

place immediately after the next harvest. It is hoped that in addition to the usual statistics as to crops and live-stock the new system will gradually be extended to include the production of orchards and other valuable particulars as to the cultivation and occupation of holdings. Considering the importance of such production to New Zealand it is essential that accurate and reliable statistics should be obtained in regard thereto.

Fisheries.

Attempts have been made at various censuses to obtain statistics relating to fisheries, but the information collected has been so incomplete and unreliable as to render the tabulation undesirable. The industry is of great potential importance to the Dominion, and I hope that one of the results of Professor Prince's visit will be that steps will be taken to obtain reliable data in regard to the industry. I intend, with your approval, conferring with the Secretary for Marine in the matter at an early date.

Forestry.

It is also to be regretted that there are no proper statistics in regard to forestry. I shall endeavour to make arrangements for obtaining particulars as soon as a favourable opportunity offers.

Manufactories.

There is nothing further to add, so far as industrial production is concerned, to what was stated in my report after visiting Australia. Although you approved of my conferring with the Labour Department as recommended there has been no opportunity of doing so yet. As soon, however, as the new system of collecting statistics *re* agricultural and pastoral production is initiated satisfactorily, I will approach the Labour Department for their co-operation in obtaining satisfactory statistics of industrial production. It is the next matter to be taken in hand, and I anticipate doing so shortly.

INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC INQUIRIES.

Since the recommendations made in the report on my return from Australia I have, with your approval, made arrangements for the co-operation of the Labour Department in the collection of price statistics, from which to produce price index numbers on similar lines to those issued by the Commonwealth Statistician in Australia. Some twenty-three towns in the Dominion representative of inland and seaport districts have been selected, and the local Inspector of Factories in each will collect monthly, for despatch direct to this office, returns of the predominant retail prices of certain commodities and weekly rents. Similar monthly returns will also be obtained from the Inspectors in the four chief centres of wholesale prices over a somewhat larger range of commodities. From these returns, which will be carefully examined and tabulated, weighted price index numbers will be produced indicating some variations in the cost of living, &c.

In initiating the new system an inquiry into the course of wholesale and retail prices in the four chief centres has also been instituted, and an endeavour is being made to carry it back to 1891. I am not sanguine, however, of obtaining prices for all the commodities so far back, but I anticipate collecting fairly complete data to 1900, and probably a year or two earlier. Mr. J. R. Fraser, of the Labour Department, was detailed to visit the four centres to interview traders and make arrangements for the returns for back years, and his mission has been on the whole a very successful one. A considerable number of excellent returns have already been received, and I have to express my grateful appreciation of the very kind assistance received from merchants, shopkeepers, agents, and others in the matter. There are still a number of returns to collect, and there is a great deal of work to be done before the results can be presented to the public, but I hope they will be available before the end of the year.

The field of industrial inquiries in New Zealand, particularly so far as it affects cost of living, wages, unemployment, &c., has been practically untouched, and the above is merely a beginning subject to the limitation of our statistical staff, in regard to which I have made some references in my previous report. A collection of household budgets should be undertaken at an early date.

PUBLICATIONS.

Official Year-book.

This book continues to receive attention. More use is being made of diagrams and graphs. Every endeavour is made to cover all the different activities and aspects of the Dominion, and where it fails in this endeavour it is principally because there are no statistics obtainable. When the various statistics are reorganized, however, it is hoped to make the Year-book more useful and complete than it is at present.

Statistical Volume.

Hitherto this has been issued in parts, and then in one complete volume, the parts and the volume being circulated to the same people. In order to save the cost of the printing and circulation of the parts, and also because the growing size of the volume militates against its transmission through the post, it has this year been decided, with your approval, to issue it in four volumes in their final form. Another advantage to be derived from this departure will be the acceleration of its issue to the public. It will be possible to proceed with two volumes simultaneously, and it is hoped, after this year, with the assistance of the Printing Department, to issue the first two