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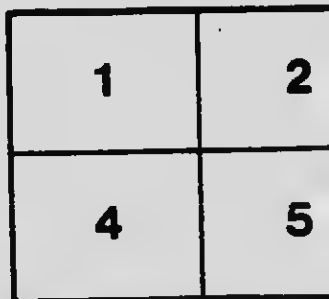
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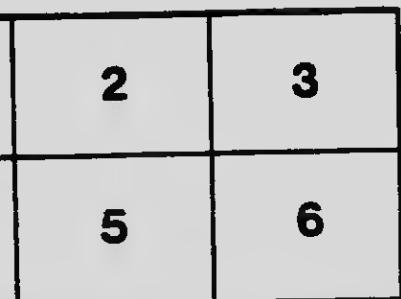
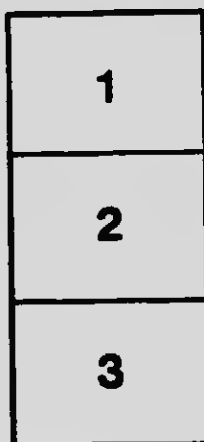
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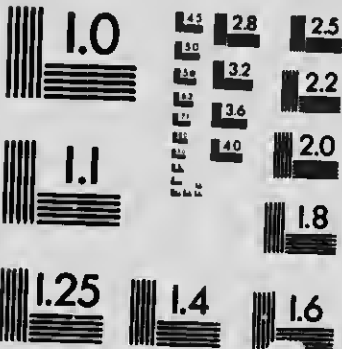
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# HIGH COST OF LIVING

## Government Dormant

### Profiteering Rampant--Combines Unmolested

#### THE POOR SUFFER.

#### THE RICH FATTEN.

In May, 1914, under strong pressure of public opinion the government appointed a commission to enquire into the question of the High Cost of Living, and to report upon it.

In June of 1915 the commission produced two bulky volumes of evidence.

No action whatever was taken by the government on this report, and the cost of living continued to mount.

When war broke out the government took to itself, through the War Measures Act, power to prevent "any undue increase in the cost of necessaries."

Absolutely no advantage has been taken by the government here of the power conferred upon it in this respect through the War Measures Act, though the cost of living since the war commenced has risen by leaps and bounds.

#### THE PEOPLE DEMAND ACTION

In November of 1916 pressure of public opinion again forced the government to make some pretext at dealing with the High Cost of Living, which by that time had attained to startling stature and corpulence. On the tenth of that month an order-in-council was drafted, and passed, embodying a series of intricate regulations. A commissioner was appointed at a high salary, and a staff employed to assist him in his labors.

During the four months which have intervened since the passing of the order High Cost of Living has attained further abnormal proportions, and is now stalking through the country with its head held higher than ever. No single concrete result can be attributed to the new regulations, or the efforts of the commissioner and his staff.



**READ FIGURES FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN PUBLICATION, "THE LABOUR GAZETTE." COST INCREASED SINCE REGULATION MADE.**

In July of 1914 just before war broke out the index figure of the department showing wholesale prices stood at 134.6. In November of 1916, when the government passed its new "control" regulations it stood at 198.4. In February of 1917, when the regulations had been in force four months it stood at 217.4 and was still going up!

In July of 1914 the estimated cost of a weekly budget for food for an average Canadian family was \$7.42. In November 1916, when the new regulations went into force it was \$9.61. In February of 1917 after four months operation of the regulations it had risen to \$10.46—and was still going up!

In July of 1914 the weekly cost of living for an average Canadian family, including coal, fuel, rent, etc., was \$14.16. In November, 1916, when the government framed its new regulations it was \$16.30. In February, 1917 after four months of operation, it had increased to \$16.78—and was still going up!

**CONDEMN THE GOVERNMENT**

The above figures, which are official, bear upon the face of them, the most striking condemnation of the government's utter failure to do anything at all toward the controlling of the cost of the necessaries of life.

**PROFITEERING A SACRED PRIVILEGE**

As a matter of fact, while every other belligerent nation and many neutral nations, have taken drastic action to prevent the undue enhancement of the cost of living, the Canadian Government has adopted, and maintained the attitude throughout the war that profiteering is the sacred right of its friends, and the middleman must not be interfered with.

The government's regulations provide for an intricate system of enquiries in which the jurisdiction of the municipalities, provincial attorneys general, and the federal authorities are hopelessly confused. Penalties are provided where undue enhancement by means of combines, price fixing by wholesalers, hoarding of supplies or any other method of artificially enhancing prices is proven. But the method of proving these things is so cumbersome and clumsy that proof is difficult, if not impossible to obtain. The last analysis responsibility for instituting prosecution rests with the government. When, even in the event of proof established, it is considered politically inexpedient to prosecute, the government has it in its power to hide the proof, and to obstruct with the Prosecution.

**THE CANNERS COMBINE DIRECTORS**

For instance the Minister of Labor has announced that the names of the companies have been investigated. In that connection the statement of the Dominion Cannery Ltd. (known familiarly as the Cannery Combine) made at Hamilton on March 7th,



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interesting. The statement shows profits for 1916 of \$668,077 as compared with a deficit in 1915 of \$292,439, or a favorable reversal of \$962,446. It would, for instance be interesting to know how the prices charged for the goods in 1916, together with the prices given the farmers for the raw product compared with those of 1915. But when it is stated that on the directorate of the company appear the names of F. E. Lalor, M.P., D. Marshall, M.P., and S. Nesbitt, M.P.P. (all of whom are Conservative members) can there be any hope of drastic action resulting from the enquiry into the canners?

#### KEMP AND THE TIN TRUST

Again, the statement has been made openly in the press and never contradicted that the Enamel and Tin Trust provides a fine of \$300 and boycott for any retailer found selling a teapot five cents below the fixed price. If that is true it is an offence under the regulations. But when it is stated that Sir Edward Kemp, Minister of Militia, is head of one of the firms which form the trust can the public have any hope that the offence will be brought home, and the penalty imposed?

#### SIR HERBERT AMES AND BOOTS

What hope again would there be of action in the controlling of the price of boots and shoes with Sir Herbert Ames, Conservative member for the St. Antoine Division of Montreal, at the head of one of the biggest boot firms in the Dominion?

#### JOHN STANFIELD AND WOOLENS

What hope of any serious investigation into woolems with John Stanfield, Chief Whip of the Conservative party as owner of one of the largest wooleu plants in Canada?

In fact what hope can there be of control of prices and regulation of profits from a government of millionaires?

#### BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN CONTRAST

In marked contrast with the passive inertia of the Canadian administration in the matter of commodity prices, and middlemen's profits is the drastic action of the Imperial authorities in that regard. In England excess profits are taken for the treasury, and the prices at which the necessaries of life must be sold are fixed on a basis of reasonable profit to the producer and retailer. Those who profit by the war are forced to pay toward the prosecution of the war.

#### DIRECT METHODS AND CONCRETE RESULTS

In marked contrast also to the attitude of the Canadian government, are the concrete results obtained by the authorities of the sister Commonwealth, Australia. That country has a simpler and more direct method of dealing with the situation than that embodied in the Canadian order-in-council. In the first place there is no shelving the responsibility for investigation. Under the War Prosecution Prices Regulations passed in July of 1916 a commissioner is appointed for each state of the common-

wealth, and a federal commissioner co-ordinates the work. It is provided that the commissioner in any state may recommend that a certain article of food or any other commodity may be declared a necessary commodity under the regulations. Evidence is then taken under oath as to the cost of the raw material, the average cost of distribution, existing wage awards, freight charges and all the factors which govern the actual cost of production, and distribution. On this evidence the commissioner then recommends a price, wholesale and retail, at which the commodity is to be sold, this price varying in metropolitan areas according to transportation, etc. With regard to goods imported the importer is required to produce the original invoices.

#### **PRICES FIXED ON MANY COMMODITIES**

By New Year last the Commonwealth had already succeeded in fixing the price of a large range of commodities, "without subjecting the trading community to any material hardship." Flour sells in Queensland at \$3.45 a bag, and in South Australia at \$2.96 a bag. Butter all over the Commonwealth sells at 36 cents a pound. Other items on which prices have been fixed include arrowroot, bran, bread, bacon, biscuits, cheese, cocoa, flour, groats, hams, infants foods, jam, milk, meats, oatmeal, flaked oats, rolled oats, quaker oats, poliard, rice, tinplates, and soups, while the number is being added to every week. Investigation is being made into boots and shoes.

It will be noted that in the above the price of the producer of the raw material which as a rule is fixed by the law of supply and demand, and in some cases by world prices, is not materially interfered with, care being taken particularly to eliminate undue spread between the producer and the consumer.

#### **HAVE ENCOURAGED PROFITS**

The Canadian Government's action throughout has been on lines exactly the opposite of those adopted in Great Britain, Australia and other countries.

**First.**—They have encountered from the onset the amassing of profits ranging as high as 800 percent, in some cases, even permitting such profits as these to be made from war orders placed by the United Kingdom.

**Second.**—They have discouraged the producer by forcing him to pay toll on everything he uses, to the heavily protected interests.

**Thirdly.**—They have enabled these interests through the very fact of this protection to charge what prices they please through the killing of competition.

The consumer has little to hope, and the middleman, and profiteer little to fear from the government's elaborate bluff at dealing with the High Cost of Living.

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