

Special Timber Committee.

This Committee, consisting of representatives of certain Government Departments and of the sawmilling industry, has been steadily at work during the year. Its main business up to the present has been devoted to the devising of grading and classification rules, having for its object a greater utilization of the log, by the introduction of grades which as the result of expert scientific investigation could be used with entire satisfaction in numerous cases where at present heart timber is specified.

Applicants for loans from State Advances Office for building are now notified that "wherever possible preference must be given to the use of New Zealand timbers in the construction of the dwelling."

Definite propaganda for extending the use of native timbers has now been undertaken by the Committee, and the first of a series of articles on the "Wider Use of New Zealand Timbers," prepared by Mr. A. R. Entrican, Engineer in Forest Products, has been published in the May issue of the "New Zealand National Review." It is proposed to reprint five thousand copies of this article for distribution to timber-merchants, builders, architects, local authorities, and other users of timber.

SHIPPING.

Coastal Trade.—The year 1929–30 has been notable for important additions to the trading fleet in New Zealand waters. The Union Steamship Company has withdrawn the following old cargo vessels: S.s. Kaitangata, 2,000 tons gross burden; s.s. Kaiapoi, 2,000 tons; s.s. Corinna, 1,319 tons. These have been replaced by modern cargo carriers especially built for the coastal trade, equipped with up-to-date cargo-handling appliances, and of greater carrying-capacity, viz.: S.s. Kaimiro, 2,562 tons gross burden; s.s. Karepo, 2,562 tons; s.s. Wainui, 1,633 tons. Another notable addition to this company's fleet is the s.s. Waimarino, of 3,030 tons gross burden, which arrived during June, 1930, and has been placed in the Dunedin–Auckland cargo service.

Greymouth–Westport Service.—Owing to shoal-water conditions on the bars at both of these ports, colliers found great difficulties in working these harbours. Very frequently vessels have had to leave only partly loaded and have also been bar-bound for periods up to a fortnight. In the case of Greymouth the position has been relieved by the railing of coal to East Coast ports. Westport, however, is not connected by rail with the South Island Main Trunk line, so that similar relief is not available. The expense of working Westport has also been increased by the necessity of many colliers to engage tugs to assist them in negotiating the bar during periods of low water.

Intercolonial Service.—During the year the Government subsidized a passenger service to Melbourne via Bluff and Wellington, starting on 29th October. The steamers Manuka and Maheno were put into this trade, but, unfortunately, the Manuka was lost by wreck south of Dunedin on the 16th December, 1929, and the service has since been carried on by the Maheno alone.

Overseas Trade.—The New Zealand Shipping Company has increased its fleet by the addition of the following modern motor-ships: S.s. Rangitiki, s.s. Rangitata, and s.s. Rangitane, each of 17,000 tons gross burden. These vessels are running in the express mail and cargo service between New Zealand and United Kingdom ports via the Panama Canal. The company's fleet now consists of seven vessels.

SUGAR.

The Department has as usual received and recorded information during the past year regarding the world's sugar markets, and has compared the movement of overseas prices with the prices ruling for the product of the New Zealand refinery. On the 1st May, 1929, the price of No. 1A sugar (the popular table grade), f.o.b. Auckland, was quoted at £18 10s. per ton. On the 7th June, 1929, it was reduced to £18, on the 22nd April, 1930, to £17 10s., and on the 6th May, 1930, to £17 per ton, at which figure it now stands.

During the year under review New Zealand's imports of sugar declined from 1,586,672 cwt., valued at £1,075,716 (the quantity and value recorded in 1928), to 1,394,600 cwt., valued at £717,991. There was a further heavy decrease in the quantity purchased from Fiji, this being made up to some extent by increased imports from Cuba. The following table shows the quantities and values imported for the last three years, and also the sources of supply.

Imports of Raw Sugar, 1927–29.

Country.	1927.		1928.		1929.	
	Cwt.	£	Cwt.	£	Cwt.	£
Fiji	316,011	270,156	570,889	423,825	105,519	63,895
Dutch East Indies ..	363,927	258,516	919,141	595,970	736,446	406,834
Cuba	432,554	322,684	552,638	247,262
Peru	128,431	82,999	96,642	55,921
Total	1,240,923	934,355	1,586,672	1,075,716	1,394,600	717,991

Sugar-markets have for some considerable time suffered from an overabundance of supply, due largely to expansion in the European beet-sugar industry, but also to greater production of cane sugar, without any corresponding increase in demand. Prices have continued to fall during the year, and it is still difficult to venture on any estimate of the immediate coming trend.