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MINING AND THE COST OF LIVING.

Of late years the scales have been removed from the eyes of the consumer. Publicists, through our most effective magazines, have made it plentifully plain that all of us pay more than we should for the necessities of life and industry. The wide movement of reform that is spreading over America is manifested chiefly in the public exposure of the intricate iniquities of trusts, and in official investigations that sometimes bring results and sometimes do not. But reform, vaguely perhaps, and only rarely crystallized into definitive acts, is nevertheless pervading the atmosphere, not only in America but pretty well over the civilized world.

From South Africa, where the mining and farming communities feel most keenly the unbalanced incidence of taxation, there comes word of evidence given before the Industries and Commerce Commission. The witnesses examined were representatives of the consumers' organization. Let us glance for a moment at their asseverations.

Whilst the peculiar and pressing need of South Africa is a larger population of whites, yet the same injurious fiscal and industrial conditions obtain there as in Canada. As illustration, here is an excerpt from evidence taken: "No tariff can increase the total amount of work for white men in South Africa, but it may, and probably will, diminish it. . . The miner and the farmer have to carry the burden of protection. They subsidize protected industries, which in many cases means subsidizing the Kaffir and the coloured man who do not even purchase the articles they produce." The point is developed that only when the white man is enabled to live in decency and comfort at the lowest possible cost will he attain his fullest effectiveness.

Amongst the positive suggestions made, several bear upon bounties and subsidies. It is urged that customs duties be levied for revenue purposes only, and apply mainly to luxuries; that railways be run at cost and deficits of branch lines be paid out of general revenue; that coal, raw materials, and food supplies be carried at minimum rates; that harbour deficits be met out of general revenue; and that temporary bounties be granted to industries dependent upon raw material, provided there is reasonable ground for believing that they can shortly survive without the bounties. In short, a general downward revision of duties and railway rates is requested, along with a judicious try-out of a temporary system of bounties. One strong point made refers to the fact that the local Johannes-