

NAURU AND OCEAN ISLANDS PHOSPHATE.

REPORT OF A. F. ELLIS, C.M.G., NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONER, BRITISH PHOSPHATE COMMISSION

THE eleventh year of operations under Government ownership at Nauru and Ocean Islands terminated on 30th June, 1931, with the following results as regards phosphate shipments, compared with the two previous years :—

				1928-29.	1929-30.	1930-31.
				Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Nauru	..	..	..	342,770	296,310	240,855
Ocean	..	..	..	233,820	207,863	145,122
				576,590	504,173	385,977

A decrease of 118,196 tons in quantity shipped will be noted. This largely diminished output was caused by the serious drop in demand for fertilizers in Australia and New Zealand, necessitating the curtailment of operations at both islands. Of the above tonnage, Australia took 263,047 tons, and New Zealand 122,930 tons. No shipments were made to other countries during the year.

Importations of phosphate to the Dominion as compared with the two previous years are as follows :—

				1928-29.	1929-30.	1930-31.
				Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Nauru-Ocean	..	..	..	138,053	117,826	112,873
Outside	..	..	..	29,288	49,983	22,935
				167,341	167,809	135,808

The outside importations in 1930-31 were made owing to existing contracts entered into when the demand was considerably in excess of the capacity of Nauru and Ocean Islands.

Regarding the proportion of the Nauru-Ocean output which comes to the Dominion, the figures as compared with the two previous years are : 1928-29, 24·66 per cent. ; 1929-30, 25·21 per cent. ; 1930-31, 31·85 per cent.

The year under review has seen important developments in connection with the plant at the two islands. The recently completed cantilever at Nauru for mechanical loading has been brought into regular use when suitable weather permitted ; the specified loading rate of 550 tons per hour has been exceeded, and vessels are given quick despatch. For instance, the m.v. "Glenbank," carrying 8,250 tons of phosphate, was only thirty-three hours at the island. The new steel cantilever jetty at Ocean Island is also proving suitable for conditions there. The s.s. "Triona," recently built by Messrs. Harland and Wolff, Ltd., for the Commission, is now employed in the trade, and her special appliances for laying or lifting the deep-sea moorings at the two islands will, it is considered, be very useful. These and other developments in connection with the mining and artificial drying operations will prove invaluable when the demand for phosphate again continues on the upgrade.