

MOTOR-VEHICLES.

The details of the standardized system of recording the running and maintenance costs of motor-vehicles have been agreed upon, and the system is now in operation. The relative instructions have been printed and circulated. The new system will ensure that the motor-vehicle costing of all Departments will be kept on a comparable basis, and enable excessive or extravagant expenditure to be more readily detected.

LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

It is the policy of the Board to keep as closely as possible in touch with the commercial development of the Dominion's manufactures. With this object in view conferences are held from time to time with organizations such as the Industrial (Manufacturers') Corporations of New Zealand, chambers of commerce, &c. There is no doubt that these conferences have been of value both to the Board and to manufacturers. During the year the Board's advisory committee (by request) visited the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition held at Dunedin, and made a careful examination of the very varied and large display of stores. Special attention was paid to the products of New Zealand factories. During this inspection the officers of the Board were accompanied by the president of the Manufacturers' Association (James Hogg, Esq.), and had the benefit of his wide knowledge of manufacturing methods. Subsequently a conference was held with the Exhibition directors. The constitution, policy, and objects of the Board were fully explained to the directors, also the principles upon which the methods of buying are based. The following extract is taken from the speech of the president of the Manufacturers' Association as reported in the press:—

“In the past the public had always been ready to criticize the Government for inefficiency in buying, but the successful advent of the Board had made for a great increase in efficiency. He did not want to pay a tribute to the members of the committee because they were guests, but he knew for a fact that the Government was now buying more wisely, economically, and in more advantageous markets than in the old slipshod days. Far lower prices were being paid to-day, and credit was due to all Government officers who handled the buying.”

At a later date representatives of the Board attended a conference of the Industrial (Manufacturers') Corporation of New Zealand, held at Christchurch. The discussion was somewhat similar to that which took place at Dunedin, but, at the request of the conference, special attention was given to the Board's methods of dealing with tenders. The value of these conferences is undoubted. They result in the removal of many misunderstandings, and the confidence of manufacturers and other suppliers in the Board is increased. At the conclusion of this conference a prominent member remarked, “We have a new vision of the Board's attitude to local industry.”

SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH.

During the year a new Department, that of Scientific and Industrial Research, has been established. The Department is interested in the preparation of standard specifications, and has already conferred with the Board in respect thereto. The technical and scientific knowledge which the Department is able to command will be of undoubted benefit to the Board. There is scope for co-operation between the Board and the Department, and one result that may be confidently anticipated is a steady improvement in the Board's specifications. The Dominion Laboratory is now attached to the Department, and the services of the Dominion Analyst are largely availed of by the Board. The information disclosed by his analyses is of the highest value, and, in conjunction with practical tests, enables the Board to determine the relative values of many classes of stores with full confidence.

SHIPPING DOCUMENTS.

In the past, Departments, in common with the commercial houses, have experienced inconvenience and delay through the arrival of stores in the Dominion prior to the receipt of the relative shipping documents. Negotiations were opened by the High Commissioner with the interested shipping companies, and arrangements completed which ensure the despatch of shipping documents by the steamer which carries the stores.

SERVICE BY CONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS.

Next to the quality of stores supplied ranks the service which tenderers are able to offer. This applies with particular force to contracts extending over a period, and is often the determining factor in deciding which tender shall be accepted.

The number of service depots, supply of spare parts, facilities for repairs, and the qualifications of the contractor's technical experts are important, and receive careful consideration prior to the acceptance of any tender. As a result the Board has reason to be satisfied with the service rendered by contractors, and it is gratifying to record that in the rare instances where mistakes have occurred adjustments have been readily made by those responsible. In a period of nearly five years only two or three cases have occurred in which it has been necessary to take drastic action and cancel the contract.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (600 copies), £2 15s.