make four.

The ultimate consumer is the only one who cannot pass the buck. All he can do is to accept that passed by others. He now has a large and varied assortment of bucks, and that is all he has. If a trust is fined it passes the buck. If a corporation is investigated or prosecuted or has anything else done to it the buck again is merrily wafted on its way. If a railroad has to pay its taxes the buck is sent spinning down the line. The ultimate consumer gets them all. There is nobody on whom he can pass them. He cannot sidestep, duck or make a getaway. He is nailed to the cross, tied to the post and lashed to the mast. He is the jolt absorber, the punching bag, the goat. Everybody tags him, and he is it. In this buck passing business he has no more chance than an icicle in a blast furnace or an honest man in the legislature. He has to take all that is handed him and say "Thank you." He is not an easy mark. He is the easy mark, and everybody does

A. Spreckels testified that he had been left in charge of a Philadelphia refinery for a short time after the trust had spread its umbrella over the Spreckels interests. During this interval he received letters from trust officials, which letters he caused to be spread upon the records. They make instructive reading, but are too long to be reproduced here. Two of these sugary epistles were from John E. Searley and another from Henry O. Haveimeyer. The two points insisted on in all three were that Spreckels restrict production and hold up prices.

Later this same Spreckels went into business for himself. He testified that his machinery was injured and that floor scrapings, filth and dead rats were placed in his barrels. He did not know who did this, but the sugar trust was the only one interested in injuring him. The sugar containing these dead rats and this filth was intended to be eaten by the American people.

The sugar weighing frauds, because of which the trust refunded more than \$2,000,000 to the government, were discovered by Richard Parr and others. The frauds were committed by means of a corset spring placed in the scales on which imported raw sugar intended for the trust was weighed. It was estimated that the amount paid the government was only a fraction of the total out of which it had been swindled. Some of the minor trust officials were sent to prison.

This is the same trust that now controls the American sugar market. American housewives are paying 8 cents a pound for sugar. These are the facts. The public is entitled to its own conclusions.

UNITED STATES EMPLOYS 513,854

Vast Army of Workers on the Government Payroll.

222,278 UNDER CIVIL SERVICE

Bureau, Originated by President Grant, Has Become Greatest in World—64,000 Clerks Are Paid by Fourth Class Postmasters Personally.

Number of federal employees protected by civil service regulations	222,278
Number of exceptions	59,202
Number not under civil service	64,892
There are 9,525 appointments made by the president without civil service requirements and 28,191 laborers on the Panama canal, making the total number of persons employed by the federal government 384,088.	

The United States government has the greatest employment bureau in the world in the civil service commission. The commission takes care of the employment of all the 384,088 persons who work for the executive branch of the government in various ways. Of this number 222,278 hold office as a result of competitive examinations held by the commission, and their tenure is not subject to the whim of a statesman or a politician.

This army of 384,088 does not include all of the persons who serve the government. This number has to do with the executive employees. In addition there are 2,115 employees of the senate and the house, and 484 men and women who serve in the congressional library. Then there are 4,390 employees of the judiciary, including judges, attorneys and marshals, and their clerical assistants and messengers, referees in bankruptcy, and United States commissioners.

Then the army has 80,521 officers and enlisted men, the navy 40,832. To these must be added 1,415 consuls, interpreters, secretaries and clerks in the diplomatic and consular service. The result is a grand army of federal employees numbering 513,854 persons.

Bureau Has Run Twenty-eight Years. This employment bureau has been running twenty-eight years, beginning under President Garfield. During his term Garfield classified or made subject to competitive examination 15,573 positions. President Cleveland in his first term added to this number 27,330. President Harrison extended the competitive civil service to 42,928 additional places. In his second term President Cleveland added 81,889 more to the number, and his successor, President McKinley, further extended the operations of the civil service law so as to include an additional 85,150.

President Roosevelt's term in the White House saw the list of classified positions swelled by 119,916, and to date President Taft has added 4,116, making the total of places made competitive by presidential order to date 124,052.

"The disproportionate increase in the number of government employees over the increase in population," said an official of the civil service commission, "is not at all an indication of extravagance or wasteful methods. It is rather the necessary result of government entrance to new fields of activity undreamed of before the civil war. The wonderful growth of the department of agriculture, which was not created until 1862, is just one explanation of the vast increase in appropriations and expenditures for clerical assistants."

Divided into Classes. This army of government clerks, minor officials and laborers coming directly under the civil service commission and which numbers 384,088 is divided into several classes. First and by far the most important is that of the 222,278 employees who are in the competitive class. Of laborers and unclassified employees there are 64,892.

Of exempted and noncompetitive places there are 59,202, and there are 9,525 positions filled directly by the president, the postmasters and diplomats. To this number must be added 28,191 laborers, who are listed as the "digging force on the isthmus." These canal laborers are all executive employees of the United States, but no civil service test of fitness is required of them.

It is said by some statistical sharps that this army of 513,845 federal employees does not include all persons who are attached to the federal payrolls. They say that the 64,000 clerks in fourth class postoffices are not given in the official figures of the commission, which holds that these clerks are not government employees, as they are paid by the fourth class postmasters. Regarding them as federal employees would bring the grand total of federal servants up to 577,854.

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