

N.Z. BUILDING PROGRESS

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Editorial Comment

A Partially Essential Industry

Since the publication of our remarks in last issue regarding the classification of the building trade by the National Efficiency Board, that body has placed building in the third schedule, as a partially essential industry. This will give the industry only a slight amount of protection from the demands of the Military Service Act, but it ensures that business will be allowed to go on to a limited extent, which in any case is all that can be hoped for at present. Materials are difficult to import, even if there were no tonnage shortage. The English authorities have rigidly restricted exports of goods the production of which would interfere with the output of vitally necessary supplies for the army, now making so splendid an attack on the German defences of the Western front. In a clear statement of the position by the Hon. A. M. Myers, New Zealand's Minister of Munitions, it is mentioned that no supplies for constructional work are likely to be manufactured except from shell discard steel. Hints have been thrown out officially in New Zealand that large contracts should be suspended, and that even in the case of freezing works, so closely associated with the supply of food for the Allied Army, it would be wiser to extend existing works, throwing further duty upon machinery already in operation, than to erect new works, in view of the extreme difficulty in getting machinery. We are, in effect, told that to demand steel-work from the Old Country when the material should all be put into shells, is not patriotic, and the building trade does not need to be told this twice when it realizes how England is making a huge effort to get rid of the great burden of war this summer. So the position of the building trade is full of difficulty, though its troubles may end quite suddenly with the collapse of the central powers.