

SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH.

Close co-operation continues between the important Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Department of Industries and Commerce, and acknowledgment should be made of the prompt help afforded to manufacturers by this new Department. Many problems of a minor nature have arisen during the year, and the advice and assistance of the expert research officers have been readily given, and have been greatly appreciated.

During the recent annual conference of the manufacturers of New Zealand a proposal to establish a standards laboratory was warmly commended, and a scheme for the extension of scientific assistance to manufacturing industries was also mentioned and supported. The importance, too, of early consideration being given to the questions of providing standard specifications, simplification of manufacturing processes, and standardization is under discussion with interested parties. In the near future some concrete proposals in this regard will be discussed with the Minister in charge of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. A preliminary meeting of departmental heads concerned, together with representatives of manufacturers, has already taken place, and the recommendations arrived at will be fully discussed with the Minister. It is unfortunately necessary to say that the general feeling among manufacturers is that the time is not ripe for a forward progressive policy in this respect, but when the full proposals are published and understood it is felt that they will be readily approved and adopted.

FOOTWEAR-MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY.

Brief reference was made in last year's report of the Department to the fact that an investigating Committee had been set up by Government to inquire into and report upon the footwear industry of the Dominion, which for years past has not made the progress which the general development of the Dominion justifies. The Committee comprises four representatives of the boot-manufacturers, four representatives of the operatives, and six departmental officials possessing expert knowledge of industrial conditions in New Zealand. The inquiry has proceeded steadily, although progress was interrupted for a time owing to the elections and the change of Government. A preliminary survey of the industry was made by a sub-committee. Selected factories were visited in the four chief centres, and the matters agreed upon for investigation were—

(1) Production :—

- (a) Factory layout, lighting, &c., general efficiency of.
- (b) Labour restrictions imposed by law; possibility of improvement by elimination of unnecessary restrictions.
- (c) Possibility of adoption of improved basis of labour-payment.
- (d) Possibility of economy in purchasing supplies of materials by joint action or otherwise.
- (e) General factory economy and cost factors arising from restricted use of plant available; consequently degree to which cost might be reduced if reasonably full output were available.
- (f) Extent to which cost is affected adversely or otherwise by diversification of output.

(2) Marketing :—

- (a) Systems under which footwear, both local and imported, is marketed; advantages and disadvantages from point of view of manufacturer.
- (b) The attitude of the retailer; his margins on imported and local footwear; his objections, if any, to handling local footwear.
- (c) Profit margins available in respect of different classes of footwear; difficulties, if any, arising from financial pressure.
- (d) Advertising, relative cost of; extent to which adopted, and possibility of joint trade action.
- (e) Possibility and advisability of establishment of direct outlets for manufacturers' products; possibility of bringing about joint action for retail sale by associated manufacturers.
- (f) General profit position of the industry.

The sub-committee presented a comprehensive and useful report, which has been studied in detail by the general Committee. Further investigations were proceeded with, including a close and useful survey of one of the most efficient factories in regard to layout and plant equipment, and in regard to award conditions—the possibility and advantages of introducing voluntary piecework or bonus systems in lieu of the rates fixed by awards, &c. These matters have been discussed and considered, and it is expected that before the issue of this annual report an interim report will be published covering the points dealing with footwear production. A second and probably a final report will be issued at a later date dealing with marketing problems. In view of the fact that these reports will be available shortly for the information of the manufacturers and workers engaged in the industry, it is not proposed to go into detail here; suffice to state that it is felt that the inquiry will prove to be of the greatest value in helping those directly concerned to appreciate the special difficulties of the industry, and, more important still, will assist by indicating certain constructive means of overcoming them.

TIMBER.

In last year's annual report the fact was mentioned that the sawmilling industry had been subjected to a close investigation of a special Committee appointed by the Government, including representatives of the trade (and of certain Government Departments), to work under the direction of the Minister of Industries and Commerce. The Committee has been steadily at work during the