

In order to encourage the importation of cement the Government for some time remitted the duty on this material. This remission of duty applied from the 28th August, 1920, and included all cement actually shipped on or before the 1st April, 1921. The amount imported during this period was 11,947 tons, of a dutiable value of £7,621 1s. 1d. Duty was refunded on 10,315 tons, the amount refunded being £6,648 19s.

BUILDING-RESTRICTIONS.

Towards the middle of 1920 the position with respect to all classes of building-supplies became so acute that on the Board's recommendation the Government decided to issue regulations the object of which was to ensure that supplies of cement, bricks, and timber should be available only for works that were at that time considered essential. The order of essentiality adopted by the Board in this connection was the same as that used in the distribution of cement (see p. 13).

As the primary object of these regulations was to stimulate the erection of dwellings, the Board delegated to local authorities its powers with respect to all applications for permits to build dwelling-houses. The co-operation of these local bodies was of enormous assistance to the Department, and by means of their operations 4,151 applications for permits for dwellings and farm-buildings were dealt with.

For the purpose of assisting the Board in dealing with applications for permits for works other than dwellings, advisory committees were set up—at the request of the architects, builders, and building employees—in Invercargill, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland. These committees acted merely in an advisory capacity, and all applications were dealt with by the Board itself. The work of these committees was of material assistance, and the thanks of the Government are due to the members for the services gratuitously given in this connection.

The work of regulating the use of building-materials by compelling the sellers to deal only with holders of permits was conducted in the most economical way possible. No attempt was made to carry out the scheme in every detail; to do so would have necessitated the establishment of a large central office and the employment of a small army of inspectors, entailing enormous cost to the State. The controlling organizations in England, for example, were particularly elaborate.

The Board considered, however, that quite a satisfactory effect could be obtained by the temporary organization of a few advisory committees and by utilizing the services of the various Inspectors of Factories. The arrangements made by the Board involved the total cost of about £700. Many letters received by the Department from various interests concerned, including the public, expressed appreciation of the Board's impartial work in connection with the building regulations and the control of essential materials. From the date of gazetting (24th June, 1920) to the suspension of the regulations (19th March) the Board dealt with more than three thousand applications for permits for buildings other than dwellinghouses or farm-buildings. This does not represent the total cases considered, as the Board received many inquiries from persons who wished to ascertain whether an application was likely to be granted; when the reply indicated that a permit would not be available till the supply of essential materials warranted it the application was not lodged. In some instances permits were granted on condition that imported materials were used.

The subjoined return shows the amounts of material and labour involved in building-construction under permits issued by the Board of Trade from the 1st July, 1920, to the 31st March, 1921:—

District.	Timber.	Cement.	Bricks.	Men.
	Feet.	Bags.	Number.	
Auckland City	10,040,559	203,832	7,154,635	3,890
Hamilton	2,456,622	33,767	995,764	1,497
Rotorua	136,437	613	17,200	57
Auckland Province	8,310,677	73,292	2,861,401	3,395
New Plymouth	215,800	25,272	80,500	274
Hawera	399,518	5,809	117,950	357
Taranaki Province	1,309,048	22,287	220,400	836
Wellington City	7,788,843	152,774	6,269,860	2,893
Palmerston North	145,623	2,570	432,500	120
Wanganui	2,181,566	14,771	1,474,050	1,306
Wellington Province	3,498,700	49,356	1,893,800	1,715
Napier	1,166,997	7,686	612,445	711
Gisborne	2,195,776	87,080	1,086,580	867
Hawke's Bay	2,892,405	41,378	1,525,225	1,456
Christchurch	2,399,949	141,513	4,962,100	1,785
Timaru	613,147	11,111	824,650	677
Canterbury Province	1,404,400	26,906	916,560	986
Dunedin	3,173,661	41,505	2,412,200	1,382
Oamaru	117,500	1,219	350	55
Otago Province	1,079,983	46,395	510,500	665
Invercargill	670,733	7,557	544,650	304
Southland	1,461,785	22,225	355,000	955
Nelson District	1,569,124	10,423	576,625	669
Westland	78,625	1,096	67,540	56
Marlborough	65,544	2,048	64,800	72
Totals	55,373,058	1,032,485	35,977,285	26,980