

(b.) In any inquiry into the cost of living it will be found that the cost of food is by far the most important consideration, more especially so in the case of those who have fixed incomes and those whose employment is of an intermittent character. It will be seen from the table of household expenditure (No. 10), which has been prepared by the Labour Department, that the cost of food amounts to nearly 35 per cent. of the total expenditure. The four main items of expenditure are (1) housing, (2) food, (3) clothing, (4) fuel and light, divided as follows: Rent, 20·31 per cent.; food, 34·13 per cent.; clothing, 13·89 per cent.; fuel and lighting, 5·22 per cent.; other items, 26·45 per cent.

TABLE 10.—PERCENTAGE OF MAIN ITEMS TO TOTAL EXPENDITURE.

Income.	Members of Families.	Housing.	Food.	Clothing.	Fuel and Light.	Other Items.	Totals.
Over £169	Over four ..	16·37	34·80	14·75	4·81	29·27	100
	Four and under	22·68	29·50	14·00	4·88	28·94	100
Between £169 and £143	Over four ..	14·05	38·52	16·87	6·17	24·39	100
	Four and under	19·91	35·68	13·77	5·01	25·63	100
Under £143	Over four ..	22·49	39·00	14·88	5·34	18·29	100
	Four and under	23·54	34·21	11·54	6·49	24·22	100
General average	20·31	34·13	13·89	5·22	26·45	100

PROPORTION OF MAIN ITEMS TO AVERAGE TOTAL WEEKLY EXPENDITURE.

EXPENDITURE, 100.				
Rent, 20·31 per cent.	Food, 34·13 per cent.	Clothing, 13·89 per cent.	Fuel, light, 5·22 per cent.	Other items, 26·45 per cent.

While the average rise in wholesale prices in New Zealand between the periods 1894–98 and 1906–10 was 7 per cent., the main foodstuffs rose more than the average, and many of them very much more. Wheat rose 10 per cent., mutton 20 per cent., beef 20 per cent., lamb 25 per cent., bacon 35 per cent., butter 41 per cent., and cheese 61 per cent. Tea and coffee also rose, but not so much as the average; whilst the only important articles that fell in price were currants, rice, and sugar.

In the case of bread the increase seems to be about 20 per cent., but this increase is largely due to the increased distribution-costs. A similar remark is applicable to other household necessities, such as milk, butter, fish, meat, and fuel. The extension of our cities, and the movements of the people into suburban areas, have increased the number of those who live in lodgings and boardinghouses.

Milk has been stationary in price.
Potatoes have fluctuated more than any other article of food.

(c.) (1.) The increase in clothing is about 20 per cent. All witnesses agreed that a better class of goods is sold to-day. The increase in the cost of clothes made on the premises is due largely to the increase in wages. Woollen clothing has increased more than any other class.

(2.) Boots: Here again a much higher quality is being demanded generally. The cheaper boots have increased in price at a higher rate than the better class of goods, and the increased tariff has caused the taxes to fall most heavily on boots of lower grade. The average increase in price in the poorer classes of boots cannot have been less than 66 per cent.

(d.) The evidence given before the Commission on the subject of household lighting and fuel shows that while the means of lighting have decreased in cost about 27 per cent., fuel has increased about 5 per cent. Owing to the growing scarcity of wood-supply as fuel and the consequent greater demand for coal, the cost of fuel to the