

IMPERIAL ECONOMIC CONFERENCE.

The Imperial Economic Conference was held in London over the period 14th May to 16th June, 1937, and immediately followed the Coronation. Many topics of international interest and of particular interest to New Zealand were discussed, and it is hoped that as the result of these discussions there will be further improvement in world conditions.

The Department was called on to prepare a considerable amount of information for the use of members of the New Zealand delegation which attended the Conference, and this entailed a great deal of statistical research into trade matters and reviews of many questions incidental to the welfare of the Dominion and, in fact, of the Empire.

EMPIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FEDERATION.

Wellington was the venue of the triennial conference of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire, which held its deliberations in the Wellington Town Hall on the 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 7th October, 1936.

The congress was attended by delegates representing practically all the chambers of commerce of the Empire, and the opportunities for free discussion and the obtaining of first-hand knowledge of New Zealand's potentialities cannot be overestimated. In view of the importance of the congress a considerable amount of detailed information was prepared by the Department for the members of the New Zealand Government invited to attend the congress as honorary delegates.

To mark the occasion of this fourteenth Empire Congress, exactly fifty years after the London Chamber of Commerce called the first congress, the Government of New Zealand issued a set of commemorative stamps, on which were depicted phases of New Zealand's industries.

At the close of the congress visiting delegates availed themselves of the opportunity to view some of the scenic beauties of the Dominion, the New Zealand Government granting free railway passes and reduced rates at Government hostels.

STORES CONTROL BOARD.

The Department is represented by an officer on the Advisory Committee of the Stores Control Board, and, in addition to the ordinary duties devolving on him as a departmental representative, he is also instructed to look to the interests of the New Zealand manufacturers in the matter of Government purchases of stores.

During the past year, in addition to the usual work in this connection, a large number of applications for variation of Government contracts, due to increasing costs caused by recent legislation, have been referred to this Department for investigation and report as to the reasonableness or otherwise of the increases requested. Contracts for the supply of coal to various Government Departments throughout the Dominion have been investigated, and also contracts relating to the supply of a large number of commodities manufactured wholly or partly within the Dominion.

NEW ZEALAND MANUFACTURERS' FEDERATION.

During the year under review the New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation has continued unceasingly its efforts on behalf of Dominion manufacturers and generally in the development of industrial activity and the fostering of co-operation as between manufacturers and others. The Dominion General Conference of the Federation was held in Wellington in December last, when many subjects of vital interest to manufacturers were discussed. The conference considered and made recommendations in such matters as the adoption of a registered mark for New-Zealand-made goods, the promotion of Dominion trade associations, the development of immigration, questions affecting trade, national defence, &c. In addition, the conference interested itself in matters relating to the employment of apprentices, the fostering of a preference for New-Zealand-made goods within the Dominion, and encouraging local manufacturers' associations to organize annual shopping weeks. These are but a few of the many and varied subjects which come within the ambit of the federation's work.

The Government and the Department have at all times been anxious to co-operate with manufacturers in endeavouring to overcome the problems facing our manufacturing industries and in making it possible to rationalize those industries in order that they may function along more efficient lines. The closer attention being afforded to these aspects is expected to benefit materially the industries concerned.

MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATIONS.

Through its district officer in each of the four main centres the Department is enabled to interest and associate itself closely in the work of the manufacturers' associations. Each district officer attends the regular meetings for the purpose of offering the advice and assistance of the Department.

The Auckland association is to be congratulated upon enrolling a large number of new members. The last report of the association discloses that there were 525 members, as compared with 260 in the previous year. The golden jubilee of the association was celebrated with a membership drive, the production of a souvenir booklet, and a "New Zealand Week," the principal feature of which was the shop-window displays of New-Zealand-made goods, which were of a high standard. The association continued in its efforts to emphasize the value of Dominion manufactures, and in this connection the Auckland Winter Exhibition sponsored by the association again proved most effective.

In its forty-first annual report the Wellington Association records an increase of 102 members for the year, making a total membership of 323. The Wellington Association anticipated the policy of the New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation, which urged associations to proceed with the organization of their members into trade groups, and as a result organized twelve such groups during the year.