



ECONOMICAL!

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OC8.2



From Chaos To Safety and Sense

(Written for "The Listener" by S.B.)

● A man was carrying a fire extinguisher on his shoulder. It burst. His head was blown off.

● Ambulance workers, military and civil, were constantly confused by the varying sizes of stretchers and the slides that take them in ambulances. When a patient had a broken back, it was difficult to change him over to a stretcher that fitted.

● Manufacturers of glass containers were making hundreds of different shapes and sizes: several times too much labour, several times too much glass. Wood heels for women's shoes were using from three to six times too much labour and time.

● School children's parents were paying the same for thin exercise books as they were paying for thick ones.

● The deaf were paying prohibitive prices for hearing-aid equipment.

● Into the Lend-Lease purchasing system was pouring a confusing multiplicity of orders for varying grades and qualities of similar articles or material.

● Prices were being fixed for commodities while there existed no standard quality grades to which the prices could be adjusted.

NOW all these things, from decapitated firemen to "freak" heels have come, or are coming, within the scope of the New Zealand Standards Institute.

Where there is confusion, the institute establishes definition and organisation. Where bad economy exists, the institute establishes basis for good management. If there is profiteering, the institute provides the key to honest trading.

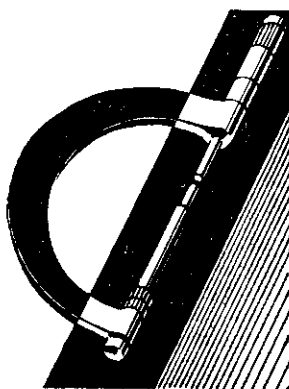
The institute could become a coercive organisation. It prefers the more progressive role of sane counsellor.

Order : Not Uniformity

Standardisation might mean that everything and everybody must look the same and behave the same. In practice, as promoted by the New Zealand Institute, it means the maximum efficiency consistent with competition in improvement, change and ingenuity. It means fire extinguishers that put out fires without blowing off people's heads. When the pressure-operated fire extinguisher is brought into action, the containers must withstand the force of the chemicals generated inside. Some containers were not strong enough. They were dangerous. The institute set down standards for protection. It insisted that the case

must be made to withstand a maximum pressure of 350 pounds per square inch, while the pressure generated must not exceed 200 pounds per square inch.

Stretchers and ambulances provide another striking example of the institute's most obviously valuable functions. Neither ambulances nor stretchers in the past were made to any standards. Some stretchers had fixed handles,



which made the stretchers too long to be received by ambulances. Some ambulances had slides which were too narrow to take wide stretchers. Standardisation has ensured that as far as practicable, all stretchers will fit not only all ambulances but lifts in hospitals as well.

Standards Mean Efficiency

These standards simply mean efficiency. Take the case of tinplate, used in so many New Zealand-made articles, all of it imported. Analysing orders to overseas manufacturers, the institute found that New Zealand firms required 71 different weights of tin coating, 20 different gauges of plate, in 90 different sizes of sheet. Acting as a purely organising and advisory body, the institute brought tinplate users together, and over the committee table reduced the range of coating weights from 71 to one, the range of gauges from 20 to 7, and the range of sheet sizes from 90 to six.

One of the more than 100 committees working with the institute operates continuously on the simplification of orders to overseas manufacturers. Their work multiplies over and over the success of the work done on tinplate. Without this committee, war-worried manufacturers in Britain and America would despair of supplying our demands.

Far-Reaching Changes

Inside New Zealand, each move by the institute makes some far-reaching change in the national economy. The heels of most women's shoes are turned and carved from wood in a specialist factory. This factory was making an excessive range of types. The institute has established four types only, with a range of size and variety to suit essential requirements. So far, the women don't seem to have noticed the effect of this order, although its practical result is visible in the display windows of any shoe store. In the factory, work which previously required from three to six workers, can now be performed efficiently by one worker without depriving style or fashion of their needs.

In the shoe industry, more work is yet to be done. It is proposed to limit the number of types of shoe that can be made in any one factory. Until now,

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