

DIVISION OF SIMPLIFIED PRACTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Washington

MONTHLY NEWS BULLETIN

November 15, 1925.

No. 8.

"MORE EASTER BONNETS"

Not long ago, Secretary Hoover, discussing the elimination of industrial waste in its relation to labor, said: "What we are discussing are our economic wastes. They contain the paradox that if we save them collectively we shall have more goods and services to expend individually. We do not by this process propose to abolish Easter Bonnets; we propose more bonnets for the same money and effort."

In some rare instances, this view seems to be misunderstood. The result is that protests are made that the simplification of variety would lead to standards--as one editor puts it "to have the retailer sell but one type of biscuit, one shape of shoe, one type of hat, one cut of coat" and so on. And this particular editor declared "there is joy in variety, in \* \* the endless variation of passing ideas and objects".

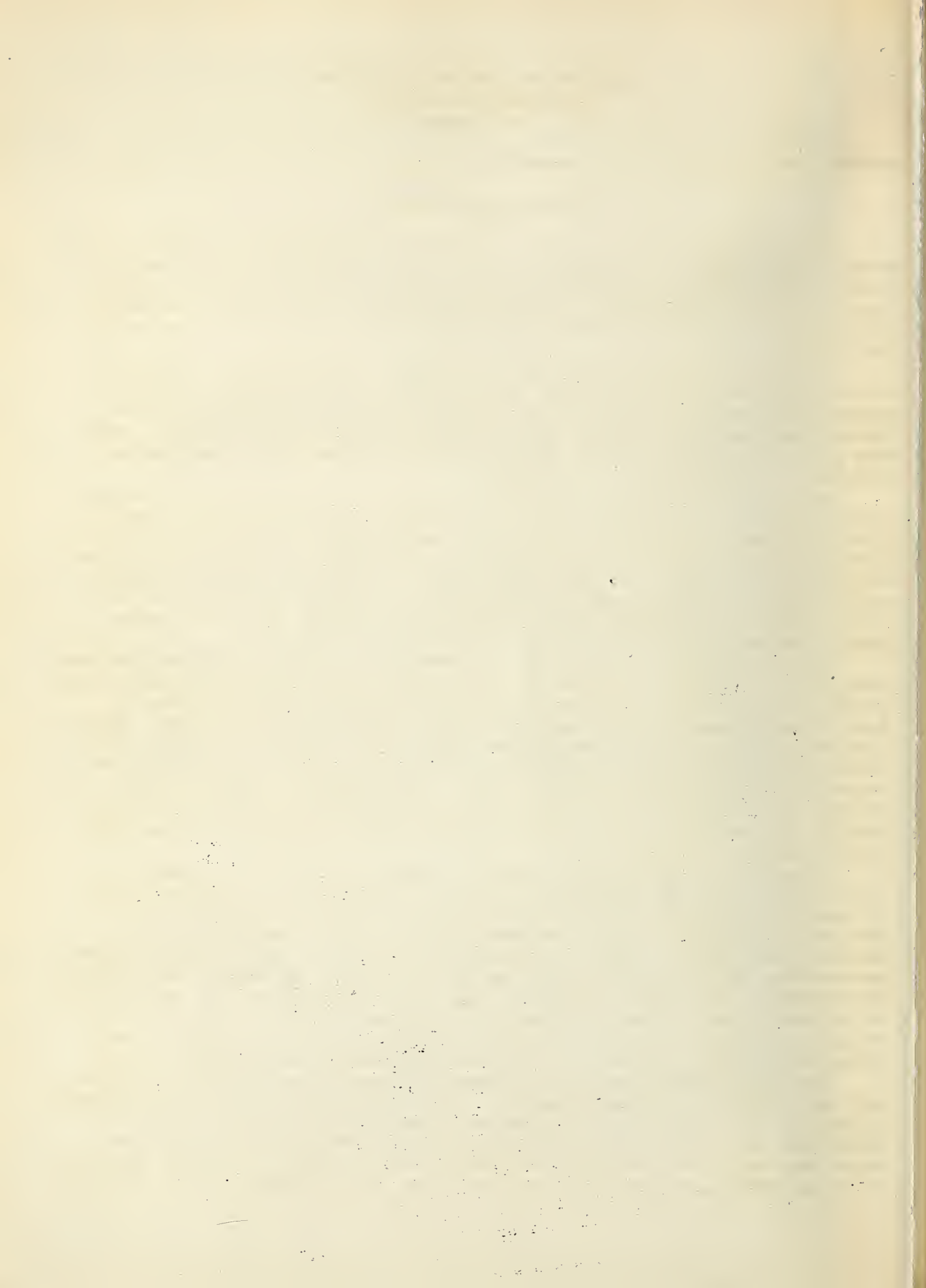
Anything can be carried to excess, and variety carried to this extent lays a heavy hand on our capacity to provide the means for enjoyment in the form the editor describes. It is this condition of wasteful variety--the commodities which vary so slightly that the consumer is bewildered, that gather dust on the shelves of the merchant, and that tie up funds which might be better spent on goods which can be kept moving and bringing in a return of profit--which the American Engineering Council says, is adding 25 to 30 per cent to the costs paid by the consumer.

What this particular editor did not understand was that Simplified Practice does not set standards. It takes account of the extent of variety produced, and of the demand for the various items in that variety. It then eliminates the drag of the slow-moving, the "dead wood", the obsolete, and concentrates attention--both production and sales--on the "live goods" with the result that the stocks of the manufacturer and distributor are kept fresher, represent better values; and that the investments are lower. The workman is substantially affected by any such action. It means a more constant operation of plant, increasing his earnings. It does away with seasonal occupation, and allows him greater spending capacity.

And another thing which this editor's criticism lost sight of was that Simplified Practice safeguards the progress of invention, the changing trend of demand, the individualism, by providing for periodical reconsideration and revision of Simplified Practice Recommendations. In the mean time, the man who wants the "special" type of article can get it. But he must pay the added cost of that special. He must not expect the maker to add part of the cost to the expense of the staple commodities which are in constant demand. And if, in the interim between adoption of Simplified Practice Recommendations, and their revision, the man wanting the "special" can build up a demand making it work while, he can still present its claims for inclusion at the revision meeting.

Hundreds of manufacturers, distributors, consumers, and others have taken part in Simplified Practice procedure. Their experiences and the benefits they gained are responsible for the tremendous growth of the movement, for, be it remembered, the Division of Simplified Practice cannot drag any industry or group into Simplified Practice, willy nilly. And as "the proof of the pudding is in the eating", we recommend that the editor ASK SOME FIRM THAT HAS TRIED IT.

\* \* \* \* \*



By unanimous vote, the advisory committee of the National Industrial Council, comprising the officers of 38 state manufacturers' associations, passed a strong resolution pledging the support of the council to the elimination of waste program. The meeting was held in St. Louis, October 26th.

- - - - -

The City Club of Portland, Ore., recognizes that simplification has possible benefits for the community at large. It has asked for Simplified Practice publications and has indicated that its membership plans to get full information on the subject. Other organizations can secure similar material by writing to the Division.

- - - - -

By cutting our 4,070 possible combinations of sizes, finishes or grades of shovels, spades and scoops, the makers, distributors and users of shovels, meeting at Atlantic City October 19, placed themselves on record in favor of eliminating waste. These 4,070 sizes furnished but 7-1/2% of the volume of business.

- - - - -

The Electric Power Club has requested the Division of Simplified Practice to call a general conference to consider their recommendations covering the dimensions of Commutator Brushes and Brush Shunts.

- - - - -

Simplified practice recommendations for the reduction of variety and sizes of milling cutters, and for eliminating 459,000 sizes of grinding wheels, have been accepted by the National Machine Tool Builders' Association. This action will permit the standing committees of these two groups to go ahead with plans for further reductions, as the cooperation of the machine tool builders will allow standard sizes for arbor holes and other items with which the tool builder is concerned.

- - - - -

The hard wood industry has decided to throw its influence in the direction of lumber standardization in its field, the Division was informed late last month. This places the lumber industry as a whole in the unique position of being the only basic industry in the country if not in the world, which is whole-heartedly in favor of standards.

- - - - -

A reduction from 38 to 18 sizes and weights for lead arsenate, calcium arsenate, Paris green and Bordeaux mixture was adopted at a general conference of makers, distributors and users of agricultural insecticides and fungicides. The meeting was held October 29.

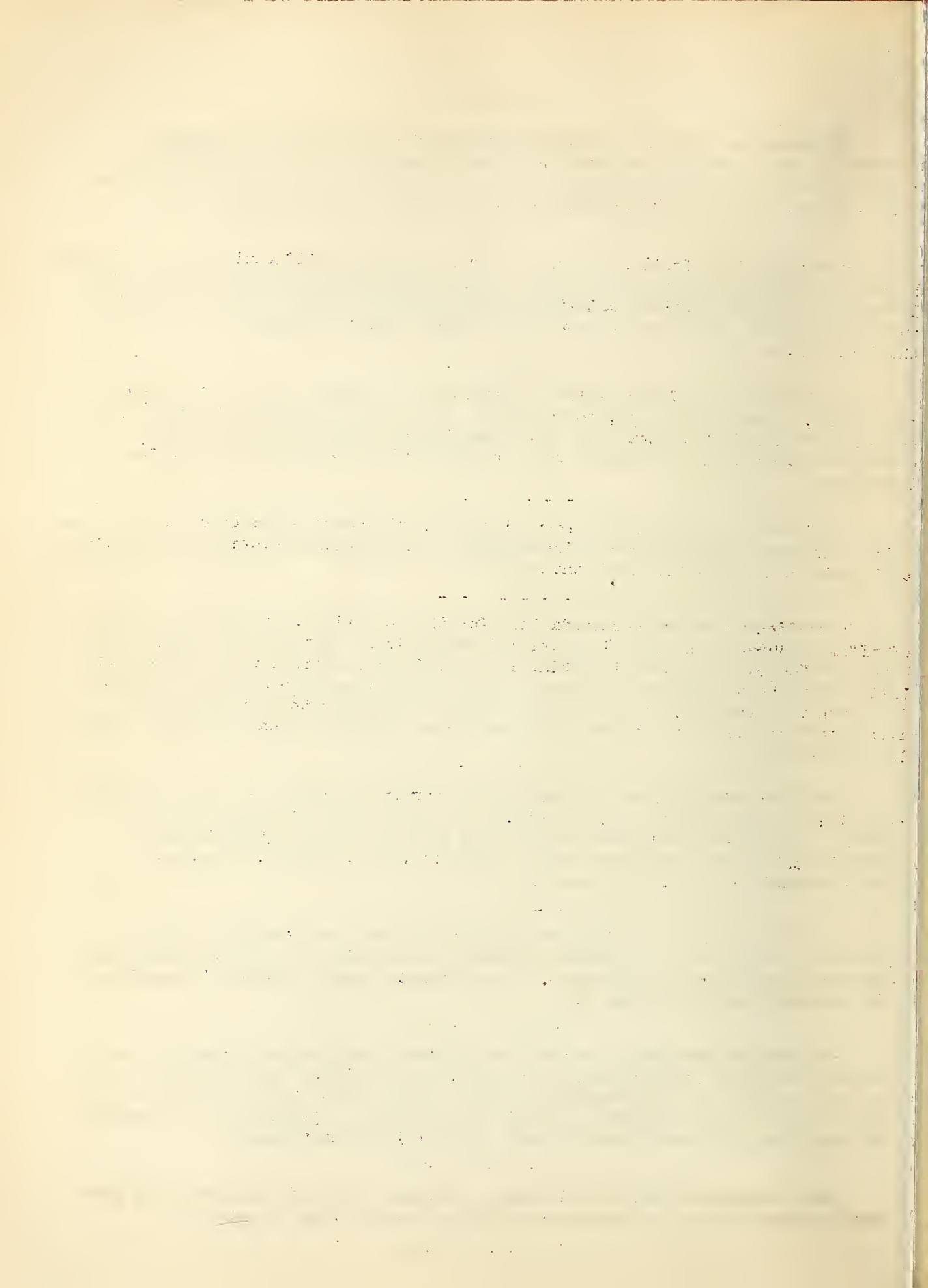
- - - - -

Invitations have been sent out for a general conference to consider proposals that glass sidewalk and roof lights be simplified. The conference will be held November 18. The tentative program would reduce styles from 80 to 3; sizes from 120 to 6 and shapes from 10 to 2, yet the simplification committee believes that this small number would satisfy 80% of the demand.

- - - - -

The recommended Simplified invoice, purchase order and inquiry forms have been accepted by 41 associations and 211 individual firms to date.

- - - - -



"Neither the business man nor the farmer is making full use of the services which the various state and Federal bureaus, maintained at public expense, are organized and equipped to render", says the monthly letter of the American-Exchange-Pacific National Bank of New York City to its clients. "In some cases the facilities of bureaus are being taxed to the limit of their capacities, but the services are being performed for the few who know their value instead of the many who are not even aware that the bureaus exist." Simplified Practice is such an activity; and the question arises; are your clients using our services?

- - - - -

Drastic changes have been made in the grading rules for vitreous sanitary ware as a result of a conference of manufacturers with Bureau of Standards officials last week. Adopting definitions as to defects, which will permit a grading as to "regular selection" and "culls"; the conferees set at work for simplification of "roughing-in" dimensions, and this will come up for a Simplified Practice conference later. The result will be the protection of the buyer as to quality, and considerable savings of time and confusion for the installing plumber and the architect.

- - - - -

Eighty or more motor truck manufacturers, parts manufacturers, and others comprising Motor Truck Industries, Inc., meeting last week in the Department of Commerce, made decided progress toward simplification of truck sizes, and standardization of non-competitive parts, which will permit greater interchangeability. Representatives of large truck using branches of the government hailed this progress as being of the utmost importance, not only to the government, but to all interests engaged in transportation by truck.

- - - - -

Manufacturers of portable forges used in steel construction, garages, factories and a number of other places, have begun a survey which will determine later recommendations as to reduction of variety.

- - - - -

Acceptances have been received in sufficient volume from the makers, distributors and users of grocery paper bags to warrant the issuance of a Simplified Practice Recommendation, effective October 15. The reduction was from 6280 to 4700, and it was estimated that the economies in paper stock alone will be \$600,000 a year.

- - - - -

Proposals for the adoption of simplified sizes of bank checks will be considered at a general conference which is to be held November 23.

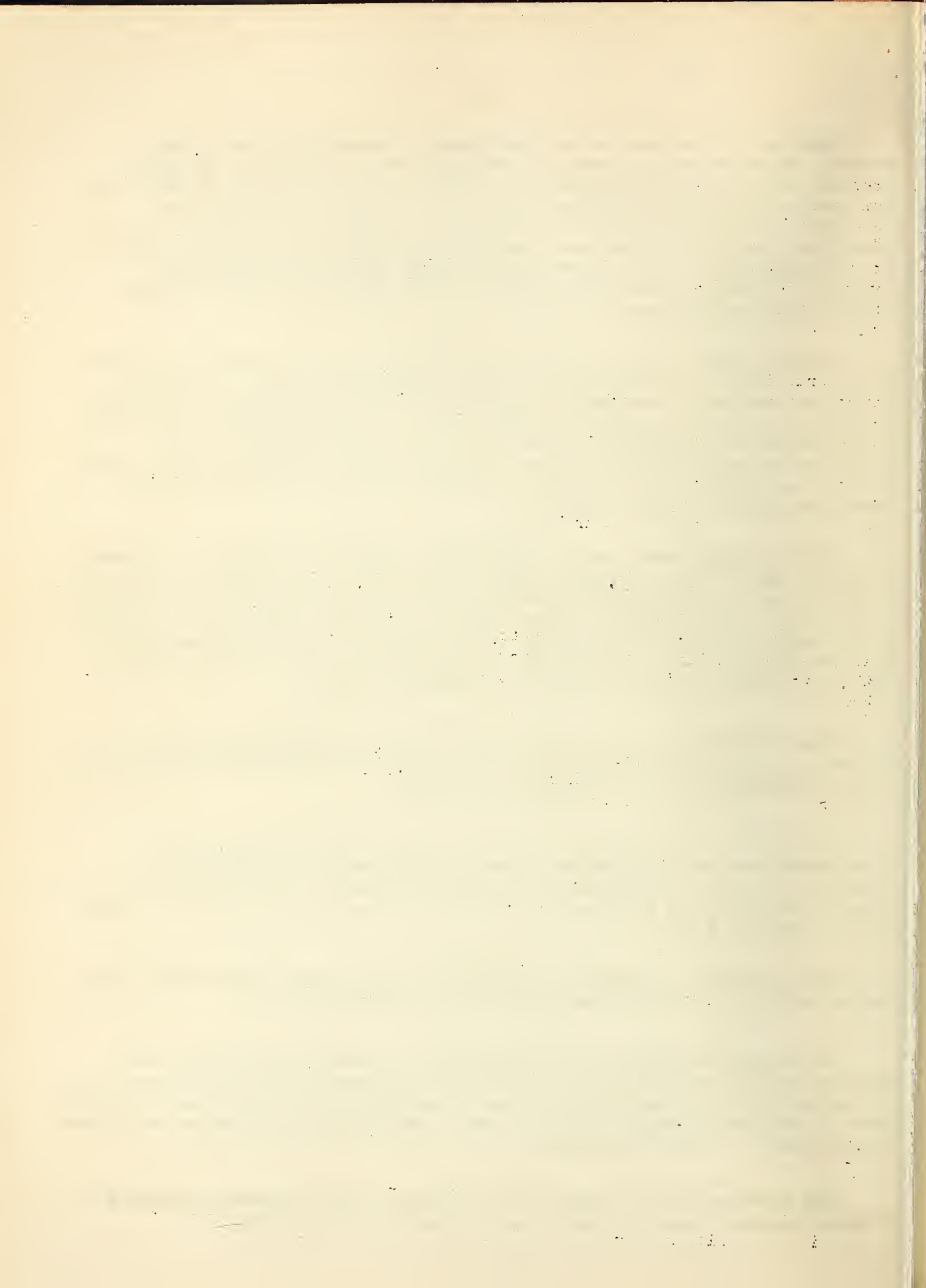
- - - - -

The standing committee on simplification of boxed elastic webbing has notified the Division that because of lack of interest on the part of makers, and distributors the Simplified Practice Recommendation will not become effective. This is the first instance wherein a group after adopting such action has failed to stand back of its recommendations.

- - - - -

This month we offer a supplement, indicative of the tremendous interest in foreign countries regarding Simplified Practice and its results.

- - - - -



BRITISH INTEREST IN SIMPLIFIED PRACTICE

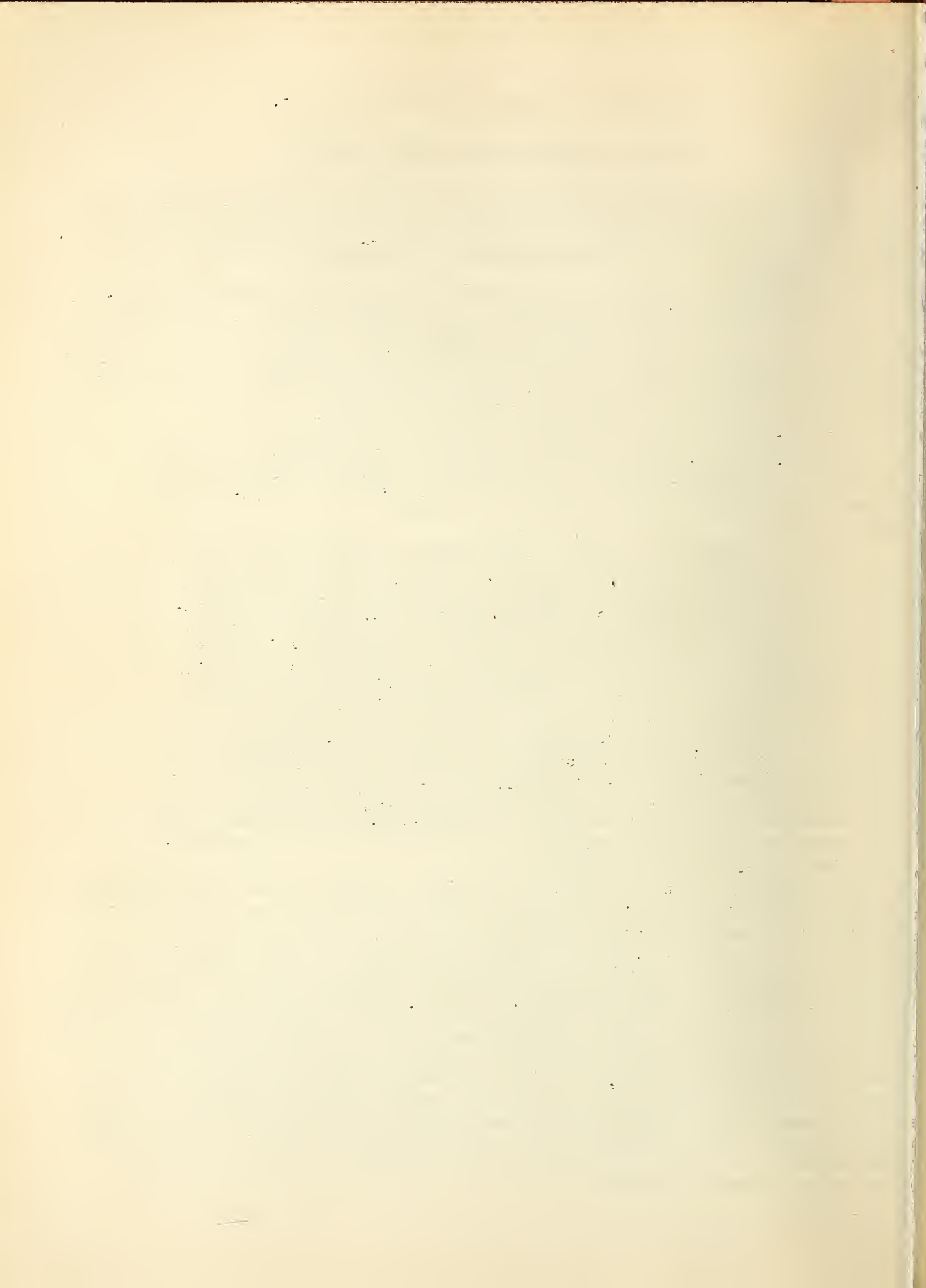
The London Times Trade and Engineering Supplement, issues of August 8, 22, and 29, 1925, and British and American editions of "System" for October devote much space to a series of articles by Cecil Chisholm, an industrial consultant, contrasting American and German Simplification progress with the apathy in British Industry.

Referring to a series of articles which he wrote for the "Times" in 1922, on the simplification policy in America, Mr. Chisholm recalls a question he raised then as to whether British manufacturers could afford to ignore a policy so far-reaching. He says: "Events have proved, as the success of American Standard goods and specifications in all parts of the world shows, that they could not." Mr. Chisholm notes that only one British firm sent representatives to the United States to investigate the new policy thoroughly.

"During the past year, however, the position has changed," he says, "There are signs of awakening at last. The president of the Federation of British Industries, a manufacturer who has studied the results of simplification in the United States at first hand, has made a statement \*\* which merits careful study:

"I am convinced", he says, "of the immense possibilities latent in the simplification of business practices. For goods at lower prices there is an immense demand, not only in this country but throughout the world. Is it realized what the wastage in industry in this country adds to the cost of the consumer? America and Germany - and a very few progressive undertakings in Great Britain - are defeating high production, transport, distribution and selling costs by the scientific application of a policy of reduction in the multiplicity of sizes, qualities, patterns and specifications - that policy is now known as simplification. The policy involves no encroachment on the wage bill in industry; no interference with the prerogative of the individual manufacturer - and carries with it the essentials of a reduction in price to the consumer. It is time that every British business leader and every trade association here studied the possibilities of this necessary factor in industry and commerce.'"

Mr. Chisholm cites as recent developments in Great Britain a simplification of paper sizes by printers and stationers; and a 50% reduction in the catalog of one of the largest British distributing houses. Similarly, he says, one leading house in half a dozen other great industries has taken similar steps. "It is estimated" he says, "that simplification would save the hardware trade about £ 1,000,000." The 50% catalog reduction referred to by Mr. Chisholm was in the hardware field and involved 50,000 items. No serious loss of orders has resulted, he reports. Among the items was a class of manhole covers, 52 kinds and as many as nine weights, which were reduced to 11. One firm of boot manufacturers which had been offering the home trade something like 500 different samples from which to select, each made in anything up to 45 different sizes and fittings, cut to 12 styles, each made in about 40 different sizes. Competition necessitated a modification of this firm's program and today there are 220 styles in 35 sizes and fittings offered, though one design may cover a half dozen different leathers.





Mr. Chisholm comments: "In America the boot and shoe industry has managed to secure the best of both worlds by limiting the caprices of fashion through united efforts to keep style in one channel and by reducing the number of violent changes.

Again, in the electrical machinery fields, Mr. Chisholm finds one firm of motor manufacturers have cut their line and the director says "Our standard lines suit 75% of the industrial users" and declares that he would not consent to the addition of any items to this line. This manufacturer has held firmly for a policy of production on a manufacturing basis rather than a specialty basis, and he asserts that under a specialty basis prices would have to be 25% higher.

In the hardware field, Mr. Chisholm points to a listing of 1,000 items in certain types of builders' hardware as against 20,000 of pre-war days. But he asks "Is there any reason for 40 different types of house gutter? Are 1-1/2 inch nails of 13, 14, 15 and 16 gauge really required when the Americans are making only the 13 gauge? Are more than a fraction of our 65 sizes of wire nail made from 1 inch to 6 inches in length necessary?"

In the field of packing materials, Mr. Chisholm reports that one carton manufacturer reduced from 12 sizes and qualities to 2, and yet satisfied 95% of his trade, while in another branch the firm reduced sizes from 50 to 3, adopting one color, fastening and shape as its standard. Only one dissatisfied buyer was reported by this firm.

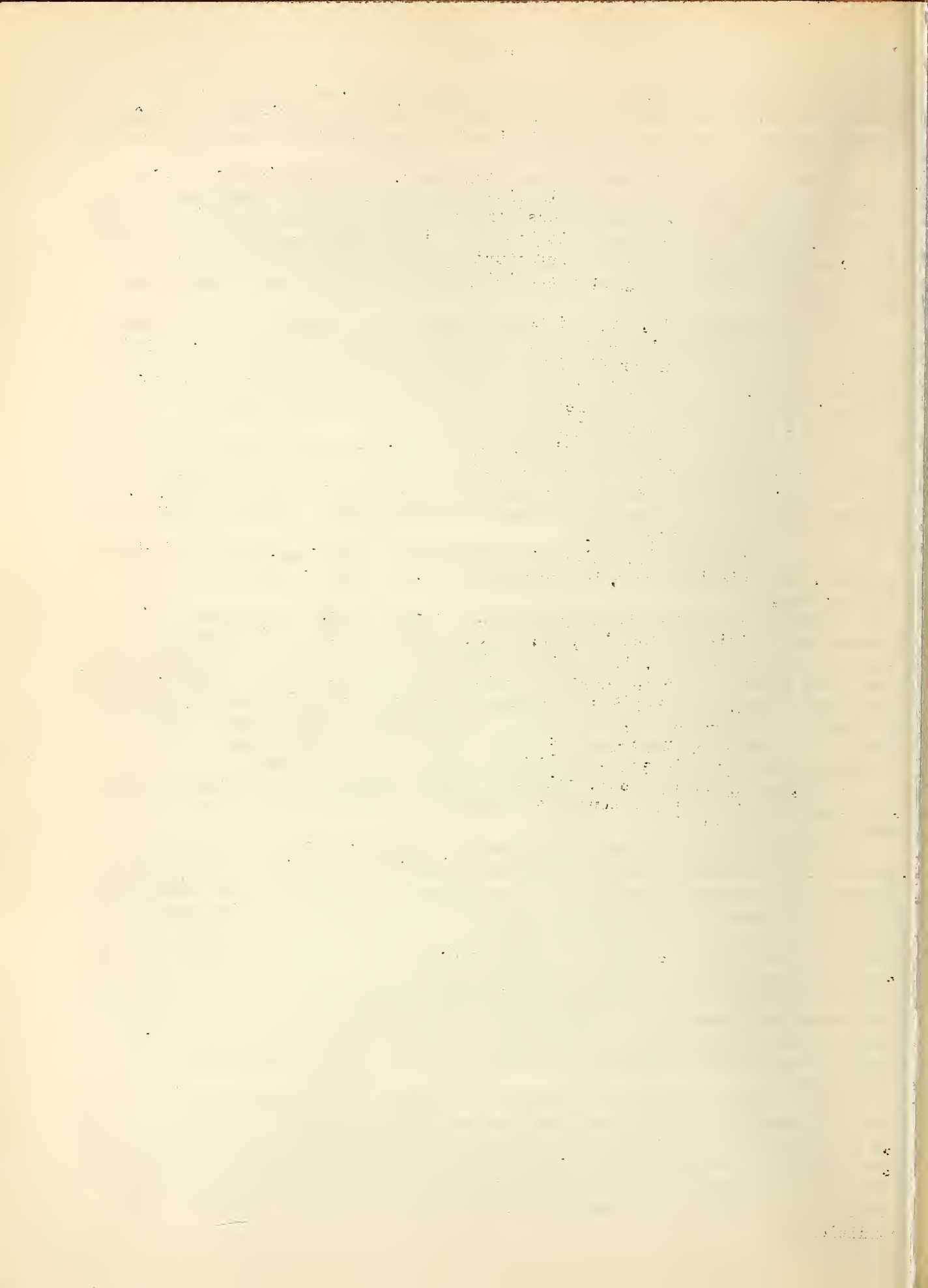
Another individual firm which simplified was a stationer, which formerly handled 1,000 varieties and which reduced to 41, and yet lost but 1% of its old customers.

Reverting to the statement by Col. F. Vernon Willey, president of the Federation of British Industries, Mr. Chisholm says: "It will be noticed that the president of the F. B. I. mentioned the wage bill. Now the wage bill is an even more serious factor in American business than in our own. Virtually speaking, simplification is America's answer to increased costs in every department of production and distribution. It is this pressure for higher wages which has forced the American manufacturer to use every device that science, invention and management can devise in order to lower costs to the consumer.

"Without simplification", said one maker the other day who owns plants in both countries, "we simply couldn't undertake building or developments of any sort in the States."

Mr. Chisholm quotes from Department of Commerce reports to show the cooperation of industry with the Division of Simplified Practice, the American Engineering Standards Committee and the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, and he continues: "The saving in national effort through such cooperation, as demonstrated by many well known examples of simplification and standardization, runs into millions of dollars. \*\*In Germany, during recent visits, the writer found increasing signs of the effective activities of the Normenausschuss der Deutscher Industrie in controlling standards, particularly in the engineering and electrical industries. The Brazilian Government has now a standardization Bureau, working in harmony with various American simplification agencies. German standards are frequently accepted in some of the other south American Republics.

"In a word, the lists are set for the "battle of the standards" in engineering products. At the same time home and foreign markets are alike succumbing to the simplified Practice which produces a highly finished article at a price not too far above that of less high quality goods. \*\* In both these directions America has secured herself a long start during the past ten years. Germany makes a good second. The question is, what are we doing to meet the same conditions?"



Quoting Mr. Hoover's summary of the benefits from simplification, Mr. Chisholm criticizes the government for its apathy. He says: "Before taking up in detail \*\* one fact must be emphasized. The slow progress of simplification in this country is largely due to the apathy hitherto displayed by the Government on this subject. This rapid spread of this more scientific method of business practice in the States owes very much to the fostering hand of Mr. Hoover and to the Department of Commerce.

"We require urgently some organization to do in what may be called the semi-technical or non-technical trades what the British Engineering Standards Association does so efficiently in the engineering trades, i.e., the work of coordination. As the secretary of the B.E.S.A. once said, the problem of simplification may be divided into two parts, 85% depending on the human element, and only 15% on the technical. The non-technical trades have heard little about simplification. Even if one of these should desire to secure the benefits of simplified practice, there is no one to whom its leaders can go for assistance in drawing up even a tentative programme."

Again, in "System" quoting Mr. C. le Maistre, Secretary of the B.E.S.A., Mr. Chisholm says, "We have now passed the stage of mere academic interest in standardization. I am inclined to think that the term standardization is going out of date, because in recent days what we are after is simplification."

As to standardization, Mr. Chisholm remarks in the "Times" that "Great work is being done quietly in the coordination of the general stores of the Government. For the first time industry is able to take a hand in the Drafting of Government specifications. At the present moment the Association has 420 committees at work. Over 2,000 engineers and business men are giving their time and experience \*\* without a fee."

Mr. Chisholm then goes into considerable detail as to the procedure of the B. E. S. A., and as an evidence of the time necessary for such work, he says "For instance, the B. E. S. A. is just completing the simplification of steel telegraph poles. The work has taken five years to complete, and even now certain last-minute proposals are awaiting discussion. (Mr. Hoover's division reduced the number of varieties of American Paving stones from 66 to 7. incidentally saving the makers, distributors and users \$200,000 within six months ! ) The thoroughness of the work done by the B. E. S. A. secures simplifications more perfect in detail than those achieved even in the United States and Germany. \*\* But the simplification \*\* also secures that each of these four types \*\* are not only standardized for Great Britain; They have been provisionally accepted by all the Colonies and Dominions. In other words, when finally published they will virtually have become 'Empire Standards' \*\* a selling point of no small value to the British maker and the distributor."

The most important work undertaken by the B. E. S. A., Mr. Chisholm believes, is in the field of building materials, taken up at the request of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, supported by the Ministry of Health, and along such lines as asphalt for roofing, asbestos, cement sheeting, expanded metal, steel arch girders, wire ropes and other materials.

Discussing "The American Plan," Mr. Chisholm describes the procedure at each of the Simplified Practice steps, and he concludes:

"Here a very elaborate piece of national machinery is involved. Some similar arrangements must be eventually made in this country, if competitive conditions continue."

