

## WHOLESALE PRICES.

Over-importation having caused serious difficulty in the soft goods business—as can be seen by the many inducements given to the consumer to stock up at “half-price”—wholesale prices in that sphere are erratic. The Government Statistician's latest figures give some promise of a drop in the cost of commodities in common use, but we are a long way from the position in which the country stood prior to the war. Wholesale prices probably show the first signs of the much desired reversion to an approximation of the happy time of long ago, but the comparison which the Statistician gives us is not particularly reassuring. While the prices of basic commodities such as coal and metals in the world's markets have shown a very substantial decline compared with the peak of the record during war time, the index numbers of New Zealand wholesale prices indicate a stubborn desire to maintain a position which makes it difficult to do business under reasonable conditions. Taking the average of the wholesale prices in the four chief centres during the period 1909-1913 as 1,000, the position of these averages at the end of April last was as follows:—

Agricultural produce ... ..	1,541
Flour, bran, pollard and oatmeal ...	2,010
Wool, hides, tallow, butter and cheese	1,615
General merchandise and crockery ...	2,250
Building materials ... ..	2,522
Leather ... ..	2,158
Chemicals and manures ... ..	1,961
Coal ... ..	2,242

The average of all the groups is 2,115, which shows what a long way we have to go before money resumes anything approaching its former purchasing value.

## TOWN PLANNING ORGANISATION.

It was with satisfaction that we noted the protest of genuine town planning members of the Wellington Municipal Electors' and Town Planning Association against the way in which that organisation has always entered the controversial arena at election time. Town planning has been an ornament of the Association—not its real purpose. The political policy has been pursued with such energy that it has run the Association heavily into debt. Labour's attempt to make the City Council a class institution was unreasonable, and the result of the election showed that the general mass of electors favoured a wider range of choice. The so-called Town Planning Association showed just the same class prejudice as the Labour Party, and in doing so, it was not assisting the ideal for which it is supposed to stand. This Town Planning Association should either be thoroughly reorganised, or there should be created in Wellington a new organisation truly standing for town planning ideals, and not leg-ironed to political prejudices. The Town Planners sought to replace the old Presi-

dent and Executive with a new set of officers directly concerned with town planning, and nothing else. The move was quite naturally resented by the retiring officers, who circularised the membership, and a battle-royal occurred at the adjourned annual meeting, when officers for the year were elected. In the discussion, it transpired that the membership generally approved of the decision to concentrate on the town planning ideal, but the result of the election was a mixed triumph. The “ins” and the “outs” were rather too well balanced to make for satisfactory work during the ensuing year, and it was decided by the three new officers who had been elected to pursue Town Planning exclusively, that their presence on the Executive would only lead to mutual conflict, and a wasted year. So they took counsel with their friends, and decided to resign. Under the circumstances they were wise, for busy men have little time for controversy, especially as it would not advance the cause of Town Planning.

## ALTERNATIVE TO STRIKES.

Mr. Robert Semple, formerly a stormy petrel of the Labour movement, is distressing some of his old friends by telling them plain truths about unnecessary truths. As the head of a co-operative labour gang which has undertaken a very useful work for the Wellington City Council in connection with its water supply scheme, he has been criticised for permitting the inclusion of a clause in the contract absolutely prohibiting strikes. As the workers all agreed before signing that the proposed wages would be sufficient, and the conditions equitable, there seems no point in the objection, therefore Mr. Semple nit out hard recently in defence of his methods. He said that there was a great deal of difference between the competitive contract system and the co-operative contract system on which he is engaged. He is the organiser of the concern, and he rightly takes credit for “standing in” with his mates on equal terms. This, although a credit to Mr. Semple's generosity, might not be altogether fair to Mr. Semple, because he will have to exercise a considerable amount of brain-power as well as muscular strength to make a success of the job. Apparently he is willing to forego what the economists call “the wages of superintendence.” The co-operative contract is a familiar thing in New Zealand, and we have had ample time to watch its workings. Mr. Semple's experiment is likely to be thoroughly successful, for he has picked his men and they are all thoroughly up to their jobs. What is wanted is some system of ensuring a fair deal for men who cannot claim the best wages current, but who, nevertheless, have a right to get a living. We are afraid, in spite of Mr. Semple's venture and his optimism, that he has not found the royal road to avoidance of industrial strife, but he certainly deserves an encouraging word for the effort, and his straight talk to the small extreme section of Labour which is always looking for trouble.