Voluntary Food Conservation: The United States Home Front in WWI

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Food shortages are a reality of war and during the First World War these shortages were extreme on the European continent but in North America, virtually untouched by the war life went on as usual. The United States only entered into the First World War in 1917 having stayed officially neutral for the first three years of the war. Although officially neutral, from the time period of 1914 through early 1917, the United States had made a profit off of the war by selling their allies especially to France and Great Britain items that the countries really needed to continue fighting the war such as weapons and food. Food was especially important during the First World War as all European countries were suffering from a severe food shortage due to a number of different factors including pre-war crop failures as well as the physical effects created by trench warfare on the earth. Importing food became the only solution to the problem. In the first three years of the war, the United States shipped billions of pounds of wheat, meat and dairy products overseas without much effect on the home front's food supply or a need to ask civilians to conserve food. After their entrance of into the war, the United States was presented the challenge of not only feeding allied soldiers, and civilians as they had done previously but also American soldiers and making sure that there was enough food available for civilians on the home front.

Getting American civilians to conserve food became a priority for the United States government after 1917. Americans were confronted with large amounts of propaganda pushing them to conserve food. From posters to pamphlets published and distributed by both government administrations and smaller organizations to newspaper articles boasting of food conservation as a patriotic duty. Civilians could not get away from food conservation. Propaganda boasting the United State's superiority in food planning, pushing for self-rationing, food substitution and growing war gardens led to an almost entirely voluntary food conservation movement on the

home front. This voluntary effort would not have been possible without the extensive use of propaganda.

From the beginning of the United State's official involvement in the war, the creation of special administrations and commissions to deal with the food issue were key factors in successful food conservation. The National Food Administration was created in 1917 and led by Herbert Hoover, the Administration worked to make sure that there was enough food to be distributed among both the American and Allied soldiers and the civilians The Food Administration was helped out greatly by the 1917 Food Act. The act was described by scholar Maxcy Dickson as being "for military, economic and humanitarian reason…[and to] ensure adequate food supply for American armies and people and for forces and populations of the associated powers".[1] The Food Act gave the federal government control over not only the production and distribution of large commercial crops but also control of the fuel and equipment needed for the harvesting of crops and slaughtering of animals. The Food Administration also acted as a leader for any groups who wished to help with promoting food conservation. The War Garden Commission was founded in order to get people motivated to grow their own vegetables and reduce the strain on the food market within the United States.[2] These government actions and administrations were key in promoting voluntary service.

Hoover's National Food Administration was admired for its efficiency during and after the war and in 1920 William C. Mullendore, a member of the National Food Administration wrote a history of the administration in his book *History of the United States Food Administration 1917-1919.* Although written in 1920, the book was not published until 1941 as

[1]Maxcy R. Dickson, "The Food Administration: Educator," *Agricultural History* 16, no. 2 (1942): 91.
[2] Charles L. Pack, *The War Garden Victorious* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1919), 1-4.

the United State's active involvement in the Second World War became more and more certain.[3] The book discusses the origins and the policies of the Food Administration and glorifies Food Administration president, Herbert Hoover. Mullendore was Hoover's chief personal assistant and he largely attributes the successful win of the First World War to the Hoover's policies and personal character. Mullendore discusses a number of different foodstuffs and how they were conserved by the Food Administration during the war including meat, sugar and wheat but also describes the great help that volunteers offered in the conservation effort.

In 1942 scholar Maxcy R. Dickson reviewed the Food Administration in relation to current events, offering the opinion that the United States Government should look at the success of both the Food Administration and the 1917 Food Act while planning for the impending military conflict. In his essay "The Food Administration as Educator" Dickson celebrates the volunteered efforts of the American Civilians and the United States's ability to provide enough food for other countries involved in the war as well as themselves but urges lawmakers not to copy the actions Food Administration exactly because the present situation was much different than that of the First World War. He tells readers that "In this day of blitzkrieg the need for speedier action will require an approach different from the long suffering and patient attitude of the Food Administration of a quarter century ago"[4] in fact the one thing that made the National Food Administration of 1917 so notable, (voluntary food conservation on the part of civilians) was the one thing Dickson is the most critical of. Waiting for volunteered support, rather than forcing citizens to observe rationed amounts of certain foods would deplete the store of food available too quickly if the United States were to fight in the war according to Dickson.

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[3] William C. Mullendore, *History of the United States Food Administration 1917-1919* (Stanford University Press, 1941), introduction.

[4] Dickson, 96.

In contrast to Dickson's realistic view on voluntary conservation, the president of the War Garden Commission during the First World War, Charles L. Pack believed that voluntary conservation; especially in the form of war gardens would continue to stay relevant no matter the decade or current events. In 1918 Pack published a book titled *The War Garden Victorious* which gave a shining review of the history of the War Garden Commission and also thanked the Food Administration for all that it had done. Pack's flair for the dramatic overshadows the book's details, as he likens Herbert Hoover creating the National Food Administration to the Biblical Joseph, preparing for the "lean years"[5] Pack also provides readers with numerous pages of data and statistics and makes statements that he does not or cannot, support in any way, raising many questions. Without citing any sources, the statistics for the number of urban agriculture plots in the city of New York are called into question.[6] The monetary value of war garden crops are mentioned within in the book but without any proof, it may be hard to put stock into Pack's claim that the city of Indianapolis gained a $600,000 profit from the city's war gardens within one year.[7] It also is unclear how Pack knew that these backyard victory gardens, paired with the limited consumption of wheat, red meat and diary products made people "happier and gave them feelings of being useful"[8] without supplying any input from the civilians who had taken these measures to conserve food. Pack's position as head of the National War Garden Committee does lend credit to his book but his lack of evidence and clear bias must also be acknowledged.

As is the case with all wars, the majority of civilians left on the home front were women and children, leaving jobs normally carried out by men unfilled. In most European countries the

[5] Pack,106-107.
[6] Pack, 7.
[7] Pack, 97-99.
[8] Pack, 107-110.

governments had asked women to take on the jobs left vacant by men early in the war and had successfully filled the most important jobs that kept the country running as close to normal as possible.[9] Seeing the European women's great success in these jobs, feminist, Harriot Stanton Blatch wrote her book *Mobilizing Woman-Power* in 1918. The point of the book can best be summed up by a quote from Theodore Roosevelt who wrote the book's forward. Roosevelt writes, "Mrs. Blatch's aim is to stir the women of this country to the knowledge that this is their war… In other words the appeal of Mrs. Blatch is essentially an appeal for service"[10] Blatch's book describes how the women of England and France had stepped up to the plate and filled the shoes of the men fighting in the trenches when their governments asked them to do so. These women did everything from farm labor to working in the city subways. Blatch also used her book to describe the Germans as brutes who chose to keep their women uneducated and out of the work force even during the war. Pitting Americans against the Germans was an incredibly successful form of propaganda. No one wanted to be like the Germans!

Some women living on the United States home front really answered Blatch's call to duty. Elaine F. Weiss' book *Fruits of Victory: The Woman's Land Army of America in the Great War* is the story of the United States Women's Land Army whose members took on the task of completing the manual labor left unfinished by the men who were away fighting in war. The members of the Woman's Land Army pushed gendered boundaries that had never been questioned in the past while helping the war effort. Dressed in military-style uniforms they worked at hard labor and demanded equal wages to those earned by the men who normally carried out the same tasks.[11] It is Weiss's belief that although the movement was largely

[9] Harriot Stanton Blatch, *Mobilizing Woman-Power* (. New York: The Woman's Press, 1918), 6-10.
[10] Blatch, 3.
[11] Elaine F. Weiss, *Fruits of Victory: The Woman's Land Army of America in The Great War* (Potomoc Books: 2008,), 13-38.

forgotten during the interwar years it paved the way for more equal rights for women in the work force of the future and at the time of the First World War, the Women's Land Army was also a great asset to the National Food Administration.

The majority of American women didn't have the ability or even the desire to join the Women's Land Army and it was important that these women knew about other food conservation programs they could participate in. Herbert Hoover strongly believed that United States citizens needed to voluntarily choose to conserve food and getting information out to the public was the best way to gain their support. Libraries were one of the most popular places used to present the new ideas of conservation to the public. Wayne A. Wiegand's 1989 essay "In Service to the State: Wisconsin Public Libraries during World War I" is critical of some of the actions that the United States Government took during the First World War, including asking librarians to censor any books they had on their shelves which were viewed as dangerous or un-American by the government and also promoting anti-German feelings within their communities.[12] Surprisingly however, Wiegand's essay offers much insight into something other than the "moral decay" of Wisconsin libraries, a look at how local organizations such as the libraries worked to help promote the conservation of food. The National Food Administration advised the State Library Board of Wisconsin in this matter: "librarians ought to develop special exhibits of books, bulletins, and periodical articles on the preservation of fruit and vegetables."[13]. The state's libraries responded promptly to this advice by setting up displays, offering lectures for adults as well as fun activities for children in order to get civilians interested in the idea of

[12] Wayne Wiegand, "In Service to the State: Wisconsin Public Libraries during World War I," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 72, no. 3 (1989),: 220.
[13] Wiegand, 214.

conserving some foods and cutting back, or even completely removing other foods from their diets.[14]

The almost entirely volunteer food conservation movement really set the United States apart from all the other countries involved in the war but the conditions on the American home front were especially different from Germany's. A blockade of German harbors by Great Britain's navy during the war meant that for the entirety of the fighting, the country was unable to receive any imported goods which was a major problem because, as author Belinda J. Davis explains, "by the late 19th century, city dwellers, including the urban poor, had become increasingly dependent…on imported goods"[15]. Davis's book *Home Fires Burning: Food Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* is not a study of governmental policies so much as it is a study of how women and children forced the empire to implement these policies. Unrest, due to the dwindling food supply within the country resulted in protests and riots over bread and potatoes during the war and forced the government to take action to appease the demands of citizens and to keep peace on the home front, especially as the outcome of the war became harder and harder to predict.[16] Public support for the war in Germany was extremely low, if it existed at all (A strong contrast to the United States) and the government had to do something to try and keep the public happy, often giving into the demands of civilians to avoid more unrest in the streets.

Government documents and decrees involving conservation of food and the problem of merchants raising prices unfairly make up a good portion of Davis's primary sources but Davis did not rely solely on government papers and minutes from meetings to draw her conclusions.

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[14] Wiegand, 216.
[15] Belinda J. Davis, Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin (The University of North Carolina Press: 2000,),
[16] Davis, 21-23.

She also chose to examine the documents that would have been the most widely available to the average German citizen, including political cartoons and newspaper articles, as well as police reports.[17] *Home Fires Burning* is the study of just one city in a country that had many cities, as well as a large population of civilians who called the rural areas of the empire their home.[18] The book does cover all different socio-economic classes within its scope and Davis is able to present the feelings of resentment of Berlin residents towards the rural people, who they felt were withholding food but the book does not give any insight into how the rural farmers felt about the different government policies that were put into place to feed the urban population of the country, leaving a large portion of the German population of the World War I era underrepresented or even unacknowledged.[19]

Benjamin Ziemann's book *War Experiences in Rural Germany: 1914-1923* takes up the challenge of studying the home front experience of rural Germans during the First World War. Like Davis, Ziemann does not focus solely on the imperial government's decrees on food conservation and whether or not these measures were successful but also on the common, rural people's reactions to these policies. Rather than just using political cartoons and newspaper articles, Ziemann goes further with his research by studying autobiographies of farmers and their families during the First World War, conducting interviews and reading many personal letters in order to fully understand the daily lives of rural Germans and how they were shaped by the government's food policies. The letters range from those between fathers fighting in the trenches to their children and wives back on the family farm, to letters exchanged between employers and their employees and Ziemann even includes letters from the government to less prominent

[17] Davis, 12-15, 40-42.
[18] Davis, 237-239.
[19] Davis, 22-26.

governmental officials in the smaller towns and villages around the rural areas of the country.[20] The inclusion of these passages from letters gives a very human face to the daily struggle of the women and children living on the home front.

These modern histories offer a balanced look at Germany's World War I era home front but during the war the American people's understanding of the German home front was almost entirely shaped by what they read in newspapers or books which generally had an undisguised bias for American superiority. Journalist Oscar King Davis traveled to Germany and spent several months there between 1916 and 1917 studying the German Food Office (the equivalent of the United States's Food Administration) and their policies's effects on the German people. Upon returning home after the United State's official entrance into the war, Davis published a series of articles in the *New York Times* about what the German Food Office was doing to manage the shortage of food, as well as his general experiences in the country The articles were meant to give readers insight into how Germany was coping with the war. Rather than attacking the German citizens as Blatch had done in *Mobilizing Woman-Power*, Davis laid much of the blame on the government for the present conditions; German civilians and soldiers were portrayed as victims of misfortune throughout his articles. Despite his clear sympathy for the plight of the Germans civilians, Davis's articles still let American readers know how fortunate they were and how quickly the United States could win the war as long as everyone continued to pitch in for the war effort and practiced food conservation because conditions in Germany would eventually become to hard to handle and the government would have to give up eventually.

Farm life on the home front was especially hard in Germany, as every able-bodied man had either joined or been forced into service, leaving women to tend the farms and orchards by

[20] Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany* 1914-1923. (Berg Publishers: 2006,): 155-209.

themselves.[21] The Prussian government had seized control of all fuel and ingredients for fertilizer in 1914 but instead of rationing these items equally for both military and agricultural use, the fuel and fertilizer ingredients were sent straight to the frontlines, further devastating the agricultural sector of Germany. The government seizure left farmers without fertilizer for their crops, a major blow after years of crop failure.[22] The act also meant that ingredients for fertilizer could now be used for chemical warfare at the government's discretion. After the German government declared that the produce from these farms as well as animals, especially pigs belonged first to the military then to the civilian population of the entire country, farmers' wives left alone on the farm were expected to not only feed their own families but the wives and children of all of the other German soldiers as well. [23] Even if there was a surplus of food after the harvest it was not given to those who had planted it.[24] Through the letters and autobiographies which he consulted, Ziemann notes that it was not out of the ordinary for farm wives to go to work in the field at three in the morning and work constantly until nine in the evening in order to produce a crop without the use of fertilizers and without the help of horse-drawn machines or the strength and knowledge of the men who normally worked the fields in times of peace.[25] One farmer's wife wrote to her sister in the city that "Things aren't looking good with the summer cereal because of the long dry spell we had here but there are lots of potatoes and cabbage. Once again, there will be enough though we aren't allowed to use too much"[26] The amount not allotted for the family would be sent off to the cities for sale, emphasising the struggle of both rural and urban people in Germany.

[21] Ziemann, 154-157.
[22] Ziemann.158.
[23] Ziemann, 75-77.
[24] Ziemann, 157.
[25] Ziemann, 154-157.
[26] Ziemann, 157.

In the United States farms were not struggling to grow crops without fertilizers although the 1917 Food Act had given control of both fuel and fertilizer to the government. In contrast to Germany's choice to use these items solely for military purpose the United States Government chose to divide fertilizer between military use and the home front agriculture sector. Still, there was a shortage of men to perform the manual labor on the farms and women stepped up to do this work while the men were gone. The lack of men to work on the farms and Blatch's plea for women to do their patriotic duty helped to cultivate the creation of the Women's Land Army.[27] The work these women performed included farming and forestry as well as other jobs normally reserved for men. At first, the members of the Women's Land Army were scoffed at but their worth was eventually shown to be invaluable. One reporter admitted that when he first heard that one women planned to run a large farm on her own, employing only female farmhands he "told her that the girls might do well picking strawberries or apples, or chasing butterflies or cheering up the hired man. But as for pitching hay…"[28] The farms which were run by the Women's Land Army were able to produce multiple tons of food that were sent overseas[29] which was enough for proof of their usefulness for the Food Administration who praised their work.[30]

Drawing comparisons between the two countries from the articles and literature available to them, Americans on the home front clearly saw how their situation was more desirable than that of the Germans. A *New York Times* article from September 1917 stated why the food conservation method in the United States was so incredible and special. "Only in our country is each one permitted to judge for himself the duty he owes his country in food Consumption… As

[27] Weiss, 81.
[28] Weiss, 151.
[29] Weiss, 4.
[30] Mullendore, 19.

a free people we have elected to discharge this duty, not under autocratic decree"[31] This difference made Americans feel that they were superior but with that superiority came great responsibility and the expectation that they would work to help those allies who were less fortunate than themselves.

Sympathy for the helpless Europeans was a strong motivation for food conservation and the Food Association played up this sympathy. Many of the "attractive" posters that libraries pasted on their walls on the suggestion of the National Food Administration, were meant to create sympathy for the allies and stress the need for food conservation. One poster quotes General John J. Pershing as saying "We must not only feed our soldiers at the front but the millions of women and children behind our lines" and in the poster's background is an illustration of a convoy of food trucks moving towards the frontlines of the war.[32]Another poster meant to incite sympathy depicted three French peasant women pulling a plow that would have, under normal circumstance been pulled by a horse, with a caption reading "Will you help the Women of France? Save Wheat."[33]

Fig. I: Edward Penfield, *Will You Help the Women of France?*, 1918. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

[31] "Hoover Announces Food Crusade Week," *The New York Times*, September 30, 1917.
[32] Wiegand, 214.
[33] Wiegand, 217.

The Food Administration was not the only group playing on the sympathy of the American public in order to push for help. The American Red Cross published pamphlets titled "You've Eaten Today But He Hasn't." The pamphlet told readers about a French woman who was stranded behind enemy lines and the only food that she received for herself and her children was delivered by the Red Cross who could only provide this food because of the selfless conservation actions of Americans civilians. Other stories included those of French orphans living in Red Cross run shelters. The pamphlet concludes by asking readers to continue their support of the war effort through donations and further conservation.[34]

While sympathy was important in getting people thinking about the war inciting sympathy was useless if direct action wasn't taken. One of the largest, most publicized and successful programs of the Food Administration were conservation pledge cards. Citizens who signed the pledge cards agreed to follow guidelines set down by the National Food Administration. The guidelines ranged from eating wheatless and meatless meals at least once a week to telling pledges how much of certain food item they could purchased each week while staying faithful to the food conservation effort. One of the most important guidelines was one that asked for citizens to purchase one ounce of potato or corn flour for every ounce of wheat flour they purchased so that more wheat could be sent overseas.[35] The food conservation pledge program was carried out across the United States in a number of different manners, including public meetings and speeches from *The Four Minute Men*[36] but most importantly canvassing of neighborhoods by both state employees and volunteers alike.

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[34] Oregon State Archives, World War I Publications and Ephemera, Series: Oregon State Defense Council, Box 87A-42, "You've Eaten He Hasn't", American Red Cross.

[35] Mullendore, 24-35.

[36] Hoover wrote a letter asking the members of the *Four Minute Men* to speak on behalf of the Food Administration. The letter was printed the organization's monthly newsletter in December of 1917.

In September of 1917, Hoover announced the creation of the first Conservation Week and volunteers entered into an intense canvas of the entire country. According to an article published on September 30, 1917 in the *New York Time*s, between October 21st and 28th all 22,000,000 households in the United States would be asked to enroll in a conservation plan. The people who went out to distribute and collect pledge card signatures were largely female volunteers and a *New York Times* article published on October 30, 1917 noted that many prominent and well respected women of the New York City community would be collecting the signatures themselves.[37] These volunteers worked long days often not returning to the office until six in the evening where they then counted number of signatures collected before going home.[38] On the west coast, signatures were collected in the same manner. The January 1918 *California War Bulletin* thanked the California Women's Committee for their work on the pledge card campaign,[39] " The principle work of the women's Committee for the past two months has been to spread the doctrine of food conservation. With no official position with the National Food Administration"[40] the bulletin also noted that county employees would be going around to try and collect additional signatures from anyone that may have missed in the original canvass of the neighborhood, in the following weeks.

The highly public nature of the pledge card drive and conservation week meant that not signing the card could result in public embarrassment and the stigma of being unpatriotic. A number of articles in the *New York Times* published during 1917 and 1918 played up the importance of the pledge cards. One article in particular shows how seriously the pledge cards were taken by American citizens as the writer announces that a "Mrs. Francis Butler Griffan …

[37] "Women Help Hoover," *The New York Times,* August 19, 1917.
[38] "Ousts servants Who Spurn Food Cards," *The New York Times,* October 30, 1917.
[39] The California Women's committee was a larger organization composed of smaller groups of women such as parent teacher associations and the Women's Temperance Movement.
[40] California War Bulletin, 14.

had discharged two cooks, a maid, and her butler after they refused to sign the food conservation pledge cards"[41] Mrs. Griffan is practically presented as a martyr for the war effort; through giving up her uncaring staff, she is a shining example of true patriotism. The article went on to criticize other servants who had refused to sign the pledge card and praised their employers for firing them from their positions. In the same article, famous actress Amelia Bingham was cited for refusing to sign a pledge card when a volunteer seeking signatures appeared on her doorstep. Fortunately for Bingham, and her career, the journalist happily informs readers that this had just been a misunderstanding between the woman canvassing the neighborhood and the actress's butler.[42] Miss Bingham was reported as being more than happy to do her patriotic duty by signing the card and enrolling in the conservation program. [43]

While American citizens were signing conservation pledges voluntarily, people in Germany were living the hard reality of government imposed ration cards and a food supply that was dwindling rapidly. During his months spent in Germany, Oscar King Davis, as a guest at a hotel was issued a bread card, which he tells readers was "almost exactly that of all the other and larger cards issued of house-holders and good for a week or more as the case may be."[44] Ration cards specified the exact amount of bread by weight, which citizens could purchase in an allotted time period. The amount of bread a person was able to purchase was determined by a number of factors including the number of members in a household and the age of the children.[45] The ration cards created numerous problems including dishonest waiters in restaurants and hotel dining rooms who stole ration squares, wealthy Germans who often were willing to pay more and thus received more bread than their ration card allowed and bakers who added water or other, less

[41] "Ousts Servants Who Spurn Food Cards" *New York Times* October 30, 1917.
[42] "Ousts"
[43] "Ousts"
[44] Oscar King Davis "Bread Card's Cycle is Full of Trouble," *The New York Time*s, April 14, 1917.
[45] Belinda J. Davis, 47-52.

savory ingredients while baking to increase the bread's weight.[46] Belinda J. Davis reveals in her book that underhanded dealing of merchants in Berlin were extremely common and struck members of all economic classes. A cartoon published in December of 1914 in a popular Berlin Newspaper featured an overweight shopkeeper telling an equally overweight customer: "Don't get excited Mr. Secretary you'll vet your ten rolls, just like always. But now you also must order ten sausages too." [47]

Without the benefit of imported wheat, the dwindling amount of bread in Germany was strikingly obvious to Davis and the cards were a ploy by the Food Office "to remind the loyal Germans every day how long they have been made to suffer by the British blockade and helps to instill a proper brotherly love into them"[48]during his stay in Germany in his writings he describes the situation of the common people, who after standing in line for hours, were turned away because the bread was all gone and the ration cards were simply useless. Davis than infers that Americans were lucky that bread was still a common staple of their diets and not a luxury like it was for many German citizens.[49]

Meat was another luxury in Germany. Hotels and restaurants had to strictly adhere to the meatless days declared by the Food Office, much to the disappointment of Davis who disliked the substitutions offered in place of pork and beef. While public establishments had to adhere to the strict guidelines for meatless days civilians were able to eat all of their weekly allotted meat in one sitting if they so desired. The week's amount of meat was incredibly small, less than a pound and the small ration, according to Davis was a direct result of the British blockade of German harbors. The German Food Office had cut the rations of meat so low in 1916, that "it

[46] Oscar King Davis, "Bread Card".
[47] Belinda J. Davis, 54.
[48] Oscar King Davis, "Bread Card".
[49] Oscar King Davis, "Bread Card".

enabled Germany to bring the number of her swine back from 13,000,000 to 17,000,000 in one year."[50] Which meant that importing pork wasn't necessary. Oscar King Davis again reminds Americans that they are in a great position in terms of food when he writes that "Going through a week on half a pound of meat is no joke, but it can be done, if you have to do it."[51] With this type of stark reality presented to them Americans were being forced to admit that their situation wasn't so bad.

In the United States meat conservation was also important. Even before the pledge program was in full swing a number of groups were promoting switching fish for red meat in order to send the largest amount of beef possible to the soldiers and civilians in Europe. On the east coast, The Women's City Club of New York published a food bulletin urging the use of seafood in place of red meat. The bulletin was published in the July 10, 1917 *New York Times* and urged civilians to "develop a cosmopolitan taste for seafood"[52] which would allow for many inexpensive dinner options. On the other side of the country, the *California War Bulletin* which was both written and published by the California State Government asked residents of the state to substitute one serving of fish for one red meat serving each week and they would not only be saving money but also helping the war effort.[53] The Catholic Church of the United States also had put its considerable influence behind the conservation movement and the 1918 *Handbook for the National Catholic War Council* urged church officials to use their influence to promote cutting beef from diets all together in favor of fish, until the end of the war[54]

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[50] Oscar King Davis, "German Privatization Next to Starvation," *The New York Times,* April 2, 1917.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "Meat Saving Urged By Woman's Club," *The New York Times,* July 10, 1917.

[53] Fish was less expensive than beef and pork at the market and the government told the public the that fish fed themselves and were naturally replenish able.
[54] Oregon State Archives, World War I Publications and Ephemera, Series: Oregon State Defense Council, Box 87A-42, *and California War Bulletin,* 79-80.

Meatless, as well as wheatless days were promoted in the United States by Herbert Hoover and his Food Administration as well but these days were only suggestions that did not have to be followed by penalty of the law. Most restaurants and hotels around the United States appeared to have followed the suggestions, offering wheatless and meatless dishes one day every week.[55] A traveling salesman who had most of his dinners at whichever hotel he was staying at, wrote a poem about the lack of food items available in establishments during the war and how each day he was growing more and more weary of both the war and the conservation efforts. The poems starts out with the lines "My Tuesdays are Meatless, My Wednesdays are Wheatless I am getting more eatless each day" and concludes with the statement "my God I hate the Kaiser"[56]

These type of complaints reveal that not all Americans wholeheartedly accepted the voluntary food conservation. For some Americans it was against their morals to take part in the conservation of food to help win the war. Dickson notes in his 1942 essay that the moral dilemma was particularly strong for those who supported banning alcohol within the United States. Dickson writes, "Prohibitionists declared that as long as the British workers were drinking beer and the French were drinking wine they would have no part of wheat conservation."[57] The Women's Temperance movement also originally did not support sending wheat to Europe for this reason but once the American soldiers were sent to the European continent and into the trenches, the movement became staunch supporters of conservation in all of its many forms in order to get American men back home as quickly and safely as possible.[58] Despite unrest for food conservation among these groups, public dissent was not prevalent in the United States.

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[55] Dickson, 95.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Dickson, 94.
[58] Pack, 36-38.

Another way to conserve food, which was highly successful during the war was the war garden movement. Pushed by Charles L. Pack and his commission, the goal was to encourage every person and every household in America to grow their own vegetables, whether in their own yards or in vacant lots loaned out by cities for this exact purpose. Growing vegetables at home was meant to relieve any possible strain on the food market within the United States.[59] War gardens were not a new phenomenon in the world. They had been utilized during every previous war in Europe but it was the first war in which the United States made an effort to promote them. Libraries, as Weigand suggests in his essay were of paramount importance in getting information about food conservation out to the public and the War Garden Commission utilized them by offering the libraries a number of free ways to promote growing vegetables at home including information pamphlets and booklets with information about the best way to create a garden plot and which vegetables grew quickly and easily in a small area, as well as hiring speakers who could give talks to library patrons about the most scientific and up-to-date ways of canning the vegetables from the garden.[60] The final, and possibly most important offering that the War Garden Commission had, were posters.[61] On these posters a small blurb told everyone to write to the National War Garden Commission for free booklets on growing vegetables, canning, and drying foods.[62]

"Let no backyard be a slacker this summer"[63] was a common slogan on War Garden Commission posters while other posters pleaded with American women to "Sow Seeds of Victory, plant and raise your own vegetables".[64]

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[59] Pack, 24-28..
[60] Pack,
[61] Wiegand, 214-216.
[62] Wiegand, 217.
[63] Wiegand, 220.
[64] Wiegand, 218.

Fig. II: James Montgomery, *Sow the Seeds of Victory*, 1918. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

The most recognizable posters used to encourage the cultivation of war gardens during the war featured vegetables with faces, arms and legs that were always presented as soldiers. These type of images of "soldier vegetables" were meant to get people excited about war gardens and to make them feel as if they were fighting the war themselves. The posters served to consistently remind civilians of the war in Europe. Some posters featured "enemy plotters" who were common garden pests such as potato bugs.

This poster created in 1917 or 1918 depicts a gardener coming up over the side of the all too recognizable war trench, armed with their hoe and accompanied by vegetables ready to do battle with the German enemy.

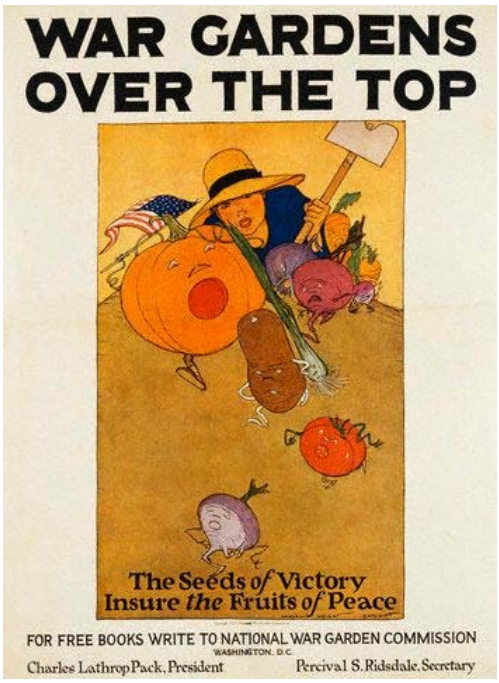

Fig. III: Maginal Wright Barney ,*War Gardens Over the Top*, 1917-1918. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

All of the conservation efforts of United States citizens were done in order to ensure that their allies and their "boys on the frontlines" were receiving the nourishment they needed to continue fighting the war. Organizations such as the American Red Cross who assured civilians of soldier's well being with pamphlets describing a regular soldier's rations and how the United States military was able to provide larger rations than any other military involved in the war.[65] News articles also attempted to lay to rest by publishing articles that described soldiers at the front lines as being "well fed and in good spirits"[66].

Germany's military was not so lucky. Oscar King Davis's April 7, 1917 article in *The New York Times* was titled "Feed Army First, is Germany's Rule" and he describes the situation near the end of his stay in Germany as a country where the only people eating enough to survive were the soldiers and the wealthy who could illegally purchase food[67] Despite all available

[65] "You've Eaten Has He?"
[66] *New York Times*
[67] Oscar King Davis, "Feed Army First, is Germany's Rule" *The New York Times*, April 7, 1917.

resources apparently being sent to the frontlines, according to the Food Office's reports to Davis, German soldiers did not seem to be benefiting from the sacrifices of their starving country men and women back home. The lack of food in the trenches for soldiers is something that both Belinda J. Davis and Joe Ziemann discuss in their books.

Ziemann discovered many different letters showcasing the fact that soldiers were not receiving more food. In a letter home, one soldier wrote, "I have to tell you that our rations have been cut again. Earlier we got half a slice of bread every day and now we only get a third"[68] Soldiers begged their families to send any food they could but only farm families who could save a portion of their crop allotment specifically for family members in the trenches were able to answer these requests.[69] Ziemann writes that "Given how serious the shortages were, soldiers were greatly concerned [about] that the unfair provision of food"[70] Confusion and anger over the sparse rations by soldiers who may not have been aware of just how dire conditions were on the home front regarding food, resulted in fights for food in the trenches, extremely low morale and a major lack of support for the government.

The conservation of food by the United States during World War I was a major success. At the end of the war the United States was able to not only continue to feed their allies and themselves but were also able to shoulder the added demand for food from Germany.[71] German officials pleaded with the United States's government for food, stating that starvation would be the ruining of their country if something was not done, the United States agreed to send meat, wheat and dairy products to the Germans and made a profit from their transactions.[72] This

[68] Ziemann, 75.
[69] Ziemann, 75-77.
[70] Ziemann, 76.
[71] Weiss, 231-232.
[72] A public wail of protest greeted the prospect of further conservation efforts on the part of the American people for the sake of the Germans who had been seen as the enemy during the war but despite public dissent the government agreed to send food.

success and post-war profit would not have been possible without the voluntary food conservation promoted by large amounts of propaganda. Although Maxcy Dickson felt that the type of voluntary food conservation could never repeat itself, during the First World War it was the right answer to the European food shortage.