

NAURU AND OCEAN ISLANDS PHOSPHATE.

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THE eighth year of operations under Government ownership at Nauru and Ocean Islands terminated on the 30th June, 1928, the total shipments of phosphate being 501,915 tons, as compared with 593,340 tons shipped during the preceding year, or a decrease of 91,425 tons. Of this quantity, 124,270 tons came to New Zealand, the balance, 377,645 tons, going to Australia.

During the year under review operations at both islands were much impeded by bad weather at the season when it may normally be expected, though sometimes it is escaped. As is frequently the case, the rough seas then encountered carried away one of the sets of deep-sea moorings, and subsequently a vessel was wrecked at Ocean Island; both accidents caused considerable dislocation of shipping operations. There were also some labour difficulties, and an unfortunate epidemic of sickness at Ocean Island. In view of all these adverse circumstances, the shipment of 501,915 tons, as stated, must be considered a very satisfactory result, having been exceeded only in the previous year, when particularly favourable conditions were experienced throughout.

Deliveries and distribution of phosphate in the Dominion from Nauru and Ocean Islands, also from outside sources (Makatea and Morocco), for the last two years, are as follows:—

Port of Discharge.	Nauru and Ocean Phosphate.		Outside Phosphate.		Total.	
	1926-27.	1927-28.	1926-27.	1927-28.	1926-27.	1927-28.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Auckland	78,560	69,612	10,415	29,022	88,975	98,634
New Plymouth	14,346	18,882	..	3,322	14,346	22,204
Wanganui	11,879	20,342	..	3,050	11,879	23,392
Lyttelton	21,986	20,482	..	7,552	21,986	28,034
Port Chalmers	9,537	7,399	..	..	9,537	7,399
Bluff	3,227	..	..	..	3,227	..
Totals	139,535	136,717	10,415	42,946	149,950	179,663

The larger proportion of outside phosphate which it has been necessary to import during the year under review has been successfully handled by the fertilizer-manufacturers. By judiciously mixing it with the main supplies of higher-grade article from Nauru and Ocean Islands the standard quality of superphosphate has been maintained, and it is hoped that this desirable result can be continued.

For the current year the indications are that about 207,000 tons of phosphate will be required, in which case there will again be a material advance on the previous year.

In order to provide full supplies for the Dominion, even in the event of unforeseen difficulties at Nauru and Ocean Islands, purchases of outside phosphate have been made up to 1932, and options of further quantities have been obtained, to be exercised should it become necessary. In the phosphate market it is necessary to contract well on ahead.

The erection of improved shipping facilities at Nauru and Ocean Islands is proceeding satisfactorily, particularly at the former, where the work is of considerable magnitude. The loading cantilever there, and necessary plant to be used in conjunction with it, will probably not be completed until the latter part of next year. At Ocean Island the new steel jetty should be finished about the end of this year.

Satisfactory steamer rates have been secured during the year under review, and the freight market continues favourable. In obtaining good freights for the Dominion the rate of discharge becomes an important factor. Material improvement in this respect has been effected at Auckland during recent years, and the arrangements at Lyttelton are satisfactory. At the other ports where phosphate is discharged in bulk there appears to be need for better facilities, and it is suggested that the installation of these could well be considered by the authorities concerned, in view of the increasing quantities now being handled. The Commissioners' chartering operations will be greatly facilitated when an all-round improvement in discharge at Dominion ports is possible. The phosphate is sold at a flat price at the various ports, and it is desirable that the rate of discharge be brought to a uniformly high level.