

*Works.*—Owing to difficulties of bridging caused by the shortages of material, particularly cement and steel, and the difficulties of carrying out any large-scale improvement works on account of the man-power position, the Board has found it necessary to recast its policy to some extent. Deferred maintenance and ordinary routine maintenance will, of course, continue to receive full attention, but on account of the difficulties mentioned above the Board considers that the most appreciated of the earliest benefits which it can provide for motorists will be a considerable extension of dustless surfaces. Indications at this stage are that there will be no shortage of bituminous materials for the summer of 1947–48, and the man-power factor is not a large one with work of this nature. If a bottleneck does occur, it is likely to be caused by shortage of stone chips, but instructions have already been issued for full production of these to commence immediately.

Firstly, attention will be given to the bituminous sealing of those highways, which were reconstructed to modern standards just prior to 1940, but on which surfacing was delayed by the war. Secondly, there are many miles of important highways where the country is easy and the lay-out comparatively good and little more than the strengthening of the metal crust will be necessary before sealing. These highways will also be included in the programme for early dustless treatment. Thirdly, there are many gaps in the highway system where alignment is not right up to modern requirements. In the past there has been a reluctance to seal any highway which was not fully in accord with the best standards of construction and geometrical lay-out. Under the conditions which then obtained this policy was sound, but, if dustless surfacing is to await full reconstruction under present-day limitations, the motorist will have to bear the extra cost of vehicle operation and endure the hazards and discomfort of dust, loose shingle, and potholes for many years to come.

Whenever there appears a little likelihood of reconstructing such highways within a period of five or six years, then the highway will be treated with a light type of bituminous surfacing to serve until reconstruction can take place. Lastly, but frequently of first importance, highways through villages and townships will be prepared and sealed without delay. Dustless streets in residential areas will be fully appreciated not only by motorists, but also by the local residents.

In so far as man-power and resources will permit, the aim will be to have all unsealed gaps along the important trunk routes sealed within five years. At the same time the extension of dustless surfacing on the local highways will receive energetic attention.

Everything possible will be done on the highways to the end of safety, comfort, and economy of transport.

The principal works carried out in the various districts are as follows:—

The Whangarei district experienced an extremely wet winter, the highest known annual rainfall being recorded, and this had disastrous effects on road-surfaces and foundations. The summer months have been devoted to restoring the damage as far as possible, particularly on the State highways. This has included the sub-draining and patching of 40 miles of bituminous surfaces, 6½ miles being completely resealed.

A substantial bridge programme has again been carried out, a total of 1,300 ft. being erected, including an overbridge at Whakapara railway-crossing. The Tangiteroria Bridge, 610 ft. long, is 60 per cent. complete, and the 2-mile western approach is nearing completion. A total of twenty-one bridges and large culverts were completed or are in progress.