

Defence.—A great proportion of the Department's warlike stores are procured here, some by requisition from the War Office, others—i.e., equipment, &c.—from the trade. The War Office system of issue, and the fact that issue is made from so many different departments of stores, entails a vast amount of work, in which the greatest care and accuracy are required to ensure that all the items demanded are supplied.

Post and Telegraph.—The indents dealt with for this Department are mainly telegraph instruments, telephone material, galvanized wire, copper wire, insulator cups and spindles, tools, &c., and a variety of office requisites such as envelopes, paper, pencils, rulers, sponge-bowls, dampers, erasers, rubber bands.

Printing and Stationery.—Envelopes, paper of all kinds, pasteboards, parchments, &c. These supplies were formerly obtained under the three-years contract, but since the outbreak of war it has become necessary to treat practically each order as a fresh inquiry, and to obtain quotations in pretty much the same way as indents for other Departments are dealt with. This has, of course, enormously increased the work in handling these orders. I may remark that the services of Mr. Sidney Sandle are utilized as adviser in regard to quality and price. A careful check has, however, to be kept to see that no items are overlooked and that formal contracts are made with the various mills with whom Mr. Sandle may have conditionally placed orders.

Agriculture, Education, Tourist, Marine, Customs, Public Health, Mines, Dominion Laboratory, Stamps, Lands and Survey, Justice, Police.—Generally speaking, orders dealt with for any one of these Departments are not numerous, but the aggregate probably equals, if not exceeds, the total for one of the Departments referred to above. The requirements are of the most miscellaneous character, among the principal of which are cattle for the Live-stock Division, and various seeds, &c., for the Experimental Farm Division, of the Agricultural Department; school appliances for the Education Department; equipment for the Rotorua Sanatorium, and alpine stores for the Tourist Department; engineering stores for the Marine Department; rails, wire ropes, &c., for the Mines Department; chemical apparatus for the Dominion Laboratory; stamp dies, plates, postage-stamp and other papers for the Stamps Department; tree-seeds for the Lands Department; drawing-instruments for the Survey Department; and clothing, braids, buttons, &c., for the Police and Justice Departments.

PRIORITY CLASSIFICATION.

Before any work of an engineering nature, where metal is employed, can be proceeded with it is now necessary to obtain from the Ministry of Munitions priority classification. This entails much extra correspondence, as, apart from the original application, reminders are in a lot of cases required, and there have been instances where a "refresher" has elicited the fact that the application "cannot be traced," and has therefore to be repeated. In cases where a low classification is given, and which we do not consider fairly representative of the urgency and importance of the work, we have to appeal and endeavour to get the classification raised. Sometimes we are successful to the extent perhaps of securing higher classification for a portion of the job. It is, however, a matter of extreme difficulty to convince the Ministry of Munitions that anything not directly intended for the war should receive consideration.

GENERAL.

Amongst what may be termed the special matters dealt with I will instance two only—the Lake Coleridge power plant, and silver and bronze coin. In regard to the former the contracts were not placed here, but we have to arrange with the Ministry of Munitions for classification, arrange with the Consulting Engineers for inspection, keep the Department fully posted by letter and cable of all correspondence on any point which may arise during the currency of the various orders, and finally to take delivery of the shipping documents, check them, and, if correct, transmit them to the Department by first mail. The preparation and passing for payment of the contractors' accounts is also attended to.

Duties in connection with the shipment of bullion cover all arrangements from transmission of requisitions to the Royal Mint down to actual shipment of the coin and despatch of documents to the Dominion.

The services of the Department are often utilized by municipal bodies, Harbour Boards, acclimatization societies, Fire Boards, Hospital Boards, &c. Quite recently an X-ray apparatus was obtained for the Cook Hospital Board; while for the New Plymouth and Whangarei Fire Boards inspection, &c., of fire-engines is in hand. The engine for Hamilton was shipped some little time ago. Unfortunately a request by the Auckland Acclimatization Society for a supply of partridges, plover, &c., could not be met. Considerable correspondence with suppliers occurred, but it was quite clear that owing to the war we could not obtain the birds, and it was with regret that the inquiry had to be referred back.

SHIPPING.

Before shipment can be effected it is now necessary in a number of cases to obtain licenses to export. On receipt of the license, forwarding instructions are issued to the contractors, and bills of lading, &c., prepared for the loading broker's signature. On their return the complete shipping documents (i.e., bills of lading, invoices, and packing-lists) are made up and transmitted to the Department on whose behalf the goods have been procured. Each set of bills of lading has a separate memorandum advising the shipment, details of insurance, and any remarks it may be necessary to make. In the case of coin-shippments the advices have to be duplicated, as, in addition to the advice which goes to the Hon. the Minister of Finance, the Collector of Customs is notified. With Defence stores we have also to arrange for collection from the several Government factories and arsenals. The handling of explosives occasions much more work than formerly. Prior to the war it was the