

The figures for the coal consumed show a reduction as a result of the greater use of oil-burning locomotives in the North Island.

During the year it was again necessary to import coal, supplies being purchased from the United Kingdom, Africa, and India. The quantity imported, however, was 26,019 tons less than that of the previous year. The New Zealand hard-coal consumption declined by 2,417 tons, whilst soft coal increased by 6,273 tons.

The percentage of soft coal consumed increased by 3.21 per cent. compared with the figure for the previous year, resulting in higher unit consumption figures. The increased consumption, however, has been offset by a lower unit cost as the result of using less imported coal.

The following table shows for the same years the consumption of coal from the point of view of efficiency and economy :—

Year ended 31st March,			Steam-engine Miles (000's). (Coal-burners.)	Pounds per Engine-mile.	Steam Gross Ton-miles (000's).	Pounds per 1,000 Gross Ton-miles.	Percentage of Soft Coal used.
1941	..	..	17,072	69	2,991,761	396	44
1942	..	..	17,368	69	3,078,801	391	43
1943	..	..	18,840	73	3,467,082	395	45
1944	..	..	18,955	75	3,562,997	399	55
1945	..	..	16,087	80	3,117,337	415	64
1946	..	..	16,804	81	3,281,499	416	66
1947	..	..	16,403	81	3,243,256	410	61
1948	..	..	16,329	78	3,110,857	409	51
1949	..	..	15,373	80	3,643,894	420	54

During the year a further 17 locomotives were converted to burn oil, so that the total number in use at 31st March, 1949, was 51. The original plan of conversion provided for 77 oil-burners of the K, KA, and J class locomotives, and it is hoped that the following year will see the completion of the programme. Further fuelling facilities have been installed, so that they can now operate from Paekakariki to Auckland and on the Napier and New Plymouth lines.

Consequent upon the greater number of oil-burning locomotives and the extended fuelling facilities, the train-miles worked by these engines have increased, so that during the past year 20.55 per cent. of the steam-train mileage was performed by them.

TRANSPORTATION

With the improvement in the locomotive-fuel supplies and in so far as the staff position will allow, efforts are being made to improve train services and to restore as far as possible the pre-war services.

A survey of all services, both road and rail and both goods and passenger, is now in hand, the purpose being to examine present services and explore all possibilities of improved service to the public.

Some of the alterations made to train services during the year are as follow :—

Auckland-Wellington : " Limited " express restored, running six days per week as from 28th November, 1948.

Wellington - New Plymouth : Express train service increased to four days per week.

Wellington-Gisborne : Express train service placed on a faster schedule and now connects at Palmerston North with the Auckland express and at Wellington with the steamer express to the South Island.

A commencement has also been made in restoring the popular Sunday excursion-trains, and these now run between Auckland and Hamilton, Wellington and Palmerston North, Christchurch and Timaru, and Dunedin and Oamaru.

A further step in the policy of eliminating mixed trains has been made with the withdrawal of such trains on the Ashburton-Timaru-Oamaru section, the passenger traffic now being handled by road services.