

It is of interest in this connection to consider briefly the production figures of pre-war years. The statistics for 1910–11 show the Dominion production of footwear at 124,263 dozen pairs. During the war period Dominion production increased, though this was not evident in the industrial census figures of 1915–16, when production was shown as 122,624 dozen pairs.

The conclusion which may be drawn from a general review of these figures is that production last year did not markedly differ from the totals of previous years. When consideration is given, however, to the increase in population which has taken place even over a relatively recent period it is clearly evident that the local industry must now be supplying a much smaller proportion of the total trade than was the case prior to the war, or even in the immediate post-war years.

The production statistics of the industry over the past three years show that the total value of all products (which includes a small proportion of other lines in addition to footwear) did not fluctuate materially in the past two years, but show a decrease of £29,038 when compared with 1926 :—

	1926.	1927.	1928.
	£	£	£
Materials used ..	589,914	566,498	565,250
Wages ..	428,940	412,979	405,443
Total value of products ..	1,197,785	1,168,314	1,168,747

The accounts of fourteen representative manufacturers in the main centres which were investigated during the inquiry showed to the satisfaction of the Committee that only three were returning a reasonable rate of profit on capital invested, two were providing a moderate but insufficient profit, while nine were definitely unsatisfactory. We include in Appendix A a comparative statement of manufacturing statistics for the years 1911, 1916, and 1925 to 1928. The evidence disclosed by our inquiries shows that some firms have apparently lost trade to local as well as to overseas competitors. New factories have come into being in the Dominion, and, while there has been no very marked fall in the total Dominion production, the business has been spread between a larger number of producing units. The number of factories* recorded in 1910–11 was seventy-four, while in recent years the number has been eighty-one.

EMPLOYMENT.

The total number of employees engaged in the industry in the undermentioned years was as follows: 1925, 2,074; 1926, 2,078; 1927, 2,018; 1928, 2,048.

The number of employees on short time for the year ending 31st March, 1928, was—Males, 246; females, 400: total, 646.

The number of hours short work for same period was—Males, 64,010; females, 25,055: total, 89,065.

Statistics show that the number of weeks on short-time work per factory during the year was greater in the boot industry than in any other industry in the Dominion, the number of weeks being sixteen.

IMPORTATIONS.

A review of the import statistics brings into prominence the increased trade done by overseas makers in recent years. By reference to the export statistics of the United Kingdom (our main overseas supplier) it will be found that imports of footwear wholly or mainly of leather have increased as follows :—

	Dozen Pairs.	Per Capita.		
		£	s.	d.
1913	100,000	1	2	10
1923	145,000	1	6	2
1924	107,000	0	19	0
1925	132,000	1	3	0
1926	117,000	1	0	0
1927	118,435	0	19	9
1928	129,179	1	0	6

Prior to 1928 the Dominion's import statistics were not compiled on such a basis as to give a clear view of the position, and non-competitive footwear (such as slippers and rubber goods) was to some extent grouped with competitive lines. While the total imports of footwear (other than gum boots) have increased from 138,000 dozen pairs in 1913 to 222,000 dozen pairs in 1927 and 260,203 in 1928, a very large proportion of this increase is due to larger importations of children's sizes and of slippers and rubber footwear.

A comparison of the six months ended 30th June, 1929, with that of the corresponding period of last year shows that a decrease of 5,997 dozen pairs, of a value of £14,954, has taken place in that class of footwear classified as "all leather" for Customs purposes :—

	Dozen Pairs.	Value.
		£
1928	42,697	276,539
1929	36,700	261,585

* "Factory" is defined as an establishment engaged in manufacture, repair, or preparation of articles for wholesale or retail trade, or for export, which employs at least two hands or uses motive power.