

A somewhat better comparison is given in the next table, showing the expenditure on food in the above countries, and, in addition, the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium. Special inquiries were made in these last three countries by the British Board of Trade during 1907-10, and the figures relate to the working-classes only.

TABLE 40.—EXPENDITURE ON FOOD IN NEW ZEALAND COMPARED WITH THAT IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

Country.	Average Weekly Income per Family.	Average Number of Members per Family.	Average Weekly Expenditure on Food.	Percentage of Expenditure on Food on Average Income.	Weekly Cost of Food per Head.
	£ s. d.		£ s. d.		s. d.
New Zealand	*3 4 3	4.52	1 0 2	31.39	4 5½
	†2 12 3	5.57	1 3 0	44.02	3 8
Australia.. ..	*4 13 1	4.71	1 3 3½	25.00	4 11¼
	†3 1 11	5.60	1 2 3½	36.00	4 0¼
United States of America	3 0 6	6.00	1 12 6	53.70	5 5
United Kingdom	2 12 0½	6.40	1 9 8	57.00	4 7½
Germany	2 8 8½	5.80	1 7 4½	54.40	4 8½
France	2 12 11	4.90	1 11 7¾	59.70	6 1¼
Belgium ³	2 12 1¼	5.90	1 9 8¼	56.90	4 9¼

* All groups.

† Groups having incomes of £169 and under and families of more than four members.

‡ Groups having incomes of £200 and under and families of more than four members.

On these figures New Zealand bears very favourable comparison. The weekly expenditure on food per head is lower than that of any other country compared, with the exception of Australia (£200 and under income group). The average percentage of expenditure on food on average income is also lowest with the exception of Australia.

11. The general conclusion arrived at by your Commissioners has been already indicated; the standard of living has risen very considerably; but it has risen because of the growing surplus of income left after paying the "cost of living" as defined in Chapter I. As Professor Segar stated (page 307), "the question of the suggested causes of the increased cost of living is quite distinct from that of a higher standard of living. In the former question we are concerned mainly with the increased cost of what are classed as the necessaries of life, in the latter with increased capacity per individual to purchase. The first depends on the prices of commodities; the second also depends on these, but further also on wages and the size of the family. It is thus the standard of living that is dependent in part on the prices of commodities rather than the reverse."

12. One other point deserves passing mention. The standard of living may not have risen equally for all classes, and if so the changes in the various standards will react on relative prices in different ways. The extent to which this has occurred in New Zealand can be only a matter of opinion in the present state of our statistical survey. If, given a certain amount of money and credit, the general standard of comfort is raised, prices must fall, not rise, because that change implies a greater production of goods and services to be exchanged against the same amount of money as before. But if the standard changes more for one class than for others, that will generally mean higher prices for the articles it demands than for those demanded by the other classes. If the standard of comfort has risen to a higher degree for the wage-earning class, that would partly explain the rise in price of the goods so demanded relative to that of other goods. Layton is of opinion that in England the wealthier classes have benefited more during the last twenty years than other classes; but the data for such an estimate do not exist in New Zealand.

General conclusion.

Standard of comfort of different classes.