

*Maintenance of Rolling-stock.*

The expenditure under this heading totalled £1,502,699, a decrease of £178,220, or 10·60 per cent., compared with the previous year. During the year ended 31st March, 1930, the amount of repair work dealt with in the shops was still in excess of what might be regarded as normal, owing to the repair work falling in arrears during the workshops reorganization. In my report of last year I dealt with the question of this accumulation of repair work, and I need only point out at this stage that just as the necessity for undertaking additional work to meet the accumulated arrears of maintenance of rolling-stock did not arise in one year, but was a cumulative process, so also it is not to be expected that the *status quo* can be reached at once, but must be a process of overtaking the requirements, the proportion of additional work decreasing as the normal is approached.

A review under the various headings is as follows :—

*Locomotive Repairs.*

Decrease, £99,319 = 12·92 per cent.

During the year 529 engines passed through the shops as compared with 579 in the previous year. Of this total, 207 received a complete overhaul in 1931 as compared with 240 in 1930, a decrease of 13·7 per cent. The total number of complete overhauls and heavy repairs for the past year was 234, which is slightly in excess of the average total of such overhauls and repairs for the past five years. The accumulated arrears were not overtaken until August of the year under review, and it was not until this date that the question of engine-repair work requiring to be done came near the line of the average for the past five years.

*Maintenance of Carriages and Wagons.*

The total expenditure for the repairs and painting of carriages and vans increased by £1,069, or 0·39 per cent. Carriage repairs decreased by £5,461, but increases in conversion and alteration and betterment work and increased contributions to Renewal Fund resulted in the total debit for the year being slightly in excess of the previous year.

During the past year the painting of carriages and vans received particular attention, and the number of carriages and vans painted increased by 34 per cent. and 17 per cent. respectively. In New Zealand, where tunnels are numerous, the appearance of our rolling-stock rapidly deteriorates, and, apart from improving the appearance of the vehicles, careful attention to painting is necessary in order to preserve the stock.

The expenditure on maintenance of wagons decreased by £75,282. During the past year 19,972 wagons passed through the workshops, of which number 13,618 received heavy repairs. The number of wagons passing through the shops decreased by 902, while the number of heavy repairs decreased by 1,199.

*Examination and Lubrication and Lighting of Coaching and Wagon Stock.*

The total expenditure under this heading decreased by £5,065. The cost of lubricating vehicles declined by £2,154, chiefly due to the fact that during the previous year it was found necessary to incur additional expenditure to bring the lubrication up to an efficient standard, and the action which was taken in this connection has resulted in the number of hot boxes being reduced by 46·3 per cent. The expenditure on lighting of coaching-vehicles decreased by £2,911. During the past year the lighting of vehicles by Pintsch gas was discontinued, and the vehicles were fitted to burn coal-gas, which is obtained from gasworks at the various centres. The change-over enabled the Department to close down the Pintsch-gas works previously maintained for the supply of gas, thus enabling a saving in expenditure to be made.

The cost of electric lighting of carriages has increased by £1,358 owing to the larger number of carriages now equipped with electric light, and also to the fact that a number of the lighting sets fell due for overhaul.

*Locomotive Transportation.*

The expenditure under this heading totalled £1,517,025, a decrease of £155,473, or 9·30 per cent., compared with the previous year. The heavy decrease in traffic during the past year necessitated a reduction in train services, and, after a careful review of the position, economy proposals were given effect to. Engine-mileage totalled 15,618,776 miles, a decrease of 1,116,848 miles, or 6·67 per cent., compared with the previous year.

This reduction in train services is reflected in the cost of engine-drivers' and firemen's wages, which decreased by £42,550, or 7·38 per cent. In view of the urgent need for economy, every effort was made to keep the overtime down to an absolute minimum, and the rosters were rearranged as was found possible and effective to this end.

The tonnage of fuel consumed by locomotives was 411,002 tons, a decrease of 35,220 tons compared with the previous year, and the cost was £680,257 as compared with £779,930 in 1930. While the larger proportion of the reduction in cost is due to the smaller engine-mileage run, a reduction in the cost of coal was responsible for a decrease of approximately £38,000.