

living is world-wide. In the same work from which I have just quoted, a General Economic History of the Dominion, 1867-1912, by Professor Skelton, I observe at page 272 the following:

After 1896 the rise was rapid and almost unbroken; the index numbers prepared by the Dominion Department of Labour showed that by 1912 the average wholesale prices of the most important commodities had risen nearly thirty per cent above the average from 1890 to 1900, and the retail prices and rents had soared to still higher levels. This rise, as English railway strikes, French food riots, German Socialist victories and United States urban discontent revealed, was not peculiar to Canada; under the price-equalizing influences of international exchange, all the leading countries shared in the increase, in fairly proportionate degree.

That is the opinion of a disinterested writer who has made the study of economics his lifework. Many considerations have been put forward by economic writers as reasons for the increase in the cost of living. It has been asserted that a higher standard of living has been established throughout the world during a period of great prosperity. According to the opinions of others, it has been based, to a certain extent, upon the increase of urban population and the relative decrease of rural population. It has been urged that the large immigration to Canada of persons, many of whom locate in cities, and none of whom became producers of food within a year or eighteen months, has also had its effect. The increased cost of labour, resulting in an increase in the cost of producing and distributing food products, including the cost of delivery in cities and towns, has been put forward by others as a contributing cause. Then it has been urged that the increase is to some extent dependent upon the lack of organization among producers and consumers, and part of it has been laid at the door of waste and extravagance. Great losses occur in all civilized countries through unnecessary fires; Professor Skelton says that in the United States there is a yearly loss by fire of buildings which placed side by side would constitute a block extending from New York to Chicago. Waste, loss and extravagance of this character are urged as causes. Then other economic writers put forward the decrease in the purchasing power of money owing to the remarkable increase in gold production in the last two decades.

I do not intend to pass upon any 9 p.m. of these causes. It may be that all of them have contributed in one way or another. But when my right hon. friend urges, as he has urged, that

this increase in the cost of living is due to the tariff, I would like to point out to him that the increase has not been restricted to recent years. Taking the number 100 as representing the average prices from 1890 to 1899, the index numbers, so-called, were as follows: in 1890 it was 110.3. In 1897 it had decreased to 92.2. My right hon. friend will observe that that was under the National Policy which he had undertaken to destroy. In 1907 it had risen to 126. In 1908, during a period of financial stringency and business restriction, it fell to 120.8. In 1911 it had risen to 127.4. In 1912 it had risen to 134.4. In 1913 there was a trifling increase to 135. It is a remarkable fact that from 1890 to 1896 the cost of living in this country decreased, and an equally remarkable fact that from 1896 until the right hon. gentleman went out of power the cost of living increased in every year except one, 1907. By 1901 the cost of living in this country had reached the figure at which it stood in 1890, far above the figure of 1897. If my right hon. friend believes what he seems to believe, if one may judge by his speeches throughout the country, that this is all due to the tariff, why was it that during the fourteen years between 1897 and 1911 he took no step whatever to apply a remedy? But, if I mistake not, in the United States it is almost universally admitted that the reduction or abolition of the duties on food has had little or no effect upon prices in that country. My right hon. friend makes a comparison between the cost of living in this country and the cost of living in Great Britain. I have here a quotation, but I shall not take up the time of the House by reading it, from Mr. Coats, the statistician in the Department of Labour, who points out that although the cost of living is higher in Canada than in Great Britain, it is not by any means so much in excess as is indicated by the figures which the right hon. gentleman gave to the House this afternoon.

The abolition of duties as against the United States could hardly have the effect which the right hon. gentleman has claimed for it in his speeches outside of this House. He has declared, as I have understood his speeches, that the cost of living had been increased in Canada by the fact that the markets of the United States were taking our food products, and then, in connection with that, he suggested that the people of this country could obtain relief by abolishing the duties on food as