

WESTPORT HARBOUR.

The following statement shows the revenue and expenditure in respect of Westport Harbour for the past nine years:—

Year.	Expenditure.			Revenue.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1921-22	63,950	1	10	25,836	19	3
1922-23	50,738	17	5	38,700	8	1
1923-24	46,619	1	11	42,285	7	4
1924-25	44,666	14	0	50,378	11	0
1925-26	51,909	4	11	57,539	12	11
1926-27	52,769	12	6	62,976	13	10
1927-28	65,828	1	7	65,909	8	1
1928-29	68,871	13	0	64,214	5	6
1929-30	64,877	10	5	66,274	17	3

The surplus for the year under review amounted to £1,397 6s. 10d., after making full provision for all charges in the way of depreciation, interest, and sinking fund. This result must be considered satisfactory, more particularly in view of the fact that protective works and extension of breakwaters have been provided for out of revenue, the expenditure under these two headings for the past year being £4,966 13s. 5d.

The following statement shows the net tonnage of shipping entered the port, the tonnage of coal exported, and the financial result for each year since the Department has had control of the port:—

Year.				Net Tonnage of Shipping entered.	Tonnage of Coal exported.	Financial Result.		
							£	s. d.
1921-22 .. ..	..	..	..	273,706	480,873	Deficiency	38,113	2 7
1922-23 .. ..	..	..	..	332,401	573,487	„	12,038	9 4
1923-24 .. ..	..	..	..	275,762	442,070	„	4,333	14 7
1924-25 .. ..	..	..	..	334,827	556,669	Surplus	5,711	17 0
1925-26 .. ..	..	..	..	386,669	552,949	„	5,630	8 0
1926-27 .. ..	..	..	..	459,670	637,165	„	10,207	1 4
1927-28 .. ..	..	..	..	466,021	623,256	„	81	6 6
1928-29 .. ..	..	..	..	458,712	604,778	Deficiency	4,657	7 6
1929-30 .. ..	..	..	..	479,623	625,835	Surplus	1,397	6 10

From this it will be seen that the deficiency in 1921-22 was £38,113 2s. 7d. and the surplus for 1929-30, £1,397 6s. 10d., which represents on the face of it an improvement of £39,510 9s. 5d.; but to obtain a uniform basis of comparison the expenditure of £4,966 13s. 5d., representing capital works paid for out of revenue last year, should be added. The net improvement would then be £44,477 2s. 10d. Although this is very satisfactory as an indication of past achievement, the fact that the harbour is now just paying its way must not be overlooked. It would take very little in the way of an increase in expenditure or a reduction of revenue to throw the balance on the wrong side.

The bunkering trade at Westport showed a slight increase. The number of vessels which have called for bunker coal during the past five years is as follows: 1925-26, 20; 1926-27, 44; 1927-28, 51; 1928-29, 54; 1929-30, 57.

During the year under review there has been an unlimited demand for coal owing to labour trouble at the Australian mines. With the cessation of Australian supplies the mining industry in the Westport district has been given an opportunity, which will probably not arise again, of extending its trade in many directions, but the export figures for the year are very disappointing. Apart from the dislocation created by the earthquake in June, 1929, vessels calling for bunker and also for cargo coal have been unduly delayed, and have frequently had to leave port short-loaded owing to the supply being insufficient to meet the demand. A considerable number of large overseas vessels called at the port during the year, but owing to the serious delays they were subjected to it will not be surprising if the trade is lost when supplies are available elsewhere.

Critics of the administration of the port have asserted that the sole reason for delays to shipping is the insufficient depth of water on the bar. Investigation of the facts, however, shows that when there was an ample depth of water on the bar the coal-output was altogether inadequate to supply shipping demands.

Last year's experience in this connection goes to show that, no matter how keen the demand may be, the output from the mines has not been materially increased to meet it. This fact does not deter critics from pressing for additional berthage and loading-accommodation and other improvements to the harbour, regardless of what the cost may be or the limited extent to which they may be used.

Apart from the natural disabilities of an artificially created river harbour, there is an economic limit to which the Department may go in the provision of harbour facilities. Every penny of revenue from the harbour is being utilized in the maintenance and improvement of the port. The harbour finance is a self-contained "separate account," and although the Finance Act, 1921, empowers the