

to New Zealand, rather than to shut out such cargo as may have been on offer, merely because other more urgently needed cargo could not be procured. In this connection, however, I desire to state that the Permits Branch of the Department has, in co-operation with the High Commissioner's Office, made every reasonable representation possible to the authorities in the hope of securing the release and shipment of essential goods required in the Dominion, and which have been prohibited from export on account of the war.

BUYING OPERATIONS

1. The purchases made by the Department during the last fifteen months have again demonstrated the advantages to be derived from a centralization of this important work. I have pleasure in recording the fact that my honorary advisers and expert executives have, during their third year of office, largely contributed to the successful working of this branch of the Department. Since my last report the sum of £1,096,338 has been expended as follows :—

						£
(a.) Stores	..	..	..	..	..	469,348
(b.) Supplies	..	..	..	..	..	615,906
(c.) Drugs	..	..	..	..	..	11,084
Total	..	..	..	..	..	£1,096,338

while the business has been spread throughout the Dominion as under :—

						£
(a.) Auckland	..	..	..	..	..	155,201
(b.) Wellington	..	..	..	..	..	578,637
(c.) Canterbury	..	..	..	..	..	169,661
(d.) Otago	..	..	..	..	..	192,839
						£1,096,338

This expenditure combined with that previously reported brings the total buying conducted since the inception of the Department up to £4,350,000, representing 89,700,000 articles which have been handed over to my colleague the Hon. Minister of Defence and his officers for military use.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT FOR INFANTRY.

2. The position in regard to the variety and nature of this supply has not altered since my last report. The following table, however, will no doubt be of interest :

Article.	Number of Each issued per Man.	Cost of Issue per Man.			
		1915.	1916.	1917.	1918.
<i>Personal Equipment.</i>					
Tunics	2	£ s. d. 1 18 6	£ s. d. 2 9 9	£ s. d. 2 14 4	£ s. d. 3 0 1
Trousers	2	1 3 4	1 7 5½	1 13 6	1 13 7
Putties	1	0 4 0	0 5 4½	0 6 5	0 6 0
Greatcoat	1	1 16 0	2 2 5¾	2 8 0	2 12 5
Hat and pugaree	1	0 6 2	0 5 6½	0 9 8½	0 9 8½
Cap	1	0 4 2	0 4 3	..	0 5 10
Kit-bag	1	0 3 3	0 3 3¼	0 4 0½	0 4 0½
Blankets	3	1 4 0	1 6 0	2 5 0	2 5 0
Braces	1	0 1 3	0 1 0½	0 1 1½	0 1 3
Boots	2	1 16 10	1 18 0	1 19 0	2 2 10
Drawers	2	0 8 6	0 10 0	0 12 0	0 12 0
Shirts, working	2	0 12 6	0 14 0	0 16 0	0 16 0
Shirts, under	2	0 8 6	0 9 10	0 12 0	0 12 0
Shoes	1	0 6 9	0 6 6	0 10 5	0 11 1½
Suits, denim	1	0 8 6	0 8 8	0 8 9	0 11 8
Socks	3	0 3 0	0 4 0¾	0 4 4½	0 4 4½
Cholera belts	1	0 1 2	0 2 1	0 2 3	0 2 3
Holdall	1	0 0 4½	0 0 5¾	0 0 3	0 0 3
Sea-kit	1	0 0 4	0 0 2¾	0 0 6½	0 0 6½
Jersey	1	0 5 6	0 5 6	0 7 0	0 7 0
Housewife	1	0 0 10	0 0 6	0 1 0	0 1 2
Knife, fork, and spoon	1	0 1 6	0 1 6	0 1 6½	0 1 6½
Plate and mug	1	0 0 4½	0 0 4½	0 0 5½	0 0 5½
Towels	2	0 1 6	0 1 5	0 2 2	0 2 2
Sheet, waterproof	1	0 8 9	0 8 5	0 9 6	0 9 6
		12 5 7*	13 16 8½*	16 9 4½*	17 12 9½*

* The percentages of increases are—1916, 12·67 per cent. over 1915; 1917, 19 per cent. over 1916 and 34 per cent. over 1915; 1918, 7·1 per cent. over 1917, 27·5 per cent. over 1916, and 43·6 per cent. over 1915 prices. Having regard to the general upward tendency of all prices, improved quality, larger sizes in some articles, and the increased difficulties met by manufacturers in obtaining and retaining suitable assistance, I regard the increases as reasonable and satisfactory in view of further advances which have taken place since our contracts were let. However, it must be borne in mind that most extensive quantities of equipment were purchased during 1916, so that the requirements for 1917, and to a certain degree 1918, were correspondingly reduced; it is therefore clear that the decision come to in 1915 by myself and advisers to arrange for extensive deliveries throughout 1916 has resulted in a substantial economy to the country.