

ECONOMICS

Challenge Price Boosts, Is Advice to Consumers

No Significant General Rise in Prices Yet Reported; Shortages in Consumer Goods Have Not Developed

IF YOU hear rumors of shortages in everyday commodities, or if prices of goods take a queer upward rise, don't be gullible. Ask why. And weigh carefully the reasons offered.

This is advice from Dr. Ben Lewis, chief economist in the office of the Consumer Adviser of the National Defense Advisory Commission, to consumers who are wondering:

Just exactly what is a consumer expected to be doing these days about national defense?

Retailers' problems are being threshed out in a retailers' conference in Washington, D. C., called by Miss Harriet Elliott, Consumer Adviser on the Council of National Defense Advisory Commission. The more successfully Miss Elliott's liaison office can work with shop owners and others who supply consumers' everyday needs, and the more easily the market adjusts itself to the stresses and strains of total United States defense, the less the public will probably have to bother over the consumer problem of defense.

For the present—

"There has been thus far no significant general rise in prices," says Dr. Lewis. "We know of no shortages as yet in consumer goods."

Consumers, therefore, may as well shop normally, expecting no more than the usual seasonal changes in price, or fluctuations due to ordinary supply and

demand. Nor have they any need to scurry around storing up shoes and blankets, squirrel-fashion, in response to vague and airy rumors that this or that useful article may be pretty scarce. In fact, such "scare" buying is likely to induce the very condition the consumers' office is trying to forestall. Usually, these rumors are based on half-facts. If British woollens prove hard to get, due to some increasing difficulties in foreign transport, it does not follow that wool from other sources cannot be provided.

Dr. Lewis sees the work of the Consumer Adviser's office as the positive job of keeping open the flow of commodities required for civilian defense, not as the negative job of snapping at the heels of industry and business groups who are trying to turn out goods for the defense program. The office is trying to keep track of the supply, demand, price, and production capacity situation in a wide range of commodities and services that affect the general public. It has a watchful eye out for, and is gearing itself to avert, unnecessary shortages and price spiraling. In some instances, huge Army orders for some article of clothing can be spaced out, instead of turned out on very short order, thus allowing factories to keep up civilian supplies as well.

"In a country with the unemployed resources of ours," says Dr. Lewis, "we should be able to take care of full civilian and military needs for total defense. Situations may occur when the Army will need instant material, and civilians will have to wait. But in general, we expect to see that people have enough goods and services to keep up morale and to meet any emergency."

Science News Letter, September 14, 1940

INVENTIONS

New Machine Gun Able to Change Rate While Firing

A MACHINE gun in which the firing rate can be varied while in action has been invented by Robert H. S. Hughes, of Baltimore, Md. A series of five patents has been granted to him for

weapons operating on the same principle. By means of an attachment to the muzzle of the gun some of the gases that would normally emerge immediately following the bullet are diverted through openings and directed to the rear at an angle of about 45 degrees to the barrel. Thus, they are not squirted at the gunner, and their force is exerted in a direction to counteract the kick.

The first four patents cover various aspects of the device as applied to any gun. The fifth relates to its application in a heavy machine gun, of the type of the Browning, in which the recoil changes the cartridge. Here the ports through which the gases are ejected can be opened or closed by the gunner through a flexible shaft extending to the breech. As this is adjusted, tension is changed on the spring which returns the barrel to position after the insertion of the new cartridge. Thus, the gunner can alter the rate of firing without stopping, a feat not possible in conventional machine guns.

Science News Letter, September 14, 1940

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Critical Tests Made on Sulfapyridine For Cows

COWS no less than humans will presently be receiving the benefits of the new chemical germ-killers of the sulfanilamide group. Tests of the closely related chemical, sulfapyridine, were reported by a three-man research team from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Louis A. Klein, Dr. Albert L. Kleckner and Dr. Robert O. Blitz.

They gave doses of varying strength to a number of cows. There was nothing the matter with the cows: the object of the experiments was to see how much of the drug had to be administered to raise the blood content to a germ-killing concentration, and also to see if any untoward effects would develop. For these experimental purposes it was better to work with healthy animals than with sick ones.

The doses varied from four to nine grams per hundred pounds of body weight. Even with the smallest dose, a germ-killing sulfapyridine concentration was found in the cows' blood within 48 hours. The cows didn't take too kindly to the dosing. They lost appetite, and the amount of milk was reduced. One cow developed a skin rash. However, all these difficulties cleared up within a couple of days.

Science News Letter, September 14, 1940

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