

STORES BRANCH.

The following figures indicate the values of supplies purchased, issued, and remaining in stock for the year ended 31st March, 1925, while those for the previous year are shown for the purposes of comparison :—

	1924-25.	1923-24.
	£	£
Balance, 1st April	289,758	330,577
Purchases	1,018,107	912,923
Issues	1,064,275	953,742
Balance, 31st March	243,590	289,758

The number and value of indents placed for materials and particulars of shipments received during the year, together with the preceding year's figures, are as follow :—

	1924-25.	1923-24.
Number of indents	482	611
Value	£627,345	£686,765
Average value of indent	£1,301 10s.	£1,124
Shipments received	2,266	1,766
Packages received	266,212	182,060
Average number of packages per shipment	117	103

During the year greater purchases than heretofore have been made of New-Zealand-manufactured materials ; lead seals and twine are two items, principal supplies of which in previous years had almost entirely been imported.

A system of distribution of lead seals, twine, paper, and rural-mail boxes direct from the manufacturers' works to the principal offices throughout the Dominion, has been inaugurated, thus eliminating the double handling and freight charges which would be incurred by consigning the materials to the Department's main stores in Wellington.

The rapid extension of the use of motor transport by Government Departments is indicated by the purchase of 245 motor-vehicles of various kinds, against 161 for the previous year.

All motor-vehicles for Government use are purchased through the Stores Branch, which, in conjunction with the Stores Control Board, also arranges contracts for motor-lubricants and petrol. The contracts arranged effect considerable savings by fixing prices throughout the Dominion for oils and spirit of standard quality.

A contract for the supply of 2,500 30 in. by 3½ in. tires and 1,200 tubes to match has recently been arranged, under which all Government Departments requiring supplies may purchase them at an estimated saving of 25 per cent. on the former method of buying. Approximately 60 per cent. of the tires and tubes used by Government Departments are of the size stated.

Auction sales of second-hand motor-vehicles and miscellaneous material are held periodically at the four centres. At these sales vehicles belonging to other Departments as well as to this Department are offered for sale.

The position in regard to supplies of hardwood poles has improved considerably, increased quantities having been received from Australia. The policy of using New Zealand silver-pine poles in certain districts has also assisted in making the position easier.

During the year the arrangement by which supplies of material from oversea sources are delivered direct to the port nearest the place at which such material is required was considerably extended. The system is found to be advantageous and economical.

Advantage has been taken of the facilities possessed by the High Commissioner for obtaining special rates of freight on goods shipped from the United Kingdom. Where circumstances permit, contracts are arranged f.o.b. United Kingdom port instead of c.i.f. & c. New Zealand ports.

AUDIT OF ENGINEERS' STOCK.

Early in the year arrangements were completed by which the Chief Inspector was made responsible for the auditing of the large amount of material held at various points for use by officers of the Engineering Division, and two additional officers were placed on the Chief Inspector's staff for this purpose. That the appointments were desirable is evidenced by the increased efficiency that has been disclosed on the occasion of a second visit by these officers to some of the places at which stock is held.

WORKSHOPS.

The volume of work performed by this branch is steadily growing, as is indicated by the following figures :—

	1924-25.	1923-24.
Value of work performed for Post and Telegraph Department	£49,404	£41,741
Value of work performed for other Government Departments	£4,245	£4,027
Totals	<u>£53,649</u>	<u>£45,768</u>

During the year a large number of motor-truck bodies has been manufactured for the Post and Telegraph service and for other Government Departments. The maintenance of the fleet of Government motor-vehicles has also been satisfactorily carried out.