

# **THE HIGH COST OF LIVING**

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The high cost of living by Frederic C. Howe

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**FREDERIC C. HOWE**

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BY

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## PREFACE

THE high cost of living is not a war product. The war hastened tendencies. It aggravated conditions. It gave opportunities for speculation and extortion. But the cost of living was rising rapidly before the war. And it will continue to rise when the war is over unless radical steps are taken to prevent it.

The last few years have witnessed a change in the economic foundations of American life. Competition is passing. Monopoly has entered into almost every process of industry. The laws of demand and supply no longer protect us. A host of intermediaries have wedged themselves in between the producer and the consumer, each one of which is interested in taking as large a profit for himself as possible. This is not only true of food, it is true of almost every necessity of life. Even more important, the control of the land and resources of the earth has diminished production. It has excluded men from the land. It has limited the opportunities of labor. It has checked initiative. It has reduced the amount of wealth produced.

Monopoly is responsible for the conditions which confront us. It operates in the following ways:

It controls the natural resources, the agencies of

transportation, distribution, and marketing. It has increased prices. It has discouraged agriculture. Tribute is exacted from the consumer at one end of the line and the producer at the other.

It reduces the output of wealth of all kinds.

It limits the opportunities for labor and keeps down wages and salaries.

What we are most in need of is freedom; freedom of access to the hundreds of millions of acres of land that are held out of use; freedom of access to adequate transportation; freedom in distribution, in marketing, in competition all along the line. Monopoly stifles. It strangles the labor and industry of the nation. It short-circuits the efforts of the manufacturer and the farmer. Colossal as is the output of wealth in this country, the possibilities of production have scarcely been touched. The talent of the country is not free to apply itself as it would if the land and resources were opened up to use. Freedom is the great need of America, freedom from monopoly in all of its forms, but most of all in its control of the land, of transportation, of credit, and of distribution.

It is not the tribute that monopoly exacts, it is the embargo on production that is most costly.

These evils can only be corrected by law, by legislation. Exhortation will not bring relief. Nor will criminal proceedings, trust-busting, or regulation of prices. We have tried this kind of regulation for a