

Supply—Trade and Commerce

be preferable or not. It seems to me however that if the consumer price index is going to be changed to 1949, the indexes of agricultural prices—and I am referring to the 11-factor cost index, the 8-factor index, and other indexes—might also be changed to the 1949 base. I wonder if that is being done.

Mr. Howe: I can assure the hon. member that every factor in the cost of living index will be on the 1949 base, including the agricultural index.

Mr. Argue: Does the minister mean that the farmers' cost of production index which, so far as I know, is not included in the consumer index, will be changed?

Mr. Howe: Yes; all other indexes, as well as the cost of living index, will be published with the 1949 base.

Mr. Argue: Will it also be the practice to continue for a period of time the other indexes?

Mr. Howe: Yes.

Mr. Argue: Regarding agricultural prices?

Mr. Howe: Yes; they will both be published for a time.

Mr. Fleming: I found some difficulty in following one answer given by the minister to the hon. member for Greenwood, when he offered as a reason for the increase this year in item 454 over last year's appropriation the fact that the bureau has been called upon to do a good deal of work in connection with old age pensions, and proof of age. I would remind the committee that we are now dealing with an item covering the fiscal year which commenced on April 1 while the bulk of the work referred to by the minister was done in the previous fiscal year. I should have thought that the bulk of that work having been done, for the very reason the minister has indicated we would be entitled to expect a reduction in the item this year as compared with last year.

Mr. Howe: The work on old age pensions is a continuing job. Much was done last year, some more will be done this year and more will be done next year. I have here an essay on new work undertaken without additions to staff.

Agriculture statistics division: New work undertaken in this division in recent years includes the following: Construction and publication of a monthly farm price index and an annual physical volume of production index; extension of the cash and net income series back to 1926; a new weekly series of butter stocks for 9 cities; a new series of monthly estimates of egg production and of monthly oilseed crushings; annual estimates

[Mr. Argue.]

of vegetable acreages and production; preparation of per capita food consumption statistics and publication of two reports per year; preparation of special forecasts of farm production and income for the Department of Trade and Commerce.

Most of this work has been undertaken with no increase in staff. This was made possible by improvements in procedures including a greater application of the sampling principle, simplification of questionnaires, adoption of the peg-board system, improved methods of estimation, et cetera. In the large semi-annual surveys almost double the number of returns are now being processed with no increase in staff. Larger samples in other surveys are also being handled with the same staff.

This division has had the preparation of a handbook of agricultural statistics under way for some time. Part I dealing with the historical statistics of field crops has been published and other parts are in preparation. This work has been accomplished with no increase in staff.

What I have stated refers only to agricultural statistics, but I could give details about industry and merchandising and general assignments, including the one I have just mentioned. I would not think my hon. friend would want to hear that.

Mr. Fleming: Does the list of work just read by the minister cover new work undertaken this fiscal year, work that was not done in the fiscal year 1951-52?

Mr. Howe: I was talking about work done during the year 1951-52.

Mr. Fleming: My question was directed rather toward the matter raised by the hon. member for Greenwood as to why there should be an increase this year when the bureau had discharged the considerable amount of work the minister has referred to in connection with the inauguration of the new universal old age pension plan. The volume of work which the bureau will be called upon to do this year would be reduced as compared with that done in the previous fiscal year. Is there some new work being undertaken this year as compared with the last fiscal year and which accounts for the increase in the item? This, of course, is quite apart from the census.

Mr. Howe: The increase is only 5 per cent, which is practically all covered by increased salaries and increased operating expenses. The work of the bureau is always increasing. Our population is increasing, the gross national product is increasing, the activities