

During the past year the Act was amended to provide additional facilities for inspection and administration, and new regulations were also gazetted. Before the regulations were decided on, a conference consisting of various scalemakers, shopkeepers, and other concerned was held; furthermore, advertisements were inserted in the newspapers in the principal towns throughout the Dominion inviting any persons interested to offer any criticism or suggestions. The few objections raised were met so far as practicable. The more important new provisions are as follows:—

(1.) Provision for approving, testing, and stamping measuring-instruments, such as measure-graphs for measuring cloth and fabrics, and petrol-measuring machines. The Act did not previously apply to measuring-instruments, which are of recent use.

(2.) Provision for a new scale of fees for testing and verification of weights and measures, the fees charged formerly being found to be too low. The new scale is based on the English and Australian charges.

(3.) Power to prohibit the use of scales or instruments made of inferior materials, and to prevent fraudulent use by manipulation of the scales or instruments.

(4.) Provision for the reverification of scales, spring balances, weighing-machines, and measuring-instruments at definite intervals.

(5.) Regulations for the sale of coal, coke, and charcoal, and for the purpose of preventing the sale of these goods in any way other than by weight. The regulations make it compulsory that all sacks containing these goods shall be labelled showing the net weight, or that a delivery-note setting out the net weight shall be carried and delivered to the purchaser. This is following the lines adopted in England and the Australian States.

The remaining provisions are merely to facilitate the administration of the Act and regulations.

It should be noted that, except in the case of coal, coke, and charcoal, the Act does not apply to the weight or measure of the goods sold, but only to the scales and measuring-instruments used; and while this is perhaps sufficient in cases where the goods are weighed or measured in the presence of the customers, it does not meet the case of goods previously made up in quantities ready for sale. So far as food is concerned, however, this feature is met by the Sale of Food and Drugs Act, which is administered by the Department of Health; but I would recommend that the Weights and Measures Act might be extended to cover other goods.

Total number of weighing and measuring appliances examined during year, 53,298. About 80 per cent. were found to be correct. Inspectors visited 4,074 premises during the year. Sixty-eight owners of incorrect appliances were prosecuted, twenty-one for using unjust weights, measures, and weighing-machines, and forty-seven for using unstamped appliances. Penalties, £141 10s. Fees collected for testing and stamping weights, weighing-machines, and measuring-instruments, £574 4s. 2d. These were under the lower scale, which has now been increased in the new regulations.

I am pleased to report that so far the new regulations have been put into force without any friction whatever. This is no doubt largely due to the precaution mentioned above, that the parties concerned were invited to confer with the Department in the framing of the regulations. Scalemakers and their agents have already fallen into line with the new requirements, and there is a general desire on their part to provide reliable and accurate appliances. It only remains therefore with the shopkeepers and other users to see that their weights and measures are kept correct by being submitted periodically for reverification.

In regard to the administration of the Weights and Measures Act generally, we are approaching the Departments concerned in Great Britain, Australia, the United States of America, and other countries, suggesting that the several countries should keep one another informed as to the requirements laid down in their territory from time to time. Such an arrangement should ensure that New Zealand is not made a dumping-ground for scales, measures, &c., that are rejected elsewhere; it will also enable us to keep in touch with new devices in weighing-machines and with the latest developments in weights and measures inspection.

LABOUR MATTERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

Fourth International Labour Conference.

The reports of the International Labour Office state that since its establishment in 1919 it has dealt with (a) industry generally, at the Washington Conference in 1919, (b) maritime labour, at the Genoa Conference in 1920, (c) agriculture, at Geneva in 1921; and that 1922 was devoted to a discussion on the inequalities found in the structure of the organization, and to the consideration of emigration. From the Washington Conference in 1919 to that in Geneva in 1921 no fewer than thirty-four draft conventions and recommendations had been adopted by the various conferences, most of them proposing alterations in the legislation of the countries concerned of a more or less drastic nature.

Eight-hours Day.

The endeavour to bring about a universal eight-hours day which took a definite shape at Washington in 1919 has made little progress during the three years. The governing body of the International Labour Organization adopted during its twelfth session in April, 1922, a resolution asking the Director of the International Labour Office to prepare a report on the situation with regard to the ratification of the Washington Draft Convention in which it was proposed that the hours of work be limited in industrial undertakings to eight in the day and forty-eight in the week. In his report to the 1922 Conference at Geneva the Director stated that only five countries had ratified this convention—namely, Roumania, India, Czecho-Slovakia, Greece, and Bulgaria—and none of these is among the eight States of chief industrial importance. Great Britain urged the need for a revision