

SECTION 5—TEXTILES AND LEATHER

(a) TEXTILES

Notable improvement has been made in the past year in the volume of nearly all kinds of textiles and clothing available to consumers. Supplies are being sent to us in greatly increased quantities by the United Kingdom, with the consequence that the range of products not freely available now includes only a few lines. Tire cord, some nylon yarn, and limited quantities of special materials and fittings for corsetry-manufacture are the only essential textile raw materials for which we must depend in some degree on dollar sources. Certain special machinery and replacement parts are also obtainable only from North America. Sewing-threads have given some difficulty, particularly the glacé-finish type for the footwear and clothing trades, and white cottons, both mercerized and other, for domestic use, but more adequate deliveries by the United Kingdom are now coming to hand.

Finished goods, too, are now in reasonable supply on the local market, and such shortages as remain are principally in the choice of items rather than in the lack of goods in a general sense. An indication of the improvement is given by the fact that the Department is not now required to assist in obtaining greater supplies of knitting-wool, diaper cloth, and suitings, for these gave much difficulty in the past. All supply problems, however, have not yet been overcome, and in addition to the commodities already noted as being in short supply we require more blankets, flannel for shirts and singlets, women's stockings, and blind holland.

Imports of made-up apparel are now much smaller than in the immediate post-war years. Small supplies of knitted woollen outerwear and underwear are still being imported, but, apart from these lines and infants' clothing, most apparel for use in this country is now being made up in New Zealand.

Our requirements of cotton piece-goods have been assisted by exports from India. Silks and selected lines of cotton fabrics became available from Japan under the trade arrangement negotiated between certain sterling area countries and the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan. Thus, fuji silk has reappeared in New Zealand shops for the first time for some years.

Competition has returned to most fields of the clothing trade, and much greater price consciousness among buyers is reported by retailers. This, it appears, accounts for Australian woollens being less enthusiastically sought after, since United Kingdom prices they consider, in general, to be more attractive. This is a notable change from a year ago when supplies of woollen yarn and piece goods were eagerly bought, with price a secondary consideration. In general, prices have recently been fairly stable, with a tendency to some easing in cottons.

The production of the local woollen-mills continues to be hampered by labour shortages, but with a large new mill at Auckland building up its output and with extensions and improvements in other mills, supplies for consumers' selection should continue to become more adequate than for some years.

Comparative quantities of the main items of textile materials imported during the past three years have been:—

	1946.	1947.	1948.
Woollen piece-goods (sq. yd.)	3,810,250	5,785,998	7,998,710
Woollen yarns (lb.)	1,385,269	1,606,326	1,925,854
Cotton and linen piece-goods, woven (sq. yd.)	44,731,423	37,872,378	33,960,715
Cotton piece-goods, knitted (lb.)	494,331	494,877	640,183
Cheese-bandage and meat-wraps (lb.)	2,083,800	2,140,763	2,961,505
Cotton yarns (lb.)	1,797,755	1,664,019	2,131,410
Silk and rayon piece-goods, woven (sq. yd.)	9,635,968	16,496,603	12,117,414
Silk and rayon piece-goods, knitted (lb.)	461,039	526,440	808,171
Silk and rayon yarns (lb.)	362,421	479,360	703,804
Tailors' trimmings (sq. yd.)	2,097,746	1,502,618	1,253,521