

The ABC's of OPA  
Wednesday, October 20, 1945  
Time: 1:30-1:45

Station WHDH  
Hotel Touraine  
Boston, Mass.

Speaker: Lawrence J. Bresnahan, OPA Director

Announcer: And now, we bring to you an original WHDH presentation, arranged in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Office of Price Administration--the ABC's of OPA. Today thousands of Massachusetts citizens stand ready to accept any inconvenience or make any sacrifice that will help to bring victory one hour sooner or save one more American life...but Massachusetts citizens have a right to ask that wartime regulation of their lives be held to the positive minimum necessary to win the war quickly...They have a right to ask that wartime rules of living be kept as simple and as practical as possible...and this afternoon Lawrence J. Bresnahan, State Director of the office of Price Administration in Massachusetts tells of new progress in that direction...Mr. Bresnahan.....

Bresnahan: Thank you, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, and good afternoon. Today I want to tell you something about War Book Four, a new kind of ration book which you will receive next week. When I have finished I think you will agree that an important new step has been taken toward making rationing a little easier for all of us to live with.

War Book Four is really part of an overall program of simplification. During the last few months we have been trying to make some badly needed ~~xxxxxx~~ changes in regulations and procedures as they affect American families, business men, and the local war price and rationing boards.

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Many of our plans had to be adopted under pressure of emergencies in the earlier days of rationing. We have wanted to see some of them changed for a long time. Now some changes are being made wherever it is possible to eliminate unnecessary annoyance without injuring the effectiveness of the program. We haven't achieved perfection by any means. I guess that just isn't possible...but we are making progress.

There are several ways in which war ration book four is going to save us taxpayers time, money and annoyance.

Up to now we have had to issue a new ration book every four or five months. As one book has come off the press, the next one in the series has had to go into production. During the past few weeks you housewives have had to ~~skip~~ shop with three ration books for each member of the family.

Eventually, war ration book four will be sufficient... and that alone will be a blessing for both housewives and retailers.

Some problems still remain to be ironed out, but we are hoping that war book four is going to last for almost two years.

That means an important money-saving for taxpayers. It costs approximately one and a half million dollars to print and distribute each food ration book.

In addition we have had to ask thousands of patriotic school teachers to give millions of man hours of their time to distribute these various books. Under the new plan much of that effort will be saved.

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Book four will last longer because it contains a larger number of stamps.

I am sorry to say that the stamps are the same small size used for the first time in war book three. I know these stamps may be hard to handle. They are a much more serious problem for the grocer, who has to sort and handle hundreds of them every day.

But we just had to accept that one defect in order to make this new ration book last as long as possible. As you know, we face a serious paper shortage. Any increase in the number of pages would have sharply increased the cost of the book and the amount of paper used.

Now, before I tell you how we hope to make other even more important savings through war book four, let me tell you a little about the book itself. In the first place, it will not be used to ration any new, mysterious commodity. It is designed solely for the rationing of shoes, sugar, and processed foods...and eventually, meats and fats.

When you get your book you will find that it contains red, blue and green stamps...96 of each. There are also two pages of black stamps...some marked "spare," some marked "sugar" and others marked "coffee." The big job of printing book four was already well underway before coffee was removed from max rationing. The cost of starting the whole job over again would have been prohibitive. That is why these coffee stamps are included, so don't let them worry you.

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For the time being you can just disregard all the red and blue stamps in your new ration book, and the black ones marked "spare" and "coffee."

Only the green stamps marked "A" "B" and "C" will become valid on November 1...for processed foods. They will continue to be good until December 20. You will use these green stamps just as you have been using the blue stamps in war ration book two to get processed foods. Incidentally, the blue stamps marked "X" "Y" and "Z" in war ration book two will continue to be good until November 20. Blue stamps "U" "V" and "W" expire today.

Now, there is another stamp in war ration book four that becomes good on November 1. That is the black sugar stamp marked "No. 29" which will be good for five pounds of sugar until Jan. 15.

Remember that we will continue to use the brown stamps in war ration book three to get meats and fats. Of course, as I have said, the job of rationing meats and fats will also be taken over by war book four when book three is used up.

Now let us see where these additional savings are going to be made through the use of war book four.

While we will begin on November First to use the green stamps with values of 8 points, 5 points, 2 points, and 1 point, we expect to be able to make an important change early in 1944. If everything works out, as now planned, the stamps in war book four will eventually be worth 10 points.

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Suppose you want to buy something with a value of 7 points. Instead of giving your grocer a 5-point stamp and a 2-point stamp, you will just give him one stamp valued at 10 points...and you will get your change in three small fiber tokens that will be a lot easier to handle than the flimsy ration stamps. That's the plan after the first of the year.

That will certainly make shopping a lot easier for you...but think what it will mean to your grocer. It will mean that he will no longer have to sort and total up a large mass of coupons...all with different point values. It will mean that he will have far fewer individual coupons to handle.

The grocer's problem was one of the most important considerations when the new ration book was designed.

It is just as practical as OPA could make it...with the help of a group of retailers representing chain and independent grocery stores, butcher shops, and country general stores.

I don't think our grocers here in Massachusetts get anywhere near enough credit for the job they have done since the rationing and price control program began. Their work has been increased tremendously at a time when it has been almost impossible for them to get enough help. Yet they have carried on, knowing that if Massachusetts people were to be fed, an effective rationing program was necessary.

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Now here is how to get your family's new war ration book. They will be distributed here in Massachusetts, next week, starting Monday. You will not get them by mail as you did in the case of war ration book three. This time one adult member of the family will have to go to a school registration place, fill out a very simple application for the whole family and get the new books right on the spot.

The exact time of the registration and the schools in which it will take place in your community has been announced locally. Here in Boston, the registration days are Monday through Thursday, 9 to 5 daily.

This point is very important, when you go to the school to get the number four books for your family, be sure to take along all of their number three books. War ration book four cannot be issued to any person who does not produce a war ration book three.

Our school teachers certainly deserve the gratitude of every Massachusetts family. They have already handled more than their share of these big registration jobs. The mailing plan in book three worked out well in some areas, but in others there was some delay in getting the books out. That is why we are back asking for the school teachers help again. Our school teachers have proved that they can conduct an intensive personal registration quickly and efficiently. I am glad for their sake and

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yours, too, that the registration procedure is so very simple.

Now, a good many people have asked me whether or not stamps will be removed from war ration book four for any reason at the time of registration. The answer is "No."

You will remember that when war book two was distributed, families having excess stocks of canned goods on hand had coupons removed from their number two books to compensate for those stocks. Where the excess was greater than could be corrected by removing half the stamps from the book, it was planned to tailor the remainder of the "points owed" from future ration books.

When the plan for book four was being developed, this question was debated for a long time. It was perfectly obvious that a few families who had large excess stocks when processed food rationing began would have a windfall unless the stamps were tailored from war book four as originally planned.

On the other hand, if the tailoring process were carried out, the cost in time and effort would be tremendous. First, the burden on volunteer registrars would be greatly increased. Second, more thousands of man hours would be lost while you people stood in line waiting for a small minority of books to be tailored.

Tailoring War Ration Book Four to distribute this excess among all American families just didn't seem sensible, and in the end, the OPA people in Washington

Bresnahan:  
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who argued in favor of simplicity won out. I certainly think they made a realistic decision.

Now, many other people have asked me if stamps would be removed from War Ration Book Four to compensate for any stocks of home canned foods Massachusetts families have in their cold cellars. Again the answer is "No."

There were a few rather theoretical people who advanced some pretty good reasons for doing it. They pointed out that unless the people who had home canned food were prevented from purchasing commercially canned food in the stores, thousands of families who were unable to have gardens last summer might have to go without this winter.

They had a strong argument...but their plan certainly did not fit in with the new effort to be just as realistic as possible in formulating OPA programs.

It did not take OPA people in Washington long to decide that folks who had produced extra food at the expense of some money and sore backs had a right to use it as they liked.

So you certainly won't have to give up ration stamps from War Book Four if you have a stock of home canned foods on hand.

But, at the same time, we cannot let ourselves forget that the food situation this winter is not going to be easy.

Through no fault of their own, thousands of large



Bresnahan:  
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families living in big cities did not have gardens. They are going to have to depend entirely on their ration books for food this winter, while some of us will have both our ration books and our stock of home canned foods. Obviously if we can get along without using all of our ration stamps, there will be just that much more food available in the stores for folks who have no stock of home canned foods.

I think those who have several rows of jars on cellar shelves should try to get through each rationing period this winter using as few processed food coupons as possible. That is the kind of neighborly cooperation that will win this war faster than anything else.

And now in closing, I might say that while some things about this new ration book plan may confuse you a little... one thing is certain. The new plan is a long step toward simplicity in the food rationing program.

Our main objective in the OPA is to see to it that American people get the greatest possible protection from rationing and price control...but with a minimum of annoyance.

We may never fully achieve that ambition, but I am convinced that we are going in the right direction.

And now thank you ladies and ~~gentlemen~~ gentlemen, and good afternoon.

Announcer:

You have just heard your State OPA Director, Lawrence J. Bresnahan. This has been the ABC's of OPA....an original WIDM presentation, arranged in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Office of Price Administration, which comes to you every Wednesday afternoon at 1.30. Tune in to station WIDM next Wednesday afternoon at this same time for another in the series of OPA programs.