

In agricultural products the tonnage decreased by 14,667 tons. Grain increased by 8,000 tons, but the tonnage of root crops and chaff declined by 13,000 tons, and there were smaller decreases in fruit and meals. The tonnage of chaff has decreased considerably during recent years, due to the growing substitution of motor for horse transport. In 1926 100,575 tons of this commodity were carried, but in the past year the traffic had decreased to 44,042 tons.

Animals and their products decreased by 6,000 tons. The principal variations under this heading are a decrease of 60,900 head in cattle, no doubt due to the low prices ruling. Sheep totalled 10,370,959 head, an increase of 432,015, compared with the previous year, which increase is due principally to the dry weather causing a shortness of feed and fat stock was disposed of earlier than would otherwise have been the case.

Wool traffic totalled 149,145 tons, an increase of 32,600 tons over the quantity carried during the previous year. This traffic has fluctuated during the past three years owing to the low prices ruling causing farmers in a number of cases to withhold their clips from sale. The carry-over from the 1930–31 season was estimated at 181,000 bales of greasy wool and for the past year the carry-over of greasy wool is estimated at 209,861 bales, comprising 80,957 bales from the 1930–31 season. After allowance has been made for the quantity still held in growers' sheds and for the increased production, the higher tonnage handled by the railway during the past year indicates that there was a greater quantity sold than in previous years and this is confirmed by the export figures which show a total of 710,576 bales shipped, an increase of 168,461 bales, compared with the previous year.

In products of mines the principal variations were: Agricultural lime decreased by 17,000 tons. The tonnage of this commodity has increased of recent years. The average annual tonnage for the five years ended 1930 was 127,781 tons, and the tonnage in the past year was 12,420 tons above the average referred to. New Zealand bituminous coals totalled 763,926 tons, a decrease of 322,321 tons, the principal decreases being 129,000 tons in consignments from the Greymouth coalfields and a decrease of 180,896 tons on the Westport Section. The decline in the bunker-coal business is one of the principal factors responsible for the decrease.

New Zealand soft coals decreased by 104,875 tons, of which decrease 49,000 tons was in the North Island and 55,000 tons in the South Island.

As a number of secondary industries are closed or are working part time only this has caused a decline in the coal traffic, which is largely reflected in the tonnage of soft coals carried.

Road-metal totalled 114,310 tons, a decrease of 121,000 tons compared with the previous year. The curtailment of expenditure on road construction is the principal factor contributing to the decrease under this heading.

In products of forests all three commodities under this heading—namely, imported timber, New Zealand timber, and firewood and posts—show decreases.

Imported timber totalled 10,308 tons—a decrease of 17,269 tons compared with the previous year. Importations of timber decreased by 75 per cent. during the year. New Zealand timber totalled 243,224 tons, a decrease of 132,300 tons (35 per cent.). The average annual tonnage for the six years ended 31st March, 1930, was 603,839 tons, and the figures for the past year represent a decrease of 59 per cent. on this average. While the decrease is due in a measure to the decline in building operations, the decrease in the export trade to Australia, which was previously a good market for certain classes of New Zealand timber, is a factor largely contributing to the low tonnage for the past year.

In benzine, cement, and manures there was a decrease of 21,111 tons. The tonnage of benzine decreased by 14,637 tons and cement decreased by 15,700 tons. Manures increased by 9,000 tons. The traffic in this commodity has increased considerably of recent years owing to the decrease in price and reduction in railway rates. The tonnage carried in the past year was 572,000 tons.

In miscellaneous goods, which comprise all commodities not listed under the other five groups, the tonnage was 962,087 tons, a decrease of 292,262 tons compared with the previous year. The principal items contributing to the decrease were general merchandise, 90,800 tons; ships' goods on port lines, 84,000 tons; and miscellaneous goods, 31,000 tons. This decrease must be principally ascribed to the depression in trade and industry affecting both internal trade and imports.

STATISTICS.

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

		1932.	1931.	Variation.	
				Amount.	Per Cent.
Goods-train mileage	..	5,728,229	6,407,248	—679,019	10·50
Goods earnings	..	£4,019,600	£4,487,357	—£467,757	10·42
Revenue, goods tonnage	..	5,824,811	6,957,709	—1,132,898	16·28
Revenue, net ton-mileage	..	405,255,971	467,109,468	—61,853,497	13·24
Average haul	..	70	67	+3	4·40
Average revenue per ton-mile	..	2·41d.	2·33d.	+0·08d.	3·40
Average revenue per ton	..	14s.	13s.	+1s.	7·70

The decrease in goods earnings would have been greater but for the increase in rates on the lower-rated commodities which became effective in November, 1930, and was therefore in force for only a portion of the financial year ended 31st March, 1931. As these rates were in force for the whole year under review they counterbalanced to some extent the decline in revenue from the higher-rated commodities.

The average haul increased by three miles, due principally to the haul of commodities such as manures, benzine, and live-stock increasing during the year. This increase is reflected in the smaller