

could not possibly be detained to pick up supplies of coal for the Dominion's industries, but on the other hand had to draw on our meagre supplies of coal to carry them back on the routes laid down by the Admiralty. In this connection the Government has repeatedly endeavoured to charter vessels for coal-carrying, but on account of this extreme shortage it has not been practicable. However, now that tonnage is becoming more plentiful it has been possible to charter one vessel for one trip from Australia, and a cable has been recently despatched to the High Commissioner asking whether a suitable tramp collier or standard steamer could be released on a time charter to the New Zealand Government.

Repeated conferences have been held with the general and traffic managers of the Union Steamship Company, with the view of ascertaining whether additional bottoms could be procured for coal-carriage, but the depletion of their fleet for war purposes rendered this practically impossible. In fact, as is commonly known, important general cargo, both from Australia and coastwise, has been locked out to release all possible tonnage for coal.

Numerous cablegrams have been despatched to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the High Commissioner for New Zealand, the Australian Government, and the Australian Shipping Controller, stressing the dire necessity and emphasizing the facts that if relief was not forthcoming drastic curtailment of the Dominion's activities would result, and that a restriction on the bunkering of overseas vessels carrying produce to relieve the acute food shortage in the United Kingdom would have to be brought into operation. As has already been disclosed, these repeated representations have had the effect of our being in the position to maintain our essential industries, and this is exemplified by the fact that up to the present time all industries have been kept going.

From the foregoing it will be seen that no stone has been left unturned in the endeavour to influence tonnage to lift cargoes of coal by steamers *en route* to New Zealand, and it must be conceded, taking the exceptional condition prevailing during the war into consideration, that the outcome of the repeated representations made have resulted in our supplies being very considerably augmented from both America and Australia. In this connection thanks are due to the local Overseas Shipowners' Committee for its valuable assistance and co-operation in endeavouring to assist in relieving the critical situation which had arisen in regard to coal-supplies.

AMENDMENTS TO COAL TRADE REGULATIONS.

During the year under review it has been found necessary to amend the Coal Trade Regulations to meet the changed conditions arising from time to time. Owing to continued shortage of supplies regulations were gazetted reducing the quantity of coal that could be delivered without a permit from 1 ton to $\frac{1}{2}$ ton in any one delivery, and from 2 tons to 1 ton in any period of twenty-eight days; in Wellington, however, as already indicated herein, no coal can be delivered in any quantity for any purpose without a permit being first obtained from the local Coal Trade Committee.

To prevent hoarding power was taken to utilize the services of Inspectors of Factories on a warrant signed by a Chairman or any member of a Coal Trade Committee giving authority to investigate and report when so directed.

In Christchurch and Dunedin regulations have been gazetted making it compulsory for lignite coal to be delivered with hard coal in the proportion of equal quantities in Christchurch and six parts lignite to one bituminous in Dunedin.

By the adoption of these measures the use of hard coal has been considerably restricted for domestic use, resulting in it being released for essential purposes.

The following gentlemen have been identified in honorary capacities as Coal Trade Committees in the various centres:—

Auckland Coal Trade Committee: Hon. E. W. Alison (Chairman), E. A. Craig, J. Dempsey.

Wellington Coal Trade Committee: F. J. Gunn (Chairman), A. S. Collins, W. W. Gibson, W. J. Gaudin, A. Hamilton.

Christchurch Coal Trade Committee: A. McKellar (Chairman), D. Redpath, P. M. C. Cleary, J. A. Boswell. (Mr. J. A. Redpath acted as Chairman until a few months ago, when he left on an extended business visit to the United Kingdom.)

Dunedin Coal Trade Committee: Robert Lee (Chairman), A. J. Allen, A. P. Brenner, A. B. Johnston (Acting-Chairman).

These Committees have also arranged for honorary representatives in the larger towns coming under their control, in order to keep in close touch with all matters appertaining to the equitable distribution of coal-supplies.

I have to express on behalf of the Government extreme satisfaction and appreciation of the valuable work so loyally carried out in the national interests by these gentlemen.

In conclusion I have to acknowledge the excellent services rendered by the staff of the Coal Control Department, and the loyal and efficient manner in which they have carried out their duties in the face of the most difficult and trying conditions.

W. F. MASSEY,
Minister in Charge.

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