

standard was set up for fixing the average wages for men. Mr. Justice Higgins was the Chairman of the Board appointed to set that up. He adopted a certain wage for a certain man—I forget what it is, but it does not matter, he found some public service corporations were paying it, and I think the city corporation of Melbourne was paying it, and quite a number of large employers of labour. From year to year, as he was called upon to set the minimum wage, he adjusted the figures in an index number, and by 1920 this minimum wage had risen considerably, of course. The people in Australia were saying that it was pretty low, that the minimum wage was not high enough to keep these labourers in decency, so this commission was appointed to ascertain what amount was required to keep them in decency. The result was not very satisfactory to the Arbitration Board of the Commonwealth, and the Arbitration Boards of some of the cities, as far as skilled workers in various industries were concerned, and they have had this standard before them, in the meantime,—which is about five years—and it has tended to raise the level, so it looks now as if they will get up to a proper standard some day. Professor Douglas reported they were only fifteen per cent below it, whereas in 1920, when it was brought out, they were very considerably below it.

So far, I have been talking about the principles of budgets. I may speak of some of those in use. The family budget published in the Labour Gazette is the one most used in Canada. It was constructed a good many years ago. The constructing of a family budget was new in those days, and it did not show the changes in the cost of living as exactly as it might have if it were constructed now. It was heavily loaded with potatoes, because there were no other fresh vegetables in it, and there are two or three points in it which spoiled it a little. We have been constructing one now for some time, and I expect we will have it completed before very long. The Labour Gazette has only included twenty-nine staple foods, coal, wood, coal oil, and the rent of a six-room house,—a working man's house. The other items in the cost of living, such as clothing, boots, and miscellaneous expenses, have not been covered. About five years ago the changes in clothing and other items had become so important that some account had to be taken of them, so we got some figures and worked out the changes from time to time, and from the budget and these other figures, we constructed a tentative cost of living index number, which we publish at the end of each year. In the United States, the Bureau of Labour Statistics has published an index number of the retail price of food for a good many years, and during the war they secured figures for other items, that is, fuel, rent, clothing and sundries, and they make up a group called "House Furnishings," which most investigators put in with "Sundries." The United States government, during the war—in 1918—made a very extensive investigation of the cost of living all over the United States. They secured figures from about 40,000 families and they used the information so secured to weight the cost of living index number; that is, to allow for the importance of each article in the calculation, according to its importance in the consumption of the family. I suppose it was the most important investigation ever made, and cost a huge sum of money. It was done because all through the United States, wages for people working on government contracts were being adjusted according to the changes in the cost of living, and it was necessary to have a very accurate system for determining the changes; otherwise, I do not think any government would have appropriated the money for such a purpose. They intend to make another investigation of that kind as soon as they can get some money.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I have several questions here I would like to ask the witness.