

CHAPTER II.—CHANGES IN THE PRICE OF PARTICULAR COMMODITIES.

Question 4: In what special direction has the increase, if any, been most marked—(a) rent, (b) food, (c) clothing, (d) lighting and fuel, (e) household necessities, (f) medical attendance, &c., (g) education?

(a.) Rent: The increase is about 20 per cent. over the last fifteen years for houses of the same style and quality. The causes of the increased rents referred to. A fair proportion of the workers own their own houses.

(b.) Food: Cost of food amounts to nearly 35 per cent. of the total expenditure. The prices of foodstuffs have risen very much more than the average level of prices.

(c.) Clothing: Clothing has increased about 20 per cent. The cheaper boots have increased in price at a higher rate than the better class of boots. The increase in price in the poorer classes is as high as 66 per cent.

(d.) Lighting has decreased about 27 per cent., fuel has increased about 5 per cent. A comparative table of gas-prices is given.

(e.) Household necessities: Prices of these are much the same as they were eighteen years ago. Full particulars of changes are given in the report. Many articles of food are short in the reputed weights and measures.

(f.) Attendance: The wages of domestic servants have at least doubled. Medical attendance has not increased in price.

(g.) The direct cost of education is very much cheaper than it used to be.

CHAPTER III.—COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

Question 2: Has that increase, if any, been more marked in New Zealand than in other English-speaking countries.

1. A direct comparison is impossible.
2. The general level of prices has risen less since 1890 in New Zealand than in any other country of which we have reliable records.
3. The New Zealand price-level has not risen to anything like the degree observable in most other countries between the average of the period 1890–99 and the year 1910.
4. A continuing upward movement has been shown by prices abroad in the years 1911 and 1912.
5. The comparatively slow rise in the general level in New Zealand is due partly to the smaller degree in which materials have risen here than abroad.
6. Our course of food-prices has lagged behind that of all the other countries except the United Kingdom and France, but has shown some abrupt movements during the last ten years, due partly to tariff changes. In so far as the cost of living is measured by the wholesale prices of food the New Zealand cost has not increased to the same extent as the cost in America, Canada, and Germany.
7. The New Zealand food-prices move in sympathy with those of the United Kingdom.
8. Tables are given showing the comparative course of prices in New Zealand and other countries of some of the most important foods produced in New Zealand.
9. There is a greater contrast between the course of the prices of materials in New Zealand with that in other countries than was exhibited by the comparison of food-prices.
10. The slower rate of rise in the case of materials is probably due in part to the high prices ruling for them during the nineties in New Zealand.
11. Tables are given of index numbers of prices in New Zealand and abroad of coal, iron, wool, and petroleum for the last twenty years.
12. The difficulty of comparing wholesale and retail prices is referred to, and a comparative table of such prices is given for the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the United States of America.
13. Retail prices in New Zealand are contrasted with retail prices in the United States, England, Germany, and France, as ascertained in the Board of Trade inquiry.