

By leave of the House,—

Sir Thomas White moved, That the House do now return to Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees, under Routine Proceedings; which was agreed to.

Mr. Douglas (Strathcona), for Mr. Nicholson (Algoma), from the Special Committee appointed for the purpose of inquiring forthwith as to the prices charged throughout Canada for foodstuffs, clothing, fuel, and other necessaries of life, and as to rates of profit made thereon by dealers and others concerned in their production, distribution and sale, also as to rentals of dwelling houses in industrial centres of Canada and rates of return of capital invested therein, etc., presented the following as their Third and final Report:—

Your Committee, since the 26th day of June last, when their second report was presented to the House, have held twelve sessions and have heard and considered evidence given under oath by several persons representing milling, elevator and cold storage companies, grain producers and dealers, retail coal dealers, woollen manufacturers, wholesale jobbers in provisions, groceries and fruit, and others who are responsible in commercial transactions as to spread of profits, distribution and sale of staple commodities pertaining to foodstuffs, clothing, fuel and other necessaries of life, and from whom further records were requested which your Committee have not yet received.

In respect to the questions of rentals of dwelling houses in industrial centres of Canada and as to the rates of return of capital invested therein, which the House also ordered to be inquired into, your Committee have not been able to give these two questions any attention owing to the session drawing to a close.

Throughout the forty-eight sessions which your Committee have held witnesses were examined under oath upon a wide range of general commodities beginning with what in their judgment was most important, namely, such necessaries as meat and meat products, butter, eggs, flour, groceries, clothing, boots and shoes, and fuel; tracing these up through the process of production, manufacture and distribution, in order that they might establish the spread between the cost of production and the cost to the consumer, determining if possible whether this was too great or not.

The investigations of your Committee have not covered as wide a range as would have been possible had we had more time at our disposal. Your Committee have, however, reached certain conclusions which they believe will assist in establishing a correct understanding of these matters, and that may be of material value in directing the attention of Parliament and country to the real cause for the present abnormal cost of living as well as pointing out a way by which any existing abuses may be corrected. These conclusions are:—

1. That so far as your Committee are able to discern no material reduction in the cost of such commodities as above indicated can be expected, except by increasing the volume at a lower cost of production or by lowering the cost of distribution.

2. Your Committee do not presume to say that there are no cases of undue inflation in prices, or of profiteering, but in the main it was their opinion that having in mind the service which the consuming public demand, the margin between the actual cost of production and what the consumer pays for such commodities is reasonably narrow.

3. In their investigations your Committee took the base cost paid to the farmer for such commodities as beef, cattle, hogs, lamb, dairy products, eggs, etc. Upon examining this phase of the subject your Committee had before them representatives of the Department of Labour, the Bureau of Statistics, the Superintendent of the Experimental Farm, the Assistant Live-Stock Commissioner, a professor from the Agricultural College at Guelph, representatives of the United Farmers of Ontario, dairymen, packers, cold-storage men, millers, grain dealers, co-operative organizations, officials of stock yards and commission merchants; and, on the strength of the evidence received your Committee desire to state that the production cost of these