

1917.
NEW ZEALAND.

COST OF LIVING COMMITTEE

(REPORTS OF THE).

(MR. STATHAM, CHAIRMAN.)

Presented to the House of Representatives, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

TUESDAY, THE 14TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1917.

Ordered, "That a Select Committee be appointed, consisting of eleven members, to inquire into and report upon matters connected with the cost of living; with power to call for persons and papers; three to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Bollard, Mr. Craigie, Mr. J. S. Dickson, Mr. Guthrie, Mr. Hornsby, Mr. Poole, Mr. Sidey, Mr. Statham, Mr. Veitch, Mr. Wilkinson, and the mover."—(Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 15TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1917.

Ordered, "That the names of Mr. Glover and Mr. Hudson be added to the Cost of Living Committee."—(Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.)

THURSDAY, THE 16TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1917.

Ordered, "That the names of Mr. Ell, the Hon. Mr. MacDonald, and Mr. Wright be added to the Cost of Living Committee."—(Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.)

FRIDAY, THE 17TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1917.

Ordered, "That all petitions relating to the cost of living be referred direct to the Cost of Living Committee."—(Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.)

TUESDAY, THE 21ST DAY OF AUGUST, 1917.

Ordered, "That the name of Mr. Walker be added to the Cost of Living Committee."—(Right Hon. Mr. MASSEY.)

REPORTS.

No. 265.—Petition of G. P. PALMER and 160 Others, and 67 similar Petitions (as per Schedule attached).

PRAYING that means be devised to effect relief from the present increased cost of living.

I am directed to report that the Committee has carefully considered the subject-matter of these petitions, and, as it is making a general report upon the whole question, recommends that these petitions be referred to the Government for consideration with such general report.

15th October, 1917.

CHAS. E. STATHAM, Chairman.

SCHEDULE.

No. 354.—Allan, A., and 90 others.	No. 348.—McDonald, J., and 57 others.
No. 393.—Anderson, W. H., and 44 others.	No. 339.—McLaren, W., and 184 others.
No. 338.—Armstrong, J., and 67 others.	No. 298.—McMullen, H., and 103 others.
No. 271.—Bayliffe, R. G., and 83 others.	No. 283.—Mathieson, J. L., and 80 others.
No. 285.—Berridge, N., and 187 others.	No. 263.—Malthus, H. L., and 109 others.
No. 302.—Brown, J., and 438 others.	No. 313.—Millar, W., and 76 others.
No. 361.—Bush, A. S., and 123 others.	No. 289.—Malloy, J. J., and 403 others.
No. 299.—Curd, F. B., and 148 others.	No. 284.—Montgomery, G., and 251 others.
No. 314.—Daly, W. J., and 168 others.	No. 264.—O'Neill, F., and 106 others.
No. 297.—Darton, H. J., and 80 others.	No. 373.—Parker, W. J., and 183 others.
No. 287.—Ellis, J., and 138 others.	No. 281.—Parrant, L. W., and 68 others.
No. 324.—Farr, W. G., and 19 others.	No. 254.—Perrin, E. F., and 139 others.
No. 316.—Fowles, H. W., and 149 others.	No. 306.—Peters, E. M., and 202 others.
No. 300.—France, J. J., and 90 others.	No. 349.—Powell, T., and 1,026 others.
No. 280.—Fuller, E., and 52 others.	No. 337.—Rankin, D., and 329 others.
No. 267.—Gibson, H. L., and 110 others.	No. 307.—Ritchie, D., and 131 others.
No. 305.—Gibson, A. D., and 201 others.	No. 304.—Robins, F. A., and 241 others.
No. 269.—Griffiths, R. J., and 17 others.	No. 325.—Rackley, E., and 73 others.
No. 296.—Gubb, L. F., and 39 others.	No. 340.—Russell, R. M. L., and 79 others.
No. 352.—Hall, F., and 57 others.	No. 317.—Sadd, R. T., and 392 others.
No. 341.—Harle, G. H., and 70 others.	No. 371.—Saunders, W. A., and 159 others.
No. 410.—Hawkes, E. A., and 417 others.	No. 308.—Smith, C. W., and 91 others.
No. 256.—Hazelton, A., and 126 others.	No. 266.—Snaith, A. E., and 67 others.
No. 343.—Hean, R. B., and 323 others.	No. 270.—Stewart, L., and 242 others.
No. 311.—Higbet, W., and 40 others.	No. 312.—Stothers, A., and 246 others.
No. 315.—Hill, W. W., and 136 others.	No. 286.—Thorne, S. G., and 33 others.
No. 327.—Hooker, E., and 305 others.	No. 353.—Turner, A. L., and 117 others.
No. 288.—Hudson, W., and 402 others.	No. 326.—Vickerman, A. H., and 90 others.
No. 279.—Jackson, E. A., and 269 others.	No. 342.—Ward, A. S., and 248 others.
No. 346.—Johnston, H., and 26 others.	No. 290.—Welsh, A., and 86 others.
No. 255.—Jordan, A. R., and 175 others.	No. 268.—Whitney, B., and 537 others.
No. 347.—Lynch, T., and 41 others.	No. 323.—Wilson, W. C., and 19 others.
No. 272.—Macdonald, J., and 15 others.	No. 282.—Wooler, J., and 82 others.
No. 301.—McArdle, J., and 640 others.	

GENERAL REPORT.

THE Cost of Living Committee, which was set up for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting upon matters connected with the cost of living, has the honour to report that it has taken the sworn evidence of a large number of persons, including members of the Board of Trade, wholesale merchants, retailers, representatives of the dairy and other industries, the Wellington Trades and Labour Council, and Government departmental officers, and as the result of its investigations makes the following recommendations:—

1. That a Food Controller be forthwith appointed, who shall have a seat in Cabinet, and in whom shall be vested special powers of administration to enable him to deal promptly from time to time with problems affecting or which may affect the cost of living, with power to control and regulate the prices of food-supplies and of any other necessities of life.

2. That the constitution, duties, and powers of the Board of Trade be amended to meet the altered conditions consequent upon the appointment of the Food Controller.

3. That subsection (2) of section 2 of the Commercial Trusts Act, 1910, and the schedule to the said Act (as amended by section 12 of the Cost of Living Act, 1915) specifying the goods to which the Commercial Trusts Act applies, be repealed, thus making the provision of the last-mentioned Act directed against the formation of trusts and combines apply to any goods whatsoever.

4. That, in order to protect the public from short weight and short measure, legislation be passed providing that all packages or other receptacles in which goods have been put up ready for sale shall have clearly marked thereon the net weight and net quantity of the goods contained therein.

5. That encouragement be given, by legislation or otherwise, to the formation and carrying-on of co-operative societies for the distribution of commodities of all kinds.

6. That, where necessary in the interests of the community, the Government should undertake the purchase and wholesale and retail distribution of goods by sale or otherwise, and that the necessary legislation be passed to enable this to be done.

7. That vigorous steps be taken to develop the fishing industry throughout the Dominion, with a view to obtaining a cheap and plentiful supply of fish for the community.

8. That, the question of overseas and local shipping being of paramount importance, the Government should take into consideration the advisability of establishing a State-controlled co-operative line of steamers for the carriage of the imports and exports of the Dominion, and for meeting the requirements of the inter-coastal and islands trade.

9. That, in order to check more effectively any cases of unfair increase of rents over pre-war rates, the provisions of Part I of the War Legislation Amendment Act, 1916, be amended, and that in cases where rents have been increased in contravention of the terms of the Act a duty shall be cast upon the Labour Department to investigate, and where necessary bring such cases before the Court for adjustment. Further, the Committee is of opinion that the curtailment of the suburban train services has been a factor in increasing the rents in the cities, and urges the reinstatement of such services as will enable suburban residents to attend to their occupations and reach their homes without serious difficulty.

The Committee is of opinion that the special powers to be vested in the Food Controller should include, *inter alia*, the following:—

- (a.) To effectually prevent increase in prices in any case where such proposed increase is not justified to his satisfaction, and, where necessary, to fix from time to time maximum wholesale and retail prices of goods throughout New Zealand.
- (b.) To make arrangements for the elimination as far as possible of the present unnecessary and wasteful cost of distribution.
- (c.) To eliminate middlemen's profits, wherever possible, by bringing the consumer more nearly into contact with the producer.
- (d.) To take the necessary steps to ensure the efficient carrying-out of the "through booking" scheme for perishable foodstuffs and of the "fruit by post" scheme.
- (e.) To fix and otherwise deal with rents of dwellinghouses under powers similar to those under which he may deal with prices of goods.

24th October, 1917:

SPECIAL REPORT.

I HAVE the honour to report that the Cost of Living Committee desires to place upon record its thanks for and appreciation of the services rendered to the Committee during its deliberations by the clerk, Mr. M. A. Rowlands, and the official reporter, Mr. H. E. Le Grove; and that this resolution be recorded in the minutes and reported to the House.

24th October, 1917.

CHAS. E. STATHAM, Chairman.

SPECIAL REPORT.

I HAVE the honour to report that the Cost of Living Committee desires to place upon record its hearty appreciation of the efficient, painstaking, and impartial manner in which the Chairman, Mr. Statham, has presided over the deliberations of the Committee; and that this resolution be recorded in the minutes and reported to the House.

24th October, 1917.

T. K. SIDNEY,
Member of the Committee.

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