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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
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FACT SHEET ON PROGRAM TO INCREASE MAINE SARDINE PACK

The Problem

The United States must depend on its own fishing industry to supply enough sardines to meet civilian, military, and export commitments since the war has halted sardine imports. The last stocks of Norwegian sardines were largely consumed in 1941, placing the burden of supply on Maine and other sardine-producing areas of the United States and possessions. A very limited supply of Portuguese sardines comes in now, as most of that supply goes to the British.

The tiny sardine and its big brother, the sardine herring, are an important source of protein, and they contain various other nutrients which are essential to health. So important are they to our war effort that cans of sardines are often referred to as "Tin Soldiers."

The Objective

To increase the pack of sardines in Maine by encouraging more people, especially women, to work in canneries. (There are 38 sardine canneries in Maine.)

The Background

The Maine sardine pack, although greater than the pre-war average, has been decreasing since 1941. During the 5-year period, 1936-40, Maine produced 1,600,000 cases per year. This total was almost doubled in 1941 when the pack reached 3,131,000 cases. After the United States entered the war, however, the pack dropped to 2,720,000 cases in 1942 and 2,353,000 cases in 1943 as a result of manpower difficulties and Government requisitioning of boats for war needs.

The War Food Administration estimates a pack this year of about 2,400,000 cases, but has asked for approximately a 30-percent increase, which would be about 720,000 cases more than the production in 1943.

Lack of Workers

The lack of workers in sardine canning factories is the main barrier to an increase in production. There are enough boats and fishermen to meet this year's goal but more people are needed to preserve the expected larger catches.

The Government, buying for military and export commitments, is the largest purchaser of Maine sardines. In 1942 the Government bought about 65 percent of the pack, 55 percent in 1943, and is expected to buy 45 percent of the production this year. The remainder of the pack goes to civilians.

Promotion Slant

In urging workers, principally women, to take jobs in canning factories, the fact that Maine has done a remarkable job in increasing sardine production should not be overlooked. The State's citizenship should be commended at the same time that it is called upon to exert an even greater effort to help put the Nation's food program over the top.

These two points should be stressed in all releases endorsing work in canneries:

1. It is patriotic.
2. It is profitable.

That it is the duty of every woman or man, who is not in war work already and has available time, to work in canneries should be pointed out. The emphasis that these men and women are taking the places of their sons, fathers, and friends who have gone to war should appeal to their patriotic sense, and Maine's patriotism can well be determined by the fact that enlistments in that State have been ahead of the draft quota. But an appeal to patriotism is not enough. They should be reminded of the extra dollars that they can earn in their spare or full time.

Women are most suitable for work in packing sardines. Therefore, the program should be directed largely to women. Although canneries have modern conveyor systems and automatic machines that do everything else, no one has been able to develop a machine that can match the skill of a woman's deft fingers in grading sardines, snipping off their heads and tails, and laying them neatly in cans.

Sardine canning is a "whistle industry." When the boats come in with their catches the cannery whistle blows for the flakers who unload the fish and get them ready for packing. Then, about 2 hours after the first whistle, a second whistle summons the workers to the cannery and they work until that particular catch has been canned.

This type of work should appeal to women, especially those who want part-time employment which they can do in addition to housework.

In most cases, private bus transportation is furnished by the canneries and is available from outlying towns within a 20 to 30-mile radius of the plant.

Timing of Program

The need for more workers in canneries is expected to be critical during May and June of this year, but a shortage of women workers throughout the year is expected. A concentrated radio, newspaper, and visual aid campaign during these 2 months would supplement programs by other agencies and should be the force behind many final decisions which will send more workers into canneries.

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