

ASSISTANCE TO INDUSTRY AND TRADE IN OBTAINING MATERIALS

As was anticipated, there has been, since hostilities ceased, tremendous pressure on a very wide range of commodities in all stages from the raw material to the finished article. Indeed, because of such factors as strains on transport systems, gigantic programmes for reconstruction, difficulties attendant on demobilization, and the necessity to share with the European peoples the many things essential to existence, a number of commodities in the classes both of consumption goods and producers' materials have been even more difficult for us to obtain than when the war was at its height. Certain important commodities are still the subject of controls in supplying countries, and the continuance of procurement procedures in the nature of quotas and allocations adopted during the war necessitates the Department retaining close association with overseas purchasing. Our interest and action in securing essential requirements have, however, gone beyond the making of purchases. As soon as there was indication of the limits to which the difficulties were likely to extend and when their possible effect on our industry could be gauged, the best course by which manufacturers and others in this country could be assisted was sought and adopted. That was to reinforce the office of the High Commissioner in London by sending there for a period a representative with up-to-date knowledge of New Zealand's urgent supply needs who could undertake negotiations at a high level with representatives both of Governments and of trade and industry. Mr. F. R. Picot, Commissioner of Supply, was chosen by the Government for the task, and for several months he has concentrated his activities on endeavouring to secure greater supplies of those factory materials which are most difficult to procure even in quantities much below our normal needs. Fortunately, he has been successful in obtaining a considerable range of goods. Among these are cotton yarns and piece-goods for both clothing and industrial use, wood-pulp, paper, white lead, leather, and a range of chemicals necessary for factory production. Iron and steel products, however, are those on which it has been necessary for him to concentrate most attention, and although the overall world supply in these commodities has deteriorated to an alarming degree, Mr. Picot has been able to arrange relatively favourable allocations for this country from the United Kingdom.

In addition to the work of the Commissioner of Supply in the United Kingdom, a great deal of work in pressing our claims for supplies has been carried out by the Department's permanent representatives overseas with the Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, South Africa, India, the United States, and the Scandinavian and other countries. In some instances, trade missions have been sponsored in the endeavour to locate supplies, while many individual trade representatives have been assisted in their missions by our overseas offices. There are many cases wherein importers have sought our assistance in pressing claims for allocations of goods, and in a number of instances the Department has been able to give assistance by suggesting sources of supply other than those usual to the trader. Assistance, too, has been given in obtaining supplies by careful examination of information on wartime surpluses of other nations and by claiming shares of goods available under reparations.

It is apparent that the efforts of the Department in this field will have to be continued for some time if no opportunity is to be missed of securing materials essential to this country as they become available. To this date we are satisfied that New Zealand has been fairly treated in allocation of materials sought by us. We are certain, too, that if the special efforts made by the Commissioner of Supply and by the Department had not been undertaken our industries would be in a less favourable position for materials than is now the case.