

## THE COST OF LIVING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir,—To put it mildly, the butchers, bakers, and other vendors of household supplies are exploiting the pockets of consumers to an unwarrantable degree in charging exorbitant prices for the commodities they retail. Bread at the present price of flour could be sold at 4½d. a loaf, and then leave a good margin for profit. Meat, seeing the prices at which it is sold in the wholesale markets, and in its frozen state in Europe, could stand a substantial retail reduction in price. Butter is being retailed at a price so high as to be out of all proportion to its wholesale value. The high price demanded for fresh fish is quite beyond the means of the ordinary citizen, and so on as regards other household requirements. The retail prices of coal and firewood are preposterous, and one is never sure, even when being compelled to pay such enormous prices, that the correct weight or measurement is given. Is there not a law in Victoria compelling vendors of fuel to carry Imperial weights and scales, in order that purchasers may see for themselves that the exact amount of purchase is being given? Such a law obtains in most states, and is enforced by the police also.

Retailers having combined in most trades to force prices up, the public should combine to reduce them to their proper and legitimate level.—I am, &c.,

Jan. 11.

PARENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir,—In your issue of to-day there is a letter on the cost of living, signed "Householder." It is a pity that he doesn't know what he is talking about before he troubles the press. This morning I wanted hind-quarters of mutton, and bought two pairs from Morris and Wilkins, of the Metropolitan Meat Market, and paid 4d. per lb. The chops of that mutton were retailed for cash at 8d. per lb. The kidney suet in each pair weighed 2½lb., and each pound of chops had to be trimmed and flap ends cut off; the legs of the same brought 4½d. per lb. This is one item of price which has occurred for the last four years. If we have had any drop it only lasts for an occasional fortnight. Lambs have been and still are 11/ and 12/ a head, and when bought alive fetch a few shillings more per head. Beef is at present quoted at 27/ and 28/ per 100lb., so I should like to know where "Householder's" good years of profits come in. I suppose it will be news to him to know that it is as much as a butcher can do to keep his bills paid.—Yours, &c.,

South Yarra, Jan. 11.

J. HOLT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir,—Your correspondent "Householder" complains about the high price of living as compared with the plentiful supply of food, &c., and says it is a great burden to make ends meet when we consider the scarcity of employment and low wages, the blame for which, he says, must be put upon the Factories and Shops Act and such like legislation. Now, I should like "Householder" to show us upon what economic basis he blames the said labour legislation for bringing about this undesirable result. Of course at present he has only made a passing shot or mere sneer.—Yours, &c.,

Jan. 11.

AL KING.