

SUGGESTIONS AND INVENTIONS COMMITTEE.

The Suggestions and Inventions Committee dealt with 1,042 suggestions during the year, as compared with 1,414 during the previous year. Of these, 106 suggestions were recommended for adoption, either wholly or partially; 301 referred to heads of branches were already in operation or related to policy matters; 583 were not recommended for adoption; and 56 are under trial or investigation, and have been carried forward for future consideration.

Where a suggestion has been wholly or partially adopted due acknowledgment by monetary award or otherwise, as the circumstances appeared to justify, has been made to the person responsible for the suggestion.

As in previous years, a number of suggestions received from the Australian railways were dealt with, and several suggestions adopted in New Zealand were forwarded to the Australian systems for consideration. In the latter connection one suggestion forwarded from New Zealand was adopted by one of the Australian systems and a monetary award remitted to the person who made the suggestion.

Of the 106 suggestions recommended for adoption 14 were in connection with improvements to rolling stock; 12 were in connection with workshop equipment, 19 referred to matters connected with the Way and Works and Signals Branches, 25 related to traffic operation, while the balance dealt with general matters in connection with railway working.

In connection with the functioning of the Suggestions and Inventions Committee, I desire to make it clear that the name of the person submitting any suggestion is never made known to the Committee. This procedure ensures that suggestions received from employees in the lowest ranks of the Department will receive the same consideration as suggestions that may be submitted from any other employee however high he may be in the service.

STORES BRANCH.

The amount expended in connection with the purchase of stores and material during the year was £2,345,239 14s. 9d., and the expenditure was divided as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
To merchants, manufacturers, and others in New Zealand ..	853,055	13	2
Through High Commissioner, London	330,566	0	11
Material manufactured in railway workshops	349,853	10	9
Coal and coke	669,785	17	8
Stationery	38,789	9	0
For manufactured and used material recovered from other railway branches	103,189	3	3
	<u>£2,345,239</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>

The value of stores held at 31st March, 1931, was £867,636, as compared with £901,472 at the end of the previous year.

There was a net decrease in this year's expenditure as compared with the previous year of £225,117 18s. 5d., the following variations being shown:—

	Increase.			Decrease.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To merchants, manufacturers, and others in New Zealand ..	10,362	16	9	..	..	..
Through High Commissioner, London .. ..	..	..	..	99,067	17	0
Material manufactured in railway workshops	21,151	11	6	..	..	..
Coal and coke .. ..	..	..	..	161,693	18	10
Stationery .. ..	..	..	..	4,712	12	7
For manufactured and used material recovered from other railway branches	8,842	1	9	..	..	..
	<u>£40,356</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>£265,474</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>

The work of reorganizing the main stores throughout the system has proceeded steadily during the year. The change-over to the new buildings at Addington and Hillside was completed during the year, and the completion of the new buildings at Woburn has enabled substantial progress to be made with the amalgamation of the Signals and Maintenance Branch stores with the general store. The transfer of the stores from Newmarket to the new building at Otahuhu was ready to be undertaken soon after the close of the year.

COAL-SUPPLIES.

The average consumption of coal per week during the year ended 31st March, 1931, was 8,327 tons, which was a decrease of 832 tons per week compared with the previous year. A comparison of the purchases of New Zealand and imported fuel for five years ended 31st March, 1931, is as follows:—

Year.	New Zealand. Tons.	Per Cent. of Total.	Imported. Tons.	Per Cent. of Total.	Total. Tons.
1924-25	94,351	23.16	313,107	76.84	407,458
1925-26	85,393	23.49	278,076	76.51	363,469
1926-27	187,793	49.30	193,163	50.70	380,956
1927-28	288,646	65.50	152,025	34.50	440,671
1928-29	356,724	84.25	66,675	15.75	423,399
1929-30	355,214	74.59	121,037	25.41	476,251
1930-31	367,686	90.00	40,827	10.00	408,513