

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES.

It is impossible in this report to cover all the activities of the Department during the past year. The inquiries received from day to day are so numerous and of so wide a range that it is possible to mention in detail in the foregoing pages only a comparatively few which happen to fall more or less under broad general headings. Furthermore, many commercial and industrial inquiries carried out by the Department are of a confidential nature, and for that reason cannot be referred to in reports for publication.

The activities of the Department in connection with the marketing of our produce both locally and overseas have largely increased in recent years. In particular the work of the Department in serving as a medium for the opening-up of new markets and the development of existing ones overseas has shown rapid extension, and the value of the Department to the business community in this direction has been materially enhanced as a result.

The following list of a few of the inquiries of lesser importance made by the Department during the past year may provide some indication of the extensive variety of subjects with which the officers of the Department are required to deal from day to day. The list covers only two aspects of the Department's work—namely, price investigations and market research :

Prices of bread in various towns ; meat ; fish ; milk ; butter ; coal ; knitting-wool ; woollen goods ; oat products ; flour ; bran and pollard ; binder-twine ; hides and leather ; agricultural lime ; ammunition ; cement ; &c.

Markets for fish (blue cod, soles, flounders, &c.) ; canned whitebait ; crayfish-tails ; eels ; swordfish ; rabbits ; sausage-casings ; tallow ; leather ; onions ; potatoes ; apples ; mineral waters ; passion-fruit juice ; binder-twine ; fancy shells ; chamois-skins ; Samoan cocoa-beans, &c.

CONCLUSION.

It is desired to record the Department's appreciation of the assistance given by the various Trade Commissioners, Consuls, and Vice-Consuls of overseas countries resident in New Zealand and, in particular, to acknowledge its indebtedness to His Majesty's Trade Commissioner, the Canadian Trade Commissioner, and the Trade Commissioner for the United States. It is to be regretted that the office of the latter has recently been closed, and it is hoped that when financial and economic conditions permit the Government of the United States will see fit in the interests of trade development between that country and New Zealand to reopen the office.

Acknowledgment must also be made of the assistance and co-operation given by other Government Departments during the year, particularly by the Customs Department, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and the Department of Agriculture.

In conclusion, it is pleasing to be able to strike a note of optimism as regards the future, for there is in existence at the present time, not only in New Zealand, but in overseas countries as well, such an atmosphere of confidence as has not been in evidence at any period during the past three years. Commencing with the suspension of the gold standard by Great Britain towards the end of September, 1931, signs of improvement have been observed from time to time, and forecasts have been made that such signs portrayed the beginning of a recovery from the long period of depression. Unfortunately, the hopeful forecasts then made were not realized and further price recessions followed.

The present improvement, however, has now been steadily maintained for some months, and present indications give no cause to think that there should be further relapse to the conditions from which we have recently been emerging. It must be expected that there will be fluctuations, but the general tone of trade at the present time points to the maintenance of the upward movement in prices that has already occurred and to a general betterment of economic conditions.

It is felt that the transition stage has now definitely arrived between the drab days of 1930-33 and the immediate years ahead. The next stage promises substantial progress towards international understanding, and the probable settlement of major questions bearing on the world economic situation. In this progress natural advantages, backed by a confidence, courage, and resourcefulness inherited from the race from which we are descended, will enable this Dominion to be in the forefront of the nations of the world.