

New Zealand soft coal increased by 40,000 tons, which was due principally to the breakdown of the Arapuni power scheme, necessitating the steam plant at Auckland being brought into operation. The tonnage in the South Island decreased slightly.

Imported coal increased by 32,000 tons, due to supplies of Australian coal again being available. The tonnage carried for the previous year was 5,700, and, as the average tonnage for the five years ended 31st March, 1929, was 87,000, it will be seen that the figures for the past year are less than half the tonnage previously carried in normal years.

In products of forests all the three commodities under this heading—namely, imported timber, New Zealand timber, and firewood—show decreases. Imported timber decreased 3,000 tons compared with 1930, and 13,000 tons compared with the average for the past five years. The heavy consignments of poles for Power Boards which were imported during the past years have decreased considerably, and this has materially contributed to the decline in this traffic.

New Zealand timber decreased by 168,000 tons, which is the lowest tonnage carried for the past seven years. The decline in the South Island was 102,000 tons, which is due in a measure to the falling-off in the building trade and also to the decrease in exports to Australia, owing to the depression in trade in that country. The decline in the North Island is 66,000 tons, the major portion of which is due to the decline in the building trade.

The tonnage of benzine and cement is normal, while the tonnage in artificial manures has decreased by 118,000 tons, due to the depressed state of the farming industry during the past year. The traffic in this commodity has increased considerably since the reduced prices and railway rates for artificial manures became effective towards the end of 1926. Prior to that time the average tonnage per annum was 280,000 tons, and, as the quantity carried during the year under review was 563,417 tons, it will be seen that despite the economic depression in the Dominion the tonnage of fertilizers is being well maintained.

The miscellaneous group includes all commodities not scheduled under the previous five groups, and shows a decline of 196,759 tons. It comprises the higher-rated commodities in the tariff such as general merchandise, &c., and ships' goods on port lines. The decrease is a reflection of the decreased import trade and the general depression in commercial circles in the Dominion.

### STATISTICS.

#### GOODS AND LIVE-STOCK.

The following are some of the statistics dealing with the operation of goods traffic:—

	1931.	1930.	Variation.	Per Cent.
Goods revenue .. .. .	£4,487,357	£4,904,324	—£416,967	8·50
	Number.	Number.	Number.	Per Cent.
Goods tonnage .. .. .	6,957,709	7,788,973	—831,264	10·67
Revenue net ton-miles .. ..	467,109,468	511,830,508	—44,721,040	8·74

The heaviest decreases in goods traffic have been in low-rated commodities such as manures, road-metal, and timber, with the result that the goods revenue has not declined in the same ratio as the tonnage. An increase in the average haul of a number of commodities has resulted in the average haul for all traffic increasing by one mile, which is reflected in the smaller percentage decrease in revenue net ton-miles as compared with the goods tonnage.

	1931. Number.	1930. Number.	Variation.	Per Cent.
Total gross ton-miles revenue freight	1,497,272,997	1,646,376,841	—149,103,844	9·06
Goods-vehicle miles (loaded) ..	120,416,484	133,574,967	— 13,158,483	9·85
Goods-vehicle miles (empty) ..	64,029,035	68,712,303	— 4,683,268	6·82
Total goods-vehicle miles ..	184,445,519	202,287,270	— 17,841,751	8·82

The decreases under these headings are a reflection of the decrease in goods traffic. The proportion of empty-wagon haulage has not declined in the same ratio as the loaded-wagon mileage, due largely to the haulage of empty wagons to the various coalfields, the general decline in goods traffic having resulted in decreased loading to stations in the mining areas, with a consequent proportionate increase in empty haulage to meet the demand for empty wagons, and also to the fact that as a result of the earthquake damaging the freezing-works in the Hawke's Bay area the live-stock for this area was forwarded to works in other districts, necessitating a considerable amount of empty haulage.

#### Averages: Revenue, Freight Traffic.

Per Mile of Line:—	1931.	1930.	Variation.	Per Cent.
Goods revenue .. .. .	£1,359	£1,492	—£133	8·91
Total tonnage .. .. .	2,106	2,370	—264	11·14
Net ton-miles .. .. .	141,420	155,714	—14,294	9·18
Gross ton-miles .. .. .	453,307	510,875	—57,568	11·27

These figures are a reflection of the decreased revenue and freight tonnage.

	1931.	1930.	Variation.	Per Cent.
Goods revenue per train-mile	14s. 0·09d.	14s. 0·53d.	—0·44d.	0·26
Train-load, gross tons ..	234	236	—2·00	0·85
Train-load, net tons ..	72·90	73·28	—0·38	0·52
Number of vehicles (loaded) ..	18·79	19·13	—0·34	1·78
Number of vehicles (empty) ..	9·99	9·84	+0·15	1·52