

MESSAGE RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL COMMISSION ON THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, BOSTON, June 13, 1919.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

Owing to war conditions prices of the necessaries of life are very considerably increased. In some cases prices have receded since the signing of the armistice; in others they appear to have increased. The ordinary consumer is interested and affected by retail prices. Except as these prices reflect prices at wholesale, he is uninterested in wholesale prices. While there is very little constitutional authority for the fixing of prices by law, it is of the utmost consequence that the public know that charges are reasonable. All kinds of wages have been increased, and these of course are reflected in the increased cost of materials. The public know this and expect to pay these necessary increases. They ought to be informed as to whether prices in general are fair and reasonable. If they are, they are willing to pay them; if they are not, a public recognition of that condition will tend to adjust prices to a reasonable basis. There is constitutional authority for investigating and reporting on this most important condition. Government fails as an administrator of justice if it permits to go unchallenged an exorbitant charge upon the public.

It is therefore recommended that a special commission, consisting of the Attorney-General, the Supervisor of Administration, the Commissioner of Standards and two other persons to be appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Council, be authorized to investigate and report its findings to the next General Court, and so much thereof as in its opinion would be for the public

benefit from time to time meanwhile, by filing a copy thereof in the office of the clerk of the Senate; with authority to make expenditures of money in the conduct of its investigation.

For legislation see General Acts, 1919, chapter 341.

For further information see reports of Commission on the Necessaries of Life.