

APPENDIX D

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAIN HIGHWAYS BOARD

The Hon. MINISTER OF WORKS, Wellington.

SIR,—

In accordance with the requirements of section 24 of the Main Highways Act, 1922, the Main Highways Board has the honour to submit its twenty-fourth annual report for presentation to Parliament. The report covers the period 1st April, 1947, to 31st March, 1948.

GENERAL

The present length of main highways maintained or subsidized by the Board is 12,468 miles, and particulars of expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1948, as well as a detailed statement of the position of various works, are shown later in this report. Of the total length of main highways, 3,978 miles have been classified as State highways.

The total expenditure under vote "Highways Maintenance," which includes bridge renewals and fixed charges, amounted to £3,157,889.

Under vote "Highways Construction" the total expenditure was £1,411,030, giving a grand total of £4,568,919, as compared with a total expenditure of £3,031,250 for the year immediately preceding.

The registration of motor-vehicles showed an increase over the previous year's figures, and the petrol consumption was the highest yet recorded for any one single year.

The length of new sealing is 182 miles, together with 64 miles of priming coats, making a total of 246 miles of new work. Part of this was carried out on deviations and reconstructed sections of the older sealed highways, so that in consequence the net increase in dustless surfacing is 205 miles. This makes a Dominion total of 3,923 miles, or 31·5 per cent. of the highway system. In addition to the above, a length of 340 miles of existing sealed surfaces received a maintenance coat.

The length of new bridging was 2,664 lineal feet, compared with 3,102 lineal feet for the previous year. Additional Bailey bridging-material which the Board had on order arrived during the year and helped materially to restore communications that had been severed by storm damage or other causes.

LEGISLATION

Section 3 of the Finance Act (No. 2), 1947, caused an alteration in the accounts and financial liability of the Board, having removed the liability for interest on past loans totalling £12,159,168, and made further expenditure over and above revenue free grants—that is, amounts on which no interest is payable by the Board.

The Government has agreed that the amount to be provided each year to the Board will not be less than the amount that would have been available under the old system.

The Public Works Amendment Act, 1947, made provision for the declaration as a motor-way of any public highway, whether then actually constructed or not. This is expected to prove of great benefit to the community in the years that lie ahead. More information regarding these motor-ways appears in a later part of this report.