

Food and clothes in England to-day—what the wartime English are eating and wearing—were topics discussed in a radio talk by L. W. BROCKINGTON, adviser on Empire affairs to the British Ministry of Information, who is visiting New Zealand. We print here some of Mr. Brockington's talk.

# WHAT ENGLAND EATS

## Food Is Dull But It Is Well Distributed

very uncommon and reserved for children and the sick. Lemons, except for a few brought back by flyers from Gibraltar, are as rare as unkind people in New Zealand.

### Forty Eggs a Year

Eggs for the ordinary person are restricted to 40 a year; only the sick can purchase more. You can imagine from that, that old-fashioned elections are out of date for the duration. The skimming of cream is illegal, and so is the making of the famous English cheeses like Stilton and Wensleydale. Cheese was fairly plentiful in England when I was there, and the ration had been increased. There were loads of vegetables. Everybody is growing them. While there were those who complained of the "windy insufficiency" of a vegetable diet, and most Canadians looked upon Brussels Sprouts as among the worst of all Belgian atrocities, you would be surprised what illusions can be created by ingenious cooks. There is no fruit for cakes. There are, of course, many things you do not get and many things you do not get even when you think that you are getting them. For instance, you will see fruitless cakes in pastrycooks' windows covered with a horrible pink icing which is certainly something else, and cream puffs

filled with cream which I believe is made with whale oil. In my Bloomsbury hotel I used to get a piece of butter or margarine as large as my little finger-nail. The sugar ration is very small. "Punch" had a picture of a butler saying, "One lump of sugar, my lord, or none?"

### Other Side of the Picture

I could go on like this for a long time, and if I have dealt fairly lightly with the food situation in England, it is because the English people do so themselves. You'd be surprised how soon you can do without things you once thought were necessary. But food control in England represents perhaps the most wonderful piece of organisation that I think this war or any other war has ever seen. It is, of course, wrong to picture Britain as rolling in abundance—it is equally wrong to picture her as half-starved. As we approach final victory and ships are diverted even more to the transport of men, things will get harder. But a large increase in community feeding, which is one of the great social discoveries, will help to save the situation. To-day, there are fewer people in Britain under-nourished and over-nourished, than there were before the war. The nutritional level in England is higher than it has ever been. The problem has been solved



L. W. BROCKINGTON  
He would like a little mustard for his meat

IN the old days in England, only dukes and down-and-outs could dare to look shabby. Now almost everyone does. Shabbiness has become a badge of service. To turn your coat is now a sign of patriotism, and not of treason. Dress clothes are not worn any more, and top-hats are full of moth-balls. I personally hope they'll stay that way. When I left England everything was rationed except hats, and I expect Queen Mary is still wearing her old ones.

As for food, it is dull but up to date, and plentiful. There is plenty of bread. Some English cynic said there were two kinds of bread in England—whole-wheat bread and sausages, while another wit called sausages "breadcrumbs in battle-dress." British sausages have to be eaten to be believed, and even then you won't believe them. Meat is very scarce. When I left, the ration was one shilling's worth per week, which I believe means about a pound of the poorest cuts, including the bone. Until you buy meat you would hardly believe that British cattle are as bony as British herrings. Over there they have all the mustard in the world—New Zealand and Australia seem to have most of the beef in the world. I only wish there could be a little more exchange of those commodities. As a matter of fact, now that I have so frequently longed in vain for beef in England and for mustard in Australia and New Zealand, I am reminded of the wistful story of Thomas Hood, the English poet. He was dying, if you remember, of a wasting consumption. By the doctor's orders, his wife put a mustard plaster on him. His last brave words were, "That is a great deal of mustard, my dear, for a very little meat." That's how it is in his England.

### Fish and Fruit

Fish is hard to get unless you live in the locality where the fishing fleets sometimes come in. The fishermen of Britain are on a deadlier business to-day.

Fruit juices are unknown, but fresh fruit is fairly common during the season, but soon disappears. Vitamins are obtained from the seeds of the wild rose. Fruits that reach the class of a luxury are, of course, beyond the reach of the ordinary person. Their price is unfixed. I remember one time wanting to buy some fruit for a lady who had driven me from my office. Going into a fruiterer's shop, I asked the price of a very small cantaloupe melon. The answer was 27/6. I did not tell the lady that I had asked about the melon, but presented her with a bag of nuts costing 2/9. Frequently in England I was reminded of the story of the Canadian soldier who bought a single peach for 7/6, and on being told by the shopkeeper that there was 2/6 change coming to him, said, "Keep it—I just stepped on a grape." Oranges are

## Letter To An Unborn Child

AT the conclusion of his radio talk, Mr. Brockington quoted a letter written by a Yugoslav to his unborn child. That child was never born—both the mother and father were killed. We have received many requests that this letter be published: here it is.

*MY child, sleeping now in the dark and gathering strength for the struggle of birth, I wish you well. At present you have no proper shape, and you do not breathe, and you are blind. Yet, when your time comes, your time and the time of your mother, whom I deeply love, there will be something in you that will give you power to fight for air and light. Such is your heritage, such is your destiny as a child born of woman—to fight for light and hold on without knowing why.*

*May the flame that tempers the bright steel of your youth never die, but burn always; so that when your work is done and your long day ended, you may still be like a watchman's fire at the end of a lonely road, loved and cherished for your gracious glow by all good wayfarers who need light in their darkness and warmth for their comfort*

*The spirit of wonder and adventure, the token of immortality, will be given to you as a child. May you keep it for ever, with that in your heart which always seeks the gold beyond the rainbow, the pastures beyond the desert, the dawn beyond the sea, the light beyond the dark.*

*May you seek always and strive always in good faith and high courage, in this world where men grow so tired.*

*Keep your capacity for faith and belief—but let your judgment watch what you believe.*

*Keep your power to receive everything—only learn to select what your instinct tells you is right.*

*Keep your love of life, but throw away your fear of death. Life must be loved or it is lost, but it should never be loved too well.*

*Keep your delight in friendship—only learn to know your friends.*

*Keep your intolerance—only save it for what your heart tells you is bad.*

*Keep your wonder at great and noble things like sunlight and thunder, the rain and the stars, the wind and the sea, the growth of trees and the return of harvests, and the greatness of heroes.*

*Keep your heart hungry for new knowledge; keep your hatred of a lie; and keep your power of indignation.*

*Now I know I must die, and you must be born to stand upon the rubbish heap of my errors. Forgive me for this. I am ashamed to leave you an untidy, uncomfortable world. But so it must be.*

*In thought, as a last benediction, I kiss your forehead. Good night to you—and good morning and a clear dawn.*

in so far as it can be solved by large and generous shipments from Canada and New Zealand, and Australia and the United States, particularly of wheat, dried milk, bacon, cheese and dried eggs, by a large increase in food-growing in Britain, which now produces 60 per cent. of her own needs, by a mobilisation of the best scientific minds—and by the broad humanity of a great and good man of whom we do not hear enough. I refer to Lord Woolton. In neutral and occupied countries, only the rich can get food. In Britain, Lord Woolton has always been mindful of the poor. When I left England, there were 10,000 factory canteens and over 3,000 so-called British restaurants. At any of the latter, any person could get a good meal for 1/- or even less.

And when I left England, every child in every school could get a glass of milk at eleven o'clock in the morning for a halfpenny, or for nothing if the halfpenny was not forthcoming. I sat with little children at one of the London County Council schools while they had meat, potatoes, two vegetables, black-berry and apple pie and custard, for the price of 5d for the first child, 4d for the second child, and 3d for the third.

## Why He Likes Us

Here, in part, is the way Mr. Brockington said he would answer the question "How do you like New Zealand?"

"[I]t is true I have been in New Zealand only ten days, but during that short time I have seen something of a land that has learned the great lesson of compassion and is determined, in so far as it is possible, that men and women within its borders shall be happy and free and equal in the great opportunities of life, that children shall know what joy is, that men shall labour in dignity and honour, that the sick shall know careful tender-

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