

PRICES OF COMMODITIES IN CANADA.

1916, Boards being established in 14 cases. In the remaining three cases proceedings were stayed to permit of negotiations between the parties concerned, which resulted in settlements being effected without the establishment of Boards.

Fair Wages Branch.—The Fair Wages Branch of the Department of Labour is charged with the preparation of schedules of minimum wage rates, which are inserted in Dominion Government contracts, and must be adhered to by contractors in the execution of the respective works. The number of Fair Wages Schedules prepared since the adoption of the Fair Wages Resolution in 1900 is 3,498, of which 122 were prepared during the calendar year 1915.

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Wholesale Prices.—The Special Report on Wholesale Prices in Canada during the 20 years 1890-1909, issued by the Department of Labour in 1910, has been followed by similar annual reports for each year 1910 to 1915. The changes in prices are measured by index numbers which are percentages of the average prices during the decade 1890 to 1899. The list includes 230 commodities from 1890 to 1909 and 272 commodities from 1910 to 1915, and is divided into thirteen groups. The tables and diagrams show the course of prices by groups for each year back to 1890 and by months during 1914 and 1915.

From Table I and the diagrams on page 526 it will be seen that wholesale prices rose very steeply during 1915, especially in the latter part of the year, the rise being marked chiefly in grains, other farm products and foods during the latter part of 1914 and the early part of 1915 and in materials during the latter part of the year, especially textiles, metals, metal products and chemicals.

Retail Prices.—Since January, 1910, the Department of Labour has secured each month the retail prices of some thirty staple foods, coal, wood and coal oil, and prevailing rates for rent for a six-roomed house in some 60 localities in Canada, 10,000 or over in population. These returns have been published each month in the "Labour Gazette." Similar statistics were obtained for December, 1900 and 1905, for the Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living. From these figures calculations of typical weekly expenditures have been made in terms of the average prices for each year. The prices for the years 1910 to 1914 were given in the Canada Year Book, 1914, page 534. The prices by months in 1915 and for the year 1915 are given in Table 6. Retail prices of food rose during 1914 and 1915, fuel and light averaged slightly lower, and rent was down in both years, but began to recover in the latter part of 1915.