

GENERAL CONTRACTS.

At the 31st March, 1932, contracts arranged by the Board were in operation for the supply of the undermentioned lines to all Departments :—

Batteries for motor-vehicles.	Electric lamps.
Bricks, fireclay, earthenware pipes, and fittings.	Motor-lubricating oils.
Brushware—painters' and general.	Motor-spirit and kerosene.
Candles, soap, and soda.	Motor-tires.
Cement.	Photographic work.
Coal, coke, and firewood.	Polish—metal, floor, and boot.
Disinfectant.	Typewriters.

In addition to the above, numerous departmental contracts were also in operation, the principal items concerned being as under :—

- Aviation spirit.
- Foodstuffs (milk, bread, fish, poultry, hams and bacon, &c.).
- Fuel oil for Navy and Government ships.
- Tobacco for Prisons and Mental Hospitals.
- Uniforms for messengers.

Owing to the unstable market conditions, the uncertainty in regard to exchange, and the surplus stocks of materials held by some Departments through the stoppage and curtailment of works and services, several contracts which expired on the 31st January, 1932, were not renewed. The principal items concerned are general ironmongery, small tools and implements, plumbers' requisites, iron and steel, fencing-wire, paints, oils, and varnishes.

Since the expiration of these contracts purchases of the items concerned have been made in the open market, as required, but the question of renewing the contracts is being kept under review, and when conditions are again favourable tenders will be called and new contracts arranged.

Competition for all items has been exceptionally keen and the contracts arranged during the year reflect a general downward tendency in prices. In many cases the prices are the lowest that have been received since the Board was constituted in 1922.

CONTRACTORS' SERVICE.

The service given by contractors during the year has, in general, been efficient and satisfactory. In one case, however, it was found necessary to cancel a contract and to disqualify the contractor concerned from tendering for Government supplies for a period of two years, owing to the unsatisfactory performance of a contract for the supply of foodstuffs.

PURCHASE OF SEEDS AND MANURES.

In December, 1931, the Department of Agriculture was constituted a purchasing Department under the Stores Control Board to undertake the purchase of seeds and manures for all Departments.

The purchase arrangements are supervised by the Fields Division of the Department of Agriculture, Palmerston North, at which centre the Department's Seed-testing Station is located.

Only Government-tested seed is purchased, except in a few instances where such seed is not available, and in many cases the samples offered are tested before the acceptance of any quotation. Arrangements are also made for samples taken from the bulk supplies to be retested. This test is used as a check on the purity and germination figures on which the purchases are authorized, thus ensuring that seed of the quality quoted for is supplied to the ordering Department.

PREFERENCE TO NEW ZEALAND AND BRITISH MANUFACTURERS.

During the year the policy of preference to New Zealand and British manufacturers has been maintained.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (440 copies), £2 5s.