

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION, COAL MINING INDUSTRY, ESTEVAN DISTRICT

First Report

Estevan, Saskatchewan,
September 16th, 1941.

J. McGregor Stewart, Esq.,
Coal Administrator,
The Wartime Prices and Trade Board,
OTTAWA, Canada.

Dear Sir:

1. Acting under the authority and instructions contained in Order-in-Council P. C. 6839, dated August 29th, 1941, and a Commission issued to the undersigned on August 29th, 1941, under The Inquiries Act, Revised Statutes of Canada, 1927, Chapter 99, empowering them, pursuant to an agreement in existence between the coal mine operators of the Estevan-Bienfait district, Province of Saskatchewan, and the Mineworkers Central Union of Estevan and District, from time to time to inquire into and determine the amounts, if any, to be paid by way of a cost-of-living bonus to the employees of the said operators in accordance with the said agreement, and requiring the said Commission to transmit its reports to the Coal Administrator, we beg to submit herewith for your consideration a report upon the changes in the cost of living in the Estevan-Bienfait district of Saskatchewan over the period December 1, 1939, to August 1, 1941.

2. In preparing this report the Commission was of the opinion that, after full and proper recognition of local conditions and the terms of the aforementioned Agreement, its procedure should conform as closely as possible to the principles underlying the Dominion Government's Wartime Wages Policy, set forth in Order-in-Council P. C. 7440 of December 16, 1940, as amended by the Order-in-Council of June 27, 1941, and published in the Supplement to the Labour Gazette for July, 1941.

3. The Commission was further of the opinion that more information relevant to its purpose could be secured, in less time and with less expense, through the personal investigations of the Commissioners than by holding formal sittings of the Commission at various places in order to obtain evidence similar in nature.

4. The Commission interviewed the proprietors, managers, assistant managers or bookkeepers of some twenty-two (22) meat, grocery, clothing and general stores serving the coal-mining communities of Estevan, Bienfait and Roche Perceé and found that, although each merchant expressed his desire to assist the Commission in every possible way, only eight (8) establishments possessed books and records from which they might be able to supply their retail selling prices for December 1, 1939, which prices might be used in the setting up of a base whereby subsequent increases or decreases in the cost of living might be measured. Since the eight (8) establishments possessing selling records of any kind for December 1, 1939, were either grocery stores or general stores

carrying a very narrow range of clothing and since no meat or clothing stores possessed such records, the Commission decided that it would be unsatisfactory and unwise to proceed with the collection of local retail selling prices to serve in the construction of a base for the measurement of subsequent price changes in the area.

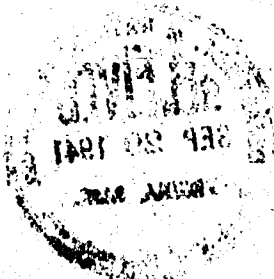
5. The Commission found that both housing and fuel costs in the coal-mining communities of the Estevan Field were substantially lower than those obtaining in most of the industrial areas of the Dominion and that there had been no perceptible increase in the house rents and coal prices charged by the coal companies, or in lighting costs, since December 1, 1939.

6. The Commission also found that a larger proportion of the employees of the coal operators in the Estevan-Bienfait district have gardens and keep cows and chickens, enabling them to provide a part of their food requirements, than is common in most industrial areas.

7. The Commission was of the opinion that, having regard to wage-rates obtaining in the field and to the special local conditions described in Paragraphs 5 and 6 above (which tend to reduce the cost of living below that obtaining in most industrial areas), any cost-of-living bonus payable should be calculated on a base, as at December 1, 1939, of Twenty (\$20.00) Dollars per week.

8. The Commission decided that: (a) for the basing date of December 1, 1939, from which all subsequent increases or decreases in the cost of living are to be measured, it would use the individual index numbers for Food, Rent, Fuel and Light, Clothing, Home Furnishings, and Miscellaneous (including Health, Personal Care, Transportation, Recreation, Life Insurance, etc.) used in the construction of the cost-of-living index prepared by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics for the Dominion as a whole; (b) that for August 1, 1942, and subsequent revision dates the Commission would use the individual index numbers of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics described above, as at the date of such revision, excepting only the items of Rent, Fuel and Light, the costs of which are determined locally and which have thus far shown no perceptible advance over December 1, 1939, so that the index numbers for Rent, Fuel, and Light remain the same as at December 1, 1939.

9. The Commission further decided, after examination of all available material on cost of living budgets and after adjustments to meet local conditions as described above, that the various component parts or items in, its cost-of-living index for the Estevan-Bienfait district should be given the percentage weightings described in the accompanying table, which also shows the individual index numbers for these items used in calculating the change in the cost of living in the Estevan-Bienfait district.



ITEM	PERCENTAGE WEIGHTING	INDEX NUMBER DEC. 1, 1939.	INDEX NUMBER AUG. 1, 1941.
Food	40	104.7	121.5
Rent	10	104.4	104.4
Fuel & Light	8	105.4	105.4
Clothing	14	103.3	115.7
Home Furnishings	8	104.1	114.3
Miscellaneous	23	102.0	106.1

10. Thus the Commission finds, on the basis of the weightings and index numbers given in Paragraph 9 above, that the composite or total cost of living index for the Estevan-Bienfait District increased from 103.8 points as at December 1, 1939, to 114.0 points as at August 1, 1941, indicating an increase in the cost of the necessaries of life amounting to nine and eight-tenths (9.8) per cent, or, on the base of Twenty (\$20.00) Dollars described in Paragraph Seven (7) above, to \$1.96 per week over the period December 1, 1939, to August 1, 1941.

11. The Commission therefore recommends that, pursuant to an Agreement existing between the coal operators of the Estevan-Bienfait district and the Mineworkers Central Union of Estevan and District, a cost-of-living bonus is payable to the employees of the said coal operators from the date that this report is accepted by The Wartime Prices and Trade Board to February 28, 1942, or to such date as the next report of the Commission shall become effective, and that, accordingly, the sum of thirty-three (33) cents should be added to the daily wages of each coal-mining employee coming within the jurisdiction of the said Agreement, providing, however, that the said daily bonus of thirty-three (33) cents shall be payable to any such coal-mining employee for a maximum of six (6) days in any one calendar week.

12. The Commission further recommends that when any coal-mining employee coming within the jurisdiction of the said Agreement commences work on any day he should be paid the full daily bonus of thirty-three (33) cents, providing, however, that (a) if on any day such employee wilfully leaves his work before the expiration of eight (8) hours, he should be paid one-eighth of the daily bonus for each hour worked; (b) if on any day such employee be required to work not more than four hours he should be paid one-half of the daily bonus.

ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

(Signed) G. E. Britnell
CHAIRMAN

(Signed) H. L. Johnston
COMMISSIONER

(Signed) V. E. Clark
COMMISSIONER

