

## STORES BRANCH.

The amount expended in connection with the purchase of stores and material during the year was £1,470,229, and the expenditure was divided as follows:—

|  | £                 | s.       | d.        |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| To merchants, manufacturers, and others in New Zealand ..                        | 439,949           | 2        | 0         |
| Through High Commissioner, London .. ..  | 137,024           | 3        | 3         |
| Material manufactured in railway workshops .. ..                                 | 166,147           | 15       | 0         |
| Coal and coke .. .. .  | 630,903           | 10       | 8         |
| Stationery .. .. .   | 18,666            | 17       | 8         |
| For manufactured and used material recovered from other railway branches .. .. . | 64,529            | 4        | 11        |
| Timber from railway sawmill .. .. .  | 13,008            | 9        | 5         |
|  | <u>£1,470,229</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>11</u> |

The value of stores held at 31st March, 1931, was £705,777, as compared with £867,636 at the end of the previous year.

There was a net decrease in this year's expenditure, as compared with the previous year, of £896,727 15s. 2d., the following decreases being shown:—

|  | £               | s.        | d.       |
|--|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| To merchants, manufacturers, and others in New Zealand ..                        | 413,106         | 14        | 2        |
| Through High Commissioner, London .. ..  | 193,451         | 17        | 8        |
| Material manufactured in railway workshops .. ..                                 | 38,882          | 7         | 0        |
| Coal and coke .. .. .  | 20,122          | 8         | 4        |
| Stationery .. .. .   | 38,659          | 18        | 4        |
| For manufactured and used material recovered from other railway branches .. .. . | 8,708           | 13        | 11       |
|  | <u>£896,727</u> | <u>15</u> | <u>2</u> |

A summary of the purchases and issues of stores, exclusive of coal, for the past six years is as follows:—

| Year ended               | Purchases.<br>£ | Issues.<br>£ |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 31st March, 1927 .. .. . | 1,481,003       | 1,356,654    |
| 31st March, 1928 .. .. . | 1,542,755       | 1,656,196    |
| 31st March, 1929 .. .. . | 1,823,767       | 1,794,838    |
| 31st March, 1930 .. .. . | 1,764,987       | 1,802,366    |
| 31st March, 1931 .. .. . | 1,716,452       | 1,743,416    |
| 31st March, 1932 .. .. . | 852,044         | 1,018,616    |

The Board has pursued the policy, which it found in operation on assuming control of the Department, of giving preference in the purchase of its materials, firstly to New Zealand products, and secondly to British Empire products. It has also aimed to steadily reduce the amount of capital locked up in stores stocks, and it will be seen that very substantial progress has been made in this direction during the year. A thorough organization has been developed for careful inspection of stores, with a view to keeping stocks in the best condition and at the lowest quantity consistent with efficiently meeting the requirements of the Department. The problem of slow-moving stores has had careful attention, with a view to seeing that they are dealt with promptly and in a way that will ensure the best results obtainable in the particular circumstances of each case.

The process of bringing control of all stocks of materials under the Stores Branch has been continued, and at the close of the year was nearing completion. This work has been largely influenced by the amalgamations of the various branch workshops which have taken place, and so far as the stores are concerned the arrangements that have been made will make not only for economy in dealing with the custody and issue of materials, but will make for more effective control and a more independent check of purchases and issues. In many cases stores depots have been amalgamated, thus ensuring economy and better order and control. The general reorganization of the Stores Branch has, the Board finds, extended over some years. A review of the position shows that it was a very desirable procedure, and the Board is pleased to be able to record the near completion of the work which, as already mentioned, will be, from every point of view, distinctly advantageous to the Department. The arrangements effectively combine efficiency with economy.

## COAL-SUPPLIES.

The average consumption of coal per week during the year ended 31st March, 1932, was 7,097 tons, which was a decrease of 1,230 tons per week compared with the previous year, and 2,062 tons compared with the year ended 31st March, 1930. A comparison of the purchases of New Zealand and imported fuel for eight years ended 31st March, 1931, is as follows:—

| Year.           | New Zealand.<br>Tons. | Per Cent.<br>of Total. | Imported.<br>Tons. | Per Cent.<br>of Total. | Total.<br>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         |
| 1931-32 .. .. . | 373,335               | 89·72                  | 42,756             | 10·28                  | 416,091         |