

# High Prices Compel Housewife to Use Cornmeal For Flour in Bread

Dorothy Day

Rising Cost of Living Forces Woman to Send Young Child to Work, So Income May Be Swelled.

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The compiler of the high cost of living stuff for *The Call* hastened on her way, past the Tombs, where two little girls were fox-trotting with all the energy and rhythmic grace of those whose stomachs are full of Irish stew, and wondered why they were so unwilling to tell their story to one who was ever ready to sympathize with pen and heart.

As she passed a house with a "Furnished Room" sign out in front, she received an inspiration. She hastened in, asked to see the room, commenting that times were so bad that she'd have to have a cheap one. The kind-hearted Irish woman responded to the strained look of worry and gave a reciprocal tale of woe.

"Everybody says the times are good, and that there is plenty to do," she said, "but I have no husband to work for me. He died a couple of years ago while he was out of work. I have as much as I can do, but I don't get paid much. It's piece work, and my eyes are bad. My kids help me as much as they can. With the money that I get for the sewing and the room that I rent I pay the rent for the flat and manage to get clothes for the children. There's three. Billy, he goes out and sells papers every day. At first, when food wasn't so high, I could keep the younger one with me, but now he goes out too. You should hear the young ones.

"Billy, he gets up in the morning and says, 'Well, mum, how much can you get along with today?' And I says, 'I guess 40 cents will about do.' And he peels off his shoes and stockings, 'cause he says that gets him more customers. In a crowd some one steps on his toes, and he cries, and they buy a paper. See?

"Now Sammy goes out, too, and he works, and with the money that they both bring in I don't get enough to feed them always. Before, when I was short, I used to go around to the bakeries in the good neighborhoods, and they'd give me the bread two for five when it was one day old, and sometimes for nothing. But now I can't get a roll, even. They say that they bake real close, because flour has gone up from \$3.50 to \$11 a barrel.

"But some of the grocers are nice. They give you a few potatoes and other vegetables. I manage to get along. But it must be harder for you, when you are living on a salary and away from home. It's cheaper for you to cook for a family than to go out and buy for yourself alone."

Always these poor people showed their ready sympathy for some one worse off than themselves. I asked a woman who was baking bread how the food prices were affecting her.

“Not so bad.” Here it was again. “But now I can’t use regular flour. It’s cornmeal. If I could afford the best grade, it wouldn’t be so bad, but I have to buy the cheap stuff that is very often wormy. I try to argue myself into thinking that it’s all right. But the stuff doesn’t taste as well as it otherwise would. Here! It’s done now. Want a piece?”

But the reporter was in a hurry and left.