

PLANT AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT.

Although the use of construction plant upon public works has been considerably reduced since the necessity arose for keeping large numbers of men employed upon relief works, it has been found necessary in many cases to introduce power-driven plant upon work in wet places and upon laborious jobs outside the scope of manpower or in cases wherein it would have been unreasonable to apply relief labour.

A considerable quantity of construction plant has also been utilized upon standard works in hand during the year, the capital cost of the whole of the construction plant in use, including that used upon relief works and road maintenance works this year being approximately £456,000.

The major construction works upon which plant has been used during the year are: Waitaki hydro-electric works; Otarehua and Omakau irrigation works; New Balclutha River Bridge; Tawa Flat Railway Deviation works; Arapuni hydro-electric works; and the Wairoa River Bridge, Hawke's Bay.

No new plant items other than a few replacement motor-vehicles have been purchased for the use of the Department during the year, but a considerable quantity of surplus plant available from the Department's closed works has been sold, the total price realized for this being £6,559 13s. 6d., which is a very satisfactory figure.

As a result of co-operation with other Government Departments, arrangements have been made to transfer a number of surplus plant items, thus preventing some expenditure of Government funds upon new plant required by those Departments.

The closest control has been maintained over the cost and use of motor-vehicles, both cars and light runabout trucks, for departmental purposes. The number of vehicles in commission has been reduced by fourteen to a total of 297, and the total annual expenditure on this service has decreased by £6,837 compared with the previous year.

Plant of all descriptions has been hired during the year to local bodies, and to small syndicates and co-operative parties operating upon mining ventures and petty contracts that have tended to ease the drain upon unemployment-relief funds, due encouragement by way of reasonable hire rates having been given by the Department in all cases.

Annual mechanical inspections have been made of all passenger-carrying motor-vehicles throughout New Zealand for the Transport Department, and when all of the conditions provided for protection the safety of the travelling public were met certificates of fitness were supplied to enable the issue of licenses.

Mechanical work of an advisory nature has been done for local bodies and for a number of Government Departments, including Stores Control Board, Native Department, Naval Department, Lands Department, Mental Hospital Department, Department of Agriculture, Scientific and Industrial Research Department, Cook Islands, and Samoan Administration.

As appendices to this statement honourable members will find full details of the principal works carried out by the Department, together with reports of the Engineer-in-Chief, the Chief Electrical Engineer, the Government Architect, and the Main Highways Board.
