

Section 2.—Retail Prices of Commodities.

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics, in addition to wholesale prices, collects retail prices in some 60 Canadian cities for foods, fuel and lighting, clothing and miscellaneous items, including data concerning the costs of various services. Prices are collected by the Bureau for over 80 food commodities; these are averaged along with certain prices received through agents of the Department of Labour, and are inserted monthly in the "Labour Gazette." The fuel group includes prices for coal and rates for electricity and gas. Information is collected for 55 clothing items and percentage price changes are computed therefrom. Miscellaneous items include prices for toilet articles, medicines, tobacco, books, newspapers, furniture and house furnishings; also the costs of services, including data for hospitals, laundries, barbers, street-car transportation, doctors, telephones and entertainment. Data on rentals are collected by the Department of Labour.

Index Numbers of Canadian Retail Prices and Cost of Living.—The index numbers of retail prices, rents and costs of services, hitherto calculated on the 1913 base, have been revised and recalculated on the base 1926 = 100. This is in accordance with the general policy of the Bureau in revising the basis of index number calculations. These index numbers are so constructed as to show the trend of the cost of living for an average middle class family, with an expenditure of about \$2,500 per annum. In revising the data sixteen items were added to the clothing group. Rental data were changed to include apartments and flats as well as houses, and higher grades of dwellings than formerly were included. Owing to the increasing use of coke, it was added to the fuel and lighting group. Miscellaneous items were increased from 71 to 130, the additions including dishes, furniture, hardware, insurance, books and education, dentists' services, cost of motor operation and supplies. In all, the index includes 245 separate items or groups of items as compared with 161 in the old index. Prior to 1926 only figures on the old list of items are available, but these have been recalculated to the 1926 base (Table 5).

This index number has for its object the measurement of the general movement of retail prices and living costs in the *Dominion as a whole*. It is constructed in such a manner as to make possible comparisons with other general index numbers, such as the index of wholesale prices. *It is not intended to be a measurement of the cost of living of any particular class or section in the Dominion.* Costs of living show considerable diversity in the various sections of the Dominion, and wage disputes in any particular section necessitate a special review for the section concerned. For the purpose, however, of showing broad general tendencies in living costs over the Dominion as a whole, the Bureau's index number of retail prices, rents and costs of services is eminently suitable.

It will be seen from Table 6 that the general index shows a slight rise in 1928 as compared with 1927, being 98.5 in 1927 and 99.1 in 1928. Foods and rents were higher, clothing and miscellaneous items practically unchanged on the average, and fuel and lighting lower.