Selling-rates.

The rates for the supply of electric power have not been increased during the past year in spite of the increasing cost of labour, amounting to 10 to 20 per cent. over pre-war rates, and of materials, amounting to 50 to 300 per cent. over pre-war rates. Of the alternative sources of light, heat, and power, kerosene has increased by 112 per cent. (*i.e.*, from 8s. to 17s.), gas by 16 per cent. (from 5s. 9d. to 6s. 8d. per thousand feet), and coal by 72 per cent. (from 35s. to 60s. per ton). But in order to ensure the most economical use of the limited power available, and to enable the benefits of electric supply to be extended as far as the generating plant in service will permit, it is essential that every unit should be utilized with increasing care. The most effective way to ensure this would be to raise the selling-rates irrespective of the cost of production. But, apart from this, the restriction in the output due to the difficulty in obtaining additional plant during the war has prevented the increased cost of supply being counterbalanced by increased output, and in view of the above figures showing that the plant is not yet paying its way there is every reason for the consideration of an increase in the selling-rates.

Staff.

In common with all other industries, work has been carried out under considerable difficulties owing to enlistments and shortage of staff due to the war conditions. Out of an average staff of seventy-seven there have been since the war thirty-seven enlistments. Three of these have made the supreme sacrifice—J. Tennant, E. Aitken, and W. W. Summers.

Owing to the shortage of skilled men to replace those called in the ballot it has been found necessary to appeal for twelve. Of these, one has been sent into camp, three have been classed C2 on the medical examination, three have not yet been called, and five have been adjourned. The operation and maintenance of a plant of this description with safety both to life and to continuity of supply requires very special training. There are only three other similar plants in operation in New Zealand—viz., Waipori Falls (Dunedin), Horahora Rapids (Waihi Gold-mining Company), and Wairua Falls (Whangarei)—all of which are working with heavily depleted staffs, and the opportunities for getting trained men are thus very limited. During the three years of operation, out of a staff of eight power-house shift engineers, five have enlisted, and eight have left to take up senior positions in other power plants, thus involving an unusual number of changes and the training of new men in each case, and it would have been quite impossible to carry on without the nucleus of trained men appealed for.

At the same time every effort is being made to take on and train suitable returned soldiers —both disabled and otherwise. Eight returned soldiers are now employed, of whom two are being especially trained under the provisions of the Discharged Soldiers' Assistance Department. For future employment in the maintenance of small electric-supply reticulations and large factory motor installations, a large number will be required later on in positions which can be filled by partially disabled men, and the training of such men is being kept in view in filling casual vacancies as far as possible by returned partially disabled soldiers.

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