

High Cost of Living

The Government has passed an Order-in-Council embodying the recommendations made by the cabinet committee which investigated the advancing cost of food-stuffs and other commodities in Canada. Wide powers are given to municipalities in relation to the control of factors which may have anything to do with advance in prices.

The Order-in-Council covers a wide range. First, it states that "No person shall conspire, combine, agree or arrange with any other person:—

(a) To limit the facilities for transporting, producing, manufacturing, supplying, storing or dealing in any necessary of life; or (b) to restrain or injure trade or commerce in relation to any necessary of life; or (c) to prevent, limit or lessen the manufacture or production of any necessary of life, or to enhance the price thereof; or (d) to prevent or lessen competition in the production, manufacture, purchase, barter, sale, transportation, insurance or supply of any necessary of life.

further, it is ordered that,

(1) No person shall accumulate or shall withhold from sale any necessary of life beyond an amount thereof reasonably required for the use or consumption of his household or for the ordinary purposes of his business;

(2) Every person who shall at any time hold any necessary of life beyond an amount thereof reasonably required as aforesaid, and every person who shall hold for the purpose of sale, whether as manufacturer, wholesaler, jobber, retailer or otherwise, any stock-in-trade of any necessary of life, shall offer for sale the said excess amount or the said stock-in-trade, as the case may be, at prices not higher than are reasonable and just.

Provided, however, that this section shall not apply or extend to any accumulating or withholding by any farmer, gardener, or other person, of the products of any farm, garden, or other land cultivated by him, nor shall any manufacturer, wholesaler or jobber, because of anything herein contained, be under obligation to sell to other than such classes of persons as are accustomed to purchase from manufacturers, wholesalers or jobbers, respectively, nor shall any person be under obligation to sell otherwise than in accordance with the ordinary course of business."

Provision is made for the collecting of information as to the stocks of any commodities held by individuals or concerns. Under notice in writing by the Minister of Labor, such individual or concern is required to render a written return showing in detail:

(a) The species and amount of any necessary of life held by such person at any indicated time or times, including any time preceding the making of these regulations, where and for whom said necessary of life is held, and if held for another, upon what terms; (b) the time when any or all of such necessary of life was prepared, manufactured, produced, acquired, or taken into possession; (c) the cost of such necessary of life, including all charges and expenses of an overhead or other nature, affecting such cost; (d) the price at which such necessary of life, if already sold, has been sold, or if unsold, is held for sale; (e) such other information concerning any necessary of life as the Minister may require, including a full disclosure of all existing contracts or agreements which such person, or his principal or agent, may have at any time entered into, with any other person, touching or concerning the sale or resale prices of any necessary of life, or the period of time during which any necessary of life should be held as bailee or otherwise, before sale or resale, or limiting the quantity of any necessary of life which should be sold to any one buyer or combination of buyers or within any limited district.

THE POWER OF MUNICIPALITIES.

Whenever the Council of any municipality shall declare by way of resolution that in its opinion excessive prices are being demanded within the limits of such municipality for any necessary of life, the Council may, by notice in writing require dealers within the municipality to

render a written return of, (a) the amount of such necessary of life held by such person for sale or disposition within such municipality at any indicated time or times including any time preceding the making of these regulations; (b) the time when any or all of such necessary of life was acquired, produced, or brought within or into such municipality; (c) the cost of such necessary of life, including all charges of an overhead or other nature affecting such cost (d) the price at which such necessary of life is held for sale or at which any sales of part of the same or of a similar necessary of life have been made by such person within such municipality at any indicated time or times, including any time preceding the making of these regulations.

Absolute power is granted to the Council or the Minister of Labor to thoroughly investigate conditions. Where wrong returns are made power is given to examine the books and stock of the concern or individual in question. After thorough investigation, if it is found that an offence against these regulations has been committed action may be taken through the Attorney-General of the province in which the offence is committed.

"Any person who contravenes or fails to observe any of the provisions of these regulations shall be guilty of an indictable offence and liable upon indictment or upon summary conviction under Part XV of the Criminal Code to a penalty not exceeding five thousand dollars, or to imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years, or to both fine and imprisonment as specified; and any director or officer of any company or corporation who assents to or acquiesces in the contravention or non-observance by such Company or corporation of any of the provisions of these regulations shall be guilty personally and cumulatively with his Company or corporation and with his co-directors or associate officers."

THE EVOLUTION TOWARDS A LASTING CANADIAN PROSPERITY.

It is gratifying to take note of the continuing advocacies of Dr. J. M. Harper, of Quebec, in favor of a post-war advancement towards a fuller prosperity for Canada. His magazine and newspaper articles are in line with our own words of advice as to how each municipality in Canada, great or small, can best assume its share in bringing our Dominion into its own, even though the end of the war is not yet definitely in sight. The nursing of an evolution in the way it should go is the statesman's highest prerogative in any and every country that is righteously jealous of its nationhood. And it is the duty of every true Canadian citizen to encourage the enterprises, economic or ethical, that are likely to bring Canada into its nationhood. Dr. Harper has lately been dealing with the moralities that tend to the maturing of a wholesome nationhood. He would have our churches range themselves in religious matters as we would have our municipalities range themselves in commercial matters, to bring about a co-ordination of all the influences for advancement we Canadians have in our gift to mature a united commonwealth of our own within the Empire. His latest article on Church Union, and the good that may come of it, even if it be only a partial union for the time being, brings us in presence of the assimilation of principles and purposes that is ours to encourage in our "daily walk and convention" as Canadians having the welfare of Canada at heart in our enterprises, commercial and moral. The democratic spirit in church or state, working for our Canadian nationhood, as he further maintains, bear to be loyal to itself and its first principles, if it would escape from fostering anarchy, directly or indirectly, in the bud or in the storm tossed leaf."

And so is it with the democracy of rule within our municipalities working for their own parochial advancement. There must ever be held in view the welfare of the whole country and its progressiveness as a guiding line in our local exploitations.