

that the great bulk of the nation's retail merchandising is still done by independent stores. It is probable that a current estimate of total retail sales of around \$2,000,000,000 is not far astray. It is estimated that if the 140 chains from which returns have not yet been received were included the total sales for all 350 would not exceed \$400,000,000 (not including sales of certain departmental stores having branch rather than chain systems). Since many which did not report were small concerns the latter figure is probably too high. It would seem that chain stores (exclusive of co-operative chains of independent stores), though doing an increasing proportion of the business of distributing commodities to the consumer, probably do less than 25 p.c. of this work at present.

This report does not include co-operative chains of independents but the business done by these concerns adds considerably to the sum total performed by chain organizations. Nevertheless, including these, it is probable that more than two-thirds of the retail distribution is still performed by independent concerns.

Sales of grocery and meat chains amounted to \$115,232,179, or almost 45 p.c. of total recorded chain sales. In the 1924 Census of Trading Establishments, 16,905 grocery and meat stores showed sales of \$319,676,823. The current figure may be estimated at approximately \$400,000,000. If allowance be made for non-reporting chains in the present inquiry the total sales by this type of chain would probably be well under \$150,000,000; hence independents (including co-operative and voluntary chains) do the bulk of the business in a field which has been more intensively exploited by chain organizations than any other.

Sales Outlets.—An item of interest is that pertaining to the number of sales outlets, that is, taking the department rather than the store as the unit. Thus, while there are special chains for the sale of candy and confectionery, the candy departments of drug stores, bake shops, restaurants, etc., offer additional sales outlets for similar commodities. The complete story of the distribution of commodities is not known until all outlets for the sales of each commodity are revealed. An attempt has therefore been made to enumerate the total number of merchandising outlets for each class of commodity in the chain systems covered. In all there were 11,896 merchandising outlets in the 210 chain systems, which is an average of over three for each separate store. There were 2,965 outlets for foods and kindred products; 991 for cigars, tobacco, and smokers sundries; 428 for women's, misses', and children's clothing; 410 for house furnishings; 387 for drugs and drug sundries; and 378 for hardware. Outlets for other classes of goods numbered from 8 to 369.

Sales by Classes of Commodities.—Sales according to commodity classes as shown in Table 29 were largest for food and kindred products, amounting to \$140,732,928, which was almost 55 p.c. of the total sales of the 210 reporting chains. Next in order came women's, misses' and children's clothing, with sales amounting to \$10,743,621 or 4.2 p.c.; men's clothing and furnishings, \$9,815,928 or 3.8 p.c.; cigars, tobacco and smoker's sundries, \$8,686,764 or 3.4 p.c.; dry goods and notions, \$7,960,739 or 3.1 p.c.; hardware, \$7,729,686 or 3.0 p.c.; toilet articles and preparations, \$7,087,194 or 2.8 p.c.; shoes and other footwear, \$6,529,593 or 2.5 p.c.