

*Summary showing Importations for Month of July as per Return furnished by Customs Department  
(Approximate Allocation compiled in this Office).*

|                      | Tons.  |
|----------------------|--------|
| Railways ... ..      | 18,323 |
| Gas ... ..           | 6,190  |
| Bunkers ... ..       | 1,600  |
| Sugar-works ... ..   | 1,101  |
| Miscellaneous ... .. | 4,501  |
| Total tons ... ..    | 31,715 |

#### HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES.

The position in regard to coal for household requirements in Wellington this winter was of so uncertain a nature that it was found necessary to amend the Coal Trade Regulations, making it necessary for retailers to obtain a permit from the local committee before any quantity of coal could be delivered. The system is extremely simple in operation. Dealers forward a duplicate of orders taken daily to the Coal Trade Committee, who by a card system can ascertain whether any person has already placed an order with another dealer or has been successful in securing supplies in excess of the quantity permissible. When the duplicate orders have been checked they are dealt with by the committee, and permits for delivery duly forwarded to the dealers in cases where everything is in order. This system will be extended to other centres if circumstances warrant it.

As illustrating the volume of work entailed in this connection it may be mentioned that during the month of July 26,886 applications were received for permits, representing orders amounting to 3,296 tons, the average order per customer being about 2·5 cwt.

In the allocation of supplies every endeavour has been made by the various Coal Trade Committees to make available as much as possible for domestic requirements. Unfortunately, however, there have been times, owing to the urgent demand for coal for railways, bunkering, freezing, and gasworks, &c., when the demand for domestic requirements far exceeded supplies available.

Special attention, however, has been given to ensure regular supplies to gasworks, as it is generally recognized this is the best means of conserving coal-supplies, as it enables householders to take full advantage of gas for heating and cooking, thereby enabling coal to be released for other essential purposes.

#### FIREWOOD.

In order to further conserve the use of coal for household purposes my Department has established a firewood-depot on the reclaimed land, Davis Street Extension. The depot is connected by a railway-siding, thus enabling supplies to be railed direct, resulting in a considerable saving in carting and handling charges. The depot is also connected by road, and the arrangements in connection with the yard have been designed with a view to minimizing handling, in order to give the public the full benefit of first-class wood at the lowest possible cost. Two saws driven by an 8-horse-power engine are kept fully occupied, and the demand for firewood is daily increasing.

In order to provide for a regular supply of suitable wood, cutting-rights have been secured over a large area of Government land situated in the Akatarawa district, and the Railway Department are now engaged in providing siding access thereto. When completed the elimination of haulage—which is one of the main factors in the high price of firewood—will, it is hoped, result in the present rates being substantially reduced. The rates at present charged are £3 5s. per cord of 4 ft. lengths of rata and £2 15s. for best-quality mixed wood. Bagged wood is sold at the following rates ex yard: Rata, 2s. 9d.; mixed, 2s. 3d.

Shortly after operations were commenced it was found that consumers were experiencing considerable difficulty in arranging for cartage and delivery to their homes, and arrangements have now been made with carriers to deliver at fixed rates per bag in the various city and suburban areas. Delivery rates vary from 5d. per bag upwards, according to locality.

Before leaving this subject it is desired to take the opportunity of placing on record appreciation of the valuable assistance rendered by the Railway Department in making available a suitable site at a nominal rental, and for the expeditious manner in which the siding was laid down and the necessary building, &c., erected. The installation of the engine, saw-benches, &c., was also carried out by the Railway Department in a most efficient manner, and the Department's recognition that prompt measures were necessary to cope with the situation enabled the depot to be established with the least possible delay.

The whole of the preliminary arrangements, especially regarding the purchase of suitable firewood, were carried out by Mr. W. T. Strand, who has given his services gratuitously, and it is due largely to his efforts that the supplies of firewood of first-class quality have been obtained, and are now made available for sale to the public of Wellington.

It is trusted, now that adequate supplies of first-class wood are available at reasonable rates, householders will take full advantage of the opportunity offered, and thus assist in allowing a larger allocation of hard coal to be made in the directions where it is more urgently required.

#### SHIPPING.

As already explained, the exigencies of the war have been such that shipping tonnage, local, intercolonial, and international, has been reduced to an absolute minimum, and as far as the latter is concerned, owing to the urgent nature of the services on which they were engaged, vessels