

MANUFACTURERS' DIRECTORY.

Information was collected by the Department from manufacturers throughout New Zealand for the purpose of compiling a directory to show buyers and other interested parties the many articles that are manufactured in the Dominion, to indicate by whom they are made, and to foster a demand for New Zealand goods. Unfortunately, owing to retrenchment of staff, this work has been considerably delayed in publication, and some help has had to be sought from the manufacturers' associations in getting the necessary clerical assistance to complete it. By mutual arrangement it has now been decided to place the matter in the hands of a private publisher, and it is expected that the directory will be published towards the close of this year. The classifications of manufactured goods will number between two thousand and three thousand; the directory will include the name of every leading manufacturer of the Dominion, and will be the most complete of its kind ever attempted in the Dominion.

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE.

The Department has co-operated closely with the Chambers of Commerce in the principal centres, and a considerable volume of correspondence on a multiplicity of subjects is continually passing between this office and those organizations. The Department has also kept in touch with the conferences of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, and has rendered assistance in matters relating to bills of lading and the question of extending New Zealand's trade abroad.

There has recently been in evidence a commendable desire to strengthen the position of the Chambers of Commerce in the larger centres, and a strong effort is to be made to increase membership. The Wellington Chamber, too, has given consent to the suggestion that several large Government Departments should have representation on the Chamber, and so ensure a greater degree of harmony and co-operation between the Government and commercial interests.

The recent amalgamation of the two Chambers of Commerce in Wellington is also undoubtedly a step which should be in the interests of the commerce of the city.

COSTING SYSTEMS.

It has been abundantly apparent to the officers of the Department that insufficient attention is paid by manufacturers to the necessity of accurately and promptly ascertaining the detailed cost of production and distribution of commodities. This necessity has grown more acute since economic conditions have brought about a general recession in prices. Indications are not lacking that manufacturers are coming to realize this fact, and will take steps to institute efficient systems of cost-finding. The Department has given encouragement to the movement, and in several instances the Board's accountants have given professional advice to traders in regard to the details of schemes to be adopted.

While the staff of the Department is not sufficiently large to allow of any general extension of the principle of directly assisting in this work, every effort will be made to increase interest in this subject and to bring about the recognition of the need for more efficient methods of accounting generally.

CUSTOMS TARIFF INQUIRIES.

At the request of the Customs Department, detailed investigations have been carried out in relation to several industries which are now feeling the full force of overseas competition. Inquiries have been made in regard to the necessity for imposing special or temporary duties for the purpose of protecting the industries in question, and detailed reports have been submitted for the assistance of the Hon. Minister of Customs. These matters are so far confidential that details of the work done in this connection cannot be given in this report.

SUGAR.

The Department has continued its arrangements in regard to the control of the supply of sugar for the Dominion. In this respect the Government purchases the sugar f.o.b. Fiji, and arranges for the freighting, refining, and ultimate distribution through the ordinary trade channels to the consumer in New Zealand. Since the date of the last report of the Department the maximum price has been reduced from 6½d. to 4½d. per pound retail, and arrangements are in hand for a further reduction of 1d. per pound as from the 7th September next. When supplies became more plentiful the necessity for rationing disappeared, and the Department removed all restrictions in this respect.

The normal requirements for the Dominion, estimated over a number of years, are between 60,000 and 65,000 tons per annum, but last year (largely owing to changed financial conditions) there was a considerable decline in consumption, and when the contract for that year was under negotiation a careful analysis of the statistics of consumption was made. As the result of this the Department estimated that 50,000 tons would be sufficient to meet the requirements of the Dominion for the year, and the Sugar Company offered this quantity to the Government at £26 10s. per ton f.o.b. Fiji. Further negotiations resulted in a price of £22 12s. 6d. being agreed upon, and this represented a reduction on the original offer of £3 7s. 6d. per ton, which, on the 50,000 tons, amounted to a saving of £193,753.

Later in the year the Sugar Company intimated that they had available a further 12,000 tons of sugar in Fiji, and they offered this to the Government at £16 5s. A purchase of this quantity was effected by the Government at £15 10s. f.o.b. Fiji. The foregoing advantages in the matter of price have been largely due to the close attention paid by the Department to the movements of the world's sugar-market, and in this respect the Department is indebted to the High Commissioner for his regular cables relating to this matter. Moreover, it may be claimed that a careful study of the statistics of consumption enabled the Government to limit its original purchase and thus be in a position to buy the balance when the market was at its lowest level.