

1924.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIES AND COMMERCE

(SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

THE following report relates to the operations of the Department of Industries and Commerce during the year ended 31st July, 1924.

During the past year an amendment of the Board of Trade Act of 1919 was passed by Parliament, and under the provisions of this amendment the Minister of Industries and Commerce is vested with the powers previously administered by the Board of Trade. The amending Act makes full provision for the appointment, from time to time, of associates, whose advice the Minister may consider it advisable to secure. Moreover, for practical purposes it is provided that the Minister may delegate to one or more persons the powers of investigation and judicial inquiry which are given to him by the original Act and its amendment.

The Board of Trade, strictly so called, has therefore ceased to exist.

GENERAL TRADE REVIEW.

The statement is often made that the prosperity of this Dominion is dependent upon the state of the overseas markets for New Zealand's agricultural and pastoral products. Attention is consequently centred upon our overseas trade, and while the importance of local production for local use is overlooked, there can be no doubt that the overseas trade of this country is the determining factor as between buoyancy and depression in the economic life of the Dominion.

The total values of exports and imports for the past four years have been as follows :—

			Exports.	Imports.	Excess of Imports.	Excess of Exports.
			£	£	£	£
1920	..	..	46,441,946	61,595,828	15,154,082	..
1921	..	..	44,828,827	42,744,122	..	2,084,705
1922	..	..	42,726,249	34,826,074	..	7,900,175
1923	..	..	45,967,119	43,486,544	..	2,480,575

The comparatively steady level of the export figures would appear to be an indication that prices for our main exportable commodities may fluctuate considerably—as they have indeed done—without seriously disturbing the total value of our exports. The movements of prices of the several main exports have doubtless had a compensating effect. The increase in the value of exports for 1923 was due mainly to a substantial increase in the tonnage of butter and cheese exported.

Imports, on the other hand, have shown during the past four years remarkable fluctuations. It is well recognized that the very heavy importations of 1920, representing delayed orders of high-priced goods, gave rise to serious financial difficulties. Banks were forced to extend their accommodation to importing houses. Liquidation of stocks at prices which meant heavy losses, and a general slackness of demand for locally produced goods, continued throughout 1921 and during the earlier months of 1922. Conditions showed improvement in the latter year, but again in 1923 heavy importations have proved to be troublesome, more particularly in regard to their depressing effect upon several of the secondary industries.

It is seldom fully appreciated that by reducing the amount of our imports our local manufacturers can and do increase our favourable trade balance, and so assist in meeting our indebtedness abroad.