

the increases must be submitted to the Board for approval. The range of commodities dealt with is being added to as necessity arises.

Prices for meat have been steadied throughout New Zealand by an arrangement entered into with the freezing companies to supply the local trade, where necessary, from the Imperial store. The wholesale price of such meat for local consumption has been fixed on a parity with the Imperial purchase price. When this scheme came into operation there was no necessity to continue the State meat-shops at Auckland, and the Government's connection with the two meat-depots was terminated.

Owing to alleged shortage of supplies of petrol, and constant increases in price of this necessary commodity, the Board is endeavouring to encourage its importation, and to control its sale and distribution.

Continued complaints as to high prices and short supplies of timber, especially white-pine, have led to the necessity for control of this important industry.

The Board has in hand important proposals for the standardization of foot-wear and woollen goods. It is hoped to give consumers good serviceable boots (quality guaranteed) at reasonable prices. Similarly, certain classes of woollen goods will be standardized as to quality and price.

PENSIONS.

The gross payments under this head passed through the accounts during the year were—

	Statutory Pensions. £	Allowance under Finance Act, 1917. £	Total. £
Old-age pensions ..	502,085	141,092	643,177
Widows' pensions ..	41,986	15,966	57,952
Military pensions ..	44,840	5,894	50,734
Miners' pensions ..	11,968	1,307	13,275
Totals ..	<u>£600,879</u>	<u>£164,259*</u>	<u>£765,138</u>

* For six months and a half only.

The total credits, including £30,147 from national endowments on account of old-age pensions, and £4,703 from gold duty on account of miners' pensions, amounted to £35,438, leaving a net charge against the Consolidated Fund of £729,700.

These figures, apart from the increase due to the provision of a war bonus of 5s. a week, represent variations from the figures of the previous year as under:—

	Increase. £	Decrease. £
Old-age pensions ..	21,957	..
Widows' pensions ..	3,973	..
Miners' pensions ..	3,928	..
Military pensions	798

The new pensions granted, and the deaths and cancellations recorded during the year, together with the pensions in force at the close of the year, were as stated hereunder:—

	New Grants.	Deaths and Cancellations.	Increase.	Decrease.	In Force, 31st March.
Old-age pensions ..	2,146	1,883	263	..	19,960
Widows' pensions ..	509	341	168	..	2,192
Miners' pensions ..	91	59	32	..	270
Military pensions ..	24	103	..	79	1,153

The annual values of the pensions in force at the close of the year were—

	Statutory Pensions. £	Allowance under Finance Act, 1917. £	Total. £	Average Pension. £
Old-age pensions ..	481,369	259,480	740,849	37
Widows' pensions ..	43,872	30,000	73,872	33
Military pensions ..	41,508	11,700	53,208	46
Miners' pensions ..	10,972	2,600	13,572	50
Totals ..	<u>£577,721</u>	<u>£303,780</u>	<u>£881,501</u>	<u>£37</u>