

Subsection 2.—Current Merchandising and Service Statistics

Indexes of wholesale sales and inventories for wholesalers proper who sell largely to retailers are based on a sample of firms in nine principal trades. Monthly and annual indexes have been available since 1935. Estimates of Canada's retail trade are now being compiled on a new basis in order to overcome shortcomings of the former monthly and annual series. Coverage for the retail field has been enlarged to include smaller sizes of stores. Adequate weighting has been given to sales trends for different sizes of stores, and results for several additional trades are compiled separately. Revised data have been prepared for 1947 and 1948, but no provision has yet been made to obtain comparable figures for the years 1942 to 1946.

Studies of operating results for wholesale establishments and chain stores have been made, for the year 1947, to complement those covering independent stores which were prepared for 1946 and earlier years. Summary statistics for both of these appear in this Subsection.

The need for current information on retail consumer credit was recognized when a program of wartime controls limited credit dealing during the Second World War. Studies of trends in retail credit were undertaken by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board to observe the effects of credit regulations. Later the Dominion Bureau of Statistics carried on this work adding several trades and extending the coverage.

Statistics on the operations of finance companies are also available for 1947 and 1948, the results of a study somewhat similar to one carried out in 1941. Special attention is given to the automotive division which forms the major portion of the activities of these organizations.

Wholesale Trade.—Monthly index numbers of sales in several branches of the wholesale trade have been prepared since 1935. Indexes of sales (on the base 1935-39=100) are calculated each month for nine wholesale trades, based on reports received from a sample of firms whose sales made up about 68 p.c. of the total volume of business done by wholesalers in those trades in 1941. The sample of reporting firms is limited to wholesalers proper, i.e., wholesale establishments that perform the complete functions of jobbers and wholesalers, buying merchandise in large quantities on their own account and selling in broken lots. In addition, the trades selected are those engaged principally in supplying retailers and include the following: automotive supply and equipment, drugs, clothing, footwear, dry goods, fruits and vegetables, groceries, hardware, and tobacco and confectionery. Inventory figures are calculated from a smaller sample, since not all firms are able to provide month-end inventory figures as required.

Recent Trends.—The dollar volume of wholesale sales in Canada in 1948, measured by the composite index of sales in the nine lines of trade for which figures are available, was 4 p.c. higher than in 1947, 99 p.c. higher than in 1941 and 183 p.c. above the average for the base period, 1935-39. The average index for the twelve months of 1948 (on the base, average for 1935-39=100) stood at 283.2 compared with 272.0 for 1947 and 142.0 for 1941.

There was little variation in percentage changes from 1947 for the different regions of the country although the Western Provinces registered slightly greater increases than those of the east.

Tobacco and confectionery and drug wholesalers, with gains of 12 p.c. and 11 p.c., respectively, were the only trades to register greater increases over 1947 than occurred in 1947 over 1946. Increases in these trades, however, were larger in the