

PRIORITY WINTER DELIVERIES OF COAL TO SMALL
CONSUMERS

Every coal merchant in the country has been sent a circular telling him exactly what he must do to help to implement the pledge given by Major Gwilym Lloyd George, Minister of Fuel & Power in the House of Commons on 1st October, that the small consumer shall have priority this winter.

Representatives of the Merchants' Consultative Committee have agreed with the Ministry that arrangements for this purpose must be in full operation at every depot during the 13 weeks starting 28th December.

The detailed arrangements at each depot or group of depots may vary according to local circumstances, the circular states, "but the object of ensuring that during this period small consumers without stocks obtain supplies at regular intervals have a first charge on depot receipts must be achieved.

"The individual merchant will be primarily responsible for meeting the needs of any priority customers dependent upon him. He must, therefore, arrange for entries to be made from time to time in his Rounds Book or Office Records against consumers holding sufficient stocks, to enable them to be left without deliveries for a week or two, in order to ensure that those without supplies obtain deliveries."

Recent and current restrictions on deliveries have been designed to provide consumers with stocking facilities with reasonable stocks by the end of the year.

"Thereafter the circular adds it may be necessary to deny further supplies to consumers who have such stocks. Consumers of this class may only be able to obtain further supplies by application to the Local Fuel Overseer for a permit to enable the merchant to deliver."

It is not intended that priority deliveries should be limited to those who normally take small quantities every week, nor that they should necessarily provide for weekly deliveries. They must cover all consumers who, because of their inability to stock, require regular deliveries during the winter.

"This necessarily implies that distributors whose principal business is with non priority customers must, during the period made, be prepared to supply coal, transport and labour in order to enable priority customers of other merchants to receive regular supplies," says the circular.

Detailed instructions are to be given to District House Coal Officers to work out suitable arrangements for each depot. These arrangements will gradually be put into force as the need arises. In this way experience of working difficulties will be gained in time for them to be overcome and the Scheme brought into complete operation by 28th December.

"The supply position this winter, and the effort being made to economise in consumption in order to avoid rationing, make it imperative that the whole trade shall co-operate fully in preventing any inequity in distribution," the circular adds.

"It is therefore emphasised that the registration provisions of the Fuel & Lighting Registration and Distribution Order and the restrictions on deliveries will be rigidly enforced. Merchants, their employees and consumers will be liable to prosecution for any infringements of the Order or restrictions."