

Good progress has been made with the consolidation of the Shipping and Seamen Act, 1908 (with amendments to date). At the end of the year this measure was in final draft form. In addition to consolidating the present Act and amendments, it also includes the measures necessary to bring into effect the resolutions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, held in London in 1948. The provisions of this Convention apply to the ships of all signatory nations as from 1st January, 1951.

I commented last year on the substantial progress made by way of the fitting of navigational aids on our coastal vessels. It is pleasing to note that the provisions of wireless telephones has spread to still smaller vessels, in that many of our small fishing craft are so fitted and such installation, apart from its safety aspect, has been a boon to members of the crew and to the companies or owners concerned.

The presence in New Zealand waters of the survey vessel H.M.S. "Lachlan" will be pleasing to all mariners. A report on this vessel's activities is a matter for the New Zealand Naval Board, but opportunity is taken here to place on record the Department's appreciation of the co-operation shown by the Commander of the vessel, Commander Sharpey-Schafer, R.N. In addition to the charting work, the complement of the vessel has carried out much oceanographic work, and a great deal of research work for our fisheries research officers.

GOVERNMENT VESSEL "MATAI"

Since August, 1949, this vessel has been under charter to the Anchor Shipping and Foundry Co., Ltd., and has given good service on the Nelson-Wellington ferry run. The "Matai" was not required for any cable repair work during the past year.

BLUFF STEWART ISLAND FERRY SERVICE

This service has been carried out efficiently during the past year. In addition to ferry work, our vessel has serviced Puysegur Point Lighthouse, conveyed mutton-birders to Cape Islands, and carried out two trips to Milford Hostel with stores.

PROSECUTIONS

During the year there were 78 prosecutions issued by the Department. Seventy-five of these were for breaches of the Fisheries Act, and 3 for breaches of the Shipping and Seamen Act.

HARBOURS

The control of Picton and Westport Harbours is still the responsibility of the Marine Department. At Dargaville, owing to the lack of shipping, the port was closed, and although the local Borough Council desired the entry of one vessel with coal during the past year it was considered that the cost of reinstalling the buoys marking the channel was not warranted.

At Picton the servicing of the Brothers Lighthouse and maintenance of automatic lights in the Sounds area has been carried out by the Harbourmaster and his staff. During the year ended 31st March, 1950, 301 coastal vessels and 4 intercolonial vessels visited the port.

ADMIRALTY CHARTS

The Department acts as agent for the sale of Admiralty charts and publications and maintains a stock at Head Office and at principal mercantile marine offices in the Dominion. The stock includes all charts of the Dominion, and many other parts of the world to which ships trading to or visiting the Dominion may be diverted.

A very useful service—that of advising masters of vessels regarding the folios of charts required for a particular voyage—has been made use of most frequently, and more particularly by masters of tankers voyaging to Borneo and the Shatt al Arab ports.