

data concerning the production of the farms, forests, mines and quarries. Banking is covered by the Comptroller of the Currency,¹ the railroads and express companies by the Interstate Commerce Commission, all on a yearly basis. At intervals, reports are made by the Bureau of the Census upon street railways, light and power plants, and telegraph and telephone companies. Shipping is covered both by the Census and by the United States Shipping Board. The fisheries have a bureau all their own.

“On one of the greatest of national interests, however, we have no accurate information—the distribution of commodities by wholesale and retail merchants. The census has never entered this field, and the lack is supplied by no other agency.² Yet there are more people employed in trade, according to the Census of Occupations, than in transportation, or in all the professions put together. The public, moreover, has been much exercised of late over the costs which it pays for distributing goods, and over changes in merchandising methods and agencies. Is it not high time that the fundamental facts about mercantile enterprises be ascertained?”

A Preliminary Survey of Our Present Sources of Distribution Statistics

Inquiries into our present sources of Distribution Statistics have been undertaken in several different directions, and while the following pages suggest wide opportunities for further analysis and bring the committee to the conclusion of suggesting a more comprehensive analysis, they are included in this report primarily because of their informative value, and not from any final conclusions which may be drawn from them in detail.

So broad is the work of the Committee that it feels that only a preliminary survey has been made.

Insofar as possible the material has been assembled in this report to show

¹ The Statistical Division of the Federal Reserve Board is also to be considered.

² It is safe to add that much soap-box oratory and a considerable false opinion regarding costs of distribution would be prevented by such statistical knowledge as this report projects.