STANDARDS.

Closely related to the scientific problems of industry is the question of developing industrial standards which define the quality and nature of the raw materials to be put into goods and the processes of their manufacture, thus providing a reliable indication of the durability, service, performance, and suitability of such goods for a given purpose. This is one of the most effective means of securing the practical application of the knowledge gained from research and the experience of other countries. We owe much of what we have already attained in this respect to the valuable leads given to us by other countries, and it is vitally important to the best interests of the nation that we should diligently pursue these leads that have been given to us and be ready to co-operate in the common effort to extend them in the interests of a common advancement and purpose.

In the other countries with which we are preparing to co-operate more fully through a standards organization, it has been found from their longer experience that colossal waste occurs through the production and distribution of too many varieties of the same general class of goods. In the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," for instance, the following passage from the treatment of this subject appears:—

> "Analyses of many different lines of products have shown to the United States Department of Commerce that usually 80 per cent. of the year's total business in any line of products is done in 20 per cent. of the varieties in which that line is offered, the remaining 80 per cent. producing only 20 per cent. of the year's business."

The wastes of over-diversification are unduly large inventories, increased cost to carry them, slower turnover, idle investment, heavy obsolescence, decreased profits, and increased prices. The use of standards of quality and utility is necessary not only to avoid these economic wastes of useless production costs, but equally to protect the interests of the consumer by ensuring to him a full and sound return for his expenditure on goods or services. In purchasing cotton or woollen goods, glassware or hardware, furniture or paint, price should not be decided merely by size, measurement, weight, or quantity, but by these factors in relation to quality. In this connection the purchaser has been dependent in the past on a personal, inexpert knowledge fortified by the reputation of a business house or manufacturer's brand or trade-mark, which cannot be regarded as a sufficient guarantee of quality in relation to price in all cases.

Standardization places on goods a registered quality, distinction, ascertained by independent experts, and so determines quality by a fixed standard. In the same way weights and measures are fixed and controlled by central authority.

This method protects the consumer, ensures that he receives value for money, and removes the hazards of uncertainty. It places tendering on a fair and competitive basis. In addition, it protects the honest trader and manufacturer from spurious competition from within or without the country. It, therefore, provides a basis for international trade on an equitable and co-operative basis.

Summarized, the advantages may be stated to be as follows:—

(1) To the manufacturer: Decreased production-costs and selling-expenses, smaller inventories, faster turnover, and consequently improved profits.

(2) To the distributor: Reduction of inventories to the lines that sell well, thus securing speedier turnover and better profits.

(3) To the consumer: Lower prices, improvements in quality of products and the service of the supply.

These considerations are of such vital concern to the whole community as to become an obvious Government responsibility. Further than this, only the administrative resources of State can adequately cater for the essential needs involved. Hence the decision of the Government to take over the responsibility for carrying out the standards activity and administration in close co-operation with representatives of business, industry, and the consuming public.

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