

THE LIBERAL WEEKLY

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FOOD PRICES AND THE WORKERS.

Out of the welter of Canadian politics to-day stands out with painful distinctness to the working-man and his family, viz., the increased and steadily mounting cost of a bare existence. In the hysteria of the hour, amid the tumult and the shouting, in the thunders of patriotic rhetoric and the frantic appeal to the passions of race and the hurling of charges of disloyalty, the worker is left to shift for himself and to face the combines and the merciless trusts alone and unaided. Yet the worker in the last analysis is the burden bearer, on him devolves the whole intricate machinery of finance and the maintenance of national credit.

The new administration, like the government which it hopes to succeed, has steadily ignored the workers of the Dominion in all its announcements and declarations of policy. The trusts and the combines, fully represented in the cabinet, have handcuffed and gagged the administration and by maintaining the farce of a food controllership, a subterfuge adopted by the old Borden cabinet to silence the workers of the Dominion at a critical time in the profiteering orgy of its friends, have indicated their determination to squeeze the last cent from the people of Canada in the matter of food costs. The bacon barons, the great milling corporations, and the tariff-protected food pirates of the Dominion have served notice on the union cabinet, as they did on the old Borden government, that they must not be disturbed in their work of fattening on the wages of the workers of this country, of plundering the savings of the toilers in field and factory. The pitiful spectacle of an administration subservient to the trusts, the willing servants of the legalized food buccaneers of the country, is presented to-day in the alleged reconstructed cabinet of Sir Robert Borden.

After months of pitiful deception and evasion the fact stands out clear to-day, despite the pettifoggery of Mr. Hanna, that food costs are higher than six months ago even, that the workers in many localities are unable to provide their children with the necessaries of life and that despite the unhealthy decrease in wages the food pirates have succeeded in taking their pound of flesh from the toilers of the country. In Montreal it has been learned that scores of the children of the poor worker are sent to school daily WITHOUT ANY BREAKFAST, because their parents cannot afford to buy food for them. This condition of affairs, a shame and an everlasting disgrace to Canada, is now being investigated by the Mayor of Montreal who has offered in the meantime to feed the children at his own expense. Yet daily we read of the millions of dollars of dividends of bacon houses, milling concerns and other allied trusts and combines—profits made because of the war. And day by day we are given our fill of bunkum respecting

the work of the food controller who has not yet succeeded in lowering the cost of a single article of food a single cent in all his tenure of office, and who is merely going through the motions of a food controller at the dictation of the food pirates of the Dominion.

IF THE WORKERS OF CANADA WOULD ASCERTAIN THE REAL MEANING OF THE FOOD CONTROLLERSHIP OF THIS COUNTRY THEY HAVE BUT TO COMPARE THE PRICES OF EVERY ARTICLE OF DAILY FOOD WITH THE PRICES OF THESE SAME ARTICLES SIX MONTHS AGO. THEN LET THEM COMPARE THE PROFITS OF THE PORK PACKERS, THE MILLING COMPANIES WITH THE PROFITS OF THESE SAME CONCERNS IN THE YEARS BEFORE THE WAR. THEY WILL LEARN THAT WHILE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CANADIANS HAVE GROWN POORER A NEW CROP OF CANADIAN MILLIONAIRES HAS BEEN GROWN IN THE LAST THREE YEARS. THIS IS THE PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THE BORDEN ADMINISTRATION NOW POSING AS A UNION GOVERNMENT.

COST OF LIVING—THE SOLDIERS' PAY.

WHILE the prices of the necessaries of life have almost doubled and wages have risen as high as fifty per cent and more since 1914, the pay and allowances of the soldier—the greatest patriot and the most important wage-earner of them all—remain the same as when he shouldered his rifle in 1914 and 1915 and marched away to do battle for his country.

The table appearing on the front page of this issue shows some remarkable changes in prices which have taken place in Canada since the outbreak of war and what has the Government done to rectify it. True, the Hon. W. J. Hanna, Canadian representative of the Standard Oil Company, was appointed Food Controller about six months ago. Outside of elaborately equipping a suite of offices in Ottawa and surrounding himself with a staff of highly paid clerks, and giving a little advice about eating green vegetables, nothing has been done.

Mr. Hanna drafted some regulations and an Order-in-Council was passed permitting the manufacture and sale of oleo-margerine in Canada.

This too, in Mr. Hanna's hands has become abortive, the same as lowering the cost of food, and now the whole matter of the manufacture and sale of oleo-margerine has been handed over to the Department of Agriculture.

The Department of Labour's family budget of food in the August issue shows a rise from \$7.42 in July, 1914, to \$11.62, an increase of 56.6%. The index number of wholesale prices rose from 134.6 in July, 1914, to 242.6 in July, 1917, or 80%. This includes woollen and cotton goods which more than doubled, boots rose 50%, fuel more than doubled. Can Mr. Hanna and his staff of experts not do something to remedy this?