

1919.
NEW ZEALAND.

BOARD OF TRADE

(THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly in accordance with Section 11 of the Cost of Living Act, 1915.

To the Right Honourable William Ferguson Massey, P.C., President, Board of Trade.

WE have the honour to present the third annual report of the Board for the year ending 31st March, 1919. (In cases where action was nearing completion in respect of certain subjects dealt with, the steps taken have been brought up to date.)

As was the case last year, the work of the Board for the period under review has consisted mainly in inquiries into matters affecting the cost of living, and especially upon questions relating to the supply, demand, or price of commodities, and into complaints that the prices of particular classes of goods are unreasonably high. Special attention was paid during the year to the importation, sale, and distribution of petrol; to a scheme for the standardization of footwear; to the placing of restrictions on the export of timber; and to a comprehensive inquiry into the coal industry. These matters are dealt with in detail later on in this report.

Two hundred and sixty complaints were received regarding the high prices of commodities. These complaints were investigated and, wherever in the opinion of the Board it was deemed desirable, adjustments of prices have been made. In addition the Board received eighty-one deputations and examined 242 witnesses.

A wide range of commodities has been under the control of the Board, and no upward movement in prices has been sanctioned without full investigation. In addition to fifty-seven main grocery items comprising household essentials, the Board has kept control of manufacturers' prices in grocery lines, such as soap, condensed milk, sugar, candles, jams, matches, baking-powder, canned meats, &c.

The prices of bacon, wheat, flour, bread, bran, pollard, hides and skins, and petrol have been fixed by Order in Council; and, by arrangement with the federated sawmillers throughout the Dominion, no increase in the price of timber has been made since the 1st November, 1918. Detailed references to these commodities will be found later in this report.

Generally speaking, the applications made by merchants and tradespeople for increases in prices have been well founded, but in a few instances the Board has refused to grant such applications where, after close investigation of the evidence and balance-sheets submitted, the circumstances did not appear to warrant the granting of the increases. The consumers' interests have been closely watched by the Board in dealing with prices.

SECTION I.—TRANSACTIONS OF THE BOARD.

WHEAT, FLOUR, AND BREAD.

On the 1st April, 1918, the price of good milling-wheat was governed and its distribution among mills controlled under an Order in Council gazetted on the 22nd December, 1917.

Under this scheme of control (full details of which were published in Appendix B of last year's report) the Government became the purchasers from the farmers of good milling-wheat at the following scale of prices:—

A. Good milling-wheat grown in the South Island:—

1. Sold for delivery free on board at the nearest port—
 - (a.) In January, February, or March, 1918, 5s. 10d. per bushel.
 - (b.) In April, 1918, 5s. 10½d. per bushel.
 - (c.) In May, 1918, 5s. 11d. per bushel.
 - (d.) In June, 1918, 5s. 11½d. per bushel.
 - (e.) In July, 1918, 6s. per bushel.
 - (f.) In August, 1918, 6s. 0½d. per bushel.
 - (g.) In or after September, 1918, 6s. 1d. per bushel.
2. Sold for delivery otherwise than free on board at the nearest port—
A price equivalent as regards the seller to the prices aforesaid.