

It is gratifying to note that as a result of the Department's efforts in this connection a contract has been let to the lowest New Zealand tenderer at a lesser price than that of the imported foreign grader. This action has also resulted in a number of New Zealand artisans being now employed upon the work, and 65 per cent. of the cost of the machines retained in this Dominion, whilst the balance of 35 per cent. represents materials indented, principally, from the British Empire.

Similar action has been taken by the Department regarding the manufacture in New Zealand of road-planers, which hitherto were indented from the United States of America, the only source of supply previously, and, to date, contracts have been let to different New Zealand firms for the manufacture and delivery of ten of these machines, eight of which are already in service and proving to be of greater utility and of better construction generally than the imported foreign machines.

The Department introduced several valuable improvements in the design of the road-planer, and upon calling competitive tenders found that the improved machines can be produced in New Zealand at much less cost than was paid for the imported machines.

The standardization of grader and planer blades by the Department, and the obtaining of these in high carbon steel from England on best competitive New Zealand tenders, has resulted in the saving of money to the Government and also to local bodies throughout the Dominion.

Efforts to sell surplus plant during the year resulted in the return of the sum of £7,822 upon sales made, and a quantity of plant has been hired at reasonable hire rates to local bodies and private parties requiring plant for short periods.

Numerous contracts for the supply of plant for local bodies and General Government Departments have been prepared and arranged by the Department after calling for tenders in the public press at the four main centres, the resulting construction contracts being supervised and payments made by my Department.

Mechanical inspections, and the issue of certificates of fitness for all licensed passenger-carrying motor-buses and service cars throughout New Zealand have been carried out during the year on behalf of the Transport Department, and the portable weighing equipment used by local-body and Main Highways Board Inspectors in checking overloading upon the highways is periodically tested, adjusted, and certified by my Department as a security in obtaining convictions against offenders. This latter work was previously done by the agents in Australia.

The Department's motor-vehicles have been maintained efficiently, and the total all-in running costs per mile of both cars and trucks continues to show a downward tendency upon the previous year's figures; the running-cost of the cars and light delivery trucks now being down to the satisfactory average figure of 3·20d. per mile, and the trucks (1 ton and upwards) to an average of 5·63d. per mile, as compared with 3·38d. and 6·29d. respectively for the previous year.

It is worthy of note that every  $\frac{1}{10}$ d. saved in the running-cost per mile on the mileage run last year represents a sum of £1,400.

A considerable amount of mechanical work was carried out on behalf of other Government Departments during the year, the major works including plant installations at Baring Head Lighthouse and at Tiritiri Fog-signal Station for the Marine Department, and a complete reorganization of the boiler-house and the installation of a new steam boiler and auxiliaries at the Hamilton Hospital.

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

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