

## SECTION I.—INTRODUCTION.

1. **General.**—The main object of this Report is to present, in concise and convenient form, the results of certain investigations concerning the subjects of trade unionism, unemployment, and changes in rates of wages and hours of labour in the Commonwealth since the year 1891. These are the matters of most general interest and importance, now being investigated from year to year (beginning on the 1st January, 1913) by the Labour and Industrial Branch of this Bureau, and the inquiries in regard to these three matters were extended back to the year 1891, so as to furnish statistics which will be comparable with those which it is proposed to publish periodically in the future. The continuity of the returns, now being collected, will thus be substantially preserved.

In addition, it will be found that the Report furnishes particulars in a comparable form—firstly, as to current rates of wages and hours of labour in a number of the more important trades and occupations in the several States, and secondly, as to prices, price-indexes and cost of living up to the end of the year 1912.

The interests concerned in certain of these questions are varied and extensive, and associated with the latter are some important aspects of those economic and industrial problems which have, in comparatively recent years, become the subject of so much research and discussion on the part of statesmen, publicists and students, as well as of those who are engaged in the practical application of Conciliation and Arbitration, Industrial Disputes and Wages Board Acts.

Most, if not all, of the subjects dealt with in this Report have, in the past, not received in the Commonwealth that attention they now demand, and in view of the lack of data bearing thereon, it became necessary, before any comprehensive or reliable results could be obtained, to commence the collection of the data *de novo*.

2. **Sources of Information.**—Forms were accordingly distributed to the Secretary of every Trade Union in Australia, asking for certain information to be furnished. A specimen of the forms used for this purpose is shown in Appendix I. hereof. It should be mentioned that four different forms were used, and, though substantially similar, they differed somewhat in detail, according as the information in regard to membership, unemployment, etc., to be supplied by the Secretary of the Union, related:—(a) to a whole State, including branches of the Union; (b) to a Head Office district only; (c) to an independent Union having no branches; or (d) to a branch only of a Union. The details of these forms are referred to hereinafter in dealing with the several branches of inquiry.

On return to the central Bureau, the particulars given on the forms were carefully examined and checked, where possible, by reference to awards and determinations of industrial tribunals, and to official reports and documents. In case of any discrepancy or apparent inconsistency, the forms were returned for verification and correction, generally through the Labour Agents and Correspondents of the Bureau.

It is gratifying to note that the response of the Union Secretaries was, on the whole, very satisfactory, and the thanks of the Bureau are due to many who went to a considerable amount of trouble and personal inconvenience in order to obtain from the books of their Associations and from other sources the desired information for past years as far back as 1891. At the outset, the progress of the work was somewhat hindered by the suspicions and apprehensions of officials of a few labour organisations, but this hindrance practically vanished, as soon as it was realised that the affairs of any single Union would not be disclosed in the published results, and that the investigations had no regard to the prejudices of any political designs, but were being made solely for general statistical purposes. In one or two cases demands for the information had to be issued under the penal provisions of the Census and Statistics Act 1905. It will be seen hereinafter that returns have been received from every trade union in the Commonwealth.

**3. Classification of Industries.**—For the purpose of tabulating and publishing the results of the investigations which have been made in regard to labour organisations, unemployment, rates of wages, etc., the following industrial classification of trades and occupations has been adopted:—

**Classification of Industries and Occupations.**

I.	Wood, Furniture, Sawmill, Timber-workers, &c.	VIII.	Mining, Quarries, &c.
II.	Engineering, Shipbuilding, Smelting, Metal Works, &c.	IX.	Railway and Tramway Services.
III.	Food, Drink, and Tobacco Manufacturing and Distribution.	X.	Other Land Transport.
IV.	Clothing, Hats, Boots, Textiles, Rope, Cordage, &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.