

*Traffic Accidents and Breaches.*

The primary object of the law relating to traffic generally, and in particular to motor-vehicles, is the protection of the public *qua* pedestrians and *qua* motorists. With the number of motor accidents and the death roll therefrom assuming bigger numbers each year, there is a danger that regulations will be relied upon more and more as a panacea for all traffic ills. Care must be taken that what is a means is not regarded in the light of an end. Attention has been directed, and rightly so, to the building-up of a code of traffic laws; but the large number of cases for breaches thereof that now occupy the Courts suggest that, in addition to keeping the laws up to date, future efforts should be concentrated firstly upon educating the motorist and the pedestrian as to traffic dangers and proper methods of minimizing them, and, secondly, upon a more complete and efficient system of enforcement of the laws.

In Britain the Ministry of Transport and local bodies are closely associated with a "safety first" organization whose objects include, *inter alia*, the education of the public in the traffic dangers. Its activities are widely spread, and are going on all the time, the problems being attacked from every possible angle. An important branch of activity is that directed to the education of the school-children. It is inevitable that a closer grasp of traffic questions by all sections of the community would react to the public benefit. Any expenditure in the direction of educating the public in every avenue possible would yield a rich harvest in a more satisfactory administration of the laws, and in a lower annual loss of life and limb, as well as in a lower aggregate of loss through damage to property.

One of the recommendations of the Traffic Accident Conference previously referred to had reference to the institution of a similar "safety" movement in New Zealand, and steps are being taken with this object in view.

A further recommendation of the Conference had reference to the second problem—namely, a more complete and efficient enforcement of the traffic laws. The proposals in this recommendation are being fully investigated, more particularly from the viewpoint of expense, and a report will be presented to the Government with recommendations as soon as possible.

Some interesting statistics relating to traffic matters follow:—

STATISTICAL DATA.

(i) CONVICTIONS.

(a) *Comparisons since 1923.*

The following figures are reproduced from page 255 of the 1930 Year-book, and they represent the convictions in the Magistrates' Courts in the Dominion during the calendar years 1923–1929 for breaches of traffic regulations: Calendar year 1923, 8,521 convictions; 1924, 8,759; 1925, 11,993; 1926, 14,184; 1927, 15,279; 1928, 15,651; 1929, 16,767.

Under the system of classification formerly in use the great majority of breaches of traffic laws were classed as breaches of by-laws. Consequent on the passing of the Motor-vehicles Act, 1924, a partial change was made in that year, and under a new system of classification adopted in 1926 all such offences were removed from the by-laws class, which has now sunk to insignificant proportions. Approximately 2,000 should be added to the above figures for 1923 and 1924 to make them comparable with those for subsequent years.

(b) *Classification of Convictions, 1929.*

The following table shows a classification of the convictions for traffic offences during the calendar year 1929, in the four principal cities and the whole Dominion:—

Traffic Offences.	Convictions in Magistrates' Courts.					
	Auckland City.	Wellington City.	Christchurch City.	Dunedin City.	Total.	Dominion Total.
(1) Negligent driving causing death*						
(2) Negligent driving endangering human life*						
(3) Unlawfully converting vehicle to own use ..	23	38	43	11	115	268
(4) Drunk in charge of motor-vehicle .. ..	45	34	27	10	116	418
(5) Drunk in charge of other vehicle .. ..	2	2	7	1	12	60
(6) Excessive speed in motor-vehicle .. ..	98	196	284	26	604	1,609
(7) Negligent or dangerous driving in motor-vehicle	877	394	379	153	1,803	3,291
(8) Riding bicycle on footpath .. ..	24	4	404	31	463	777
(9) Negligent and dangerous driving in other vehicle	8	9	12	1	30	67
(10) Breaches of regulations for the lighting of vehicle	483	249	914	161	1,807	4,164
(11) Offences relating to registration, licensing of motor-vehicles	408	366	582	208	1,564	3,232
(12) Breaches of parking regulations .. ..	504	476	280	166	1,426	1,734
(13) Other traffic offences .. ..	164	131	231	105	631	1,147
Totals .. ..	2,636	1,899	3,163	873	8,571	16,767
Deduct non-motor offences—						
Drunk in charge of other vehicle .. ..	2	2	7	1	12	60
Riding bicycle on footpath .. ..	24	4	404	31	463	777
Negligent and dangerous driving other vehicles ..	8	9	12	1	30	67
Breaches, lighting vehicle (one-third of total) ..	161	83	304	54	602	1,388
Totals .. ..	195	98	727	87	1,107	2,292
Grand totals (motors only) ..	2,441	1,801	2,436	786	7,464	14,475

\* These offences (1 and 2) are generally finally tried in the Supreme Court, for which the classifications are somewhat different. For negligent driving causing death there were 8 Supreme Court convictions in the Dominion in 1930, and for negligent driving endangering human life there were no convictions.