

# Press Comments on Profiteering

## THE PROFITEERS

A deep and lasting impression will be made upon public opinion by the statement of the federal trade commission, in its report to the president of the senate, that exorbitant profits have been rolled up by many of the great industries which are vital to the country in the war.

We are in the midst of a campaign for War Savings stamps in which a properly urgent appeal is made to families who must painfully contrive and cut expenses to support, as they loyally desire, the national purpose. Now by high authority we are told that "profiteering exists," that many "industries are making unusual profits, some are showing outrageous ones." This need not chill ardor in the war; but it must, and it should, raise inquiries as to what we are going to do with the profiteers.

Four of the five great beef trust monopolies "have pocketed in 1915-1916-1917 \$140,000,000," we are told, "in terms of profit" mainly taken before we entered the war. J. Ogden Armour's comment is that "profits which seem huge when described by the commission appear in their true light when brought down to the basis of a dollar's worth of business."

They do "appear in their true light"—and in that light still "seem huge." If the vast economies of great-scale enterprise are not fairly shared with the consumer; if they are not even to be remitted when the nation is engaged in a life-and-death struggle; if they are so swollen as to suggest that to many applies the commission's indignant scoring of "inordinate greed," to some of "barefaced fraud," then the case of big business falls to the ground. It is on the defensive without a defense.

One month ago the President told congress that "the profiteering that can not be got at by the restraints of conscience can be got at by taxation;" that "there is such profiteering now." The commission follows him in recommending that congress impose heavy excess-profits taxes upon "inordinate" profiteers, and thus regain for the government a great part of what has been taken from it and from the people.

Clearly, the future will have its problems. So far as past and present are concerned, taxation is the short, easy, obvious method. Congress can not escape the duty laid upon it by the commission's findings. In so doing it must this time tax the real excess profits, not the lawful gains of industry and intelligence which have had no excess profits. It must supertax, to the limit, the profiteer and not his victim.—New York World.

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The federal trade commission has torn the cover off a mess of war profiteering by big business.

Its report is a mass of figures going clear to the bottom (and up to the top) in the matter of cost of production, cost of distribution, pre-war profits and excess profits reaped since brave men began giving their lives to make the world safe for democracy.

It is the most startling accusation of profiteering ever made, and it is staunchly backed by evidence.

It points to enormous war profits wrung out of the meat industry by packers. It reveals the excess profits made by coal barons. It charges the large flour millers with exacting immense war profits at a time when the farmer producers were regulated by governmental price fixing. It goes all through the list in a most methodical and painstaking manner, telling who has been profiteering and how much. The commission exonerates some large business institutions of profiteering charges, and does not hesitate to express its opinion when it finds hands soiled by unpatriotic profit taking. Thus:

"These have preyed upon the people unconscionably." And again—

"Some of it (profiteering) is attributable to inordinate greed and barefaced fraud."

No honest person can read the commission's report, study those figures of profits, and not come to the conclusion that profiteers have

helped the kaiser in this war against the nations fighting for democracy.

They have increased the cost of living here, in France, Great Britain and wherever else American products go to aid in fighting this war. By thus increasing the living cost they might have weakened the morale of the people and the soldiers fighting for us. They have done much to make the burden of war harder for the American people to bear.

They have been of great assistance to the enemies of democracy than the whole collection of pro-German Germans and anti-war socialists in these United States—and they have done this not for principle but for dollars!—Omaha Daily News.

## PATRIOT OR PROFITEER?

"This nation can not live half slave and half free." That declaration was made by Abraham Lincoln, met the country when it was half slave, half free, and had not determined to free itself of slavery.

"This nation can not live half patriot, half profiteer." This might be said today, but the man large enough to assert it has not appeared. The truth in it is as apparent as in the words of Lincoln on slavery. The need for comprehension of the truth is as keen, but the declaration is unspoken.

It is self-evident that two antagonistic principles can not determine a nation's course, direct its life, and sway its people. There is not working space enough for two such principles. Both will expand under constant cultivation, and ultimately one will drive the other out. The people of a prudent nation will select the beneficial principle, adopt it, insert it into the national life and if necessary, fight for it. The opposing idea will be driven out.

The disclosures of the federal government within the last few weeks make a picture that is disturbing the American people. The treasury department exposures have brought patriots and profiteers side by side before the citizens of the United States. They are at the bar of public opinion. The question to be decided—which must be decided—is whether this nation wants to live half patriot, half profiteer, whether it can so live even if it desires.

There is no need to enlarge upon the conditions that confront the people, and especially that majority element generally recognized under the broad term, working class. The members of that class know the changes in economic circumstances thoroughly. They may not have a clear knowledge of causes, but of effects they have nothing to learn, for results have fallen upon them heavier and with more distressing results than any other element of society.

The federal government's own figures, its own exposures, merely bring this problem of patriotism and profiteering directly before the country. The positiveness of figures leaves nothing more to ask from that side. The question is, what are we going to do about it? The government seems to be waiting upon some commanding expression from the country. The people expect the government to solve the difficulty. The citizens who are victimized by profiteering can do nothing. They are helpless. The government is all powerful. Its duty is plain and large. \* \* \* —Pittsburg Leader.

## THE PROFITEER

Our people are in this war heart and soul—pocket, stomach and starred service flag. We propose to win it and drag-chain the tigers who still infest the medieval moral jungle of central Europe at whatever cost in personal privation, in keenly felt sacrifice, in the straitening of our lives—yes, in the blood of our sons. Our men buy liberty bonds until it mortgages their earning power and cuts their living expenditures to stark necessities. Our women labor early and late to fit themselves to "carry on" the business of the nation when the men go to fight for its freedom and existence. Our very children are taught to forego their little luxuries in order to invest their "pocket money"—pitifully small to a profiteer, but big as a house to the budding patriots—in thrift stamps.

But, in the name of our first dead and of those who are about to die, we are not doing this to pour more millions into hands already weighted below the heartline by the millions they have. We are not even doing it to make new millionaires. When the nation is in the agony of a great war the making of millionaires is a non-essential industry. There are



TWO KINDS OF AMERICANS  
—New York World.

only two classes of men who profiteer on a battlefield—the dishonest sutler and the ghoul who robs the wounded and the dead. During the battle of Vimy Ridge, which lasted for days and terrible nights, the Canadian Y. M. C. A. workers climbed through the shattered thickets that clothe it in a hell of shrapnel and machine gun bullets to carry bottles of hot coffee to the fighters. But they did not charge for them. They were priceless, but they were free. That is the spirit of America at war—not that of the sly, greedy sutler safe behind the lines, who charges ten prices for his stock.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

## PROFITEERING SHOULD STOP

It is no surprise to the people that there has been extravagant profiteering in the necessary supplies of the nation. Those who have been paying the price have long felt that the only reason for such prices was that those charging them have found they could get them. There has been little real cause under any of the much talked of natural laws, to warrant the prices the people have had to pay. The pity of it is that most of the high profiteering reported to the senate has been in articles like meats, flour and coal, commodities under government regulation and in charge of the various government bureaus. \* \* \* \* \*

Something should be done and done quickly. Justice should be given the sacrificing people. They willingly sacrifice for their government. They should not at the same time be mulcted for private greed.—Milwaukee News.

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The report made to congress by the special committee of investigators really brought to light nothing more than might have been expected, although the truth is the exposure of a most regrettable condition. The same facts have been brought to light in all of the countries at war, since there seems to be special radical distinction in the matter of taking advantage of conditions for one's personal and financial gain.

We take it for granted that the investigators, when they use the names of certain concerns as illustrations of the advantage that has been taken of war business, know what they are talking about. The result is that our opinions of the great business houses, wealthy enough without bleeding their customers further, goes considerably down in the scale as the result of their exposure.

It now remains for congress and the administration to take steps that will teach these profiteers a lesson. By no means should they be allowed to continue high handed methods. On the other hand, we have no reason to shudder with horror. That there should be war and opportunity without someone taking advantage of it is absurd to think about. We should be glad that the wolves have been unearthed as quickly as they have.—New Haven, Conn., Union.

The taking over of the railroads by Secretary McAdoo must have been regarded by Mr. Hoover and Mr. Garfield as in the nature of a godsend. Being a kicking post all the time tends to deprive a thankless job of its flavor.