

The price of leather has advanced, it is true, but only to counteract the increased cost of tanning-materials, due to Britain going off the gold standard.

The opinions of a leading boot-manufacturer in England, and also one in Australia, were that New Zealand sole-leather was "good honest leather, price all right." It would appear as if the New Zealand tanners were now reaping the reward of their foresight in establishing the Leather Research Association, and also their own individual efforts in the improvement of their products.

It is realized that efforts must be maintained not only to retain the present high quality, but also to improve it. At the present, output is probably the main consideration; but now is the time to look for improved methods, lowering cost of production, and new outlets for leather. The low prices of hides and skins should enable leather to recapture some of the markets which the various substitutes have taken.

During the year the work in the laboratory has been maintained, in the absence of the Research Chemist in England, by Mr. F. G. Caughley, M.Sc. The action of lime and sodium sulphide on hides was investigated, with special reference to the problem of greasy leather. This was in continuation of the work previously carried out as to the cause and possible means of eliminating this defect. Reports as to how this trouble may be reduced, if not entirely eliminated, have been circulated to the members.

Investigations were commenced on the effect of time and temperature on the processes of soaking and liming, with a view to determining the modifications necessary to suit local conditions. This is necessary where it is not economical to maintain the temperature at a uniform point all the year round. Interesting results have been obtained which have a direct bearing on the methods of manufacture of both vegetable sole and chrome upper leathers. Special attention has been given to microscopical investigations in carrying out this work. It is realized that the microscope is one of the most valuable pieces of apparatus in solving some of the problems of the leather-manufacturer, and it is proposed to develop still further this aspect of the association's activities.

During the year the Research Chemist visited England, and valuable contact was made with the various Research Associations there. The interchange of ideas, new viewpoints with which to approach definite problems, and the broadening effect of the contact with other workers were some of the valuable results accruing from the visit. At the same time visits were paid to large and small tanneries, and boot-factories. The broad-minded attitude taken by these manufacturers was greatly appreciated, and it is hoped that the benefits derived were to some extent mutual. The slump in the markets for skins had led to the position that deer-skins could not be sold in New Zealand. Stocks were accumulating, with little possibility of disposal. One of the direct results of the visit to England was to open up a market for these skins, and at the same time to demonstrate the quality of the local product as compared with those of other sources. Direct contact has enabled a comprehensive idea of the requirements of this trade to be obtained, and it is expected that eventually this trade will be definitely established, and will in time help to reduce economically the number of deer in New Zealand.

PELT RESEARCH.

During the past years research work on New Zealand pickled pelts has been carried out. The results of this work have already been experienced. Manufacturers in England obtained information of the work being carried out in New Zealand and by the British Leather Research Association. Purchases were made by these tanners to determine if any improvement had been made. Confidence was established, with the result that New Zealand pickled pelts are being used in large quantities there. The fact that America is now purchasing only small quantities of the Dominion's pelts has had the effect of considerably reducing the demand.

Consequently, prices are extremely low, and, low as they are, there is little doubt that but for the increase of the English trade they would have been considerably worse. There are many problems awaiting solution. These are being investigated both in England and in New Zealand. This is possible by the grant given by the Empire Marketing Board for this purpose, and also by the support of the English tanners. This collaboration between the producers and the consumers should have a good effect on the trade, which will lead to a product not only satisfactory to the purchasers in England, but in other parts of the world.

The interests of pelt and leather research are so bound up in one another that the results obtained are of great benefit to each other. This has already been demonstrated, as investigations of pelt problems have suggested another line of approach to a difficult problem in leather-manufacture.

STANDARDIZATION.

Consequent on the visit of Mr. C. B. Le Maistre, Director of the British Standards Institution, to New Zealand, a representative meeting was called of those interested in the standardization movement, when it was decided that the Development of Industries Committee should undertake the launching of the local Standards Institute.

It was decided that the institution should consist initially of a Council and four Technical Committees, as follows: (1) Chemical; (2) Engineering; (3) Electrical Engineering; (4) Building.

The Council was to consist of two representatives from each of the sections, together with one representative from each of the following: Chamber of Commerce; New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation; Society of Civil Engineers; Development of Industries Committee; University of New Zealand.

Meetings of the various committees were called, and it is felt that once the Institution is fully organized, much good work of real assistance to industry will be accomplished.