

In spite of this average of general prosperity there is plenty of room for individual poverty. The savings are often of a petty character; the struggle against competitors severe; and the very fact of higher standards of life becoming general makes the strife for existence among the very poor the harder and more galling to endure. If sometimes, as is alleged, the workers' means are too much trenched upon for sport and recreation, neither the State nor the Press is blameless in the matter. The State encouragement of the racecourse, and the endless columns of sporting news in the daily newspapers may be indexes of popular opinion, but do not tend to teach economy of outlay in the "cost of living." We have not in New Zealand what an American authority on economics has called "the criminal extravagance of our wealthy classes," but we have sufficient evidence visible on every side that it is difficult for people of varying degrees of wealth to exist in communities without a determination being aroused among the more needy to share in some of the advantages of national progress. This latter determination may contain within it valuable germs of enterprise and of future improvement. The matter may be considered as admirably summed up in the statement of a Wellington witness: "The desire to maintain and raise the standard of living is the only worthy motive for industrial and commercial advance."

7. Our inquiries into the movements in the national income during the last twenty years in order to ascertain the extent to which the purchasing-power of the people has increased in that time, and the proportions in which the different classes have benefited therefrom, have been restricted through the paucity of reliable data. No scientific valuation of the national income of New Zealand has yet been made. Certain statistics of wages exist, but they are not comprehensive, and it is difficult to generalize from them. Mr. F. P. Wilson (p. 409) took the figures given in the census report for 1890, and found that in twenty-nine industries, corresponding to Tables I to XXIX of the industrial census of 1911, the average wage for males was £87, and of females £32; whilst an examination of the Tables I to XXIX of the industrial census of 1911 showed that the wages of male employees have risen to £115, and of females to £57·5. The index numbers are: Males—1890, 100; 1910, 132; and females—1890, 100; 1910, 180. The information, however (such is the deficiency in New Zealand statistics), does not allow one to state definitely that these have been the rises in wages for adult workers, since they may have been brought about by an alteration in the ratio of boy and girl workers to adults; but that there has been a substantial rise in nominal wages may be safely asserted, and, in Mr. Wilson's opinion, the rise appears to have been greater than the rise in the wholesale prices of commodities, and about equal to the rise in retail prices.

Mr. F. L. G. Jolly, working from the data in the Official Year-book (page 197), estimates the rise in general money wages to be 24 per cent. since 1896, and the rise in the purchasing-power of these wages, taking the movements in Dr. McIlraith's index number into consideration, to be only 18 per cent. The following table embodies his results:—

TABLE 35, SHOWING CHANGES IN NOMINAL AND REAL WAGES IN NEW ZEALAND, 1896-1910 (JOLLY).

Year.	Total of Average Wages.	Index Numbers of Wages, Base Year (1896) being 100.	Dr. McIlraith's Index Number of Prices for New Zealand.	Index Number of Purchasing-power of Wages, Base Year (1896) being 100.
1896 .. ..	124	100	96	100
1897 .. ..	125	101	97	100
1898 .. ..	128	103	97	102
1899 .. ..	126	102	98	100
1900 .. ..	138	111	101	106
1901 .. ..	132	107	98	105
1902 .. ..	137	110	100	106
1903 .. ..	138	111	100	107
1904 .. ..	139	112	95	113
1905 .. ..	142	115	98	112
1906 .. ..	146	118	101	113
1907 .. ..	150	121	107	109
1908 .. ..	152	122	104	113
1909 .. ..	154	124	101	118
1910 .. ..	154	124	103	118
1911 .. ..	..	..	..	..