



COMMONWEALTH BUREAU OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS,
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA.

LABOUR REPORT, 1937.

No. 28.

Prepared under Instructions from
THE HONORABLE THE TREASURER.

by

ROLAND WILSON, B.COM., D.PHIL., PH.D.,
Commonwealth Statistician.

MARCH, 1939.

By Authority:

L. F. JOHNSTON, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.

(Printed in Australia.)

[C.S. No. 650].—3905.

PREFACE.

The first Labour Report issued by this Bureau was published in 1912. This Report is the twenty-eighth of the series and deals chiefly with the year 1937. The tabulations, however, include particulars relating to the first half of 1938 as well as for earlier years, in most cases back to 1933.

The synopsis immediately following shows the general arrangement of the work, while an index has been inserted at the end of the volume to facilitate reference.

The subject-matter in the Report has been divided into five Chapters, covering information in regard to Retail Prices and Price Indexes; Wholesale Prices and Price Indexes; Wages; Employment (Employment, Unemployment and Industrial Disputes); and Associations (Trade Unions and Employers' Associations). The Report follows the lines of its immediate predecessors in scope and arrangement.

Chapter I. (Retail Prices and Price Indexes) has been rewritten and rearranged to facilitate reference; a history of the various index-numbers has also been incorporated together with the purposes for which they have been used.

In Chapter III., Section 3, a comprehensive review is given of the judgment of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration of the 23rd June, 1937, by which "prosperity loadings" were added to the basic wage of all workers whose wages and working conditions are controlled by that Court. A table of the "Court" Series of Index Numbers created by the Court for the adjustment of its basic wage appears in Appendix IV.

A brief review has been included in Chapter IV. "Employment", of the legislation in force for the relief of unemployment. Tables are also published herein embodying data on "Direct Measures of Employment" by way of supplementing the information in regard to unemployment provided by the percentages reported by trade unions. The field of inquiry covered by this investigation has been limited for the time being to employment in factories and retail stores.

For the purpose of tabulating the results of the investigations which have been made in regard to rates of wage, labour organizations, employers' associations, unemployment, industrial disputes, &c., 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, 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. |

PREFACE.

It is gratifying to record that secretaries of trade unions and of employers' associations, officials of Commonwealth and State Departments, private employers, retail dealers, house agents, and others have readily responded to the somewhat heavy demands made upon them.

Without the help so rendered, the investigations contained herein would have been impossible, and I take this opportunity of expressing my cordial thanks to all who have thus assisted.

The valuable assistance rendered to the Bureau by the Statistical Offices in the various States, especially in regard to the collection of retail prices, is acknowledged, and to the officers concerned I desire to express my sincere thanks.

I am specially indebted to Mr. H. G. Downing, the officer in charge of Labour Statistics in this Bureau, for the care and attention which he has bestowed on the compilation of this Report and for seeing the matter through the press. My thanks are also due to the staff under his control for their cordial co-operation and valuable services.

ROLAND WILSON,
Commonwealth Statistician.

Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics,
Canberra, A.C.T., March, 1939.

SYNOPSIS

| | | Page. |
|--|---|--------|
| CHAPTER I.—RETAIL PRICES AND PRICE INDEXES. | | |
| § 1. | Collection of Returns of Retail Prices and Rents | 1 |
| § 2. | Compilation of Indexes of Retail Prices and Rents— | |
| | 1. General | 1 |
| | 2. The Regimen | 2 |
| | 3. The Mass Units | 5 |
| | 4. Relative Importance of the Items and Groups | 7 |
| | 5. Base Periods of the Indexes | 7 |
| | 6. The Methods of Tabulation | 8 |
| | 7. Relative Population Weights for Towns | 8 |
| § 3. | The Food and Rent ("B" Series) Index of Retail Prices— | |
| | 1. General | 9 |
| | 2. Retail Price Index-numbers—Capital Cities, 1907 to 1937 | 9 |
| | 3. Retail Price Index-numbers—Thirty Towns, 1933 to 1938 | 10 |
| § 4. | The All Items ("C" Series) Index of Retail Prices— | |
| | 1. General | 14 |
| | 2. Retail Price Index-numbers—Capital Cities, 1914 to 1920 | 14, 24 |
| | 3. Retail Price Index-numbers—Thirty Towns, November, 1914 to March Quarter, 1938 | 14 |
| | Relative Cost of Each Group of Items, 1936 and 1937 | 21 |
| | 4. Retail Price Indexes in Terms of Currency—Capital Cities, 1932 to March Quarter, 1938 | 22 |
| § 5. | Retail Price Index-numbers, 200 Towns— | |
| | 1. General | 25 |
| | 2. Retail Price Index-numbers—200 Towns, 1933 to 1937 | 25 |
| | 3. Comparison of Capital Cities with Other Towns | 39 |
| § 6. | Publication of Prices and Price Index-numbers | 31 |
| § 7. | Royal Commission on the Basic Wage, 1920 | 31 |
| § 8. | Changes in the Regimen | 33 |
| § 9. | Retail Price Index-numbers and Wage Variations— | |
| | (i) "A" Series | 36 |
| | (ii) "B" Series | 36 |
| | (iii) "C" Series | 36 |
| | (iv) "Court" Series | 37 |
| | (v) "D" Series | 37 |
| | (vi) Food and Groceries | 38 |
| | (vii) The "200 Towns" Series | 38 |
| | (viii) Relative Merits of Series | 38 |
| § 10. | International Comparisons—Retail Price Index-numbers | 39 |

CHAPTER II.—WHOLESALE PRICES AND PRICE INDEXES.

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| § 1. | General | 41 |
| § 2. | The Grouping of the Commodities | 41 |
| § 3. | Index-numbers—Melbourne, 1861 to March, 1938 | 44 |
| § 4. | Variations since Outbreak of War | 45 |
| § 5. | Prices of Commodities, 1936 and 1937 | 45 |
| § 6. | International Comparisons—Wholesale Price Index-numbers | 46 |

CHAPTER III.—WAGES.

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| § 1. | Operations under Arbitration and Wages Board Acts and Industrial Legisla- tion— | |
| | 1. General | 47 |
| | 2. Acts Regulating Industrial Matters | 47 |
| | 3. Methods of Administration | 47 |
| | 4. Awards and Determinations made and Industrial Agreements Filed | 48 |
| | 5. Awards, Determinations and Agreements in Force | 49 |
| | 6. New Legislation and Special Reports | 51 |

CHAPTER III.—WAGES—continued.

| § 2. Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour— | Page. |
|--|-------|
| 1. General | 55 |
| 2. Adult Male Weekly Wages—States, 1914 to 1937 | 57 |
| 3. Adult Male Weekly Wages—Industrial Groups, 1914 to 1937 | 57 |
| 4. Adult Female Weekly Wages—States, 1914 to 1937 | 59 |
| 5. Adult Female Weekly Wages—Industrial Groups, 1914 to 1937 | 60 |
| 6. Hours of Labour and Hourly Rates of Wage, 31st December, 1937 | 60 |
| 7. Adult Male Weekly Wages—States, 1891 to 1937 | 63 |
| 8. Adult Male Weekly Wages—Australia—Industrial Groups, 1891 to 1937 | 63 |
| 9. Adult Male Hourly Wages, 1914 to 1937 | 64 |
| 10. Adult Female Hourly Wages, 1914 to 1937 | 65 |
| 11. Nominal Hours of Labour—Adult Males, 1914 to 1937 | 66 |
| 12. Nominal Hours of Labour—Adult Females, 1914 to 1937 | 67 |
| 13. Nominal and Effective Wages | 68 |
| 14. Productive Activity | 71 |
| § 3. The Basic Wage and Child Endowment in Australia— | |
| 1. The Basic Wage | 74 |
| 2. The Commonwealth Basic Wage— | |
| (i) General | 75 |
| (ii) Basic Wage Inquiry, 1934 | 77 |
| (iii) Basic Wage Inquiry, 1937 | 77 |
| 3. State Basic Wages | 87 |
| 4. Royal Commission on Basic Wage, 1920 | 93 |
| 5. Child Endowment | 93 |

CHAPTER IV.—EMPLOYMENT.

| | |
|---|-----|
| § 1. Industrial Disputes— | |
| 1. General | 94 |
| 2. Industrial Disputes in Industrial Groups, 1937 | 95 |
| 3. Particulars of Principal Disputes in 1937 | 96 |
| 4. Industrial Disputes, 1933 to 1937 | 98 |
| 5. Duration of Industrial Disputes | 99 |
| 6. Causes of Industrial Disputes | 101 |
| 7. Results of Industrial Disputes | 102 |
| 8. Methods of Settlement | 104 |
| § 2. Fluctuations in Employment— | |
| 1. General | 106 |
| 2. Unemployment— | |
| (i) States, 1937 | 107 |
| (ii) Australia, 1891 to 1937 | 107 |
| 3. Unemployment by Industries— | |
| (i) Australia, 1937 | 108 |
| (ii) Australia, 1912 and 1936 to 1938 | 109 |
| 4. Unemployment, Quarterly—States, 1926 to 1938 | 109 |
| 5. Causes of Unemployment | 110 |
| 6. Seasonal Employment in Australia | 110 |
| § 3. Direct Measures of Employment— | |
| 1. General | 110 |
| 2. Index of Employment in Factories | 111 |
| 3. Index of Employment in Retail Stores | 112 |
| 4. General Employment Indexes of New South Wales and Queensland | 112 |
| § 4. Relief of Unemployment— | |
| 1. Special Legislation for the Relief of Unemployment and Rates of Taxation | 117 |
| 2. Unemployment Relief—Sustenance Rates | 120 |
| 3. Unemployment Relief Funds | 129 |
| 4. Numbers in Receipt of Sustenance | 134 |
| § 5. State Free Employment Bureaux— | |
| 1. General | 134 |
| 2. Applications and Positions Filled | 134 |
| § 6. Industrial Accidents— | |
| 1. Source of Information | 135 |
| 2. Number of Accidents Reported | 135 |
| 3. Accidents in Industrial Groups | 136 |
| 4. Mining Accidents | 136 |

CHAPTER V.—ASSOCIATIONS.

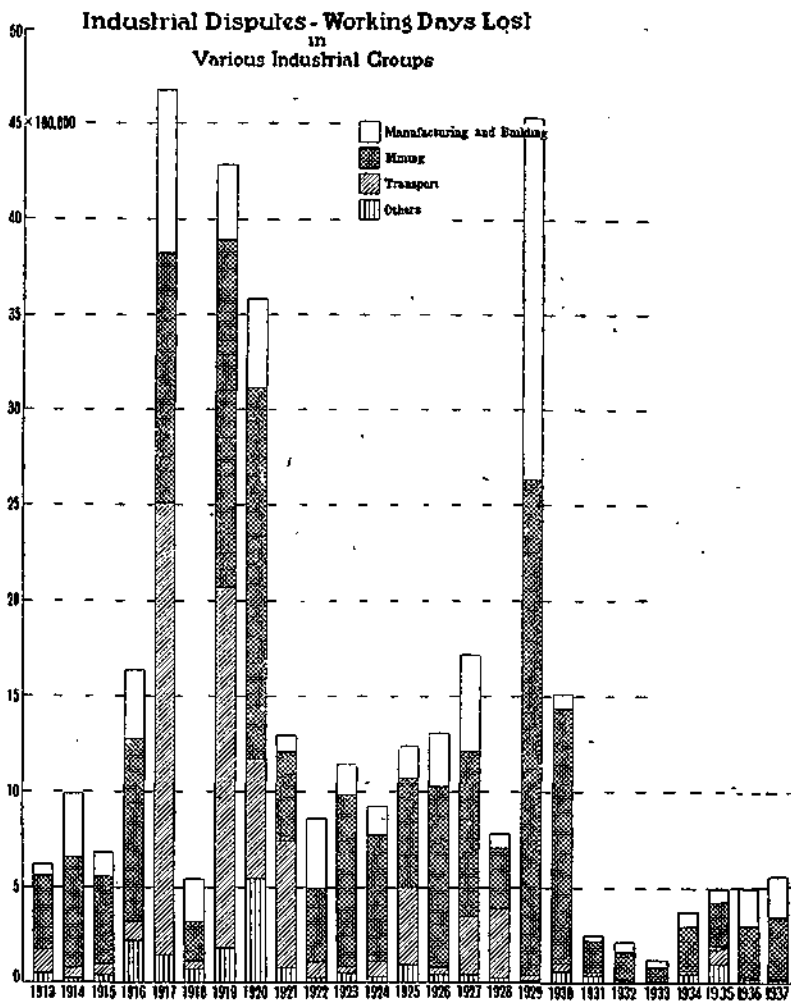
| § | 1. Labour Organizations— | Page. |
|---|---|-------|
| | 1. General | 138 |
| | 2. Trade Unions and Branches—Number and Membership, 1933 to 1937 | 138 |
| | 3. Trade Unions—Industrial Groups, 1933 to 1937 | 139 |
| | 4. Trade Unions—Number of Male and Female Members and Percentage to Total Employees | 140 |
| | 5. Trade Unions—Classification according to Number of Members, 1933 to 1937 | 142 |
| | 6. Interstate or Federated Trade Unions | 143 |
| | 7. Central Labour Organizations | 143 |
| | 8. Organizations Registered under Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act | 144 |
| § | 2. Employers' Associations— | |
| | 1. General | 145 |
| | 2. Employers' Associations in each State | 145 |
| | 3. Employers' Associations in Industrial Groups | 146 |
| | 4. Employers' Associations in Membership Groups | 146 |
| | 5. Federations of Employers' Associations | 147 |
| § | 3. International Comparisons— | |
| | 1. The International Labour Conferences | 148 |
| | 2. Unemployment | 149 |
| | 3. Retail Prices of Food—Various Countries | 150 |

APPENDIX.

| Section | I. Average Retail Prices of Chief Food and Groceries Items, Capital Cities, during each month of 1937 | 153 |
|---------|---|-----|
| .. | II. Weekly House Rents in Metropolitan and Country Towns, 1933 to 1937 | 159 |
| .. | III. Retail Price Index-numbers, 1911 base— Food and Groceries only, quarterly, 1933 to 1938 | 160 |
| | Rent (All Houses), quarterly, 1933 to 1938 | 162 |
| | Food, Groceries and Rent (All Houses), quarterly, 1933 to 1938 | 164 |
| | Food, Groceries and Rent (All Houses), Capital Cities, 1901 to 1937 | 166 |
| .. | IV. Retail Price Index-numbers—The "Court" Series Index | 167 |
| .. | V. Wholesale Prices, 1936 and 1937 | 168 |
| .. | VI. Minimum Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour for Adult Male Workers, 31st December, 1937 | 169 |
| .. | VII. Minimum Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour for Adult Female Workers, 31st December, 1937 | 183 |
| .. | VIII. Rates of Wage and Hours of Labour, Australia and other countries | 186 |
| .. | IX. Comparative Index-numbers, Six Capital Cities (1911 Base) | 189 |

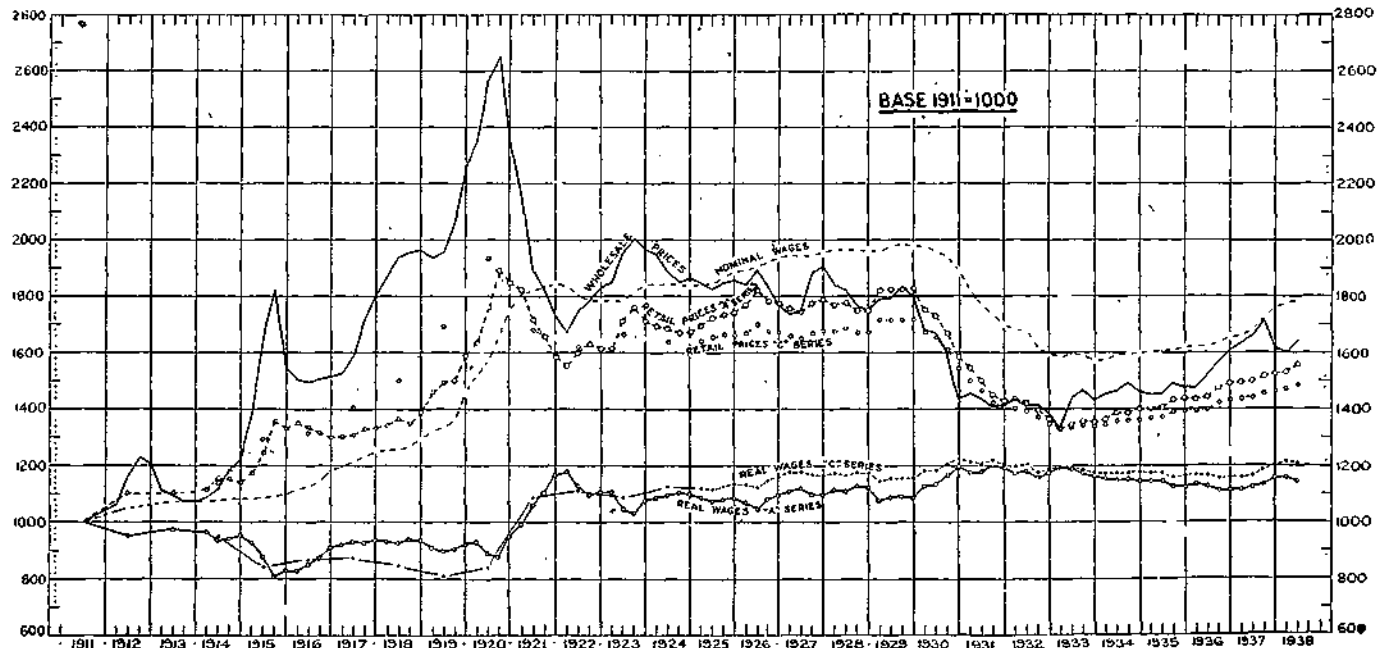
GRAPHS.

| | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | Industrial Disputes—Working Days Lost in Industrial Groups, 1913 to 1937 | vii |
| 2. | Retail Prices, Wholesale Prices and Nominal and Effective Wage Index-numbers, and Percentage of Unemployed | viii |



EXPLANATION.—The scale refers to working days lost in hundred thousands. Thus, taking the year 1917, and comparing the shaded and blank sections with the scale, it will be observed that about 870,000 working days were lost in Manufacturing and Building, over 1,300,000 in Mining, over 7,300,000 in Transport, and about 150,000 in other industries.

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL PRICES, NOMINAL AND EFFECTIVE OR REAL WAGE INDEX-NUMBERS.—AUSTRALIA, 1911 TO 1938.



NOTE.—The index-numbers in the above graph are for the Six Capital Cities as a whole, with the exception of those for Wholesale Prices which are for Melbourne. They are all calculated to the common base 1911 = 1,000, the scale for which appears on the left of the graph. They are shown *quarterly* from the year 1912 in the case of the "A" Series Retail Prices (food, groceries and rent of all houses) and Wholesale Prices (Melbourne). The "C" Series Retail Prices (food, groceries, rent of 4 and 5 rooms, clothing and miscellaneous household expenditure) are shown *quarterly* from the year 1925. Nominal Wages are shown *quarterly* from 1914, and Real Wages *quarterly* from 1914 for the "A" Series, and from 1925 for the "C" Series.