

in my report, show a much greater falling-off in recent years than any other class of coal mined in New Zealand; and, further, it is this class of coal that is essential for railways, shipping, freezing, gasworks, and other public services and primary industries.

It will be readily seen, therefore, that any substantial increase in the allocations for household purposes, having regard to the acute shortage of this class of coal existing, could only be done by withdrawing equivalent quantities of coal from the industries and services mentioned; and as these are essential in the welfare of the Dominion, any interference with their activities would inevitably result in widespread disorganization of trade, unemployment, and financial loss to all concerned.

FIREWOOD-SUPPLIES.

The firewood depot, to which reference was made in my previous report, and which is administered by the Coal control Department, has shown a considerable expansion of business, and to meet growing demands extensive alterations have been necessitated. When the Department was established in July, 1919, two saws driven by an 8 horse-power steam-engine were installed; but in order to cope with the rapidly increasing business it was found necessary to install another 8 horse-power steam-engine capable of driving four saws, and two electric motors driving one saw each, making a total of 8 saws, which can be increased to nine by connecting another with the original steam-engine. The plant as it now stands is capable of cutting approximately forty cords a day. Delivery to householders is by means of two motor-trucks owned by the depot, and several hired lorries which are employed as circumstances warrant.

Since the inception of the depot in July last year to the end of May this year 1,568 cords have been sold, representing a value of £6,192, indicating clearly the extent to which householders have availed themselves of the advantages offered, thus minimizing the hardship that would have undoubtedly ensued in view of the prevailing shortage of coal.

In order to give the public every facility for placing orders for firewood, arrangements were made in January last with the Post and Telegraph Department to accept orders at the various city and suburban post-offices, and this arrangement has been taken full advantage of by the public, as is evidenced by the fact that for the five months ended 31st May no less than 3,462 orders have been received, of a total value of £2,198, through the various post-offices.

SHIPPING REGULATIONS.

An important amendment to the Shipping Regulations, 1917, was gazetted on the 29th November, 1919, providing that all British ships owned by or chartered by any company incorporated in New Zealand, or any company, firm, or person the headquarters of whose business is in New Zealand, must obtain licenses before leaving New Zealand waters for any port overseas.

GENERAL.

In concluding this report I wish to acknowledge the services rendered by the Coal Trade Committees in the four centres, together with the representatives of same in outlying ports, for the valuable assistance they have rendered in distributing coal within their respective areas. During the year under review the duties undertaken gratuitously by them have been most arduous owing to the continued shortage of coal, and it has been largely due to their efforts in distributing available supplies to best advantage that industries and services have been kept going with so little dislocation. The assistance rendered by the Post and Telegraph and Railway Departments in connection with operations at the firewood depot was most valuable, and has contributed largely to the successful working of the depot.

The Customs Department and the Collectors of Customs at the various ports have also rendered valuable assistance in supplying statistical information relating to coal matters and the movements of steamers carrying coal, and in connection with the administration of the Shipping Regulations the valuable co-operation of the Marine Department has contributed largely to the smooth working of the regulations.

I have also to acknowledge the excellent services rendered by the staff of the Coal-control Department, and the efficient manner in which they have carried out their duties during the exceptionally trying period under review.

Wellington, 30th June, 1920.

W. F. MASSEY,
Minister in Charge.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (600 copies), £6 10s.

By Authority: MARCUS F. MARKS, Government Printer, Wellington.—1920.

Price 3d.]