

The SECRETARY, MARINE DEPARTMENT, to the Hon. the MINISTER OF MARINE.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 31st July, 1918.

I have the honour to make the following report on the work of this Department during the year ended the 31st March last.

Head Office.

The difficulty experienced last year owing to the absence of officers at the front has been felt more acutely during the past year in consequence of other officers going. Four officers—viz., J. C. O'Leary, J. Butler, D. N. Lawrence, and G. H. Weir—have been wounded, the last-mentioned having lost a hand. Messrs. Butler and O'Leary have recovered and have returned to the front. Mr. Lawrence has been discharged and resumed duty in the Department, and Mr. Weir is expected back in the Dominion at an early date.

Mercantile Marine Offices.

The work of the various offices have been carried out very satisfactorily. In addition to the ordinary duties services have been performed for the Defence Department, principally in connection with the crews of transports and hospital ships. The officers have willingly carried out these duties without any additional remuneration.

In the Wellington and Auckland offices the Defence Department has supplied military non-commissioned officers to see that the military papers of seamen who are engaged for ships are in order, and that the men are not evading the requirements of the military law.

In order to assist in procuring seamen for ships a Seaman Inspector has been appointed at each of the ports of Wellington and Auckland, whose duties are—

(a.) To keep a register of persons desiring to be entered as seamen or apprentices on board ships at the port; and

(b.) To supply seamen and apprentices to be entered on board ships at the port.

Captain A. Barr was appointed at Wellington and Captain C. B. Daniel at Auckland. The former has since resigned, and steps are now being taken to appoint a successor. The appointment of these officers has been of great benefit to vessels wanting men.

In a good many cases the Department has withheld the discharges of seamen who have deserted from or failed to join their ships. Whilst the discharges are withheld the men are unable to join other vessels.

A good many cases have occurred in which men who have shipped in the Dominion on steamers trading to the west coast of the United States have deserted on arrival at American ports.

Owing to the Chief Clerk of the Department being on military service, Captain H. T. W. Wilcox, Assistant Superintendent of Mercantile Marine at Lyttelton, has come into the Head Office to perform his duties, and Captain J. W. Burgess, one of the Wellington Surveyors of Ships, has taken up the duties of Assistant Superintendent and Surveyor of Ships at Lyttelton.

Appended is a statement showing the number of seamen engaged and discharged at the various ports in the Dominion during the year, and the fees received for engagements and discharges. The number engaged was 18,577, and the number discharged 17,872. The fees received amounted to £2,122 ls. 6d. During the previous year the engagements were 21,300 and the discharges 20,500, and the amount of fees £2,483 2s. 6d.

The transactions at the four principal ports were—

				Engagements.	Discharges.	Fees.		
						£	s.	d.
Auckland	...	...	...	5,729	5,560	739	14	0
Wellington	...	...	...	6,991	6,349	844	5	0
Lyttelton	...	...	...	1,411	1,352	196	8	0
Dunedin and Port Chalmers	...	...	...	2,781	3,062	140	4	0
During the previous year they were—								
Auckland	...	...	...	5,425	5,294	715	17	0
Wellington	...	...	...	7,485	6,946	948	11	6
Lyttelton	...	...	...	1,805	1,798	257	18	6
Dunedin and Port Chalmers	...	...	...	4,045	4,227	261	15	0

No fees have been charged for engagements and discharges on transports and hospital ships.

Proceedings for breaches of the law in regard to seamen were taken by the Department in the following case with the result stated: A. Dryden, master of the s.s. "Arahura," for taking a seaman to sea without entering into an agreement with him, convicted, but no fine imposed.

In the case of the appeal of the assistant manager of the Northern Steamship Company against his conviction for engaging seamen, referred to in my last year's report, the conviction was upheld.

Masters, Mates, and Engineers.

During the year 317 candidates passed their examinations and 94 failed. Of those who passed, 170 were masters, mates, and engineers of seagoing ships, 27 were masters and engineers of steamships plying within restricted limits, 27 were engineers of seagoing motor-propelled boats, and 93 were engineers of such boats plying within restricted limits. The difficulty of getting properly certificated second mates for sailing and auxiliary-powered ships has continued, and appears likely to continue while the war lasts. There has also been a difficulty in getting certificated men for some of the small launches, especially in the north, owing to the absence of certificated men at the front.

Captain William Whiteford, one of the Department's Examiners, who was sent to Great Britain to study the methods adopted in the Board of Trade examinations and the system by which