

SESSION II.
1921.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIES AND COMMERCE

(BOARD OF TRADE)

(FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE subjoined report deals with the operations of the Department of Industries and Commerce since the last report was placed before Parliament in the session of 1919, and covers a period of two years—July, 1919, to 30th June, 1921.

The period under review has been a busy one, and the Department's staff has had to attend to a constantly increasing amount of business. The supervision for several months of building operations throughout the Dominion, and the control of essential supplies, entailed an enormous amount of work, notwithstanding the fact that the staff endeavoured to co-operate as far as possible with commercial men and work with a minimum of friction.

Any idea that the cessation of war would mean a decrease in the Department's activities has proved to be quite erroneous. Indeed, increasing demands continue to be made upon its services. The Department has been called upon to deal with many complex problems, involving subjects of trade, finance, and industry, and has had to effect difficult readjustments of the commercial situation to ensure fairness to all parties. For the investigation and understanding of these problems—not to mention their adequate solution—a great deal of concentrated effort has been necessary.

THE BOARD OF TRADE ACT, 1919.

The statutory functions of the Board are—(a) To obtain by means of investigations and judicial inquiries information as to the industries of New Zealand; (b) to publish, in such manner as the Board thinks fit, all such information as the Board deems of advantage to the public; (c) to procure, by means of regulations under the Act, the due control, maintenance, and development of such industries.

The Board of Trade has the powers and authorities of an inferior Court of justice. The Board may summon witnesses and hear evidence on oath; and wilful failure to comply with a summons or to give evidence is deemed contempt of an inferior Court of justice. The provisions of sections 3 to 22, dealing with Board of Trade inquiries, will undoubtedly prove of great value. Comprehensive investigations such as that made into the coal-mining industry properly come within the scope of these sections.