

### CHATELS TRANSFER ACT.

During the year the Department was entrusted with a number of investigations under section 57 of the Chattels Transfer Act, where permission was sought to have certain chattels included in the Seventh Schedule to the Act. The effect of inclusion in the Seventh Schedule is to give protection without having to register a hire-purchase agreement, and the protection was sought to include the following chattels: Excavators, scrapers, road rippers and rooters, cranes, bulldozers, angledozers, roadbuilders, graders, loaders, incubators, seed-cleaners, caravans, trailers, floats, Aga cookers and boilers, bottled-gas equipment, electric washing-machines, knitting-machines, electric ironing-machines, electric floor-polishing machines, petrol-driven washing-machines, and cinematograph cameras.

The investigation that is carried out when an application is received is designed to ascertain whether a customary practice exists of disposing of the class of chattel by hire purchase and whether it is in the public interest that such a chattel should be so included. In the applications above set forth, inquiries have not been complete concerning cinematograph cameras, electric washing-machines, knitting-machines, electric ironing-machines, electric floor-polishing machines, and petrol driven washing-machines, but in all other cases the Government decided that a sufficiently notorious practice did not exist to warrant their inclusion in the Seventh Schedule.

### CASH-ORDER TRADING.

Certain very strong representation has been made during the course of the year to the Department in connection with the activities of cash-order-trading companies. Quite recently several large companies have been incorporated to issue cash orders, and with the growth of this form of trading representation was received by the Government to investigate alleged abuses that tended to disrupt certain of the retail trade. A preliminary survey of the position was made by the Department, and indications showed that this form of trading had materially increased. It was accordingly decided that a Dominion-wide investigation should be conducted, and the district officers in each of the main centres were entrusted with procuring information from all those engaged in cash-order trading. A questionnaire was issued, and comprehensive details have been supplied by all those engaged in this class of business.

At the present time final inquiries are being made from the retailers who have been in the habit of accepting cash orders, and as soon as this information is completed, together with that procured from the cash-order companies themselves, the Department will be in a position to advise the Government as to the growth this form of trading has made during the past few years. It is as well to point out that the Department conducted an investigation into cash-order trading in 1929, and certain recommendations were made by the Committee which investigated the matter at that time. These were not proceeded with, but appeared to cover most of the difficulties that arise from time to time when dealing with cash-order companies.

As soon as the final report has been compiled the Department will be in a position to recommend to the Government whether, in its opinion, legislation should be introduced to control the position.

### GAS REGULATIONS.

The Board of Trade (Gas) Regulations, administered by the Department, are designed to provide protection to the consumer in respect of calorific value, purity, pressure, measurement, and price.

During the year a new award giving increased wages and paid holidays to the workers in the industry came into force. The higher costs thereby caused to the gas companies, and the increased costs of coal, resulted in the Auckland, Napier, and Timaru gas companies applying for permission to increase the selling-price of gas. After full investigation small increases were permitted in each instance.

The work of the Gas-examiners and Inspectors of Meters has been carried out efficiently during the year, and official relations with the gas companies and municipal undertakings have, without exception, continued to remain most satisfactory.

### TECHNICAL DIVISION.

With the appointment last year of two technical advisers, the scope of the assistance which the Department is rendering to industry has considerably widened. These officers have wide experience in actual factory production covering both industrial chemistry and engineering.

It is the function of these officers to render assistance to industry in the study of any technical problems connected therewith, and their services and advice are available for this purpose. Their concern is to develop the use of New Zealand raw materials and generally find avenues of profitable utilization of our own natural resources.

New fields of industrial expansion are being explored and consideration given to the founding of new industries, and problems connected with technical efficiency and the utilization of waste products are under investigation.

Since last year the work done has amply demonstrated the wisdom of adding this type of technical service to the resources of the Department.

In the short period during which this branch has been functioning the foundations have been laid for much solid development in the future, and, to mention but a few examples, investigations are either complete or in progress in connection with such industries as the manufacture of service-station lubrication equipment, citrus by-products, washing-machines, salt and caustic soda, the whole group of electro-chemical industries, set-screws and machined bolts, refrigerator cabinets, kauri-gum, ammonia oxidation, and nitro benzene, &c.