

Mercantile Marine Offices.

The Superintendents of Mercantile Marine and their assistants have carried out their duties in a very satisfactory manner. The tact exercised by them, especially during the recent strike, is worthy of commendation.

Owing to the decision of the seamen not to engage upon any ship during the recent industrial crisis, it became necessary, in order to prevent the sea-carrying trade of the Dominion becoming completely paralyzed, to exercise the powers given by section 57 of the Shipping and Seamen Amendment Act, 1909. This section gives power to the Minister to exempt any ship from any specified requirement of the Shipping and Seamen Acts, or to dispense with the observance of any such requirement, if he is satisfied that the requirement has been substantially complied with, or that compliance is unnecessary in the circumstances of the case, and that the action taken or provision made is as effective as, or more effective than, actual compliance with the requirement. Under the authority of this section ships were, during the strike, exempted from the manning requirements of the Act in the case of seamen, firemen, trimmers, and greasers, when the Department was satisfied that the crews carried were as effective as the crews required by the Act. A return of these exemptions will be presented to Parliament in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

A return is appended showing the number of seamen engaged and discharged at the different ports and the amount of fees received for the engagement and discharges. The number engaged was 22,330, and the number discharged 21,718. The amount of fees received was £3,015 18s. In the previous year the engagements were 20,554, the discharges 20,378, and the amount of fees received £2,801 17s. The transactions at the four principal ports were:—

			Engagements.	Discharges.	Fees.		
					£	s.	d.
Auckland	...	...	6,834	6,916	973	6	0
Wellington	...	...	7,751	7,159	992	19	6
Lyttelton	...	...	1,757	1,766	250	19	6
Dunedin and Port Chalmers	...	...	2,730	3,052	408	4	6
During the previous year they were—							
Auckland	...	...	5,611	5,692	775	13	0
Wellington	...	...	6,930	7,152	932	12	0
Lyttelton	...	...	2,152	1,936	296	0	6
Dunedin and Port Chalmers	...	...	2,879	3,021	437	13	0

Messrs. L. Flower, W. N. Poole, and W. J. White, Postmasters at Awanui, Kaiapoi, and Foxton respectively, have been appointed Superintendents of Mercantile Marine at those places, so as to give them power to deal with seamen.

Proceedings for breaches of the law in regard to seamen were taken by the Department, with the following results: W. E. Wahlstrom, master of the s.s. "Putiki," for giving the cook a "V.G." discharge when such was not a true report of the man's conduct—fined £1 and costs; and G. Lang, master of the scow "Oban," for carrying seamen to sea without entering an agreement with them—convicted and ordered to pay costs.

Masters, Mates, and Engineers.

The examination of candidates has been carried out in a satisfactory manner by the various examiners. Four hundred and eight candidates passed and 132 failed. Of those who passed, 240 were masters, mates, and engineers of seagoing ships, 53 were masters and engineers of steamships plying within restricted limits, 5 were masters of fishing-boats and of cargo-vessels up to 25 tons register, 1 was master of a sailing-vessel plying in harbours and rivers, 22 were engineers of seagoing ships propelled by mechanical power other than steam, and 87 were engineers of similar vessels plying within restricted limits.

The percentage of passes in the whole number of examinations was 60½, which is a better result than last year, but in the foreign-going examinations the percentage was only 47½, which is not quite so good as last year. This was no doubt due to the new and more difficult problems connected with the chart-work which were adopted.

His Excellency the Governor has cancelled the New Zealand certificates of competency as home-trade master and foreign-going first mate held by J. M. Etheridge, in consequence of his having been convicted of theft.

The following persons have been prosecuted by the Department for offences connected with certificates, viz.: W. Smith, for running launch "Sea Wolf" without certificated man in charge—fined £2 and costs; G. Reading, for similar offence—fined £1 and costs; F. Rattenbury, for running launches without certificated man in charge—fined £2 and costs; G. Lang, for acting as master of scow "Oban" without holding proper certificate—fined £1 and costs; and Titipa Harris, for being in charge of licensed launch without holding certificate or boatman's license—charge dismissed on ground that vessel was not plying for hire.

Registration of Shipping.

Returns are appended showing the vessels registered in New Zealand on the 31st December last, and the number of seamen employed in them. On that date there were 225 sailing-ships, of 31,619 registered tonnage, and 391 steamships, of 127,691 tons register, as against 242 sailing-ships, of 34,308 registered tonnage, and 374 steamships, of 121,772 tons register. The number of seamen and boys on board at the end of 1913 was 5,477, as compared with 4,983 at the end of the previous year.