CABINET

RATIONING OF BREAD AND OTHER CEREALS

Memorandum by Minister of Food

1. In accordance with the decision reached by the Cabinet at their meeting on 27th May (C.M. (46) 52nd Conclusions, Minute 5) I have made all preparations for introducing a rationing scheme after full discussion with the Bakery Trade, the Trades Union Congress and the British Employers Confederation. A summary of the scheme is attached at Appendix A, and all the necessary documents are being printed on this basis.

2. If the scheme has to be introduced, 21st July is for many reasons far and away the best date. If we are to introduce the scheme on 21st July I must have the final decision of the Cabinet by mid-night Thursday/Friday 27th/28th June. I propose to announce the scheme in answer to a Private Notice question in the House on Friday morning. A draft statement is attached at Appendix B.

3. My predecessor has already informed my colleagues of the many difficulties inseparable from any bread rationing scheme. I believe that the psychological preparation of the public mind for the scheme has had a useful effect. On the other hand there will, of course, be great unpopularity to be faced over the imposition of bread rationing a year after the end of the war and in face of a largely hostile Press. Nor can the possibility of a loss of productive efficiency be ignored.

4. The essential objection to any abandonment of the bread rationing scheme, or even to its postponement, is that I can give my colleagues no guarantee that in default of rationing supplies of bread and flour would not run short some time this August. I need not stress the gravity of the situation which the Government would face if bread queues, some of which would not receive a supply of bread, developed at that time.

5. Since my return from Washington I have carefully re-examined the supply position in the light of the latest information in the possession of my Department here and collected by myself and my officials in Washington and Ottawa. The position on the fairly long term is, I believe, improving mainly as a result of materially better prospects for the Canadian crop - although these prospects will not be firm for another month or six weeks - and the assurance of a good American crop. Unfortunately these better prospects do little to help us get through the danger point which will occur next August.
6. On reasonably optimistic assumptions, including provision by the U.S.A. of 456,000 tons of wheat and receipts from the new home crop amounting to 575,000 tons by the end of October, our bulk wheat stock at the end of each month for the period July/October will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>000 TONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These stock estimates assume that flour consumption will continue at the average weekly rate of 97,500 tons. It has in some recent weeks been much above this figure and in fact was 110,000 tons in the week ending 15th June. In this connection the fact must not be lost sight of that the severe cuts which have had to be made in rations of animal feeding stuffs, particularly the cut in the domestic pig and poultry-keepers' ration, may well lead to a substantial diversion of flour and oatmeal to the feeding of animals unless some form of rationing is adopted. The wheat stock figures mentioned above compare with the desired minimum bulk stock level of 760,000 tons (the equivalent of 7 weeks' flour consumption) and recent investigation of the working stock level by my Department gives no justification for thinking that at current consumption rates, a significantly lower level could be operated, except for a very short time, without serious difficulties arising.

7. The scale of rationing proposed in Appendix A will only result in approximately a 5½ saving of flour, but it will give us control over the situation and will alone, in my view, make it possible safely to turn the corner during the next two months of very low stocks.

8. If it had not been for this consideration I should have been much tempted to ask my colleagues to postpone the decision for a few weeks during which we could obtain a clearer view of the prospects over the next year, since it is just possible that they will improve materially; but I feel that the short term risk is not one which I could possibly ask the Government to take.

8. I am in a position to give the public one piece of good news, which I think will be unexpected. This is that we can increase the meat ration by 2d. a week. For administrative reasons it is much more convenient that the increase should take place on 11th August, but I should propose to announce it on Friday, simultaneously with the announcement of bread rationing, which will come into effect on 21st July.
9. It has been very strongly represented to me by my Department that the whole success or failure of the bread rationing scheme, which is a most complex administrative undertaking, may depend on adequate explanatory advertising in the Press. As my colleagues know, there is acute competition for the small space available to Government advertisements in the Press at the present moment. I would ask my colleagues whether they would give directions to the Central Office of Information to give a very high priority to Ministry of Food advertisements explaining the bread rationing scheme in the Sunday papers for the four weeks, 30th June, 7th July, 14th July and 21st July. This would undoubtedly affect prejudicially other Government campaigns for that limited period, but the consequences of any breakdown in the bread rationing scheme owing to public failure to understand it would be so grave that I feel that I must make this request for priority.

10. I therefore recommend—

(i) that bread rationing on the scales proposed at Appendix A should be introduced on 21st July next;

(ii) that the meat ration should be increased by 2d. a week on 11th August;

(iii) that both these changes should be announced by me in answer to a Private Notice Question on Friday morning;

(iv) that a high degree of priority should be given to Ministry of Food explanatory advertisements relating to the bread rationing scheme in the Sunday papers of 30th June, 7th July, 14th July and 21st July.

J.S.

Ministry of Food, U.

26TH JUNE, 1946.
APPENDIX A

MINISTRY OF FOOD

Rationing of Bread and other Cereals and Cereal Products

Outline of Scheme

1. Commodities covered

In addition to bread, the scheme will cover flour (including self-raising flour), cake and flour confectionery. Any of these can be taken up freely instead of bread in approximate accordance with flour equivalence. Other cereals and cereal products including oatmeal will be brought within the Points Scheme.

2. Categories and entitlements

(a) There would be four categories of juveniles and four of adults:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Entitlements in loaves of 1 lb. 12 ogs. per week</th>
<th>Total Entitlement in terms of bread per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children under 1</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>8 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 5-11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 11-18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal adult</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
<td>9 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectant mothers</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
<td>11 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Manual workers</td>
<td>3 1/2</td>
<td>15 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(see also 3(b) and 4)</td>
<td>3 1/2</td>
<td>15 oes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Manual workers</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
<td>11 oes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) If consumption had to be cut, the first cuts should be on the adults. "Normal adults" constitute nearly half the total population.

(c) The scales have been worked out with the full co-operation of nutritional experts.

3. Catering and canteen establishments

(a) Normal catering allowance would be the equivalent of the normal adult ration.

(b) Treble this allowance would be available for industrial canteens catering for the very heaviest workers.
4. **Interchangeability with ordinary points**

Bread coupons will be exchangeable at the food office with ordinary points coupons either way at the rate of 3 points = one small (14 oz.) loaf. This is to enable those whose bread needs are much above average to get more by surrendering entitlement to other foods and those who need little bread to keep off flour consumption and receive compensation. It provides just that elasticity which is needed to avoid serious hardship.

5. **Printing and distribution of documents**

This will have been completed within the next few days.

6. **Classification of manual workers**

The Ministry of Labour and National Service and the T.U.C. and B.E.C. have given much help in preparing lists of "manual workers".
The Government has decided to introduce as from 21st July, 1946, a scheme of bread and flour rationing. I need scarcely emphasise to the House that the Government has only reached this decision because they are convinced that to fail to ration bread and flour at the present time would be to take an unjustifiable risk with the basic foodstuff of the British people. The Government is determined that every family in this country shall be sure of its share of bread and that that share shall be, in so far as humanly possible, adequate to the individual needs of its members. In present circumstances of grave world shortage of cereals, the only way of ensuring this is by a well thought out scheme of bread and flour rationing. The scheme will cover bread, flour, and flour confectionery. Measured in terms of ounces of bread per day, the rations for different groups will be as follows:

Children under 1 .............. 2 ounces

Children from 1 to 5 ........... 4 "
" 5 to 11 ............ 8 "
" 11 to 18 ............ 12 "

Expectant mothers and women manual workers ............. 11 "

Men manual workers ............ 15 "

All other adults .............. 9 "

The Statutory Scale of provisions for Seamen will be adhered to.

The housewife will be free to take up part of or all her rations in flour or flour confectionery instead of bread and to shop wherever she pleases. To secure approximate flour equivalence the ration will be measured in Bread Units - one 1 lb. 12 oz. loaf will be 4 bread units, 1 lb. of flour 3 bread units, and 1 lb. of flour confectionery 2 bread units.

Except in the cases of adolescents of 11 to 18, and of manual workers the necessary coupons are already in the ration book namely L M G J and P. The adolescent group will obtain additional coupons from a food office while manual workers will apply through their employers or, if they are self-employed, through the local office of the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

Allowances to catering establishments and institutions will be similarly restricted but I am making special provision to safeguard the adequacy of the "meal-on-the job" which is already a feature of the rationing system, particularly for workers engaged in very heavy manual work. I am also making special provision for those workers who have no access to canteens and who now enjoy the special cheese ration. They will be able to secure coupons for an additional 6 bread units per week to assist them in providing packed meals from home.
Special authorisations, e.g. for the benefit of agricultural workers at harvest time, will be granted for bread as for other rationed foods.

We do not consider that even these careful gradings as between different consumers will sufficiently meet the wide variations in individual and family needs for bread. A special feature of the bread rationing scheme will therefore be that the bread unit coupons will be interchangeable at the food office with ordinary points. The rate of exchange will be at the rate of one bread unit for one point, but for administrative convenience the food offices will only make the exchanges in multiples of 8 at any time during each four week period. In other words you will not be able to change less than 8 bread units into 8 points. This provision will have two effects. On the one hand it will offer an inducement to families which use less bread and flour than their ration to abstain from drawing their full ration and so obtain some extra points on which they can draw other foodstuffs. On the other hand it will enable any family which finds that it needs more than its bread ration to supplement that ration by sacrificing some of the family's supply of points.

I do not for one moment under-estimate the gravity of this step, which conditions of world famine or near famine in many lands have compelled us to take, but the Government would be unworthy to hold office if it flinched from this measure and so risked a breakdown in the bread supply of the people.

I have one good piece of news to give the House. Our meat supply enables me to announce that the meat ration will be increased by 2d. a week, from 1/2d. to 1/4d., as from 11th August next. The increase will be in carcass meat, so that the ration will then be 1/2d. of carcass meat and 2d. worth of canned meat. In addition we shall increase again from 11th August meat supplies for manufacturing purposes, mainly sausages, by about 20%.