The Sun.

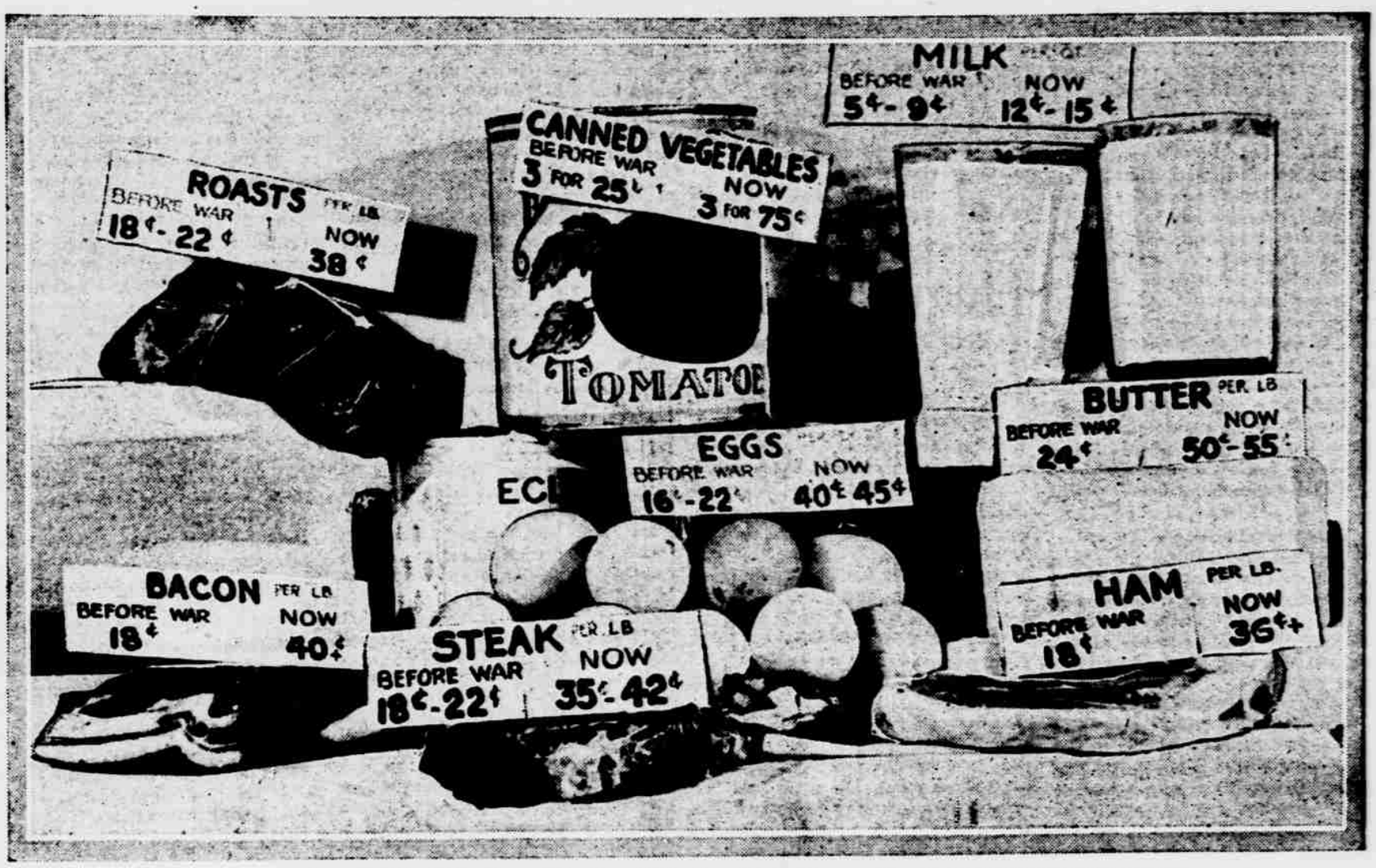
MAGAZINE SECTION

TWENTY PAGES | NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 1918. | SECTION FIVE

Copyright, 1918, by the Sun Printing and Publishing Association.

The Facts About High Prices

Record Production and Systematic Distribution, Not Artificial Regulation, Declared Remedy for Situation That Is Rapidly Growing Most Serious



Before the war this collection of food could be bought for $1.52. Now it costs $3.26 at the least.

By A. C. LAUT.

WE have had meatless days; and we are now entering on an era of wheatless days; and some of us who figure up the effect of the increased cost of living on our home kitchen budget are beginning to wonder if we are going to slide into eatless days. But when we ask ourselves this question—even under our breath—we are rebuked as belonging to the unregenerate and gravely warned against "that famine hysteria" which is sweeping over the world, though four million people have perished in Europe since the war began of "malnutrition"—whatever that word means; and 260,000 children came to New York schools without any breakfast last winter because the price of food has soared so high the home purse could not afford breakfast; and infant mortality has mounted both in America and Europe since the war began, in plain, brutal truth, because the kids have not been getting enough to eat.

Facts a Forefinger of Warning.

I don't know whether those facts are symptoms of "famine hysteria" or not, but they are ugly facts to me and point a long forefinger of warning to a gaunt figure that used to be called famine in the days when people dealt with facts and didn't fool themselves with theories. If theories and windy piffle and long explanations could grow crops we would all be wallowing right now in a redundance of plenty and low prices. Whereas we all know prices are going up and plenty is going down. Prices have gone so high up the poor can't reach them; and plenty has gone so far down it has brought us to the dead line of the vanishing point, whether we spell the words Meat-less, Wheat-less, Eat-less, or Meatless, Wheatless, Eatless.

Nor has "the famine hysteria" thrown its scare over the war-scoured and ne'er-do-wells only, who were close to the dead line in any case. It is when the average householder examines his own food budget that he asks himself whether he is suffering from a nightmare from too much plum pudding or has lost the bottom out of his purse.

Eggs that sold at from 16 to 22 cents before the war in the spring season now sell at from 40 to 45 cents—an increase of 100 per cent. Is that hysteria? The little hen may be excused if it is; for chicken feed that was $1.50 is now $4.50.

Canned vegetables that used to be three for 25 cents are now 25 cents for one. Is that hysteria? It may be; for while householders are paying these prices vegetables are rotting in farm cellars from Maine to Wisconsin because the farmer can't sell them at any price.

So High Babies of the Poor Die.

Milk that used to be from 5 to 9 cents a quart is now from 12 to 15 cents. Is that hysteria? Maybe; for while the infant mortality is going up because the price is so high the poor cannot afford it such a surplus of milk is being backed up on the farmers' hands, unsellable and a dead loss, that farmers are selling off their dairies in hundreds of thousands and going out of business.

Steak that used to be from 18 to 22 cents is now from 35 to 42 cents.

Veal that used to be 16 cents is now 38.

Calf's liver that used to be 24 cents is now 40 plus.

Bacon that used to be 18 cents is now 40 plus.

Ham that used to be 18 cents is now 36 plus.

Wood that used to be from $5 to $8 a cord last winter sold for from $10 to $18; and the freight was only $1.

Butter that used to be 24 cents at this season is now from 50 to 55 cents.

Roasts that were from 18 to 22 cents are now 38 cents.

Steak that used to be served on a hotel table at 50 cents for one portion is now from 90 cents to $1.

Is all this "famine hysteria"?

The poor cannot buy food freely now. Witness the breakfastless children and the surplus of milk that cannot be sold and the potatoes rotting in the cellars of Maine and Wisconsin because the farmers cannot find a market for them at any price. The poor cannot buy food freely now. How much higher will prices have to go before the average well off householder will begin to stint his buying too?

Higher Prices Least of the Evil.

If this be hysteria, every purse in the world has a bad attack of it; *and the higher prices are the least part of the impending evil.* Last winter, no matter how much money you had, if you hadn't any coal you couldn't buy any coal because there wasn't any coal; and next winter, if the present trend continues, if you haven't certain kinds of food, no matter how much money you have, you will not be able to get that food, for the simple reason there will not be enough of that food to go around.

Take the surplus milk backed up on the farmers' hands at a dead loss because the price is so high the poor cannot buy it. The farmers are selling their dairy herds. It takes four years to raise a good dairy herd. Now take a look at the facts and don't blink them—dairy herds sold off to-day mean for four years:

Less milk and higher prices for milk.
Less butter and higher prices for butter.
Less meat and higher prices for meat.
Less leather and higher prices for boots.
Less cheese and Klondike nuggets for it.
Potatoes rotting in the cellars of Maine and Wis-