

books would have been one-sixth of the wholesale price had the Bill in its original form become an act.

The issue was one of principle more than profit for an increase in the price of books would hardly in itself have reduced the demand so much as to make books difficult to sell. The important thing is that on that one occasion something more than rosy phrases about books and civilization was wrenched from the powers-that-be, and books were recognised as being different in more than size and shape from clothes and crockery.

The most powerful impetus to sales is that books can be bought without giving up points or coupons.

The sudden imposition of stringent clothes rationing in the United Kingdom in the middle of 1941 changed overnight the whole business of giving presents. Pullovers, scarves, and "undies," male and female, have almost disappeared from the Christmas breakfast-table. Children's toys are shoddy and difficult to get. So books and book tokens are a far more common gift to adults and children than ever in the past.

All publishers are rationed to a percentage—now $42\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, but it has been as low as $37\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of their paper consumption in 1938. In addition to this basic ration, paper reserves are held in a "pool" from which new publishers get their allocation and from which special grants of paper are

made for the publishing of books regarded as having some claim to special priority. The pool was initiated by the Publishers' Association, but the Board of Trade now has some measure of responsibility for it.

A ration of $42\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the paper used in a poor pre-war year is pretty drastic. Is it necessary? This is what publishers say:—

(a) As straw is the basis of the papers now used, a larger allocation would not involve shipping space.

(b) If more paper is not granted and granted smartly the export trade in books will be lost, education crippled for want of text books, technical progress hindered and Bibles made unobtainable.

(c) Newspapers get roughly 250,000 tons of paper each year; H. M. Stationery Office, 100,000 tons; periodicals 50,000 tons; books, 22,000 tons.

Just now it would be no trouble at all to sell the whole annual book production in the home market. Yet publishers are genuinely anxious to give the distant New Zealand market its full share, and perhaps a bit over. Why do they bother?

Care for the overseas market is due, partly, of course, to thought for the future when bigger demand will mean bigger profits and not bigger headaches. Fear of competition overseas from America—a fear encouraged by artful overseas buyers—is a useful lever.

