

however, and especially since Confederation, the responsibility and labour incident to the majority of public offices have materially increased, while the value of the money in which the official salary is paid,—that is to say, its purchasing power, or command over commodities and services,—has decreased probably 40 or 50 per cent, and is still decreasing.

During the same period, too, the condition and surroundings of most of the senior officials have in other ways been very materially altered. Let us take a single case by way of illustration.

Upwards of twenty-five years ago, a gentleman and member of the Bar gave up his profession and accepted one of the highest non-political offices in the service of the old Province of Canada, at a salary of £500 per annum. That gentleman now receives a salary (deducting superannuation charges) of £624. In view, however, of the depreciation in the interval of the value of money, his salary now should be £900 or £1,000, in order that his position, pecuniarily, should be as good as it was on the day when he entered the service. In effect, therefore, though his nominal salary is somewhat higher than it was 25 years ago, his real salary (measured by its purchasing capacity) is more than 30 per cent. less. But while this practical decrease of income was steadily going on, the demands upon his purse—for he married and had children—were as surely and steadily increasing. He may be pardoned if he does not consider the result as a very splendid reward for a quarter of a century of conscientious labour in the Public Service. Cases such as this, and the one we have cited is not by any means a solitary one, do not hold out any great encouragement to men of intelligence and education to enter our Public Service.

The extreme hardship of the present position of the officers in our Service, more particularly as regards the men of 20 or 30 years' standing, may perhaps be made clearer

by a hypothetical case. Let us suppose a Government organizing its Service for the first time. The scale of official salaries being formally established, the ranks of the Service are filled up. Before, however, the first pay day comes, the Government has caused an alloy of 50 per cent. to be mixed with the coin with which the public officials are paid. Instead, therefore, of receiving the salaries they had counted upon, they receive salaries in effect 50 per cent. lower. Now, assuming that in Canada the purchasing power of £100 has fallen 50 per cent. during the last 25 years, the hardship suffered by the Canadian official of that number of years service is precisely the same as in the case we have supposed. The only real difference in the two cases is that in one the currency is depreciated by the direct action of the Government, and in the other, mainly at least, by external circumstances over which the Government has no control.

What, we would ask, is the meaning of a fixed scale of salaries for the Public Service, if it does not imply that the Government will, under ordinary circumstances, secure to the recipient of such salary a certain definite share of the decencies and comforts of life. If it does not mean this, and means merely that the recipient shall be entitled to receive a certain amount of current money, (which may become as worthless as the French assignats) then surely a fixed salary is merely a mockery, a delusion and a snare!

The continuous, and extraordinary, though irregular, advance in wages and prices during the last quarter of a century, and especially within the last six months, are facts painfully familiar to all house-keepers at least. To attempt to establish this fact by elaborate statistics would be worse than a waste of time. The object of the writer of the present article will be rather to call attention to the efficient causes of this uncomfortable economic phenomenon, and to point out how this depreciation of the value of money, necessarily pressing