

Even in the relatively prosperous year of 1928-29 the estimated national land transport costs represented no less than £36.22 out of every £100 of the estimated value of national production, as compared with £29.59 in 1913-14. Over-capitalization in transport, and the shrinkage in the value of national production in 1930-31 due to the decline in the prices of primary products, are the principal causes for national land transport costs representing no less than £45.23 out of every £100 of the national volume of production in that year. This increase immediately directs attention to the far-reaching changes that have taken place in the whole field of transport in the Dominion, and the marked relative disproportion that now exists between transport costs and the annual value of national production. In so far as the additional costs represent definite gains in the conquest of time and space in the transportation of human beings and commodities they must be regarded as part of the fair cost of progress, but in so far as they are the result of wasteful duplication or triplication of facilities they represent a serious and unnecessary obstacle to economic development.

The figures relating to the estimated capital cost of the land transport services are of interest, although they are reflected to some extent in those relating to annual cost. The following figures show the summarized figures relating to the estimated capital cost of the various facilities at 31st March, 1931 :—

Kind of Service.						Estimated Capital cost at 31st March, 1931. (000,000 omitted.)
						£
(1) Railways .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	61
(2) Electric and cable tramways .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	5
(3) Roads .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	65
(4) Motor-vehicles (including estimated value of garages and repair shops, &c.) .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	53
(5) Horse-drawn vehicles* .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total .. .. .	..	..	..	..	..	£184

* Less than £1,000,000.

REGULAR MOTOR FREIGHT SERVICES.

The official statistics relating to organized freight services during the months of July, 1931, and January, 1932, have been used as the basis for estimating the figures for twelve months. These statistics point to a slight decrease in the number of vehicles used in these services, and declines of 28 and 14 per cent. respectively in the tonnage of freight carried and receipts. In spite of this falling-off in business, the vehicle mileage remained at the same level as for the previous year—viz., 11,700,000 miles.

The following summary shows the principal information relating to the operation of trucks on organized services during the years ended 31st March, 1930, 1931, and 1932 :—

				Year ended 31st March,			Percentage.	
				1930.	1931.	1932.	Increase.	Decrease.
Vehicles	Number	965	1,160	1,117	..	4		
Vehicle mileage	Miles	9,800,000	11,700,000	11,700,000	..	..
Freight	Tons	876,000	1,038,000	749,000	..	28		
Receipts	£	653,000	708,000	607,000	..	14		
Average miles per vehicle per annum	Miles	10,000	10,000	10,500	5	..		
Average number of tons of freight per vehicle per annum	Number	907	894	671	..	25		
Average receipts per vehicle per annum	£	677	610	544	..	11		
Average receipts per ton of freight	d.	179	164	195	19	..		
Average receipts per vehicle-mile	d.	16.0	14.5	12.5	..	14		