

# BASIC FACTS ABOUT PRICES

THE full effect of the upward movement of prices of foodstuffs and other necessities of life has only begun to bear upon the consumer. In view of the present high cost of living and the advances over a year and two years ago this statement appears alarming, but it is clear after a study of conditions that the effect of the rising cost of raw materials is only beginning to be felt by the consumer. Prices are regulated in most part by the relation of the supply of the commodity considered to the demand for the commodity. In a few cases forces may be operating to secure control of the supply of certain products, and in such instances artificial means are employed to raise the cost of the products affected, to the detriment of the consumer. But, to-day, the high prices are due generally to increased demand for products, the actual supply of which is inadequate to meet present and immediate future needs. Added to this operation of the law of supply and demand are the many other factors, such as decreased labour supply, the unsettlement of industry due to war demands, lack of ocean shipping facilities, etc., all the outcome of the great war in which the world is engaged.

Up-to-date, most lines of commodities ordinarily purchased by the average consumer have been more or less affected. In breadstuffs the increased demand is clearly apparent, and with the Russian grain crop unavailable, and the Argentine crop wasting for the want of ocean tonnage to convey it to the world's markets, there is a shortage in the supply as compared with the world's present and immediate future needs. Added to this the North American crop this year is scarcely an average one, and although the Canadian grain crop is better than the average, thereby allowing for a large exportable surplus, the Canadian consumer is compelled to pay a price in accordance with that fixed for the raw material in the world's markets. The full flood of the Canadian crop to Eastern markets is now on, and manufacturers of breadstuffs have abundance of raw material available, so that, ordinarily, breadstuffs should now be selling at little above the low point of each year's fluctuations. But the manufacturers are compelled to purchase their raw materials in competition with the world, so that the rising costs of raw materials must be accompanied by proportional advances in the prices of the finished product in order that the manufacturer may be protected. Raw material prices are rising steadily, and this at a time when manufacturers are in the mar-

*Fundamental Factors which the Government and the Municipalities will have to consider in a necessary regulation of the Cost of Living*

B Y E . S . B A T E S

ket for supplies for future needs. The shortage in supply is bound to effect further increases, and as the increases go into effect the consumer pays. Unless governmental regulative means are employed to control the situation the Canadian consumer will pay considerably more during the next few months than he is now paying for his requirements of breadstuffs. Millers, manufacturers and bakers may have discounted the future to a certain degree, but scarcely to the extent proportionate to the present rising tendency of the raw material markets.

Leather, textiles, furniture, hardware, household goods, foodstuffs, canned goods, meats, fish, and in fact, practically all products entering into the requirements of the ordinary consumer are in the same category. Boots and shoes have advanced from 50 to 75 per cent. over pre-war prices. Present prices are based on prices paid for raw materials several months ago. Leather has advanced steadily since then, but manufacturers have had to purchase their requirements for the future, and their prices on next season's goods will be proportionately advanced. Woollens, cottons and all textile goods are similarly situated. Manufacturers are paying fifty cents to seventy-five cents a pound for wool and nineteen cents a pound for cotton to-day that cost thirty to fifty cents and twelve to fifteen cents a pound respectively six months ago, and next season the consumer will pay the price, facing a gradual rise in the meantime. Furniture dealers are now selling goods purchased six months or more ago, but their present purchases are on a basis fifty per cent. or more above prices then prevailing. Household hardware is on the same basis. Raw materials are advancing, labour is scarce, manufacturing costs are higher, and manufacturers are busily engaged on war contracts making the delivery of domestic orders next to impossible. Furniture factories are manufacturing shell boxes, textile manufacturers khaki cloth, socks and wearing material for the soldiers, hardware manufacturers are busy on shells. And so the tale goes, the home trade is a secondary consideration and the stay-at-home pays the price.

Foodstuffs, canned goods, meats and fish are in great demand for the fighting forces. Exports of

cheese, butter, eggs, canned meats, canned vegetables, and canned and frozen fish are larger than ever before in the history of the Dominion. Trade conditions have been such during the past two years that the Canadian product is in demand in England and France practically regardless of the

selling price. Bully-beef is scorned by the soldiers in France, nevertheless it is a very necessary part of the rations owing to the ease with which it can be transported and preserved, and the canned meat factories of this country have been working to capacity, together with those of the United States and other countries, maintaining the supply. Cured and pickled meats of all kinds, hams, bacon, etc., have been taken in large quantities, until the domestic supply of live stock is being drained and the country is facing a shortage. The Canadian consumer is already paying from 25 to 50 per cent. over pre-war prices for meats, but there is every indication that live stock will go higher and retail prices soar in proportion. Fish, generally the cheapest sort of meat food, is following the lead. Poor returns from the fisheries, and increasing demand from the military forces for supplies, are likely to send prices up before long. Already the tendency is becoming apparent.

Cheese is now selling at the highest point in years. The demand from overseas has been urgent in spite of these high prices, and stocks on hand at the leading markets here are comparatively small for this season. The demand from overseas will likely continue as long as the war lasts, so that the Canadian consumer stands a very poor chance of getting even a small share of the present supply. Butter and eggs are in the same class. Prices are now almost prohibitive, but the full effect of the upward movement is scarcely realized as yet. Potatoes are very high, perhaps from artificial causes, but whatever the cause, the supply available is far from sufficient to meet requirements. Canned goods are advancing steadily. The salmon run on the Pacific Coast last season was a poor one, but canned salmon must be had for the troops, and prices are proportionately high. Canned vegetables have advanced materially, about seventy-five per cent., under the increased demand, as also have all kinds of canned fruits, jams, etc., partly because of short crops, shortage of labour to handle crops, increased cost of other ingredients, and the increase in demand. These goods will surely go higher as stocks

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## THE MAN FROM ATHABASKA

This is a Canadian poem from a new volume entitled "Rhymes of a Red Cross Man" (William Briggs, Toronto). These poems were written on the spot. Service is doing duty as a Red Cross man. His

B Y R O B E R T W . S E R V I C E

OH, the wife she tried to tell me that 'twas nothing but the thrumming  
Of a woodpecker a-rapping on the hollow of a tree;  
And she thought that I was fooling when I said it was the drumming  
Of the mustering of legions, and 'twas calling unto me;  
'Twas calling me to pull my freight and hop across the sea.

And a-mending of my fish-nets sure I started up in wonder,  
For I heard a savage roaring and 'twas coming from afar;  
Oh, the wife she tried to tell me that 'twas only summer thunder,  
And she laughed a bit sarcastic when I told her it was war;  
'Twas the chariots of battle where the mighty armies are.

Then down the lake came Half-breed Tom with russet sail a-flying,  
And the word he said was "war" again, so what was I to do?  
Oh, the dogs they took to howling, and the missis took to crying,  
As I flung my silver foxes in the little birch canoe;  
Yes, the old girl stood a-blubbing till an island hid the view.

Says the factor: "Mike, you're crazy! They have soldier-men a-plea.  
You're as grizzled as a badger, and you're sixty year or so."  
"But I haven't missed a scrap," says I, "since I was one and twenty.  
And shall I miss the biggest? You can bet your whiskers—no!"  
So I sold my furs and started . . . and that's eighteen months ago.

For I joined the Foreign Legion, and they put me for a starter  
In the trenches of the Argonne with the Boche a step away;  
And the partner on my right hand was an apache from Montmartre;  
On my left there was a millionaire from Pittsburg, U. S. A.  
(Poor fellow! They collected him in bits the other day.)

But I'm sprier than a chipmunk, save a touch of the lumbago;  
And they calls me Old Methoosalah, and blagues me all the day,  
I'm their exhibition sniper, and they work me like a Dago,  
And laugh to see me plug a Boche a half a mile away.  
Oh, I hold the highest record in the regiment, they say.

verses are a powerful translation of what he sees and hears men say in the hospitals and the trenches. There are many poems in the book even better than this; none so thoroughly Canadian in tone.

And at night they gather 'round me, and I tell them of my roaming  
In the Country of the Crepuscule beside the Frozen Sea;  
Where the musk-ox runs unchallenged, and the cariboo goes homing,—  
And they sit like little children, just as quiet as can be;  
Men of every clime and colour, how they hearken unto me!

And I tell them of the Furland, of the tumpline and the paddle,  
Of secret rivers loitering, that no one will explore;  
And I tell them of the ranges, of the pack-strap and the saddle,  
And they fill their pipes in silence, and their eyes beseech for more;  
While above the star-shells fizzle and the high explosives roar.

And I tell of lakes fish-haunted, where the big bull moose are calling,  
And forests still as sepulchres with never trail or track;  
And valleys packed with purple gloom, and mountain peaks appalling;  
And I tell them of my cabin on the shore at Fohd du Lac;  
And I find myself a-thinking: Sure I wish that I was back.

So I brag of bear and beaver while the batteries are roaring,  
And the fellows on the firing steps are blazing at the foe;  
And I yarn of fur and feather when the marmites are a-soaring,  
And they listen to my stories, seven poilus in a row,  
Seven lean and lousy poilus with their cigarettes aglow.

And I tell them when it's over how I'll hike for Athabaska;  
And those seven greasy poilus they are crazy to go too.  
And I'll give the wife the "pickle-tub" I promised and I'll ask her  
The price of mink and marten, and the run of cariboo;  
And I'll get my traps in order, and I'll start to work anew.

For I've had my fill of fighting, and I've seen a nation scattered;  
And an army swung to slaughter, and a river red with gore;  
And a city all a-smoulder, and . . . as if it really mattered,  
For the lake is yonder dreaming, and my cabin's on the shore;  
And the dogs are leaping madly, and the wife is singing gladly,  
And I'll rest in Athabaska, and I'll leave it never more.