

Unfortunately, it has been necessary to continue restrictions on the importation of goods from hard currency areas, which are now mainly the North American countries, and licences for goods from hard currency countries have been limited to those most essential items which are still not available elsewhere. The Department's trade representatives overseas have located substitutes for many commodities which we formerly obtained from North America.

SECTION 8—INDUSTRIAL RAW MATERIALS AND THE SUPPLY POSITION GENERALLY

Improvement in the supply both of industrial raw materials and of consumer goods continued during the past year and reached the stage which justifies our saying that, in general (though there remain some exceptions), manufacturers are able to secure adequate supplies with a minimum of delay and retailers are able to display full selections of goods.

Steel and other metals, which have caused us so much anxiety, are now in better supply, and present prospects are that improvement will continue. Other commodities are dealt with in detail under the particular industries earlier in this report.

It is unfortunate that we are prevented by exchange difficulties from taking full advantage of the improved availability of raw materials and consumer goods for which there is heavy local demand. However, our overseas offices have had considerable success in locating sources of supply or substitute materials in areas with which our trade is not specially restricted by currency problems.

SECTION 9—SHIPPING IN RELATION TO INDUSTRY

Congestion in both coastal and trans-Tasman shipping has not been so marked in the past year as it was previously, when the volume of cargoes offering and the slow turn-round of vessels combined to cause considerable delays. It is deemed desirable to retain the powers conferred by the Shipping Supply Emergency Regulations in the meantime.

While the fleets owned by the companies catering for the trans-Tasman service are insufficient for the trade offering, chartered vessels are being used to increase the freight capacity. The Union Steam Ship Co., Ltd., commissioned the general cargo-vessel "Kaitoke," of 5,000 tons, into the Australia-New Zealand service during the year. It is understood that the company's cargo-carrying fleet is to be further augmented, and to the extent that this is achieved chartered vessels can be released. The trans-Tasman timber trade kept the three vessels, "Kopua," "James Cook," and "Matthew Flinders," fully engaged during the year in bringing Australian hardwoods to this country and in taking our softwoods to Australia.

Vessels recently commissioned for the New Zealand coastal service include the two colliers "Kaitangata" and "Konui," each of 3,000 tons, and two smaller cargo-vessels, the "Puriri" for the Anchor Line and the "Apanui" for the Northern Steam Ship Co.

SECTION 10—INDUSTRIAL LABOUR

A fall in the number of vacancies for staff of which notification is given to the Department of Labour and Employment and the loss of intensity in the searches by manufacturers for employees provide grounds for the view that the industrial labour position eased further in the past year. A combination of factors contribute to this change.