The Honorable
The President
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

I am deeply disturbed about the food situation here and abroad and its relationship to our present program of rationing.

I have no first-hand knowledge of the food situation in Europe and other foreign countries. However, according to all public reports the situation in many areas is desperate indeed with tens of millions of people close to the starvation line.

I believe, as I am sure you do, that the sending of the largest possible shipments of food overseas is essential from a humanitarian point of view. It seems equally clear that such shipments will serve to increase the general respect for our own country in world affairs and to win for us the friendship and gratitude of many peoples.

Public opinion polls have emphasized the willingness of the American people to accept this view. On many occasions our people have indicated its willingness to make any reasonable sacrifice in the reduction of their own food purchases if the dietetic needs of our allies and even our former enemies overseas are clearly outlined to them.

I am not a member of the committee which allocates food to the people of foreign countries and to American civilians. Hence I am not familiar with the specific amount of food which is being sent abroad today. However, I can not believe that it is nearly as much as the American people are willing and able to provide.

This is borne out by the estimates of the meat, fats, and oils supplies which are now available to American civilians and which will become available during the next eight months. These figures have been developed by the Department of Agriculture working in cooperation with members of my own staff here at OPA.
During a five year period before the war, as you perhaps know, American civilians ate an average of 126 pounds of meat annually. The allocation currently is 155 pounds per person. Approximately this same quantity promoted the removal of most meat from rationing while the war was far from won in the Spring of 1944. It is expected to rise to an all time high of 164 pounds in December and to remain in excess of 143 pounds per person each month between now and next July 1.

The supply of fats and oils, products which I believe are in crying demand among undernourished people overseas, is estimated for November to equal the present demand. In December, the supply is expected to be greater than the demand, even with the present high purchasing power. Between January and June, the civilian supply of these commodities will be about 10 per cent less than the full unrationed demand.

Unless my estimate of the American people is wholly incorrect, I believe they would cheerfully accept a reduction of 10 per cent in the total amount of meat, fats and oils which are now being made available to civilians. This would still leave our civilian supplies of meats, fats and oils substantially above the average supply levels which we have had during the war period except 1944 when most meats and fats and oils were not rationed. It would enable us to still eat better than any other people on earth. And it would provide roughly 160 million more pounds of meat each month for the next six to eight months to meet the desperate demands of people of foreign countries.

If you should decide to take this step, and if you clearly explained it to the public, I believe it would be met by widespread approval. Your move would offer dramatic testimony to the fact that America feels deeply her responsibilities as a world power.

It would indicate our willingness to share our food abundance with undernourished people in foreign lands who are facing a desperate winter. It would bring hope into the lives of tens of millions of people whose outlook today is bleak indeed. It might spell the difference between life and death to tens of thousands of individual men, women and children.

Let me again make it clear that I do not pretend to be an expert on the situation in Europe from the political standpoint or from any other standpoint. I am simply stating my views as a member of your Administration who knows the food picture in this country and who has had a wide experience in judging the viewpoint of our American people.
If you consider this proposal either unwise or unnecessary, and if it is decided that the American people should continue to consume the present high levels of meats, fats and oils, I can see no further reason for rationing of these products.

With the present and anticipated supplies available for American civilian consumption, rationing constitutes only a hollow gesture. It may make us appear to be making sacrifices in order to carry out foreign commitments abroad. But it will not fool anyone who knows the facts.

Obviously from my own selfish standpoint and for the good of our overall OPA program I would be glad of an opportunity to drop these rationing problems tomorrow. They represent a severe drain on our manpower and on our energies.

But I admit that I have a distinctly uneasy feeling as I compare our overflowing food abundance to the privation faced by people of other lands. I cannot believe it is right and I am confident that if the great majority of our people had the facts they would feel as I do.

Very sincerely,

Chester Bowles
Administrator