

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.

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NATIONAL SWEET TOOTH
 or
THE STORY OF THE LONE RATION RANGER.

Well, rationing is out - out that is - except for one item and that as you've guessed is sugar. That sugar stamp is like rationing's Lone Ranger, who like a lingering ghost shouts Heigh Ho Sugar and continues to ride on and on. Moreover, that lone stamp may linger for quite awhile because the sugar shortage is still with us. It is a sweet and yet a sour tale because it affects not only the makers of candy and candy bars, the bakers of sweet rolls, cake and other delectables, the housewives who want to can fruit and other dainties, but also the old familiar sugar bowl. So, here's the distressing story without a lot of dreary figures and dry statistics except the few that are needed to tell the story.

WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL THE SUGAR.

There is a lot of sugar produced in the world but just what happens to sugar in our country that a person cannot go down to the corner store, lay down the money and pack away a nice white muslin bag filled with 25 pounds of this indispensable product. We are doubtless the greatest sugar consuming nation in the world and in a normal year, we use about seven million tons. Start with the sugar bowl on the family table; then comes the pie, cake, cookies that mother makes at home or buys from the baker; it's in that luscious looking preserve or jelly on the table; it's in that "coke" you just had at the drugstore fountain; it's in the chocolate bar you just ate; it's in that ice cream you just heard advertised over the radio; it's in that canned fruit on the grocers shelves. There are a thousand and one uses and that's what takes in normal years about 7 million tons. That's a lot of sugar.

AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM.

Let's start at home. In ten or 11 western and middle western states some sugar farmers produce beet sugar. Down in Florida and Louisiana where the climate is a bit on the tropical side they grow vast fields of sugar cane to produce cane sugar - perhaps a half million tons every year. Then there is Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands - commonly referred to as offshore islands - which are ideally suited to sugar and where this is the principal crop. Now journey across the Pacific to Hawaii, the Philippines, Java and Formosa - all sugar producing areas. From each of these we obtain sugar. But sugar beets and sugar cane are not unlike any other farm crop in at least one particular. The size of the crop depends upon weather and growing conditions. If it's too dry or too wet, that affects the crop. If a war comes along and prevents production in any one of these areas, the amount of sugar available diminishes. If farm labor cannot be had in the beet fields especially - because it is a hand crop - there will be less sugar. Well, that's what happened. War affected Java, Formosa, the Philippines and Hawaii. A drought struck the Cuban crop. Other countries wanted a little larger share of the whole crop. The result - less sugar for us.

SHARE AND SHARE.

The Department of Agriculture had to determine how much sugar would be available and tell the OPA. The OPA then had to figure out how to distribute it. It worked out a formula and said "So much for industrial uses, so much for home use." And this amount is about 50% of what we've been used to. So there's the story of rationing's Lone Ranger - the sugar stamp. Well, when will it get better, you ask? No improvement to speak of in the first three months of 1946; perhaps a little increase in sugar supplies in the second three months; substantial improvement in the third quarter of this year. That's what the government's sugar experts believe. It's a sweet story with a slightly sour note.