

Section 2.—Retail Prices and Cost of Living.

Collection of data and calculation of index numbers of retail prices and the cost of living are carried out in co-operation by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Labour. Resultant series of index numbers are computed from different points of view. Index numbers of retail prices and cost of living, issued by the Bureau, have for their object the measurement of the general movement of such prices and costs in the Dominion as a whole, and are so calculated as to make comparisons possible with other general index numbers constructed on similar principles, for example, the index of wholesale prices. Calculated, as they are, on the aggregative principle, i.e., the total consumption of each commodity, the Bureau's index numbers afford an excellent measurement of changes in the average cost of living in the Dominion as distinguished from that of any particular class or section. As a development of retail prices and cost of living studies, investigations into the living expenditures of families in representative cities (see Subsection 2, p. 819) have been made by the Bureau of Statistics. The results of these are available in bulletin form.

The computations of the Labour Department are designed to show changes in the cost of living for workmen's families in cities. They are thus limited in scope and more restricted in application than the Bureau of Statistics index.

Subsection 1.—The Bureau of Statistics Index Numbers of Retail Prices and Services.

In the Bureau's index, 1926 is taken as the base year. A description of the system of weighting of individual items, sub-groups, and groups, and of the method of construction of this index number is given at pp. 812-818 of the 1931 Year Book. Annual figures on the 1913 base covering prices of a family budget of staple foods, fuel, rent, etc., will be found in the Bureau's report "Prices and Price Indexes", while monthly figures are published in the *Labour Gazette*.

As in the case of wholesale prices, retail commodity prices showed little movement during 1939 until the closing months of the year; the food index showed an appreciable advance only in the last four months. During the same period fuels moved higher by slightly more than the usual seasonal increase for the autumn and early winter season. Special surveys of prices of clothing and household furnishings showed that there were moderate advances in November and December and at the end of the year the prices of these two items were, respectively, 3.6 p.c. and 8.4 p.c. above the levels of Sept. 1. Changes in residential rentals during 1939 were generally small. An index of rentals based on a survey in May was 90.0, and the corresponding October, 1939, index was 89.9. The 1938 average index for rentals was 89.8.

9.—Index Numbers of Retail Prices, Rents, and Costs of Services, 1929-39, and by Months, 1938, 1939, and January-April, 1940.

(1926=100.)

NOTE.—Statistics for 1913-28 are given at p. 820 of the 1938 Year Book. Monthly figures prior to 1938 will be found in the corresponding table of previous editions of the Year Book.

Year.	Food Index.	Fuel Index.	Rent Index.	Clothing Index.	Sundries Index.	Total Index.
1929.....	101.0	96.4	103.3	96.9	99.0	99.9
1930.....	98.6	95.7	105.9	93.9	99.4	99.2
1931.....	77.3	94.2	103.0	82.2	97.4	89.6
1932.....	64.3	91.4	94.7	72.3	94.6	81.4
1933.....	63.7	87.7	85.1	67.1	92.6	77.5
1934.....	69.4	87.7	80.1	69.7	92.1	78.6
1935.....	70.4	86.8	81.3	69.9	92.2	79.1
1936.....	73.4	86.4	83.7	70.5	92.8	80.8
1937.....	77.3	84.9	86.9	72.7	93.4	83.1