

The Paper and Stationery Committee has also had two meetings.

The Fruit Committee has finalized provisions for standard grades for apples and pears which were in the meantime incorporated in regulations issued by the Department of Agriculture.

It has not been possible to prosecute the work of the Consumer Standards Advisory Committee and its sub-committees effectively, as has been the case with other committees. Because of the significance of the considerations involved and the comprehensiveness of the work to be undertaken, the requirements can only be met when the organization has had time and opportunity to develop to a stage that will permit it effectively to initiate and maintain this side of the activity. The question of testing facilities is involved. It is hoped that it will be possible to establish this phase of the activity during the ensuing year.

The process of specialized mass production has been responsible for placing such an amazing array and complexity of goods on the consumer market that some method to assist the purchaser to compare their characteristics, quality, utility, and value seems essential to the judicious spending of income. The value of the goods received for income expended is a no less important consideration to the purchaser than is the amount of the income itself, and it is not possible to determine the value received in goods, unless there is some means whereby the factor of quality can be determined in the same way as are the factors of weight, volume, measurement, and price. Indeed, the factors of quantity and price possess little meaning unless related to the third factor of quality.

It is not by any means only the interest of the consumer that is involved in this aspect of the problem. Judging by the activities of trade organizations throughout the world, including manufacturers, producers, and distributors, these business organizations are displaying more concern at the confusing position that is developing than are the consumers themselves, even though the consumers have powerful organizations at work in many countries. Trade organizations, representative of all phases of business activity, are seeking to develop some order from the confusion that is threatening to envelop their activity.

Commodity and consumer standardization has in fact proceeded to a stage overseas that induces attention to it here if the interests of our manufacturing organizations are not to be seriously prejudiced. Already there is evidence that the certification insignia, based on standards, used in advertising matter and attached to labels of imported goods displayed for sale, is influencing purchasers in favour of these imported lines to the possible detriment of New Zealand manufacturers and the employment of New Zealand labour.

Scientific progress is discovering new processes and materials which can be applied to duplicate uses—some of them as cheap substitutes for genuine constituent materials—and this permits imported or manufactured inferior goods to be placed in the market in competition with higher-grade products from which they cannot be distinguished by the inexpert.

Consequently traders find themselves having no equitable basis for competition, with the net result that both customer and trader may be exploited by the competitive, superficially-attractive, substitute lines which are not comparable in quality, utility, or efficiency with legitimate competitive goods.

Traders are finding that standards related to labelling, advertising, or other descriptive matter give added value to the claims contained in such sales presentation because they are then more reliable and consequently find more general acceptance by the community.

Standards, therefore, provide a common language for buyer and seller. They do not replace other guides to selection, but supplement these more adequately by making advertising more informative, labelling more useful, trade-marks more efficacious, as symbols of quality, utility, and value. The consumer-buyer will also benefit if the presence or absence of certain qualities is definitely known, so that goods possessing desired characteristics can be selected and those possessing undesirable ones avoided.

The use of standards would therefore save money for consumers and traders, since the characteristics of goods will be known and buyers will not need to pay for qualities they do not want or receive. Price, which is the only present guide, is not an infallible indication of quality or excellence.

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Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,725 copies), £27 10s.

By Authority: E. V. PAUL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1938.

Price 9d.]