

SECTION I.—INTRODUCTION.

1. **General.**—This report contains information in summarised form regarding trade unionism, unemployment, prices, rents, purchasing-power of money, wages, industrial disputes, and general industrial conditions, and covers the matters of general interest and importance investigated each year since 1913 by the Labour and Industrial Branch of this Bureau. In some instances, however, the inquiry was carried back as far as 1891. In addition, the Appendixes to the Report furnish detailed particulars in a comparable form—firstly, as to prices (wholesale and retail) and rents for the year 1920, and secondly, as to current rates of wages and hours of labour in all the more important trades and occupations in the several States.

Most, if not all, of the subjects dealt with in this Report have not in the past received the attention they demand, and in view of the lack of data bearing thereon, it became necessary, before any comprehensive or reliable results could be obtained to create a suitable organisation and collect the necessary information

In consequence of the urgent necessity for economy, the publication of the Quarterly Labour Bulletins ceased with No. 18 (June, 1917). The principal tables hitherto published in these Bulletins are included in the Quarterly Summary of Australian Statistics.

Notwithstanding the explicit statement of the purpose and scope of the investigations of the Bureau as to variations in prices and purchasing-power of money given in the various Labour Reports, misunderstandings in regard thereto are prevalent. The subject is again alluded to in the present issue. Moreover, a limited number of copies of a special article entitled "Price-Indexes, their Nature and Limitations, the Technique of Computing them, and their Application in Ascertaining the Purchasing-Power of Money" was issued in pamphlet form during the year 1919, and the report was printed in Labour Report No. 9 (vide Appendix 1). Part I. of this Appendix consists of introductory remarks on price-indexes. In Part II. the purchasing-power of money and the nature of price-indexes are indicated, while in Parts III. and IV. the technique and significance of price-indexes are dealt with in detail.

NOTE.—The Labour Report, in its accounts of proceedings, abstracts of reports, legal decisions, quotations and other matters of concern to labour, is not to be regarded as expressing an official endorsement of any of the views or opinions contained therein.

In Appendixes to Labour Report, No. 9, tabular information was given of the commodities included for both wholesale and retail price investigations in various other countries.

2. Sources of Information.—In the collection of the data upon which the particulars given in this Report are based, a great variety of sources of information has been utilised. For example, in the collection of data as to the purchasing-power of money, particulars are obtained direct from retail dealers and house-agents, the complete scheme providing for the collection, analysis, and tabulation of over 150,000 separate prices and quotations each year. Particulars as to wholesale prices are taken from the market quotations in the daily press and in trade journals. Information as to unemployment is collected from trade unions, partly direct and partly through the labour agents and correspondents whose services are also utilised in collecting returns from trade unions as to industrial disputes and changes in rates of wage. As regards the last two matters, however, returns are also collected from employers and employers' associations. A large number of reports and returns are also received from official sources. These relate to operations of industrial courts and wages boards, employment bureaux, assisted and nominated immigrants, accidents, and cognate matters. Although the work of collecting the necessary information and of keeping in touch with industrial conditions and matters throughout the whole Commonwealth from a single bureau centralised in Melbourne is necessarily one of some difficulty and magnitude, it is felt that the conspectus which is thus given of the industrial affairs of the entire Commonwealth fully justifies the effort, and is essential to a proper understanding of the industrial position of Australia.

It is gratifying to note that the response of all persons has been, on the whole, satisfactory, and the thanks of the Bureau are due to officials who at the cost of a considerable amount of personal inconvenience supplied the desired information from the books of their Associations and from other sources.

During the years 1919 and 1920 enquiries from the Labour and Industrial Branch of the Bureau for particulars relating to the variations in the prices of commodities and house rents, changes in rates of wage, industrial disputes, unemployment, etc., were greatly in excess of those in previous years, and it is very gratifying to record that secretaries of trade unions, and employers' associations, officials of various State and Commonwealth departments, municipal bodies and private employers readily responded. The cordial thanks of the Bureau are extended to all those who forwarded returns.

3. Classification of Industries.—For the purpose of tabulating the results of the investigations which have been made in regard to labour

organisation, unemployment, rates of wage, industrial disputes, etc., the following classification of trades and occupations has been adopted:—

Classification of Industries and Occupations.

I.	Wood, Furniture, Sawmill, Timber-works, &c.	VIII.	Mining, Quarries, &c.
II.	Engineering, Metal Works, &c.	IX.	Railway and Tramway Services.
III.	Food, Drink, and Tobacco, Manufacture and Distribution.	X.	Other Land Transport.
IV.	Clothing, Hats, Boots, Textiles, &c.	XI.	Shipping, Wharf Labour, &c.
V.	Books, Printing, Bookbinding, &c.	XII.	Pastoral, Agricultural, Rural, Horticultural, &c.
VI.	Other Manufacturing.	XIII.	Domestic, Hotels, &c.
VII.	Building.	XIV.	Miscellaneous.