

# Mob Storms Waldorf In Demand for Food

## Doors Barricaded as Porters Drive Back Women Rioters Who Seek Whitman—Several Arrests—One Hurt by Crowd

The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, with its garrison of well-to-do guests and its subterranean stores of onions, potatoes and other gustatory treasures, stood siege for the better part of an hour late yesterday afternoon while a mob of women food rioters threw themselves in a dozen successive charges against the revolving doors.

It was the belief of the women, who had marched north from a comparatively tame cost of living meeting in Madison Square, that Governor Whitman was in the hotel. In reality the Governor was quartered at the St. Regis, but the mistake was not discovered until one woman had suffered injuries which may result in death, traffic in Fifth Avenue and in Thirty-fourth Street had been brought to a standstill, five surrounding police stations had been emptied of reserves and a half dozen leaders of the mob had been arrested.

Another scheme besides that of sending a committee to the Governor with a "direct action" appeal actuated the attack. On the way up the avenue the women had decided they could call attention to their demands in no more spectacular fashion than by carrying their banners, their babies and their babies' bottles, and a half dozen leaders of the mob had been arrested.

Two Policemen First Victims

Opposed at first only by the two traffic policemen on duty at the Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street intersection, the marchers struck their first real obstacle when they reached the main entrance to the hotel. The doors had been blocked, and the management had hastily organized bellboys, porters and waiters into a first line of defence. There were probably not more than

three hundred women in the attacking party, for it was only the tail end of the procession, which started from Madison Square for the tenement districts of upper Manhattan and the Bronx, that turned aside. Anything like a close estimate of the number concerned was made impossible by accretions from the rush hour crowd on the avenue, which immediately swelled hundreds into thousands.

With Thirty-fourth Street jammed from curb to curb behind them, the women again and again rushed the entrance. Each time they were beaten back by the hotel's home defence force. In the mean time one of the traffic policemen had got to a telephone, leaving his brother bluecoat in considerably disputed command of the situation.

Reserves to the Rescue

"There must be 7,000 in the crowd now, and it's growing every minute," the traffic man told Lieutenant John Collins, on the desk in the West Thirtieth Street station. "Better 'shoot' the reserves!"

Collins started Sergeant John Cogan toward the Waldorf with twenty reserves, then spread the riot alarm to the West Twentieth Street, the East Twenty-second Street, the West Thirtieth Street and the East Thirtieth Street stations.

Altogether more than a hundred policemen were sent to the relief of the hard put Waldorf garrison. On their arrival in the trouble zone they found Captain Bailey waiting to take command.

Scores of private motors and taxicabs, bringing prospective patrons to the hotel, made quick turns and scooted elsewhere at sight of the mob. A few machines, directed into Thirty-first Street, where the crowd was not nearly so thick, managed to get to the curb there and land their passengers, who proceeded to fight their way in through rear doors.

Those who got into the Waldorf

found themselves in a company whose composite frame of mind was inclined to the uncomfortable. Hysteria or hunger, or a combination of both, made the hundreds of faces pressed against the plate windows a sight neither pleasant nor reassuring.

"Open Warehouses!"

Behind the faces the banners of the rioters were on parade, dipping and twisting as the bearers fought their way along.

"Why should you rich people have everything you want when we are starving?" the women were screaming, and some of the texts on the banners seemed to voice the same direct, personal issue:

"Open the warehouses! We demand food for our children!"

"Greedy speculators, beware! The string is breaking!"

Before Captain Bailey had got his reserves organized, a new disturbance started at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-third Street. Chauncey Whitman, of 1450 Broadway, driving north in the avenue, found his way blocked and stopped his automobile. The mob filled in behind him. Samuel Solomon, a Smith, who had marched up with the women, vaulted into the machine and a dozen of the women climbed on the running board.

"These are fine days for people to be riding in automobiles!" Solomon cried. "Others are starving. Get out and sell the machine. Give the money to the starving poor!"

Solomon started to back his altruistic suggestion with force. Policemen came to Whitman's rescue, and on his complaint Solomon was arrested.

Isabel Sorken, who is nineteen and lives at 187 East 160th Street, in a neighborhood in which food riots have been raging for a week, was half way through a window opened from the Waldorf dining room when Patrolman Thomas Jordan, of the East Twenty-second Street station, yanked her back to the sidewalk. Isabel punched the policeman in the mouth, and was arrested by him on a charge of assault. Jordan was directed to present himself in evidence in Night Court, for his appearance had been materially changed by Isabel's effective right.

Lena Chornak, of 63 East 102d Street, and Joseph Held, a clerk, living at 225 East Tenth Street, were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct. Against Held a further charge of inciting to riot was entered.

Even with the addition of twenty-five plainclothes men to his command, Captain Bailey held to a policy of pacifism in dealing with the mob. He and Sergeant Cogan went among the women,

assuring them that Governor Whitman was not in the hotel. Most of them either did not understand or did not believe.

Many Join with Mob

The hysteria of the mob spread eventually into the ranks of those who had joined it as onlookers. Mrs. Arthur Layton, of 218 West 112th Street, well dressed and palpably of another class than the rioters, was moved to take up the cudgel for lever prices. She found an elevator in the street, adopted it as a rostrum and undertook to act as spokeswoman for the mob.

"We want to see the Governor," she cried. "Don't try to keep us out!"

Afterward, no attention being paid to her demand, she advised the rioters to "stick for their rights."

"My husband makes a good salary and I don't have to worry about high prices," she explained later. "But when I saw those starving women it was too much for me."

After half an hour of persuasion had failed of result Captain Bailey ordered his men to move the crowd. The police found the spectators as hard to get into motion as the rioters. A woman in a lavender coat, who looked as if she belonged rather with the crowd in side the hotel, and a tall young man refused to give ground until flying wedges hit them.

Isaac Cohen, a member of the Home Defence League, assigned to the West Thirtieth Street station, harangued the mob in Yiddish at Captain Bailey's suggestion. He reiterated that the Governor was not in the Waldorf, and for the first time the crowd was convinced. Little further was required to get the women started north again.

When the crowd had been cleared away from the front of the hotel, Mrs. Bessie Chevat, of 190 East 101st Street, was found lying unconscious on the sidewalk. She had been knocked or struck on the head. At Bellevue Hospital it was said she was in a concussion condition. Bessie Horowitz, another operator living at 530 Blake Avenue, Brooklyn, was treated at Bellevue for hysteria and sent home.

Refuse to form any marching much further, better information came to the leaders. Learning Governor Whitman was at the St. Regis, they resolved to try different tactics in asking their appeal to him.

The body of the marchers remained at a discreet distance from the hotel, marking time at Fifty-sixth Street and Madison Avenue, while a committee was sent on to see the Governor.

# ALLOWS \$400,000 FOR FOOD INQUIRY

## House Passes Amendment by 83 to 51 in Cost Investigation

Washington, Feb. 24.—An amendment to the sundry civil bill, appropriating \$400,000 for an investigation by the Federal Trade Commission of the high cost of food, passed the House to-night, 83 to 51.

The investigation was ordered by President Wilson, who directed that particular attention be given to charges of combinations to control food prices. The Department of Agriculture was asked to assist. Facts developed in an investigation started by the Department of Justice will be turned over to the trade commission.

The trade commission has outlined an investigation to last six months and go into every detail of food production

and distribution. If the appropriation is approved by the Senate the commission will start immediately on the inquiry, taking up first the packing industry.

Addressing the House in opposition to the \$400,000 item for the investigation, Representative Fitzgerald declared that the food situation had shown the incapacity of Congress to deal with "the most vital problem affecting the American people to-day."

"The riots that have taken place," he said, "are not the riots of the thrifless and the worthless. It is the outraged and indignant protest of the thrifty, the industrious and the frugal, who cannot meet the demands for prices of food that now exist."

The Interstate Commerce Commission issued a statement expressing its confidence in the Car Service Association of the American Railway Association, representing all the railroads of the country, and saying the organization was doing much "excellent work in the interest of the general public."

Price Conspiracies Suspect

The Car Service Commission, repeating its declaration that the roads are not to blame, through car shortage or congestion, for the rise in price announced that no embargo whatever had been placed by the carriers upon the movement of food for human or animal consumption.

# Food Situation "Improved," Says Whitman; Promises Aid

Governor Whitman had been in conference during the day with George W. Perkins and others interested in the present food situation, but he had anticipated a call from the East Side delegation. When the committee sent word to the Governor's suite that they would like to see him, he informed them that he would talk to them in one of the hotel parlors on the first floor.

The committee consisted of Mrs. Held, Fisher, Mrs. L. Shefkowitz, Miss Rose Gesapick, Mrs. Sarah Erdman, Miss Belle Newman Zilberman and Zil-Beck, of the Labor Forum. Miss Zilberman, acting as spokesman, began to speak of the hunger due to the high prices of food, when the Governor interrupted her.

Situation Called Improved

"Now, I know the situation," he said. "I know the facts, perhaps, better than you do. This situation is largely iniquitous. While the food prices are unquestionably high, there is also an abundance of food at moderate prices."

"Where is it?" chorused the women.

"Have you tried to find it?" asked the Governor. "Now, I want you to understand that I am here to help you and will do all in my power to assist."

Carl Beck explained to the Governor that the committee had come from the demonstration at Madison Square Garden, and that it had been the sense of the meeting that the state government should assist by passing an enabling act, such as was suggested at the meeting of the Board of Estimate Friday, to give the city power to spend from \$1,000,000 to \$10,000,000 in the purchase of food, which should be sold at cost to the people.

The Governor replied that he would support the city in such a measure, provided it was properly drawn and he first had a chance to look it over. He was asked if the Laying Corporation Council drafted a bill which met with his approval and was acceptable to the Legislature, how quickly the city would be enabled to use the money to buy food.

"The bill ought to go in Monday night," said the Governor, "and it ought to come out signed and available to the city by Wednesday. You can rest assured that I will help it all I can."

The women on the committee were

# FOOD DICTATORSHIP URGED FOR WASHINGTON DINNERS

Washington, Feb. 24.—A virtual food dictatorship in the capital was proposed by Representative William S. Bennett, of New York, to-day in a joint resolution, which would empower the District of Columbia Health Department to limit the amount of food consumed at "public dinners" or served to any person in the District within twenty-four hours.

The measure was referred to a committee.

# HOUSE CHAPLAIN PRAYS FOR AID IN FOOD SITUATION

Washington, Feb. 24.—A prayer for relief of the food situation was delivered in the House of Representatives to-day by Chaplain Gaudin. He said: "We pray, in this land of peace and plenty, that the authorities in state and nation may find ways and means by which the abnormal prices of food-stuffs may be brought within reach of the struggling classes, the poor and needy; that the spectacle enacted in many of our cities recently may not be repeated."

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