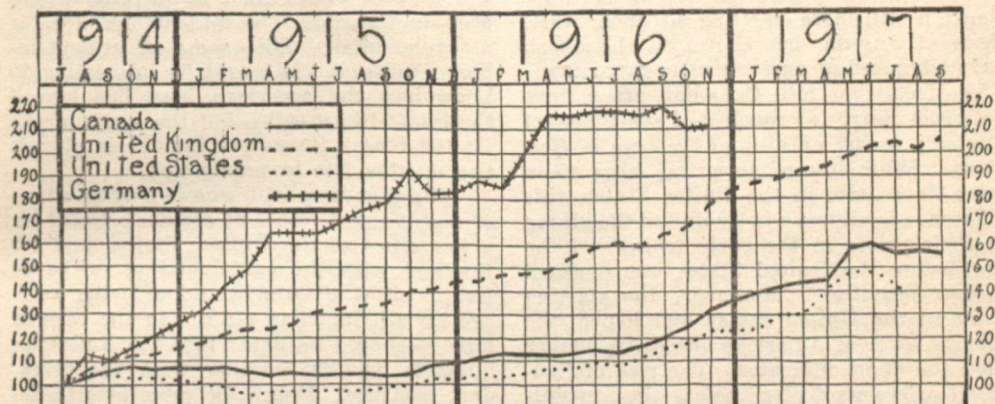


RETAIL PRICES COMPARED.

Cost of foodstuffs at home and abroad.



The above chart gives a comparison of the rise in prices in Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Germany as compared with the pre-war level in each case. It is not a comparison of the general levels of prices.

MANY extravagant ideas are current on the subject of food control and prices of foods. The chief cause of such ideas is lack of information as to the actual facts. A study of the data compiled by the Canadian Department of Labour, will bring out the actual facts of the changes of prices in Canada and other countries. The Labour Department gathers information as to the prices of forty staple food articles in each of our fifty-nine largest cities every week. It also compiles similar data from the United States Bureau of Labour and the British Board of Trade.

The data show how the cost of foods has advanced in each country. Staple foods are selected in such manner as to represent a typical workingman's family budget. The cost of this group of commodities as on July, 1914, just before the war, has been taken as a standard of reference, which is counted as 100, for each country. The cost of the same group is then taken for each month since and expressed as a percentage of the pre-war cost of July, 1914. The series of percentages so worked out is shown in the chart. Thus the rise of prices in each country is graphically shown.

The starting point of each line in the chart, being the price level for each country in July, 1914, represents an actually different point for each country. Consequently the chart does not show the difference between the price levels of the different countries. It does show a comparison

between the rise of prices in each country as based on its own pre-war level.

It might be feasible to compare the general cost of living in Canada and the United States; wage levels and tastes in the two countries are quite comparable. Mr. R. H. Coats worked out a comparison of these price levels for the December before the war in his Cost of Living Report in 1915. Taking the eleven comparable food-stuffs in the budgets used by each Department of Labour he found that prices were higher at that time in the United States than in Canada. Working from his basis we find that in July, 1914, we were only paying \$5.53 for the food which cost the Americans on the average \$5.78. Thus we see that even though our price level has risen a little more rapidly since the war than has that in the United States, the latter was higher at the outbreak of the war. How the comparison stands to-day is shown later in the submitted table. The main things to be noted here are that while price levels in the two countries have risen in very similar proportion, the Canadian has advanced a little more rapidly than that of the United States on the whole; that the American level of prices actually fell during the first of the war and only came permanently above the starting point in the second summer; and that the American starting point was really higher than that for Canada.

It would be difficult to compare the actual price levels of England and Canada. The