

The bunkering trade has fallen away very considerably, the number of vessels which called at Westport for bunker coal during the past seven years being as follows :—

Year.	Number of Vessels.	Year.	Number of Vessels.
1925-26	20	1929-30	57
1926-27	44	1930-31	24
1927-28	51	1931-32	10
1928-29	54		

In the past, tramp steamers calling at Westport for bunker coal were frequently subjected to considerable delay owing to sufficient coal not being available when it was required, and this, combined with the fact that the present rate of exchange is so favourable to the purchase of Australian coal, has caused a loss of trade which will be difficult to regain.

The following statement shows the net tonnage of shipping entered the port, the tonnage of coal shipped, and the financial result for each year since the Department has had control of the harbour :—

Year.	Net Tonnage of Shipping entered.	Tonnage of Coal shipped.	Financial Result.
			£ s. d.
1921-22	273,706	480,873	Deficiency 38,113 2 7
1922-23	332,401	573,487	„ 12,038 9 4
1923-24	275,762	442,070	„ 4,333 14 7
1924-25	334,827	556,669	Surplus 5,711 17 0
1925-26	386,669	552,949	„ 5,630 8 0
1926-27	459,670	637,165	„ 10,207 1 4
1927-28	466,021	623,256	„ 81 6 6
1928-29	458,712	604,778	Deficiency 4,657 7 6
1929-30	479,623	625,835	Surplus 1,397 6 10
1930-31	352,228	513,503	Deficiency 423 13 10
1931-32	234,936	336,873	„ 11,546 11 11

From the year 1924-25 to 1930-31 (inclusive), there was an average annual surplus of £2,849 11s. 2d., but during 1931-32, when there was a decline of 176,630 tons in coal export, the harbour fell far short of making ends meet despite very drastic cuts in expenditure.

When the coal output dropped to such an extent that the revenue became insufficient to meet the ordinary maintenance of the port, the Department was forced to reduce expenditure in every possible direction. The extension of breakwaters had to be discontinued, and the bucket dredge “Maui” laid up, with consequent heavy reductions in staff. The suction dredge “Eileen Ward” has been kept in commission, but this has meant further borrowing from the Consolidated Fund, as the present revenue from the port is insufficient to meet working-expenses in addition to interest and sinking-fund charges.

As practically the whole of the revenue from Westport Harbour is dependent upon coal, there is no prospect of improvement in the port's finances until the depression in the coal industry lifts. An export of at least 40,000 tons of coal per month is necessary to provide sufficient revenue for the maintenance of essential port services, but at the present time the monthly average does not reach 30,000 tons.

HARBOUR BOARD'S LEGISLATION.

Auckland Harbour Board and other Local Bodies Empowering Act, 1931.—This Act dealt with the following matters :—

- (a) It validated a deed of agreement entered into between the Harbour Board and the Auckland City Council with respect to the Orakei Waterfront Road.
- (b) It validated a deed of agreement entered into between the Auckland and Suburban Drainage Board and the Auckland City Council, with respect to the control and maintenance of certain sewage-tanks along the said road.
- (c) It authorized the transfer of a portion of Harbour Board land in Hobson Bay to the Auckland City Council for a plantation reserve.
- (d) It authorized the lease of a small portion of reclaimed land, the property of the Harbour Board, to the Auckland Electric-power Board.
- (e) It authorized the lease of a portion of land known as Onepoto Basin, in Shoal Bay, to the Northcote Borough Council for recreation purposes.
- (f) It authorized the Takapuna Borough Council to lease to the Board a small portion of land, the property of the Council, for a control station for the new electric beacon on Rangitoto.
- (g) It authorized the Board and the bearer of any debenture of the Board to enter into an agreement, on the application of the bearer, to change the place fixed for payment of principal and interest.