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**M**AN does not live by bread alone, but even if he did, civilised man would want a table to eat off, a chair to sit on, a couch to stretch on, and, probably a mantelpiece to put his legs up on to. He needs cupboards into which to put his possessions, and shelves for his books. He expects artificial light so that he can continue his work or his play long after lowlier creatures have gone to rest. In short, he needs furniture so that his life may be less nasty, and less brutish, even if it is still short. But in wartime the importance of all things becomes relative. We have less of this and more of that, and so *The Listener* set out to find out how the war is affecting and will affect our furniture.

Are we going to have "utility furniture" as people in England have? This was one of the first questions that we asked a furniture expert on the Price Tribunal, who has been dealing with the simplification of furniture in New Zealand.

"The New Zealand problem is quite a different problem from the English problem," we were told. "In England one of the first difficulties is to produce furniture quickly for those people who have been bombed out. They must be

## CHAIRS TO SIT ON—TABLES TO EAT OFF

*Plans For The Future Of Furniture*



given the chance to get back to normal life as quickly as possible. The furniture is produced in factories, and consequently there is the strongest emphasis on all those types that can be produced by machinery. If you look at some of the illustrations of utility furniture you will see at a glance that it is designed especially for people who are working at high pressure. In a utility flat, the dining table and chairs are in the kitchenette. This may be more of a radical change for England than for us here. There is only one armchair in the sitting room, and that is not a spring upholstered one, while the couch is also a spare bed.

### New Zealand's Problem

"In New Zealand our problem is rather different. Fortunately, we do not need to supply large numbers of bombed-out people at short notice. But we do need to take steps to prevent waste—of materials, of manpower, and of overlapping machinery. We cannot produce the same things that we produced in peace time. Our problem is to decide what are the types of furniture that are most necessary; what can be cut out without loss of hardship to anyone; how the price can be kept down and the quality up. So we are cutting out the manufacture of those pieces of

furniture which we think are not essential. This list of goods includes china cabinets, pot plant stands, hall stands, occasional tables, glory boxes, and so on. In the second place, we are limiting and controlling the furniture that is produced. Actually, the sizes which we have fixed are generous, and will not affect ordinary furniture very much. These regulations apply to size and to elaboration. Those very large wardrobes that we used to see won't be allowed any more, and there is a limit to the number of drawers in tallboys and chests. There is a limit to the number of handles that may be used and the amount of mirrors and glass. Again most people would think that the allowance of 1300 square inches of mirror on a dressing table quite generous, but mirrors may not be used on wardrobes or on sideboards. Again we are limiting the number of pieces that may be sold as a suite. A bedroom suite may only be of four pieces if there is a double bed, or five pieces if there are twin beds. A dining suite may only be table, four chairs, and sideboard; and so on. It is difficult to get any general formula for all furniture manufacturing firms, because there are a large number of these, and they make such a very large variety of types of goods.

### Fixing The Price

"One advantage that may appear as an effect of war conditions is that we are being forced to use more New Zealand woods. Some of them look very fine when they are properly used. Southland beech, for instance, has a beautiful grain, and tawa is used, too.

"The most difficult part of our work has been the price-fixing of furniture. Our final decision has been to fix the price of all furniture made with rimu, so that people can be sure that there will be some furniture that remains at a fixed level. The price of other furniture is controlled but not fixed. We do want to avoid any falling off in quality, and we want to avoid too great a uniformity in goods produced."

### Manufacturer's View

*The Listener* visited one or two furniture shops and manufacturers to get their views on the standardisation and simplification of furniture making. As we threaded our way between chairs and tables, we noticed some china cabinets. "What do you think of the things that are to be cut out?" we asked one of the makers.

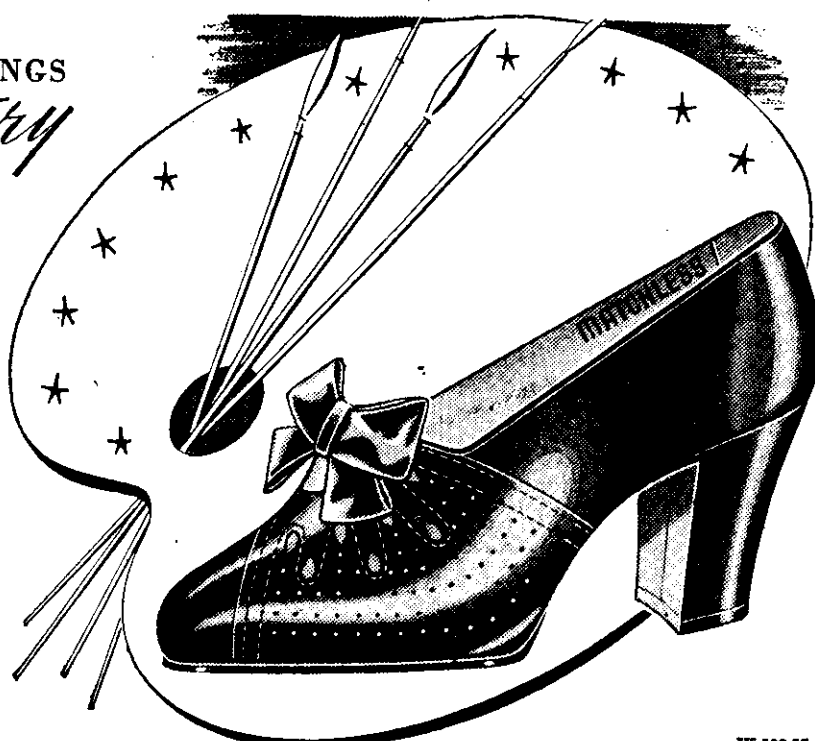
"Well, on the whole, the list seems reasonable. I would have left in china cabinets myself, as many people living in small flats use them instead of sideboards—they take less room. Cutting those other smaller articles out is a saving in labour, though hardly of materials, as they can usually be made of scraps. The other limitations as they are set out will not affect us very much."

We stopped by some elaborately worked furniture. "This type of carved

(Continued on next page)

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