

way into service and, although the Passenger-service Vehicle (Constructional) Regulations 1936 set out dimensions and detailed requirements to provide a reasonable standard of passenger comfort, operators are encouraged to construct vehicles to a standard above this minimum requirement. This applies particularly to the case of vehicles used for long-distance travel (service-cars and service-coaches), where there is evidence of an element of healthy rivalry in the provision of comfortable travel facilities.

46. In regard to the overcrowding of omnibuses it may be stated that to meet wartime conditions the proportion of standing passengers was increased from 33½ per cent. to 50 per cent. of the seated capacity of the vehicles. On the 1st February last this wartime allowance was withdrawn and the Certificates of Fitness amended accordingly.

47. Condition of Vehicles.—While the acute demand for heavy trucks by the transport industry has been eased by the release of vehicles from the Armed Services and by importations from overseas, it will be several years before the general condition of vehicles returns to pre-war standards. Although approximately 60 per cent. of the vehicles of the "light" group have been on the roads for ten or more years it may be generally stated that the only importations for civilian requirements since the outbreak of hostilities have been small shipments during the past year. These amount to a total of approximately one thousand vehicles. Light trucks play an important part in the transportation system of the Dominion, and the need for new vehicles is becoming an urgent matter. The supply of new chassis for passenger-service purposes has exceeded the capacity of the body-building industry of the Dominion, and at the present time the limiting factor is not chassis, but skilled labour to produce bodies.

48. During the past year 605 cars of the light and medium class have been imported, but as over 50 per cent. of the cars in use to-day are ten or more years old it seems clear that even with considerably increased shipments it will be many years before an improvement in the general condition becomes apparent. Although the condition of the Dominion's fleet of vehicles will slowly improve with the arrival of each new shipment it is clear that for some time to come old vehicles will still have to remain in service by patching and mending. As there is little doubt that the vehicle position will lag behind that of tires and petrol, the incidence of accidents due to mechanical defects will tend to rise, making a thorough inspection of all motor-vehicles in the Dominion a matter of even greater importance than in pre-war years.

REGULATION OF COMMERCIAL ROAD TRANSPORT

49. All the wartime restrictions administered by this Department which affect the freedom of commercial road transport operation have been dispensed with, apart from the Auckland Taxicab Control Committee.

50. Goods Transport Control Committees.—These Committees were abolished on 30th August, 1945, after being in operation for nearly three years. Their function was to allocate orders for transport among available carriers for the purpose of conserving motor-vehicles, petrol, and tires. While they were in existence they effected substantial savings in these commodities at a time when the Dominion's road transport system was in jeopardy. Their personnel comprised representatives of the carriers, farmers, stock and station agents, meat-export concerns, and the Railways Department, and, in the towns, the general business community. All members acted in an honorary capacity and devoted long hours in carrying out the work of the Committee. All members have been thanked for their services, but it is appropriate that a record of appreciation of their services should be made in this report.