

1927.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE PROPRIETARY ARTICLES TRADE ASSOCIATION.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY APPOINTED UNDER SECTION 13 OF THE BOARD OF TRADE ACT, 1919, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

REPORT.

To the Hon. A. D. McLeod, President of the Board of Trade.

SIR,—

1. Some months ago it was brought to the notice of the Department of Industries and Commerce that an association known as the Proprietary Articles Trade Association of New Zealand (hereinafter referred to as the P.A.T.A.), was in process of formation within the Dominion for the purpose of controlling prices at which certain proprietary articles were to be sold. These articles comprised lines which are largely sold by chemists, grocers, drapers, and fancy-goods shops, and the articles which could be controlled by the association number many hundreds. A deputation of retailers waited upon the Acting Prime Minister and yourself in November last, and asked, first, that an inquiry be held into the proposed operations of the association, and, second, that the association be asked to withhold operations until such time as the inquiry had been completed and Government decision in the matter had been given. The executive officers of the association, when subsequently approached, expressed themselves desirous of having an inquiry, and readily agreed to postpone their activities. You thereupon decided that it was in the best interests of all concerned that the inquiry should be held, and accordingly the powers given by section 13 of the Board of Trade Act, 1919, and amended by the Act of 1923, were invoked, and you appointed as the judicial Committee—

W. B. MONTGOMERY, ex Comptroller of Customs;
W. R. HAYWARD, Manufacturer, Dunedin;
M. J. REARDON, ex Workers' Representative on Court of Arbitration;
J. W. COLLINS, Secretary, Department of Industries and Commerce.

At a preliminary meeting of the members of the Committee with yourself you intimated that the Government desired a thorough investigation, and practically left it to the members themselves to decide the procedure to be adopted. In order to enable the Committee to function under the Act, and in accordance with section 5 of the Board of Trade Amendment Act, 1923, you delegated your authority, for the purpose of holding the inquiry, to Mr. J. W. Collins, Secretary of the Department of Industries and Commerce, and joined as associates the other members named.

2. The Committee held its first meeting in Wellington, on Monday, 21st February, 1927. Mr. J. W. Collins was unanimously elected Chairman. Advertisements inviting evidence from persons interested appeared in newspapers published in the main centres throughout New Zealand. There was very little response outside Wellington, and it was deemed advisable, in conference with counsel appearing for clients, that it would be better to bring witnesses,