

The following table shows the quantity and value of wheat and flour imported in each month of the year ended February, 1929 :—

Importations of Wheat and Flour into New Zealand.—Season 1928-29.

Month.	Wheat.		Flour.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
	Bushels.	£	Tons.	£
March	12,458	3,800	1,003	15,826
April	8,555	2,695	617	10,640
May	6,161	2,007	738	12,214
June	11,361	3,391	770	12,617
July	20,886	7,482	810	13,497
August	65,256	21,374	692	11,224
September	29,648	10,484	973	15,109
October	41,958	8,444	668	10,834
November	44,340	12,819	1,153	18,085
December	30,711	8,098	625	10,026
January	61,302	17,550	718	10,410
February	7,160	2,638	792	11,569
Totals for season ..	339,796	100,782	9,559	152,051

Together the imports of wheat and flour last year represent an amount approximately equivalent to New Zealand's flour-consumption for one and a half months. The importations for the corresponding period of the previous year amounted to 673,766 bushels of wheat and 9,466 tons of flour, equivalent approximately to New Zealand's flour-consumption for two months.

From the foregoing it will be noted that even when the Dominion's wheat-production reaches a high figure—as was the case during the past two seasons—some importations will continue. The research work now being carried out by the Wheat Research Institute of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research will, when further advanced, have an important bearing on the importations of “stronger” flour for blending purposes, in that the Research Chemist of the Institute, in co-operation with the flour-millers and bakers, is securing encouraging results from a blending of New Zealand flours combined with treated and specially heated flour. These experiments, if successful, should obviate the necessity for importations of much of the flour now secured from overseas. The New Zealand flour for the past year has also improved in quality; there have been remarkably few complaints from bakers or consumers.

A noteworthy feature of breadmaking in the Dominion is the desire amongst the bakers to keep up to date with the latest improvements in machinery and methods, and generally it can be stated that the bakers of the Dominion are making a good standard of bread. Two complete reorganizations of factory and plant have been made at considerable capital costs. The efficiency and modernity of these plants are such as to warrant the statement that there is nothing better in the Southern Hemisphere. Considerable expenditure on new plant has been incurred in all the centres, but progress has been checked by the price-cutting tactics of a number of bakers in each of the main centres. The enlightened buyer recognizes that industry is maintained and progresses by the creation of profits, and these profits must be attained if improvements are to be carried out which aim at improved quality, lower cost of production, and more effective distribution. The manufacturer who adheres to a price which provides a moderate profit usually gives a better product, better service, and eventually lowers his costs and prices.

GAS REGULATIONS.

The regulations under the Board of Trade Act for the control of the sale and supply of gas have had wider application during the past year owing to the inclusion of fourteen gas undertakings located outside the centres. The four chief centres have been under control since 1925. The heating-value of gas, its purity, pressure, price, and measurement, have been subject to official survey, and it may be claimed that a useful and proper service has been performed in the public interest by the operation of these regulations. Some criticism, however, has been voiced by the Gas Institute of New Zealand against the industry being controlled, and a resolution was passed at the last annual conference of the Institute, held in January and February this year, to the effect that the Government's notice should be drawn to the advisability of deleting the Order in Council bringing the smaller gas undertakings under the regulations. Prior to this conference being held, a deputation from the Gas Companies' Association of New Zealand waited upon the then Minister of Industries and Commerce to ask for freedom in the fixation of gas-prices, which right had been taken from the gas undertakings by the regulations, and the power given to the Minister of Industries and Commerce. These suggestions for amendment of the regulations and for relief from their operations have been reported to the present Minister in charge of the Department both by deputation and correspondence, and the parties concerned have been advised that the Government will probably refer the whole matter to a parliamentary Committee this session. The Committee, which will represent all parties in the House of Representatives, will be asked to advise whether or not legislation, apart from regulation by Order