

and the extent to which the system had grown in New Zealand reported that steps should be taken to control it by legislation, and made the following recommendations:—

- (1) That the commission charge to clients should not exceed 6d. in the pound.
- (2) The discount allowed by retailers to cash order companies should not exceed 10 per cent.
- (3) Canvassing for orders be prohibited.
- (4) Mail order propaganda to be prohibited.
- (5) Acceptance of orders by retailers to be open to those willing to accept them.
- (6) No orders to be issued to persons under twenty-one years of age.
- (7) Issue of orders to a married woman without the husband's written consent be not allowed.
- (8) No order to be issued to any person who has not completed payment of any previous order.

In order, however, to avoid restrictive legislation the Committee recommended that three months' notice be given to cash-order companies and others conducting a cash-order business to express their acquiescence in the above proposals. All cash-order companies were accordingly written to and requested to express their willingness or otherwise to conform to the above proposals. The invitation of the Committee to the cash-order companies to express their views on the proposals were in the majority of instances completely ignored.

The report was referred to the Industries and Commerce Committee of the House more specifically that the Committee should consider the recommendations in the report and whether control by legislation, as suggested, was desirable. Reporting to the House the Committee expressed the opinion that the following clauses in the recommendation be deleted:—

- (3) Canvassing for orders be prohibited.
- (4) Mail order propaganda to be prohibited.
- (7) Issue of orders to a married woman without the husband's written consent be not allowed,

and, further, that clause 8 be amended by the addition of the following words: "Providing that the amount advanced should not exceed £10 in any one case."

With these modifications the Committee recommended that legislation be introduced to regulate the cash-order trading system as outlined in the report.

#### CONCLUSION.

In a brief report of this kind only a few activities of a special nature are able to be touched upon, and no mention can be made of the large number of inquiries, both general and particular, with which the Department is dealing from day to day. To an ever-increasing extent general information concerning the Dominion's trade, commerce, and economic and social conditions, and particular information relating to certain specified industries is solicited from the Department, and every possible assistance is given to inquirers upon these subjects.

As mentioned early in the report, our trade and banking figures have been somewhat adversely affected during the year ended 31st March, 1930, by a more or less continuous fall in the prices of several of our principal primary products. The effect of this has been counteracted to some extent by increases in production of certain commodities. A substantial increase in exchange rates is tending to discourage importations and to restore the trade balance to a satisfactory figure. There are indications that the low level of prices in overseas markets is stimulating consumption in many lines, and it is hoped that next season may witness a revival in the demand for our products and an improvement in regard to prices. It is therefore to be expected that our trade and banking figures will show an early tendency towards a position of greater national security.

With regard to our manufacturing industries, it is very pleasing to note that the latest statistics available—those for the year ended 31st March, 1929—reveal a greater degree of activity and employment during that period than in the previous year. Our manufacturers are undoubtedly awakening to the necessity of availing themselves of more scientific methods of production, and the general public is slowly becoming imbued with a knowledge and an appreciation of the merits of the products of the manufacturing industries of the Dominion. With a still greater measure of support given to those industries by the buying public it is confidently hoped that the statistics for the year ended 31st March, 1930, and succeeding years, will show further steady expansion in many directions.

The Government's interest in the manufacturing industries was manifested during the year by the setting-up of a parliamentary Committee to investigate certain industries of the Dominion, but, unfortunately, owing to unforeseen circumstances, this was unable to function. It cannot be doubted that such a Committee, consisting of sound business men with a broad outlook and unbiassed in their opinions, could find much from such an investigation that would be of value to the industries concerned.

While it is true that there is a progressive movement amongst certain sections of the manufacturing industries and a genuine desire to adopt the most improved methods of production, yet it must be said that this movement is not general over the whole field. The apathy of some manufacturers is a bar to the general adoption of a more rational organization of production. Any improvement in many cases must therefore be effected as a result of investigations made by some external committee or commission appointed for the purpose.

Methods making for greater efficiency in plant and personnel, working-conditions, piecework and conditions thereof, and methods of wage-payment, relations between employer and employee, costing systems, and methods of marketing, are some subjects that offer scope for valuable investigation and research by such a committee. The elimination of waste, both in effort and materials, and the reduction of costs of production, are essential factors in the struggle for markets which is much in evidence to-day.