

SECTION 9.—SHIPPING IN RELATION TO INDUSTRY

105. Throughout the year demand for shipping space for the transport of coastwise cargoes and cargoes from Australia has remained at a level substantially in excess of supply. This position has continued, notwithstanding the acquisition of additional tonnage, both by charter and otherwise, and heavy accumulations of goods awaiting shipment have been apparent, particularly in Australian ports.

106. Trans-Tasman cargoes principally affected by shipping difficulties have included hardwoods, pig iron, steel, gypsum, salt, wheat, sugar, tires, and a wide range of transshipment cargoes from South Africa and the East. In the coastal trade the effect has been most marked in the case of coal, cement, timber, and other building materials, and, as regards the internal distribution of transhipped factory, raw materials and finished goods.

107. Under the Shipping Supply Emergency Regulations 1942 a measure of control over New Zealand registered tonnage is vested in the Shipping Controller—Mr. J. H. Gilbert—and until the shipping position materially improves it is necessary, in order to ensure priority of space for essential cargoes, for these regulations to continue in force.

108. The closest co-operation is maintained by the Department with the Shipping Controller, and during the year it has been possible in this way, and through the Department's district and overseas offices, to facilitate the shipment of urgently needed raw materials, and other goods essential to New Zealand's economy. Assistance has also been given, through Government channels, in the chartering of further tonnage for New Zealand, and continuous efforts have been made by the Department to take advantage of any shipping opportunities to relieve the local situation. During the year the 1,418 ton motor vessel "Gaarden," acquired by the New Zealand Government under the German reparations, was sold to the Union Steamship Co. of New Zealand, Ltd. This ship, which has completed refitting in the United Kingdom, will be a valuable addition to the company's coastal fleet.

109. Appreciation is recorded of the able assistance given by the Shipping Controller throughout the year.

SECTION 10.—INDUSTRIAL LABOUR

110. Shortage of industrial labour remains a basic post-war problem in New Zealand, the current position being particularly difficult in regard to female employment, and, therefore, its effect most apparent in the textile and clothing industries. At the end of March, 1947, notified vacancies in industry approximated 27,000, the shortage in the clothing industry representing approximately 29 per cent. of its current labour requirements. Such a position adversely affects factory production, both as regards output and efficiency in the matter of operating-costs. A reflection of this has been apparent in the continued shortages on the local market of many essential consumer lines.

111. The present shortage of industrial labour is a problem which is not, however, peculiar to New Zealand. A recent United Kingdom white-paper survey indicated that shortages of labour for industry in Britain are at the moment even more acute than here. Major British industries, such as the tinplate and sheet-steel industry, and the textile industry, are stated to be 67 per cent. and 56 per cent. respectively below their 1939 employment levels. Similarly in Australia a serious shortage of factory labour currently exists.

112. Factors contributing to the present position in New Zealand have undoubtedly included the relaxation and subsequent lifting of man-power controls following the cessation of hostilities, the stimulus given to increased commercial activity in a period of post-war reconversion to civilian production, with resultant high level of labour demand; wider application of the shorter working-week; the tendency towards a reduction in shift-work and overtime; and the effect of the declining birth-rate, in the early and mid-thirties, on the current supply of juvenile labour.