

The greatest falling-off during the war period, however, has taken place in connection with the output of bituminous coal, the figures being as follows:—

	Tons.
1914	1,494,315
1915	1,404,400
1916	1,422,047
1917	1,247,989
1918	1,122,308

Of course, the big falling-off of outputs and importations in 1918 was due largely to the influenza epidemic in New Zealand towards the end of the year, which had the effect of practically stopping all shipping, both local and intercolonial. In addition to this, many of our important mines were forced to close down during part of the epidemic, and a number of miners fell victims to the scourge. No sooner was the epidemic over in the Dominion than it became serious in the Commonwealth, and shipping was again disorganized. On top of this came the recent big shipping strike, which reduced intercolonial shipping to Australia to four vessels carrying New Zealand crews. As influenza is still prevalent in Australia, ships are still subject to quarantine delays.

It was clear at the beginning of the current year that if the Dominion's industries and services were to be carried on, increased effort had to be made by shipping companies to augment our supplies by making arrangements for all overseas ships coming to the Dominion to utilize all available space for the carriage of coal. Owing to the acute food shortage in the United Kingdom and the congested condition of our coal stores in the Dominion, very little relief was forthcoming, as it was imperative to turn ships round with the least possible delay. It was found, however, when the shipping dispute in Australia arose that the number of steamers usually engaged on the Newcastle run was reduced, as previously stated, to four steamers manned by New Zealand crews, and accordingly further representations were made to the New Zealand representatives of the overseas shipping companies, as well as to the Imperial Shipping Controller, that unless substantial relief was forthcoming from America and Australia by overseas vessels the Government would have no alternative but to reduce bunkering supplies to only sufficient quantities to carry them to Newcastle instead of via Panama. The outcome of this pressure resulted in the London Tonnage Committee permitting overseas ships to pick up cargoes of coal *en route* to New Zealand at America and Newcastle, the freight rate from the latter being ultimately fixed at £1 17s. 6d. per ton, having been reduced from £2 5s., which was the rate originally quoted. The freight rate charged from America is £2 per ton. The following list illustrates the extent to which assistance has been rendered by the carriage of coal by overseas vessels from America and Australia:—

RETURN SHOWING COAL IMPORTED IN OVERSEAS TONNAGE SINCE MARCH LAST AS A RESULT OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIONS.

Name of Vessel.	Company.	Quantity.	Allocated to.	Origin.
		Tons.		
Callone	N.Z. Shipping Co. ..	3,110	Railways	Newcastle.
Raranga	Shaw-Savill	4,989	Railways and trade ..	Newport News.
Middleham Castle ..	N.Z. Shipping Co. ..	6,063	Bunkering	"
War Music	"	4,091	"	Newcastle.
Pakeha	Shaw-Savill	4,809	Trades and essential industries	Newport News.
Paparoa	N.Z. Shipping Co. ..	3,483	Railways, industries, and bunkers	"
Rimutaka	"	4,083	Bunkers	"
Orissa	"	7,400	Railways and gas ..	Newcastle.
Port Pirie	C. and D. Line ..	350	Trade	"
Port Napier	"	4,000	Railways	"
Armagh	N.Z. Shipping Co. ..	2,500	Railways and industries	"
Shropshire	N.Z. and African ..	1,750	Railways	"
Prinzessin	Shaw-Savill	3,000	"	"
Rona	Scales Limited ..	2,500	Gasworks	Newcastle (two trips).
Port Victor	C. and D. Line ..	600	Railways	Newcastle.
Otira	Shaw-Savill	7,250	"	"
E. R. Stirling	"	4,000	"	"
Mamari	Shaw-Savill	4,268	"	Newport News.
Essex	N.Z. and African ..	3,000	"	Newcastle.
Durham	"	3,000	"	"
Port Victor	C. and D. Line ..	3,000	"	"
Mamari	Shaw-Savill	4,685	"	Newport News.
Masula	N.Z. and African ..	4,966	"	"
Waiwera	Shaw-Savill	900	"	Newcastle.
Kumara	"	4,506	"	West Virginian.
Westmeath	N.Z. and African ..	4,286	"	"
Zealandic	Shaw-Savill	2,000	"	Newcastle.