

Strange Facts Relating to the H.C. of L. in Canada.

The high cost of living is a subject for a great deal of discussion and indignant anonymous letter writing, but, as Mark Twain wittily said of the weather: "People are always discussing it and grumbling about it, but nothing is ever done about it." The cost of living in Canada at the present time, however, is no fit subject for jesting about. Food of all kinds is soaring in price, and every boost in freight rates sends it higher. With the spectacle of a crop failure looming up over the horizon, the thrifty housewife and the plodding bread winner are beginning to wonder what food will cost this winter. There are only a few profiteers in Canada, it is said, and it is to be hoped that this gentle surmise is true, but if the cost of living in different parts of Canada is not an indication of profiteering, it is at least an indication of bad management among the wholesalers and retailers. With the object in view of throwing some light on the subject of high food prices the Farmer's Advocate of Winnipeg ascertained the prices at which common articles of food were sold in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Minneapolis, Chicago and St. Paul on June 12th. The prices were collected by responsible residents in each of the cities mentioned, and may be taken as approximately correct. They disclose some peculiar discrepancies that are worth consideration. Sirloin steak, for instance, sold on that day for 45c. per pound in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Chicago. Choice beef sold around that date on the Toronto, Calgary and Chicago markets for \$17.15, \$13.50 and \$18 per hundred respectively. In view of this marked difference in the price paid for the live beef in these cities, why the uniformly high prices asked by the retailers for the killed beef? Where does the difference go to? The people of Vancouver on June 12th were paying no less than 50c. a pound for sirloin steak, while in Edmonton, just two hundred miles from Calgary, the retailers asked 40c. for sirloin. Forty cents was the ruling price in Winnipeg and Regina. Considering freight charges one might well ask why these prices are similar. The ruling price for sirloin steak in Minneapolis on the date mentioned, however, offers food for thought. The price quoted was 26 cents per pound. In view of the recent report published by the United States Government, which places the combined profits of the four chief packers for the past three years at \$146,000,000, the average Canadian will be inclined to wonder just what the profits of the Canadian packers have been during the past three years, as beef on the hoof usually sells for higher prices in the United States than it does in Canada.

Bacon, strange to say, sold for a uniform price (55 cents) from one end of Canada to the other on the date cited, and the same was true of shoulder roast. Why a uniform price for bacon and shoulder roast in the different cities of Canada, when freight rates are so heavy? Why should bacon cost the same in Regina as in Edmonton, considering freight rates? The same thing applies to lamb. These questions offer a great opportunity to the busy press agents and official "explainers" attached to most of the packing companies.

There has been a great deal of unctuous material written about the virtues of fish as a substitute for beef. On June 12th fresh halibut sold in Vancouver for 25c. a pound, in Montreal for 23c., in Winnipeg for 30 cents, in Regina for 25 cents, in Calgary for 30 cents, and in Edmonton for 28 cents. Now halibut is not caught in prairie rivers or sloughs. It is caught in the ocean. Canada's chief halibut beds lie north of Prince Rupert. Keeping this fact in mind, therefore, we might well ask why halibut sells for 25c. in Regina, and for the same price in Vancouver. Regina is being exceptionally well treated by the fishmongers, or else Vancouver is the victim of profiteers.

Canadian hens in the districts surrounding the chief cities laid just enough eggs to keep the price per dozen very uniform in Canada's big cities on June 12th. Vancouver was the only exception, eggs selling there for 10 cents more per dozen than the ruling price in the other big cities. Of course the average individual knows that fresh eggs are bought in the country at much lower prices than those asked for them by the city retailer.



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