

## CHAPTER XIII.—REMEDIES.

Question 13 : What steps should be taken with a view to reducing the cost of the necessities of life ?

On this subject your Commissioners submit the following remarks :—

1. The first essential in the study of any social problem is correct diagnosis of the case. All the facts that are related to the subject must be examined and their mutual relations and the degree of importance of each ascertained. The Commission has learned by experience the inadequate assistance which is afforded by the available official statistics of the Dominion, and is of opinion that the Government should extend the work of its Statistical Department. An economic survey of the Dominion is urgently needed ; for until we have available trustworthy statistical descriptions of the national resources, of the productive powers of the people, of the organization of the markets, of price and wages changes, of the way in which the national income is distributed, of the modes and amount of consumption, &c., any economic legislation is but a leap in the dark, and our industries are deprived of knowledge which is as necessary for their successful development as a plentiful supply of labour and capital. The Commission therefore recommends :—

Improvement  
of New  
Zealand  
statistics.

- (a.) That the Government Statistician should have full control of the collection and publication of all statistics so as to secure uniformity of definition, of methods of collection and presentation generally, in order to render proper comparisons possible and to minimize the risk of fallacious reasoning from them. In 1902 a permanent Bureau to deal with all statistics was established in the United States of America, and the Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labour, referring to the advantages of such an office, reported as follows : “ The Census Bureau is a purely statistical office, employing a body of experts whose main business it is to study statistics and statistical methods with a view to their improvement and perfection. To this work they give their undivided attention, and it is reasonable to believe that a steady improvement in the character of official statistics will result from the concentration in such an office of as much of the statistical work of the Department, no matter what its immediate character, as can be centered there without interference with the administrative duties of the other Bureaux.”
- (b.) That, in order to facilitate the above-mentioned improvement of the statistics of New Zealand, the Statistician's Office should form a separate department, and the status of the Government Statistician raised accordingly, with powers sufficient to procure the necessary information. The Commission has carefully considered this important question, after taking the evidence of the Government Statistician, and believes that if this recommendation were carried out, it would enable the office to co-operate more readily with all other Departments, by each of which it could be treated as if it were a Statistical Branch. There should be a considerable increase in the permanent staff and a higher standard of qualification insisted upon, so that more and more regard should be had to the quality of the statistics produced rather than to the quantity. Another reason for increasing the permanent staff in number and efficiency is that the Government Statistician should be freed from much of the personal detailed work which he now has to do, so that he may devote more time generally to improve the statistics and methods, and to studying the methods and statistics of other countries.