

price satisfactory to producers—namely, 62s. 2d. per unit f.o.b. Under the arrangement, over 30 tons of this very essential war commodity have already been exported to the United Kingdom, and, in addition, about 6 tons have been released for export to France. Investigations are being made into the position of the Glenorchy scheelite industry with a view to obtaining a maximum production as soon after the winter as possible. In addition, scheelite deposits in the Marlborough district are being prospected, and results so far obtained in this locality are very promising.

### OIL-FUEL CONTROL.

Statutory Powers : Oil Fuel Emergency Regulations 1939.

Oil-fuel Controller : G. L. Laurenson (Commissioner of Transport).

Controller's Office : Care of Department of Industries and Commerce, Wellington.

Petrol is a commodity vital to national production, to defence, and to the economic and social life of the community. New Zealand has practically no internal petrol resources, and all supplies have to be brought considerable distances, principally from the United States and the Dutch East Indies. For some years a committee, associated with the Department of Industries and Commerce under the Organization for National Security, has been engaged in drawing up machinery and plans relating to the petrol problem. On 7th August, 1939, regulations which had been drafted for some considerable time were reviewed, and instructions were issued to all Chief Postmasters to enable the scheme finally decided upon to be put into immediate operation should the emergency arise.

Owing to the general uncertainty in the international outlook, when war was declared it was decided to ration petrol forthwith in order to ensure that the reserve stocks were adequate to meet every possible eventuality. On 4th September, 1939, the Oil Fuel Emergency Regulations were gazetted which provided machinery for a rationing system. As a first step sales of petrol were authorized for all productive and business purposes and for public transport services.

It was realized that many thousands depended on the private-car traffic for their livelihood, and as soon as it became clear that the international situation would not directly affect the Dominion's supplies a limited ration by way of coupon was made available to private cars.

As a result of the restrictions, adequate reserves were accumulated by the end of November, and by *Gazette* of 30th November, 1939, the restrictions were lifted.

During December representations were made by the British Government that petrol rationing be reimposed to free tankers for war purposes and to conserve dollar funds. As considerable numbers of people were travelling, it was considered undesirable to reimpose the restrictions during January, but on 1st February, 1940, by *Gazette* notice the restrictions were reimposed.

As a result of the experience gained during the previous period of rationing it was possible to arrive at certain conclusions regarding the petrol requirements of different classes of users. Standards were laid down, but in order that hardship should not be caused special Advisory Committees were set up throughout the country to handle appeals for amounts in excess of those standards. These Committees consist of representatives of primary producers, licensed transport operators, private motorists, local bodies, the Railways Department, and the Transport Department.

Every endeavour has been made to bring into effect voluntary zoning schemes for the distribution of essential commodities, the purpose of these schemes being to conserve petrol. A special case is the distribution of milk in the Christchurch Metropolitan Area. A careful investigation revealed the necessity for setting up some authority to co-ordinate the delivery of milk in Christchurch and to avoid wasteful overlapping. On 1st May, 1940, regulations were gazetted setting up a Milk Board with powers to zone milk deliveries with the object of saving petrol. The Board was established for the duration of the war and twelve months afterwards.

The general policy of the Government has aimed at securing a reduction in the use of petrol, while at the same time not impeding the acceleration of national production. Serious dislocation of industry and employment has had to be avoided as much as possible.

The present rationing system is based on the following principles :

- (1) For public vehicles, supplies are allocated that are adequate to maintain services, while at the same time duplication and overlapping is eliminated.
- (2) For business vehicles, sufficient petrol is allowed to enable the business to be carried on efficiently.
- (3) For private and domestic purposes, adequate petrol is permitted to allow approximately 220 miles running per month.

A technical committee has been set up under the Oil-fuel Controller to investigate the use of alternative fuels. The encouragement of the use of coal-gas in large quantities has not been considered advisable because of the cost of installation, the necessity for carrying a large gas envelope or bag, and the small mileage that can be covered before the bag needs refilling.

The most promising alternative to petrol is the producer-gas plant. Unfortunately, the plants in use overseas are not wholly suitable for the New Zealand fuels available in adequate supply. The Committee has carried out extensive investigations into locally-made gas-producers and into the development of a plant that will be simple of construction, easy of operation, and at the same time suitable for New Zealand fuels. A comprehensive report with plans and recommendations has recently been completed.

In view of the present international situation, it is possible to lay down only the general principles of future policy. These are as follows :—

Firstly, the maintenance of the maximum possible reserves in case of interruption of supply. Secondly, to make available adequate supplies of petrol for defence purposes and sufficient to enable essential transport services, primary production, and industry to be carried on efficiently and without interruption or hindrance.

Thirdly, to allow petrol for private and domestic purposes so long as this does not prejudice reserves, and subject to the conservation of dollar funds and the freeing of tankers for war purposes.

Fourthly, to encourage and promote the conservation of petrol by every means possible.