

During the time the permit procedure was in force 9,118 applications were dealt with, covering orders to the value of £4,553,049, and in the majority of cases the representations made were instrumental in establishing the desirability from a national point of view of releasing the goods required.

A resolution passed by the Association of the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce expresses on behalf of the commercial community their appreciation of the organization set up to deal with priority-permit applications.

COAL-DISTRIBUTION.

The matter of coal-supplies has been one of grave concern, and called for the closest attention in order to prevent the Dominion's vital industries being imperilled through lack of supplies.

A comparison of the outputs of the New Zealand mines and the importations of coal from overseas during the years 1914 and 1918 respectively clearly discloses the acute position which has had to be faced:—

Year.			Output. Tons.	Importations. Tons.	Total. Tons.
1914	2,275,614	518,070	2,793,684
1918	2,034,250	255,332	2,289,582
Decrease for 1918			<u>241,364</u>	<u>262,738</u>	<u>504,102</u>

It is satisfactory to note that it has been possible to so arrange the allocations of the coal available that no industry has been forced to suspend operations through lack of fuel.

Special difficulties which have had to be contended with in regard to importing coal from overseas were the influenza epidemic, both in New Zealand and in Australia, and also the maritime strike in Australia. Every effort, however, has been and still is being made by representations through the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the High Commissioner for New Zealand, the Commonwealth Government, the New Zealand Government Agent in Sydney, and the Overseas Shipping Controllers in the United Kingdom and Australia, to secure as much shipping-space as possible for the carriage of coal both from Australia and America.

In order to conserve our supplies it was found necessary to take special action in regard to the bunkering of oversea vessels, and this has had the desired effect.

A State Firewood Depot has recently been opened, and the extent to which its supplies are being availed of by the public shows that its establishment was justified.

MINING.

The value of minerals entered for exportation and of the coal produced in the Dominion during 1918 amounted to £3,688,168, as against £2,496,870 during the previous year. The increase during 1918, however, is due to the higher valuation placed upon the coal. With the exception of silver, mercury, and tungsten ores, a decline was experienced in the production of all minerals.

The decline in mineral-production was due to the increased cost of labour and all materials, to shortage of labour, and to the lower grade of mineral won.

The State collieries produced 288,119 tons of coal, as against 265,267 tons during the preceding calendar year; while the profit on State coal business was £30,607, as against £24,466 for the previous financial year. These results are very satisfactory in view of the low rate at which the coal is supplied to the public.

The proportion of deaths from accidents at coal-mines during 1918 was 1.5 per one thousand persons employed and 2.95 per million tons raised.

The total output of coal from the mines of the Dominion for the year 1918 was 2,034,250 tons, a decrease of 34,169 tons as compared with the previous year. The decrease in coal-output may be attributed to shortage of labour and stoppage of work owing to the influenza epidemic and labour troubles.