

Compared with the figures for the preceding year, purchases of motor-vehicle and workshop stores and of stationery and office supplies show increases. Purchases of stores for telegraph and telephone purposes show a falling-off; but the previous year's figures include expenditure on purchases of automatic equipment for large exchanges and heavy items of line-construction material.

The number and value of purchases made for other Government Departments under the Stores Control Board system, as compared with the previous year, were—

Year ended	Requisitions.	Items.	Value of Items purchased.		Total.
			On Indent.	Locally.	
31st March, 1925 ..	1,842	6,488	£ 17,472	£ 40,120	£ 57,592
31st March, 1926 ..	1,548	5,946	£ 32,451	£ 74,154	£ 106,605

During the year the work in connection with obtaining quotations for the purchase of stores was undertaken by a separate division of the Stores Branch. The concentration of the work has proved to be satisfactory, and as the officers gain additional experience a further increase in efficiency may be expected. The new method has advantages over the old one, as the quotation work is now performed along uniform lines. Such was not the case when the work was attended to by officers on different sections.

In addition to the work undertaken in the Department's laboratory, extended use was made of the services of the Dominion Analyst in the first place for the purpose of analysing and examining samples and items submitted for purchase, and in the second place for the purpose of providing an efficient check against the quality of goods supplied. The reports obtained provide valuable data which will be of much practical benefit when making subsequent purchases.

Wherever practicable, and where the cost has been within the limits of the preference extended by Government to such purchases, the Department has continued the buying of goods manufactured within the Dominion. The number of items and the value of such purchases are increasing, and it is pleasing to note that on the whole the quality of supplies is of a high standard.

As the Department's Stores Branch has the necessary staff and facilities for packing, for transporting, and for performing other kindred operations, its services are being availed of by other Government Departments to an increasing extent. During the year work occupying 1,035 working hours was so undertaken. In addition, 2,909 working-hours were occupied in effecting removals of furniture and personal effects of departmental officers on transfer.

Owing, no doubt, to the method being both convenient and economical, other Departments are drawing to a greater extent on this Department's stocks of office supplies and motor accessories. The practice is sound, as this Department, unlike certain smaller Departments, is able to purchase cheaply in bulk.

During the year 222 motor-vehicles were purchased for other Government Departments, and approximately ninety old vehicles were disposed of at auction. The contract for supply to Government of motor fuel was extended for one year, and a fresh contract was let for motor-lubricating oils. Both contracts provide for deliveries to be made from a large number of depots. The system under which this Department undertakes the purchase and distribution to Government Departments of the more-commonly-used sizes of motor tires and tubes has proved satisfactory and economical.

The work undertaken on behalf of other Departments with respect to motor-transport requirements is extending, and the advantage of one office controlling purchases in this connection is already apparent.

A new system of recording, requisitioning for, and advising supplies of uniform clothing was introduced during the year. It is working satisfactorily, and has brought about a reduction in labour.

The systems of distributing supplies direct from the place of manufacture to the store nearest the point of use and of landing bulky stores at main ports have been further extended, and are now reaching the point of maximum benefit. Improved methods of local distribution and transport also are receiving attention.

From the 1st December, 1925, the control of stores in the Auckland, Thames, and Hamilton Postal Districts was removed from the District Telegraph Engineer, Auckland, to the Stores Branch of the General Post Office. The Auckland Stores Branch is under the immediate charge of a Stores officer whose headquarters are in Auckland. The establishing of branch stores is about to be undertaken in the southern portion of the North Island. It is anticipated that the transfer of direct control to officers with special stores training will produce beneficial results.

From the 1st July, 1925, provision has been made for all stores ordered to be insured under the Government Marine Insurance Fund. Formerly insurance was effected with outside insurance companies.

#### NEW ZEALAND AND SOUTH SEAS INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.

At the New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition, held at Dunedin from the 17th November, 1925, to the 1st May, 1926, a model post and telegraph office and a departmental exhibit were provided, both being situated in the Government Pavilion.

The post and telegraph office, at which could be carried out all classes of business (except savings-bank), observed 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. as the hours of attendance. The staff consisted of a Postmaster, three telegraphists, a messenger, and two message-boys. In addition to the facilities provided at the office itself several posting-boxes and slot telephones were erected in the Exhibition grounds. Mails between the Dunedin chief post-office and the Exhibition office were