

the imported article comprises "compo," "board," and the like, which are required to be indicated by brand as not consisting entirely of leather. In many cases, too, various imitations of leather are used in imported goods which it is very difficult even for experts to distinguish from leather after the boots are complete. During recent months a number of complaints have been made by those engaged in the manufacture of footwear in New Zealand that much of the imported footwear is shoddy and should be prohibited. In order to ascertain the position it is proposed to call a conference of the Department's Inspectors of Footwear, and to give an opportunity to representatives of the manufacturing, importing, and selling interests, also employees, to express their views.

The complaint of allegedly shoddy footwear chiefly relates to the use of cardboard in the cheaper classes of footwear. It is pointed out on the contrary, however, that when worked up with certain other substances cardboard or paper will make a serviceable wearing-material for light flexible boots which is preferable to the poorer classes of leather, and that the suggested prohibition would not result in any advantage to the public. Further, it is stated that it would be impracticable to prohibit the use of certain classes of leather, as grading would be necessary, which would be difficult and expensive. These questions will come up for consideration at the conference.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

The new Act and regulations have worked smoothly, and a great deal of inspection has been done during the year, resulting in many inaccurate scales, weights, measuring-appliances, &c., being corrected.

The number of appliances examined by Inspectors during the year shows a considerable increase over the previous year—namely, 63,018, as compared with 53,298 for the year ending 31st March, 1923. An increase also took place in the number of premises visited during the year—a total of 6,661, or over 50 per cent. more than during the previous year; ninety-three persons were prosecuted, seventy-one for using or being in possession of unstamped or unjust appliances, and twenty-two for various breaches of the regulations. The total of the penalties and costs inflicted was £166 5s. 7d. The total fees collected during the year as prescribed by the new regulations were £2,726 8s. 5d. (previous year £574, old lower scale). Seventeen appliances presenting novel features were submitted for the approval of the Minister in accordance with clause 5 of the regulations, and of these fourteen were approved as being suitable for use for trade and such as would not facilitate fraud, three were rejected, whilst three of the fourteen were approved subject to restrictions regarding their use.

Special attention was given under the new statutory powers, particularly during the winter months, to the sale of coke, coal, and firewood. Simultaneous and other inspections were made throughout the various towns at the time of the delivery of coal and coke by dealers, and in cases where shortage in the weight alleged to be contained in the bag was found prosecutions were taken. Twenty-three dealers were proceeded against, eleven for selling short weight of coal or coke, six for not having proper weighing-appliances, and six for not affixing labels to coal-sacks indicating the weight. It was found in many towns that a rough-and-ready system of guessing the weight in the bag prevailed. In most cases this was done without intention to defraud; such a method, however, tends to the sale of short-weight measure, and has been stopped. As a result of the special inspection there was a rush by the dealers to obtain proper scales, and scale-makers have been hard pressed to supply all orders.

Arrangements are being made to provide better facilities to enable owners to present their appliances for periodical reverification. The regulations prescribe that within ten miles of the offices of the Inspectors situated in the sixteen chief and secondary towns of the Dominion owners shall present all appliances other than spring balances annually for reverification, while spring balances must be reverified every six months. Where possible, Inspectors will visit the more populous suburbs and arrange for temporary offices for the purpose of carrying out this work, thus saving the owners the necessity of having to convey their appliances over long distances. Any owner may also, if he so desires, arrange with the Inspector to reverify his appliances on his own premises, in which case the owner must pay any expenses incurred by the Inspector.

As mentioned in my report last year, except in the case of coal, coke, and firewood, the Act does not apply to the weight of goods sold, but merely requires that the weighing or measuring appliances shall be accurate. The Sale of Foods and Drugs Act, which is administered by the Department of Health, provides certain protective measures against the sale of short weight or measure as far as food is concerned, but there is a need for legislation making it an offence to sell any goods less in weight or measure than that purported to be sold. This applies especially to goods already made up in quantities ready for sale. The Union of South Africa Weights and Measures Act, 1922—one of the most recently enacted dealing with weights and measures—provides that any person who by means of words, description, or other indication, direct or indirect, makes any false, incorrect, or untrue statement as to number, quantity, measure, gauge, or weight of any goods sold by him, or who otherwise sells or causes to be sold, or delivers or causes to be delivered, to a purchaser, any thing by weight or measure short of the quantity demanded of or represented by the seller, shall be guilty of an offence. Similar legislation exists in New South Wales and several of the American States. I recommend that similar measures might be adopted here.

As stated last year respecting the administration of the Weights and Measures Act generally, we approached the Departments in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the United States of America with a view to an exchange of information from time to time concerning the requirements laid down in each country. I am pleased to say that the proposal was favourably received without exception, and a permanent arrangement for interchange of matter dealing with weights and measures administration has been made. This arrangement should enable us to ensure that New Zealand is not made the dumping-ground for appliances that are rejected elsewhere. It is also hoped that by the means stated more uniformity regarding the use of certain types of appliances will be brought about. For instance, Australia and South Africa do not recognize the so-called "blind petrol pump." Such a pump is not allowed in New Zealand unless it has been approved by the London Board of Trade. Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, however, permit the use of the blind pump. Again, the standard of accuracy and precision of appliances varies in different countries, whilst certain types of weighing-machines are used in some countries and are not permitted in others.