

1916.
NEW ZEALAND.

BOARD OF TRADE

(SYNOPSIS OF WORK OF) SINCE INCEPTION, 1st MARCH, 1916.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

To the Right Honourable WILLIAM FERGUSON MASSEY, P.C., President of the Board of Trade.

- I. INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS ALLEGING INFRINGEMENT OF THE COMMERCIAL TRUSTS ACT, 1910.
1. *Re Sugar*.—Complaint of Fairbairn, Wright, and Co. that the Colonial Sugar Company's scheme of discounts was a breach of the Commercial Trusts Act. Result: Solicitor-General has advised on evidence submitted that the practice is legal.
 2. *Re Coal*.—Complaint by Neil Cook against Nightcaps Coal Company, Invercargill. Complaint was fully investigated in public. Result: The facts were determined and a legal point was submitted to the Solicitor-General for advice.
 3. *Re Coal*.—Complaint by Neil Cook against the Wairio Coal Company, Invercargill. Complaint was fully investigated in public, and facts showed that no breach had been committed. Report already in your hands.
- II. INVESTIGATIONS UNDER SECTION 6 (b) OF THE COMMERCIAL TRUSTS ACT RELATING TO THE SUPPLY, DEMAND, OR PRICE OF COMMODITIES.
1. *Petrol Prices*.—Referred to Board by His Excellency the Governor. Inquiry was held and representatives of all oil companies doing business in New Zealand were examined. Result: Report submitted showing that price is reasonable and on a parity with prices fixed by the Necessary Commodities Control Commission of New South Wales.
 2. *Fish Prices*.—Referred to Board by His Excellency the Governor. Inquiry opened at Auckland and continued at Napier. Result: Investigation incomplete, therefore no report yet submitted.
- III. COMPLAINTS UNDER SECTION 6 (c) THAT THE PRICE OF ANY CLASS OF GOODS IS UNREASONABLY HIGH.
1. *Coal Price at Auckland*.—Inquiry held; representatives of the various companies were examined, also wholesale dealers and retailers. Result: Report submitted and laid on the Table. After a conference between members of the Board and leading coal dealers and retailers the price of coal in bag lots was reduced by 2s. a ton. Estimated saving to consumers by this reduction totals £3,000 per annum.
 2. *Coal Prices at New Plymouth*.—Inquiry held, and master coal-dealers examined. Result: Prices reduced from 1s. 6d. to 6s. per ton. Estimated saving to consumers, £1,500 per annum.
 3. *Sugar, Price and Supply of*.—Inquiry held Auckland and Wellington, and agreement arrived at with company, fixing price at £21 per ton for twelve months ending June, 1917. Result: Report submitted to you. On comparison with prices in other countries New Zealand is saving by this arrangement £360,000 for the period. (NOTE.—Retail prices of sugar to-day are, per pound, New Zealand, 2½d. to 3d.; Australia, 3½d. to 3¾d.; Great Britain, 5½d.)
 4. *Wheat, &c., Bread, and Flour*.—Prices investigated at Christchurch, Ashburton, Timaru, Greymouth, Westport, Nelson, Auckland, Pukekohe, Thames, Hamilton, Wanganui, and New Plymouth. Result: Report with recommendations submitted to you, and subsequently laid on Table, printed, and circulated. At Thames price of bread reduced after conference with bakers to correspond with Auckland prices. Estimated saving to Thames consumers, £2,000 per annum. At Hamilton and Pukekohe, Board unsuccessful in reducing price of bread, which it considered unreasonably high. At New Plymouth, bread reduced in price by bakers after conference with Board by 1d. per 4 lb. loaf. Estimated saving to consumers in New Plymouth, £2,500 per annum.

5. *Meat, Gisborne.*—Complaint by Gisborne Borough Council as to prices. Inquiry held and report submitted showing prices reasonable.
6. *Certain Class of Tinned Goods, Auckland.*—Complaint by merchants that local price unreasonable as export price lower. Investigation held and witnesses examined. Result: Board reported to you the complaint unfounded.
7. *Milk, Wellington.*—Complaint by Wellington City Council and others that price of milk unreasonable in Wellington. Board is entering on the inquiry this week.
8. *Pork and Bacon.*—Complaint that bacon-curers' prices are unreasonable. Inquiry held in Wellington and Wanganui. Result: Investigations still proceeding.
9. *Numerous Complaints dealing with High Prices of all Classes of Commodities from various Parts of New Zealand.*—These have been dealt with by the Board by correspondence.

IV. INQUIRY INTO POST-WAR TRADE WITH ENEMY COUNTRIES.

This matter was referred to Board by His Excellency the Governor. Inquiry opened at Auckland and continued at Gisborne, Wanganui, and New Plymouth, when representatives from the Chambers of Commerce in each place were interviewed and matter discussed. Proceedings were open to the Press. Result: Matter incomplete.

V. INQUIRY INTO PRE-WAR AND PRESENT PRICES OF THE MAIN COMMODITIES OF LIFE.

At Auckland, Wanganui, and New Plymouth the Board instituted inquiries into pre-war and present prices of the main commodities of life, including groceries, fuel, clothing, and rent. Result: Inquiry incomplete; investigations pending in other centres.

SUMMARY OF PRACTICAL RESULTS.

The Board's work has resulted in the following monetary savings to the public:—

	£
(a.) Sugar (estimated)	360,000
(b.) Coal (Auckland), (estimated)	3,000
(c.) Bread (Thames), (estimated)	2,000
(d.) Coal (New Plymouth), (estimated)	1,500
(e.) Bread (New Plymouth), (estimated)	2,500

In addition the opinion has been freely expressed that the appointment of the Board has had a steadying influence on prices generally.

W. G. McDONALD, }
J. R. HART, } Members of Board.
P. HALLY, }

J. W. Collins, Secretary.
31st July, 1916.

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