

What Canada's Vital Assets Are Worth

They are Worth Conserving in Order to Reduce of Annual Expenditure of \$116,000,000 on Sickness

By J. W. MacMILLAN, D.D.

It is the constant complaint of social students in the United States that the vital statistics of their country are so scanty. Much more may that fault be found in Canada. In many cases no estimates are possible, or, if attempted, are mere guess work. In regard to such figures as we have, however, the parallel with similar conditions in the United States is close. The ratio 90:7, as expressing the relative populations of the two countries, is found to apply fairly well to many of the particulars of life and labor, of illness, accident and death. Of course, we have none of the sub-tropical phenomena of the southern states. We have no hook-worm and little malaria. We must make allowances for such things. Leaving such things to one side, however, so similar is the social composition, the climate, and the stage of progress attained by us and our neighbor, that one is inclined to regard as moderately accurate the results reached by using the ratio of population. It is not perfectly correct, to be sure, but it is much better than nothing.

So, in developing the figures of my last article "The Market Price of Manhood," I have used this method. I shall apply it to several of the chief matters of national concern, to mortality and to morbidity costs.

The *Canada Year Book* declines to make an estimate of the death rate of the Dominion. Whittaker's *Almanac* is bolder and, however, it arrived at its conclusion, is probably nearly right. It gives the rate at fifteen per thousand. That gives 105,000 deaths each year. According to Professor Fisher, who works out his results with all possible caution and keeps always to minimums, 42% of these are annually preventable or postponable. Thus we have in Canada each year 44,100 needless deaths. By using well understood methods of prevention and remedy this waste might be saved. Again, Professor Fisher calculates the average economic value of the lives now sacrificed by preventable deaths, using the age distribution of deaths and the percentages of preventability. This average is \$1,700. By the multiplication of 44,100 x \$1,700 we find the annual unnecessary loss of capitalized net earnings, which is \$74,970,000.

Take now the question of morbidity, or sickness. There are, on the average, 233,000 persons in Canada on the sick list. Most of these persons are of more than the average age, and statistics show that mortality increases with age in geometrical progression. It is calculated that one-third of the sick, or 77,000 are in the working period of life. Remember that one-fourth of these are not producers, and taking the average earnings at \$700, we get the net loss of earnings each year through sickness as \$40,792,500.

But there is another side to morbidity besides loss of earnings. There is the cost of the sickness. Professor Fisher uses two estimates in his reckoning on this point. The first is the statement of Doctor Blum of New York, that the cost of medical attendance, medicine, nursing, etc., for the consumptive poor is at least \$1.50 per day of illness. If we reflect that tuberculosis is not one of the costliest diseases, and that other classes spend more when ill than the poor do, we can safely adopt this as a minimum. Applying it to the 233,000 always ill we get as the annual cost of sickness \$126,567,500.

The other estimate is much lower. It is from the figures compiled by the Commissioner of Labor for the United States. He shows that the annual expenditure for illness and death in workingmen's families is \$27. Even this figure, if applied to the 1,517,742 families of Canada would make the total bill for illness and death \$40,979,034. The true cost may well be twice this sum, or much more than that. That we may retain the utmost margin of safety in our estimates let us adopt this latter reckoning.

The sum, then, of the costs of illness, including both loss of wages and cost of care is \$40,792,500 plus \$40,979,034, which is \$81,771,534.

In this sum no notice is taken of the loss from "undue fatigue" which there is some reason to believe exceeds in its effect upon efficiency the loss of illness. There is no mention of the cost of the care of the insane and feeble-minded. It is impossible to tell how much of the cost of alcoholism is indirectly included. There is no mention at all of the minor ailments—headaches, toothaches, the "just poorly feeling"—from which the aggregate loss is enormous.

In a general summary Professor Fisher says, "The actual economic saving annually possible in this country (the United States) by preventing needless deaths, needless illness (serious and minor) and needless fatigue is certainly far greater than one and a half billions, and may be three or four times as great." Applying the ratio 90:7 we find that over one hundred and sixteen millions is the possible saving for Canada.

An application of the human price list to immigration is an inviting field. How much more is an immigrant worth in himself than the paltry \$25 he is asked to show! How criminally careless is the lack of policy which makes almost no effort to utilize these human values to advantage! How much we owe to the homes and schools of the land from which he came for bearing the heavy expense of rearing him and presenting him to us as a finished instrument, a mature man!

But leaving immigration for the present to one side, let us confess that these computations show that the practice of sanitation is worth while as a

public measure. The M. H. O. is abundantly justified, and a people who love and value life should not stint his resources nor balk at the inconveniences his programme necessitates. Yet there are cities in Canada, to say nothing of counties and towns, where the Medical Health Officer is appointed with no peculiar qualifications for his post, the supposition being that any doctor will do. In such places no wonder that inspection of doubtful premises is slackly done, that tainted meat and milk are sold, and that only some cases of infectious diseases are isolated. It is in the wake of such slipshod and purblind administration that disease and death pile up their grim bills of costs.

No one who has taken part in the great life-saving enterprises which are at work in Canada, such as the Anti-Tuberculosis League, or the campaigns for pure milk, or the movement for better housing, but knows how thick is the ignorance and how unyielding the indifference of the big public. These unselfish workers are accustomed to being patronized, pitied, laughed at, and opposed. The object of this and the preceding article is not at all to shield them from the smiles or the sneers of their neighbors. I have a greater object in view; to cut the ground from under the forces which actively oppose them. For the opposition is generally economic. It is the cost of something new or the loss of something old is convincingly pleaded against the reformers. Let the champions of "letting things alone" study the figures I have given. As they insist on setting things above persons and are willing to sacrifice a baby any day to save a dollar, it may impress them to learn that persons are worth more than things, even in money value, and that each baby that is born is worth twenty-five dollars.

How Retail Profits are Reduced

Rising Prices the "Bete Noir" of the Retail Merchants

By WM. J. BRYANS.

Last week the retail grocers of Toronto held a meeting of protest against the small margin of profit allowed them by bakers for the sale of their bread. In the city of Toronto it has been the practice of bakers to allow large purchasers of bread like the retail grocers, a discount of 2 cents per large loaf. At the time that figure was set it was quite satisfactory to the retail trade. Why then, the casual observer is likely to ask, have the grocers any reason for complaint, when a margin of two cents per loaf is still being allowed?

At the time a margin of two cents per large loaf was set bread was costing the retailer 8 cents per large loaf and he sold it for 10 cents. That allowed him a profit of 20 percent, which was quite satisfactory. But with the last rise in the price of bread, it costs the retailer 14 cents a large loaf and he has to sell it for 16 cents. This only gives him 12½ percent profit and as it costs the average city grocer from 16 to 18 percent to conduct his business, it may clearly be seen that he loses money by selling bread on this basis.

It is this very thing that is largely responsible for decreased percentages of profit in retail establishments under enhanced prices. The dealer may advance the price of goods the same amount per pound, yard or package as it has been raised by the wholesaler or manufacturer but he is not maintaining his profits as he sometimes thinks he is, for his percentage of profit is being reduced.

That prices have been advancing at a rapid rate in Canada during the past few years and particularly in the last two years, is indicated by the figures presented in the report on wholesale prices in Canada for 1915 recently issued by the Department of Labour at Ottawa. The index figure based on quotations on 272 commodities rose from 138.9 in January to 161.1 in December of last year. This as compared with an index figure of around 134 previous to the outbreak of war and of 124 four years before.

Higher prices are not confined to one or a few lines either. Grains and fodder were 18.5 percent higher in 1915 than in 1914, dairy products showed an advance of 3.7 percent, groceries advanced 15 percent, textiles, 11 percent, hides and leather 5.1, metals 34.7, paints and glass 11.5, home furnishings, 4.6, drugs and chemicals 50.3 percent, etc. Only a few lines like furs, lumber and fruits showed any decrease. These figures are quoted to show the diffi-

culty with which business establishments in all lines are confronted in their effort to maintain the percentage of gross profit.

Not only are gross profits being reduced in many instances by higher prices but the higher expenses in conducting most lines of business today are tending to reduce the margin of net profit still farther. Every retailer who keeps a properly conducted expense book can give concrete evidence of this fact. In the first place wages are generally higher while the merchant has to pay higher prices for paper, twine, printing and many other things for which he receives no direct returns. Added to this is the higher standard of service that is being demanded of the retailer by the public of today, all contributing to a higher cost of doing business and narrowing the margin between expenses and gross profit.

It is this very fact — that higher prices and higher expenses are reducing profits in the retail business, or at least making it more difficult to maintain them — that makes it most essential that retailers gauge their progress by the actual profits and not by the turnover of their business. Retailers today are apt to think that they are doing well because their monthly sales records are larger than they used to be, when the increase may really be due to the higher selling prices of goods. Only the same quantity of goods may be sold this year as last, or possibly a smaller amount, yet the enhanced prices may bring sales to a much higher figure. For this reason retailers should gauge their progress by a frequent inventory which will show the exact standing of their business. It is unfortunate but nevertheless true that many retailers do not take an inventory of their business as frequently as they should and not having a check on actual profits as often as they should, such dealers are likely to be misled by the success that they believe they see in sales figures.

PERSONAL.

W. H. Curle, administration commissioner of the Manitoba Workmen's Compensation Act, visited Toronto and other Ontario cities last week, making a study of the methods of organization of the Ontario act.

P
The T

Whilst the greatest war disturbing n doing everyt of arms and selves here which threa and sets for problems of imperiously. system, whic ory manner ever, knowi present unh the time sec out the caus the nature v suggest. Th ation, it is t state of whi at first sigh it is necessa to stop the e ing our nat

The public terly of the loud protes which has c small means

The mercl one is dispos al situation allegations profit on wh him to get a

The manu last analysi defends him using that la production fied with th

Thus the mercl wor ributor are

Rightly e threaten ou people of C those respo causes that ing.

Very muc of which th nature to r mitigated. the causes l in cost.

Statesmen vain to fir crease. The elaboration of this phen anything h hardships f less to brin

Some hav scarcity of cause this life. Other ial extravag In a word e en the caus those such solution of none of the sources of f

The prob which is of can be divid aspects whi at an inter These two tribution.

When a n poison of an ing the pri the nation first of all ducts conce