

# POLICIES AND POLITICS

## The Policy of Fixed Prices on Food, Fuel, Clothes and Footwear.

NO. 3.

"Now call we our high court of Parliament;  
And let us choose such limbs of noble counsel  
That the great body of our State may go  
In equal rank of the best-governed nation."

—Shakespeare.

The parliaments of Australia, France, Great Britain and lately the United States, have enacted strong measures to lower the present high prices. The U. S. Price Board decrees have caused an immediate decline since August 10th of 3c. per pound on lard, \$4 to \$6 per barrel on pork. Barrel beef, 200 lb. each, which in August sold at \$27.00 in bond, is now \$20.00 in October.

Canada's Board of Commerce, although late to arrive, is about to pursue the Australian plan and limit all profits to a percentage on actual cost.

Coal—This is one large item that the Board must debate. Canada owns the railway to the Cape Breton mines and can control the output, the freight rate and the profits to the owners and lessees of these Nova Scotia mines. The retail price for Sydney Reserve coal is \$9.75 per ton of 2,000 lbs. at St. John. Old Mines Sydney, best grade, is \$11.00 per ton. Are these prices warranted by the cost of production? There are only a few persons who control these mines, leased from the N. S. Government on life-long terms, but there are tens of thousands who need the coal for warmth.

Clothes and Shoes.—Will the Board inquire about the cost of distribution? Does it need 40 to 50 per cent. profit on purchase price to give reasonable return on retailer's investment? Why should not the retail profit on clothes and standard footwear be cut down

by the Board to 30 per cent. profit on cost or even lower? The retail grocer receives 10 per cent. on sugar, 7 per cent. on flour and 20 per cent. to 25 per cent. on general goods. He works very long hours and is at large expense for delivery, etc. Why should staple dry goods, clothes, footwear and fuel collect from the public over 25 per cent. profit? When goods that cost \$4.00 at factory, after paying profit to manufacturer are doubled to \$8.00 to the consumer, then it is time for the public to do away with the middlemen, or reduce the percentage of profit.

On August 11th and 12th the British Parliament, by a vote of 251 to 3, passed the bill providing prosecution and penalties for profiteers.

Sir Auckland Geddes, in piloting the bill, said, "Shoes that sold at wholesale at 15s. to 20s. retailed at 50s. to 60s., a profit of 200 per cent. It is this deliberate excess profit which makes the British workman regret, at times, that he sank, in 1916 and 1917, his ideas of unionism, and with a mighty effort, enlisted to win the war. It is this profiteering in Britain which has caused the unrest of 1918-1919. If we have in Canada similar outrageous profits in coal, hoots and shoes, clothes and food, then the Board of Commerce must investigate, regulate, condemn and penalize those who make such gains.

Sugar Prices.—On July 31st last, Dr. McFall, of Ottawa, reports that five of the six Canadian refineries had a stock totalling 100,000,000 lbs. of sugar, about 15 lbs. per head for all Canada. The sixth, and largest, refinery refused to disclose its stock on hand. I am aware that much of the present high price of sugar is due to the ability of Cuban sugar planters to control the market. Their 1919 crop was about 3 1-2 million tons, and this coming season bids fair to be four million tons, or eight billion pounds, equal to 30 lbs. per head for one hundred million people. Besides this, there are the crops of Java, the Philippines, etc. Nevertheless the whole world is far short of the crop of 1912 and 1913, because Russia, Austria and Hungary, in 1919 are away behind normal beet production. Thus reasonably high prices will have to obtain during 1919-20.