

The society pays high wages—£3 3s. to £3 8s. a week—as well as giving half a ton of coal per month to each man. Its secretary stated that its expenses are lower than those of any coal-merchant in Invercargill. No charge for management was included.

(d.) *Profits.*—The gross profits to the retailer on the cash price in Kaitangata are about 9s. 3d. per ton, in Wairio 9s. 9d., and in Nightcaps 9s. 6d. On the monthly credit trade these profits are for Kaitangata 10s. 9d., Wairio 11s. 7d., and Nightcaps 11s. 8d. The expenses of the trade have been shown to be at least 8s. 6d. If we take the largest business, doing an annual turnover of about 2,500 tons, the difference between expenses and gross profits would approximate a little over £300, made up as follows: 1,250 tons at 1s., £62 10s.; 625 tons at 3s., £93 15s.; 625 tons at 5s., £156 5s.: total profit, £312 10s., less an unknown amount for unpaid and unduly deferred debts. This sum *cannot be regarded as excessive remuneration* for the retailer's own labour and trouble, or as containing any considerable element of pure profit.

Two coal-retailers have recently gone out of business in Invercargill through financial loss.

(e.) *Suggestions for Improvements.*—Witnesses in this town expressed the opinion that if there were fewer dealers and a larger and more regular supply of coal the distributing-cost per ton could be reduced.

The following tables summarize the changes in the retail prices of household coal at the different centres in comparative form, with allocation to the different heads of costs, and the estimates of the actual cost of delivery from the retailer's yard to consumer about September, 1918:—

TABLE 70A.—COMPARATIVE TABLE SHOWING TOTAL INCREASE IN THE CASH RETAIL PRICES OF STANDARD HOUSEHOLD COALS DURING THE PERIOD 1913-18, WITH DIVISION INTO ITS SEVERAL PARTS.

| Place.                           | Rise in Cost<br>at Mine. | Rise in<br>Transport. | Rise in Retailers'<br>Charges. | Increase in certain<br>Wholesale Charges. | Total<br>Increase. |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---|--------------------|
|                                  | s. d.                    | s. d.                 | s. d.                          | s. d.                                     | s. d.              |
| Auckland (to September, 1918) .. | 5 6                      | 1 7                   | 1 8                            | ..  | 8 9                |
| „ (after September) ..           | 7 6                      | 1 7                   | 4 11                           | ..  | 14 0               |
| Wellington .. ..                 | 4 6                      | 4 7                   | 4 6                            | 0 5                                       | 14 0               |
| Christchurch (Kaitangata) ..     | 9 10                     | 2 4                   | 7 10                           | ..  | 20 0               |
| „ (Homebush) ..                  | 11 0                     | 1 4                   | 6 8                            | ..  | 19 0               |
| „ (Westport) ..                  | 4 6                      | 4 9                   | 5 0                            | 0 9                                       | 15 0               |
| Dunedin .. ..                    | 10 10                    | 1 2                   | 1 6                            | ..  | 13 6               |
| Waronui .. ..                    | 5 7                      | 0 11                  | 4 0                            | ..  | 10 6               |
| Taratu .. ..                     | 6 10                     | 1 2                   | 1 6                            | ..  | 9 6                |
| Invercargill .. ..               | 7 0                      | 1 1                   | 2 5                            | ..  | 10 6               |

TABLE 70B.—COMPARATIVE TABLE SHOWING COST OF DELIVERY FROM YARD TO CONSUMER AT DIFFERENT CENTRES.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Auckland .. ..     | 6s. to 7s. 9d.                             |
| Wellington .. ..   | 6s. 6d. to 8s. 7d.                         |
| Christchurch .. .. | 4s. 7d. to 8s. 6d. (average about 6s. 6d.) |
| Dunedin .. ..      | 4s. 6d. to 5s.                             |
| Invercargill .. .. | 4s.  |