

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT.

During the year traders and others submitted for verification and stamping 132,141 weights, measures, and weighing and measuring instruments. These cover the verification of new appliances and also the periodical reverification of appliances in use. Under test 117,266 proved to be accurate within the permissible amount of error, while 14,875 were rejected and required to be repaired or replaced. The total fees for testing and verifying the appliances amounted to £7,234 9s. 6d., an increase of £1,245 7s. 3d. over last year's total. Proceedings were taken against sixty persons—38 cases for using "unjust" (inaccurate) or unstamped appliances, whilst the remainder were for selling shortweight goods, including coal. Penalties totalling £97 5s. were imposed. One of the cases was taken against a petrol-supplier for selling short measure, in which it was shown that the supplier had deliberately interfered with the pump so as to deliver short measure; the shortage amounted to 2½ pints in 4 gallons, or over 7 per cent., and a penalty and costs totalling £11 were imposed. Several cases were taken against bakers for selling bread underweight; in each case a penalty was imposed.

An important part of the weights and measures administration is the examination of new types of weighing and measuring appliances submitted for approval under clause 5, Part II, of the regulations; this is found to be particularly necessary in the case of petrol-measuring instruments; it will be noticed below that six out of fifteen such instruments were rejected, and that all the others also required some alteration; this supervision work entails a careful and thorough examination of each appliance to ensure that it is of reasonably good construction as to materials, workmanship and design; the examination is followed by tests under practical working-conditions to determine constancy of accuracy and to show any features that might facilitate fraud; during the year forty-five new kinds of appliances were dealt with; of these, thirty-seven were approved after suitable alterations had been made; eight were rejected, and four are still under consideration. The following summary shows the types submitted:—

Description.	Approved after Alterations made.	Rejected.	Total.
(a) Petrol-measuring instruments and attachments..	9	6	15
(b) Drum- and can-filling appliances	3	..	3
(c) Liquid-measures	5	..	5
(d) Automatic weighers	..	1	1
(e) Linear measuring instruments	1	..	1
(f) Weighing-machines	19	1	20
Totals	37	8	45

The arrangement made with the British Board of Trade and the Weights and Measures Departments in other countries (including the United States of America and Canada) to prevent appliances that have been rejected in any of these countries from being dumped into the Dominion is still proving useful, and the use of many defective appliances has been prevented in New Zealand as the result.

As mentioned in the last annual report, the Weights and Measures Act which came into force in January, 1926, requires for the first time that all goods, except those which are exempted by regulations (which cover forty-five kinds of articles, such as fruit in bottles and sauces), shall, when sold by retail by weight or measure, be sold only by net weight or measure, and where made up in packages the net weight or measure shall be shown on the package. These provisions were found to be very essential, as it had been the general practice to sell goods—particularly groceries—made up in packages on the premises by gross weight. The new Act was strongly supported by the various associations of traders—both dealers and local manufacturers—and most of the shopkeepers and others have readily complied with the requirements. Systematic inspections have been made throughout the year, and it has not been found necessary to take proceedings to enforce the law in any instance; cases of selling by gross weight are now rare.

The standard-weight provisions which were also enacted in 1926 for the first time have worked smoothly. These enable regulations to be made to require certain specified goods (principally foods) to be sold only in prescribed quantities. The object of this regulation is to prevent the public from being led to believe that a package contains, for example, a full pound (net) of a commodity, while in fact it may consist of only 14 oz. or 15 oz. These provisions have also been strongly supported by the traders and manufacturers concerned. In order to give dealers an opportunity to dispose of stocks not packed in standard weights or measures, a period varying from the statutory minimum of six months to eighteen as from the date of the regulations has been allowed. The articles which are standardized are butter, tea, and milk (which had formerly been standardized in a similar manner under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act), and sugar, coffee, coffee and chicory, cocoa and cocoa-powder, chocolate-powder, treacle and golden syrup, pepper, mustard, and several articles other than foods. These were standardized for the first time as from 10th January of this year. Paints, soap, and honey are also being standardized as from July, 1928, January, 1929, and July, 1929, respectively; and the question of standardizing the weight or measure of other articles is also under consideration in conjunction with traders. Besides preventing the misleading of the public as to the actual net quantities of the goods purchased, a noticeable feature of the provisions is the desire of local manufacturers to minimize costs by reducing the number of sizes or weights: for example, bar soap has hitherto been sold in eleven different sizes and weights, and these have been reduced by the regulations to four.