

APPENDIX E.

ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAIN HIGHWAYS BOARD.

The MAIN HIGHWAYS BOARD to the MINISTER OF PUBLIC 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 eleventh annual report for presentation to Parliament.

The report covers the period from the 1st April, 1934, to the 31st March, 1935, though a number of matters referred to are carried beyond the latter date for convenience and completeness of record.

GENERAL.

The present length of main highways maintained or subsidized by the Main Highways Board is 11,560 miles. Formerly the main highways system was classified into primary and secondary groups for the principal reason that secondary highways were subject to subsidies for maintenance works only. However in process of time, and especially during the period of financial stringency, necessary works on secondary highways, other than maintenance in character, had to be faced, and these were subsidized from highways funds in the same way as in the case of primary highways, with the result that no good purpose was being served by retaining the classifications.

The Board has therefore abolished the distinctions between primary and secondary main highways, and throughout this report and appendices the system is dealt with comprehensively.

The total expenditure for the financial year ended on the 31st March, 1935, amounted to £1,943,814, compared with £1,346,026 for the year immediately preceding.

The expenditure from the Revenue Fund for the year 1934–35 was £1,618,331, as compared with £1,147,731 for 1933–34 and £1,185,700 for 1932–33. These figures include a number of charges against the Revenue Fund under the authority of the Finance Acts of 1932, 1932–33, and 1934, which are not directly related to matters covered by the Main Highways Act, 1922.

The amounts expended from the Revenue Fund on actual maintenance of the main highways (including repairing of earthquake and flood damage) during the past four years were as follow: 1931–32, £849,734; 1932–33, £600,324; 1933–34, £674,026; 1934–35, £932,675. The Board's standard subsidy for maintenance works is £3 for £1.

The expenditure from the Construction Fund for the year 1934–35 was £325,483, as compared with the following amounts spent during the preceding four years: 1930–31, £711,250; 1931–32, £384,145; 1932–33, £159,323; 1933–34, £198,295.

It will be noted that last year's expenditure showed a substantial increase over that for the year 1933–34. This is due chiefly to the facts that special attention was given to the important matter of bridge-construction, and that a certain amount of reconstruction and dustless surfacing, which had been deferred for financial reasons, was completed or commenced. It has been the policy of the Board to subsidize sealing-work at the rate of £2 for £1, although preparation of surfaces as apart from sealing usually carried a £3 for £1 subsidy, but the standard rate of assistance for both preparation and sealing was increased to £3 for £1 as from the 1st April, 1934. The higher expenditure has resulted in the reduction of the credit balance in the Board's Revenue Account from £182,000 at the commencement of the year to £34,000 at the end of the year.

In the Board's report for the previous year, reference was made to the anticipated increase in highways operations as the result of further funds becoming available. The Board has pleasure in reporting that, with the ready co-operation of many local authorities, its proposals for the financial year covered by this report were well advanced, as will be seen from the accompanying detailed tabulations.

With the funds allocated for the year 1935–36 improvement of the highways system will be continued. There is still much to be done, but the rate of progress will be dependent on the amount of finance made available.

There are a large number of justifiable works awaiting attention, and these will be considered in due course, according to their order of urgency.

Traffic on main highways shows a steady increase, and the inevitable result will be heavier maintenance and a necessity for safer roads. The principal factors in considering highways improvements are the possibility of reducing maintenance costs and the desirability of providing safe conditions for travelling, according to the nature and amount of traffic.