

1929.

NEW ZEALAND.

FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY.

PRELIMINARY REPORT (DEALING WITH THE PRODUCTION OF FOOTWEAR) OF THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY.

Laid on the Table of the House by Leave.

REPORT.

The Hon. J. G. Cobbe, Minister of Industries and Commerce.

SIR,—

4th September, 1929.

Towards the end of 1927 the then Prime Minister, the Right Hon. J. G. Coates, convened a meeting of departmental officials possessing expert knowledge of industrial matters in New Zealand with a view to discussing whether or not an economic survey of the boot industry would be welcomed by the interested parties. The Minister of Customs (the Hon. W. Downie Stewart) and the Minister of Industries and Commerce (the Hon. A. D. McLeod) were also present. The Prime Minister expressed the opinion at this meeting that the manufacturers concerned would welcome investigation and co-operation in order to ascertain whether the development of the industry was proceeding on right lines. He suggested that certain departmental officials, together with leading boot-manufacturers, might form a preliminary Committee of Inquiry and that this Committee should endeavour to ascertain precisely what the difficulties were, and, if possible, suggest means for overcoming them.

Following a discussion with departmental officials, a meeting was arranged on the 17th November, 1927, between the officials and certain representative boot-manufacturers from all parts of New Zealand. Full opportunity was given to each manufacturer to state the present position of the trade, and most helpful information was furnished. The delegates were invited to advise the Government as to whether the boot-manufacturers generally welcomed the co-operation of the Government in such an inquiry, and, further, whether such investigation would be likely to lead to practical and useful results.

Manufacturers' representatives stated that in their opinion the present state of the industry was due to a combination of the following conditions:—

- (1) Labour legislation (Factories Act and Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act):
- (2) Alleged dumping of low-price footwear from Great Britain:
- (3) Difficulty of coping with changing fashion in ladies' footwear:
- (4) High duties chargeable on certain raw materials in fashionable footwear:
- (5) Absence of assured local markets:
- (6) Difficulties of marketing.

In view of these conditions the delegates were asked to express their opinion whether official investigation by Government would be welcomed, and also if the proposed investigation would lead to practical and useful results.

It was not until the 21st March, 1928, that the manufacturers resolved that they would welcome an investigation and would be prepared to co-operate with the Government Committee in order that the industry might be fully reviewed.

As a result of this decision the following Committee was set up:—

Official members—

- J. W. COLLINS, Secretary of the Department of Industries and Commerce (Chairman).
 *G. W. CLINKARD, M.Com., Advisory Officer, Department of Industries and Commerce.
 GEORGE CRAIG, LL.D., Comptroller of Customs.
 E. MARSDEN, D.Sc., Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.
 E. T. SPIDY, A.M.F.I.C., Ass.Mem.A.S.M.E., Superintendent of Workshops, Railway Department.

Manufacturer members—

- A. TRENWITH, representing Auckland Boot-manufacturers' Association.
 E. T. ARNOTT, representing Wellington Boot-manufacturers' Association.
 H. DUCKWORTH, representing Canterbury Boot-manufacturers' Association.
 J. R. LUFF, representing Dunedin Boot-manufacturers' Association.

* Resigned 19th March, 1929, owing to appointment as Secretary to Administrator at Samoa.