

Wanganui Group, including Wanganui County, Patea County, and Waitotara County.
Wairarapa Group, including Masterton County, Wairarapa South County, Featherston County, Eketahuna County, Pahiatua County, Akitio County, Mauriceville County, and Castlepoint County.
Marlborough Group, including Marlborough County, Awatere County, and Blenheim Borough.
Nelson Group, including Waimea County, Richmond Borough, and Motueka Borough.
South Canterbury Group, including Mackenzie County, Geraldine County, Levels County, Waimate County, Geraldine Borough, Temuka Borough, Waimate Borough, and Pleasant Point Town District.

The Board has also recently agreed to subsidize the cost of painting and maintaining white centre-lines on black road-surfaces, the rate of subsidy for such work to be the same rate as for the time being prevails for ordinary maintenance. This work will no doubt be highly appreciated by the travelling public, and should have a beneficial effect in reducing accident risk.

EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE.

A great deal of work was carried out in the Nelson and West Coast districts on the restoration of damage caused by the earthquake of the 17th June, 1929. The total expenditure for the year was £108,320. The expenditure on restoration work in the same districts for the year ending 31st March, 1930, was £86,878, making a total expenditure to the 31st March, 1931, of £195,198. It is anticipated that a further sum of £30,000 will be required during the current financial year. The expenditure for the past two years was made up as follows:—

	1929-30.	1930-31.	Total.
	£	£	£
Nelson-Westport	51,907	44,539	96,446
Murchison-Reefton	11,652	5,685	17,337
Westport-Karamea	15,936	55,937	71,873
Various small items on other main highways ..	7,383	2,159	9,542
	86,878	108,320	195,198

The Nelson-Westport Main Highway through the Buller Gorge was re-opened to traffic on the 1st November, 1930. The highway between Westport and Karamea was reopened on the 1st April, 1931, but severe floods and slips on the 3rd April blocked the road again for some weeks.

On the 3rd February, 1931, the disastrous earthquake in the Hawke's Bay District involved the Board in heavy liabilities. The principal damage was in respect of several large bridges, most of which, however, would have required to have been renewed within a comparatively few years. Most of the highways in the vicinity of Napier were only blocked for a comparatively short time. The worst slips occurred on the Napier-Wairoa Main Highway, but even on this road traffic was restored within a few days. The total estimated cost of rebuilding the damaged bridges and of restoring the highways to their previous condition is approximately £100,000. Up to the 31st March, 1931, a sum of £7,473 was spent by the Board.

PURCHASE OF PLANT.

The purchasing, and hiring of plant to local authorities on the hire-purchase system has been continued. The total value of plant purchased during the year under this system was £15,878, making a grand total value since the scheme was inaugurated of £155,694. Of this sum, £99,818 has been recovered from local authorities, leaving a balance outstanding of £55,876.

The following list shows the plant hired to local authorities from the 31st March, 1930, to the 31st March, 1931: Power graders, 5; road-rollers, 3; motor-lorries, 11; tractors, 4; tractor-scoop, 1; tar-boilers, 2.

In addition to the above, the Board purchased the following plant for its own use at a total cost of £7,514: Power graders, 4; motor-lorries, 6; road-planers, 2; tractors, 2; portable conveyer, 1; oil-engines, 2, &c.

As mentioned in last year's report, the periodical payments being made to the Board by local authorities for plant purchased on their behalf are now sufficient to finance all new purchases under the scheme, so that it is unnecessary to utilize ordinary revenue for this purpose.

TESTING OF HIGHWAY MATERIALS.

The Petrological Laboratory has continued to carry out the standard tests on roadmaking-materials. The testing of samples of tar, road-oil, bitumen, bituminous emulsions, and bituminous concrete was efficiently undertaken as usual by the Dominion Analyst, Wellington. A core drilling machine for concrete pavements was purchased, and has been operated for some considerable time. The results of compression tests carried out on the samples bored from the various pavements laid have been most satisfactory.

EXAMINATION OF FOREMEN AND OVERSEERS EMPLOYED ON ROAD-CONSTRUCTION.

The sixth examination of foremen and overseers for the purpose of issuing certificates of competency was held on the 11th August, 1931. Ninety-one candidates sat for the examination as compared with twenty-six, fifty, fifty-two, forty-eight, and eighty-four respectively in previous years. The marking of the papers has not yet been completed, and consequently the results are not available.