

At Lake Pukaki the outlet sluices are complete, and some storage of lake water has been achieved as a result of construction of the up-stream coffer-dam behind which the main dam will be built. The stored water is being released as required during the winter for the Waitaki Power-station. A large quantity of overburden has been stripped from the dam-site and 80,000 cubic yards have been excavated from the spillway-site.

Lower down on the Waitaki River, investigation work is going ahead at the proposed site for a dam at Black Jack's Point.

Investigations have been prosecuted vigorously in the Clutha River Gorge immediately above Roxburgh with the object of proving a suitable site for the dam and ancillary construction for the proposed Clutha River Development.

## HIGHWAYS

Last year's Budget gave details of the financial position of the Main Highways Account, and indicated the Government's intention of granting relief to the Main Highways Board from payment of interest and loan repayment, interest alone having reached over £486,000 per annum on the then existing debt, apart from interest on any further loan-moneys required for new capital works. To give effect to this proposal, legislation was passed during the year abolishing the Main Highways Account, and in future highways are to be maintained by funds provided by a vote out of the Consolidated Fund, and moneys for capital work are provided by a separate vote out of the Public Works Account. The powers of the Main Highways Board regarding control of expenditure out of the two new votes has not been varied in any way.

Further legislation passed during the year in the form of the Public Works Amendment Act, 1947, made provision for the declaration of motor-ways, and these limited-access highways, some of which are already under construction, will be of great benefit to the community and one of the most important milestones in the development of the road transport of the Dominion. They will provide safe and more economic transport, and will in this way pay for themselves in a few years after being brought into use.

With a view to assisting some local authorities and in order to help round off the State highways system, the Main Highways Board, with my approval, classified 1,330 miles of main highways as State highways as from 1st April, 1948. As a result of this further length of State highways the whole of the cost of construction and maintenance, in accordance with the standard prescribed by the Board, will from the date of classification be the sole responsibility of the State.

The activities of the Main Highways Board for the past financial year are described in its annual report, which is attached to this statement.

Considerable progress has been made in overtaking the arrears of maintenance that occurred during the war years and in carrying out improvements to the existing highways system. I am pleased to be able to record an extension of dustless surfacing during the year over a length of 205 miles, and this work will be continued on the more heavily trafficked highways where the dust nuisance creates danger conditions, especially during the holiday season.

The heavier and larger vehicles now being used to transport goods and passengers and the increasing numbers of such vehicles are causing great concern to the Board and the Engineers of my Department. Previously, highways foundations and surfaces were not constructed to cater for such heavy transport, which was generally carried by rail or coastal steamer. Except on the very best of our foundations, this heavy and continuous haulage of goods is severely damaging the surface of our highways, and the cost per mile of new construction to cater for this extra loading will naturally show a substantial increase in future highway costs. There is need for greater co-operation between the roading authorities and the transport-controlling authorities, and it is my intention to foster this co-operation as much as possible in the future.