

success during the war, and the locally manufactured goods have been of splendid quality. The acute shortages of woollen goods experienced up to the commencement of this year have now been met, largely by importations from overseas.

BUTTER.

The control over the butter trade has been exercised from time to time under the provisions of the Board of Trade Act, 1919. The administration of such regulations has, however, been the work of the Department of Agriculture. The cash price is fixed at 2s. 3d. per pound, and is operative up to the end of August, 1921.

EGGS.

Although the prices of eggs have been fairly high throughout the past two years, there is no doubt that some of the poultry-farmers have found difficulty in making ends meet. Many returned soldiers have taken up this branch of farming, and in the early and difficult stages of their enterprise they have found the competition of Asiatic egg-pulp a serious handicap. This matter has been before the Government on several occasions; and previously, as the producers were not prepared to guarantee full supplies for New Zealand requirements, it was considered inadvisable to prohibit the importation of Asiatic egg-pulp. Early this year, however, the whole subject was thoroughly discussed at a conference of representatives of the poultry-farmers, pastrycooks, and the several Government Departments concerned, and as a result an arrangement satisfactory to the parties was arrived at by restricting the importation of this product, save on the recommendation of the Board of Trade.

TOBACCO AND CIGARETTES.

The Department has kept a close watch on the prices of these goods, and has found after investigation that the traders have acted fairly towards the public. The prices of certain popular lines have been reviewed from time to time by the Department in order to see that any increases were warranted.

SALT.

For a while—as far back as 1918—there was a serious shortage of salt in New Zealand, but this shortage soon led to an oversupply, and by November, 1920, salt was available in abundance, occasionally being quitted below cost.

Dairy salt was particularly in short supply a few years ago, and dairy companies and other traders imported big supplies. Consequently this commodity became a drug on the market, and the dairy companies then went to the other extreme and let their stocks run right out, and towards the end of 1920 were again appealing for supplies. There was, however, no difficulty in meeting their demands.

At New Brighton, Christchurch, the production of marine salt is being experimented with by a new company.

METHYLATED SPIRITS.

During the period under review there has been from time to time a serious shortage of methylated spirits in the Dominion. Australia could not supply nearly the whole of our requirements, and it was necessary to send to America and Canada to make up the deficiency. The American spirit was more expensive than the Australian because the original price was higher and freight expenses heavier, and the exchange difficulties accentuated both disadvantages. The New Zealand wholesale firms appear to have gone to a good deal of trouble to ascertain a new source of supply, but are still obliged to rely largely upon America.

Attention is being given by the Department to the question of improving the supply, as many local industries are affected by the shortage.

SOAP AND CANDLES.

The prices of New-Zealand-made soap and candles have been fixed from time to time by traders after agreement with the Board of Trade, and after full inquiry as to production-costs.

The locally produced candles are now meeting with keen competition from imported supplies, and prices have fallen considerably during the last six months. There is, however, a more promising future for the manufacture of soap, as good supplies of raw materials in New Zealand are available; but a large section of the public has still to be educated as to the satisfactory quality of the New Zealand soap, much of the imported supplies being inferior in quality, price for price.

GAS.

Complaints regarding the prices and quality of gas in the main centres have been made frequently within recent years, and the Department has from time to time investigated the accounts of the gas companies to ensure that increases in the prices were warranted by higher productive costs. In addition to inquiring into the reasons for specific changes in the prices of gas, the Department has commenced a thorough analysis of the accounts and cost records over a period of several years of all the gas undertakings in the Dominion, and by this means valuable comparative data should be secured.