

The first meeting of the full Committee was held on the 30th April, 1928, the main business transacted being a consideration as to the future procedure to be adopted and the lines the investigation should take. It was resolved that a preliminary survey should be made at selected factories in the four chief centres, and that Messrs. G. W. Clinkard and E. T. Spidy should make this investigation and report to a later meeting, when the general problems concerning the boot-manufacturers could be made known.

A preliminary report of Messrs. Spidy and Clinkard was considered at a meeting held on the 14th September, 1928, and has proved of very great assistance to the General Committee and in the preparation of this report.

After the Committee had functioned for several months it was considered necessary and advisable to obtain the assistance of employees' representatives, and assent to their appointment was given by the Government. The following were added to the Committee as representatives of employees' federations in each centre :—

C. A. WATTS, Auckland.
J. W. MOORE, Wellington.
F. M. ROBSON, Christchurch.
F. JONES, Dunedin.

The subject-matter of the inquiry will be dealt with under the various headings set out below.

CONDITION OF THE INDUSTRY.

While the investigation shows the existence of relatively depressed conditions in the industry, yet at the same time the extent of the depression has not been continuously as great as has sometimes been suggested. It is difficult to secure anything approaching an accurate view of the condition of an industry which covers such a varying field as is found in this instance. While some units of the industry are relatively prosperous and strong, others are showing a distinctly unsatisfactory and declining condition. The present position of the industry by comparison with earlier years is to some extent disclosed by the official statistics of factory production. The latest figures available are for the year ended in March, 1928, and are shown below. It will be noted that in the period under review there has been an increase of 3,925 dozen pairs (3·4 per cent.) of all footwear produced, but a decrease in value of £5,255 (0·47 per cent.) when compared with the figures of 1927. The average price of boots and shoes in 1927 was 16s. 9d., and in 1928 16s. 6d. The following statement shows the quantity and value of boots, shoes, slippers, and shoettes produced in New Zealand during the years ended 31st March, 1919 to 1928, inclusive :—

Year ended 31st March,				Boots and Shoes.	Slippers.	Shoettes.	Totals.	Per Capita.
<i>Dozen Pairs.</i>								
1919	..	..	..	118,989	3,441	3,100	125,530	1·26
1920	..	..	..	120,211	2,217	8,982	131,410	1·27
1921	..	..	..	107,088	1,791	3,003	111,882	1·06
1922	..	..	..	110,763	2,734	2,442	115,939	1·07
1923	..	..	..	119,805	1,711	4,087	125,603	1·14
1924	..	..	..	122,591	1,435	4,691	128,717	1·15
1925	..	..	..	114,398	1,580	2,841	118,819	1·03
1926	..	..	..	113,641	1,238	3,569	118,448	1·01
1927	..	..	..	109,780	722	6,651	117,153	0·98
1928	..	..	..	109,222	660	11,196	121,078	1·00
<i>Value.</i>								
1919	..	..	..	£ 1,132,014	£ 13,254	£ 10,086	£ 1,155,354	£ s. d. 0 17 7
1920	..	..	..	1,334,259	9,314	34,358	1,377,931	1 2 2
1921	..	..	..	1,389,599	8,905	11,354	1,409,858	1 2 2
1922	..	..	..	1,232,687	11,459	7,429	1,251,575	0 19 2
1923	..	..	..	1,384,359	8,219	13,091	1,405,669	1 1 2
1924	..	..	..	1,304,576	6,887	14,728	1,326,191	0 19 7
1925	..	..	..	1,181,122	6,138	9,275	1,196,535	0 17 5
1926	..	..	..	1,149,191	5,442	11,808	1,166,441	0 18 7
1927	..	..	..	1,100,963	3,276	36,670	1,140,909	0 15 10
1928	..	..	..	1,065,830	2,864	66,960	1,135,654	0 15 7

For obvious reasons, the statistics of value are not of primary importance, and the records of quantities produced prior to the year 1921–22 were influenced by abnormal trade conditions. The production in the year 1921–22 was itself doubtless affected by the depression in trade that existed at that time, and, though importations were then still comparatively small, the general demand was slow. Comparisons of value can best be made, therefore, between production figures of years since 1922, and, as the table shows, the figures of the three most recent years were lower than for 1922–23 and 1923–24. The decline, while appreciable, does not, however, record a very marked depression in the industry.