

2. Industrial Production.

In all the Australian States particulars in regard to manufacturing industries and works (all factories where power is used or where four hands and over are employed) are collected *annually*, showing number of employees, wages paid, power, materials used, output, and value of land, buildings, and plant. The returns are collected by the police and forwarded to the Statistical Office, where, after examination and verification by correspondence if necessary, the particulars are tabulated and published. In New Zealand practically similar particulars are collected by the Government Statistician every fifth year in conjunction with each census, but from all factories employing two hands and over. In addition certain particulars as to hands employed and wages paid are collected by the Labour Department *annually*.

All developments taking place in industrial production can be more closely followed where the material is collected annually, and the quality and accuracy of the statistics published is much superior. This latter point is so important that it cannot be too strongly emphasized. It is better to have no statistics than to have statistics which are unreliable and may be misleading. The manufacturers supplying the returns, and those employed in the collection, become more familiar with what is required. Permanent Statistical officers, continually engaged in examining and dealing with these returns, become expert in the work, which requires skill and a knowledge of industrial conditions. Difficulties are gradually overcome and the statistics improved. The educative value of this continuity in dealing with these returns, and the problems involved, are largely lost when an interval of five years intervenes between each collection. Temporary officers are employed, and the same men are seldom available for consecutive collections. Consequently the experience gained through one collection is largely lost, and it is impossible to make sure that difficulties arising are dealt with in exactly the same way each time. I went to Australia with some doubt as to whether the collection each year of these statistics in such detail was really necessary, and if anything with a predisposition in favour of the quinquennial collection. After discussing the point fully with the Australian officers, I am convinced that if accurate and comprehensive statistics of industrial production are to be produced the annual collection is undoubtedly the best. It is the one adopted in *all* the Australian States, and I recommend its adoption in New Zealand. I suggest that in regard to these statistics also there should be co-operation between the Labour Department and the Statistical Office, so that by means of one return and one collection the requirements of both Departments should be met, in which case it would probably be found best to collect the returns per medium of the Inspectors of Factories. Prior to my departure for Australia the question of co-operation was discussed between the Departments, and it was practically agreed that in the event of their working together the respective spheres of work would be for the Labour Department to undertake the collection of the data, and the Statistical Office to compile the statistical tables therefrom.

3. Fisheries.

In Australia statistics *re* fish-production are mainly obtained from the wholesale markets, but in New Zealand this would prove more difficult, as the conditions of marketing the fish are not identical. At present we have no statistics as to the quantity of fish caught or marketed. The industry is of growing importance, and a quantity of New Zealand fish is sent to Sydney and Melbourne. The question of obtaining proper statistics of the industry should not be delayed much longer. With your approval I should like to go into the matter with the Secretary for Marine (under whose control our sea-fisheries are) at the earliest possible opportunity, with a view of instituting methods of obtaining the necessary data.

4. Forestry.

Similarly in this case no proper statistics are available in regard to the extent of our forests, and I think this matter should also be taken up at an early date. Probably something could be done after the report of the Forestry Commission is received.

5. Trade Statistics (Imports and Exports).

The trade statistics in the Commonwealth are on excellent lines. In regard to imports, the country of origin is shown as well as the country of shipment, while both imports and exports are arranged in great detail according to a standard classification. New Zealand is much behind Australia and the leading commercial countries in that our trade statistics do not disclose the country of origin of the goods imported, and that they do not follow a standard classification. The arrangement of our trade statistics is in accordance with tariff classification, which, of course, varies with every change of tariff. Also, there is too much grouping of commodities, so that the trade in many articles cannot be traced. In addition, the New Zealand trade statistics do not appear to be quite so clearly presented, consequently they are not so readily understood by persons requiring to use them who may not be very familiar with their arrangement. The work, so far as it goes, is, I am sure, as efficiently and economically performed in New Zealand as in Australia, but our statistics are robbed of much of their value on account of the form in which they are produced, and the fact that the country of origin is not disclosed.

Another important point in connection with these statistics, and one which cannot be too strongly emphasized, is the necessity for celerity in their publication. In Australia a fairly comprehensive return of the principal items of imports and exports is published monthly, and the complete returns annually, both of which are issued from the Commonwealth Statistician's Office. These are the only official statements issued, but I understand that in addition the Collectors of Customs make up a return, which is handed to the Press for publication each week, giving figures for the most important articles of export. In New Zealand the Department of Industries and Commerce issue fortnightly a leaflet giving figures for principal articles of export, the Customs Department issue quarterly statements, and the Statistical Office publishes the annual tables.