

An examination of Table No. 20 in the Appendix to this report, which shows comparative statistics relating to fatal motor accidents over a period of six years, directs attention to the following principal points:—

- (i) The number of accidents due to motor-vehicles colliding with pedestrians increased from 26 in 1933-34 to 46 in 1934-35.
- (ii) Collisions between motor-vehicles caused 36 fatal accidents in 1934-35, as against 21 in 1933-34.
- (iii) Collisions between motor-vehicles and bicycles increased from 15 to 23.
- (iv) The accidents showed a more even distribution over the different days of the week as compared with last year.
- (v) An increase in the number of young children killed as a result of motor accidents.
- (vi) Pedestrian fatalities show a sharp increase from 26 to 45, due mainly to an increase in the number of cases where the pedestrian was at fault.
- (vii) Motor-cycles figure in an increased number of accidents.
- (viii) Excessive speed under the heading "Exceeding thirty-five miles per hour" as a cause of accident increased by $2\frac{1}{2}$ times—from 8 to 20.
- (ix) Glaring headlights was the prime cause of accident in 10 instances this year, as compared with 2 last year.
- (x) Intoxication (mild or severe) figured in 18 fatal motor accidents this year, as compared with 4 last year.

The above points emphasize the diversity of causes in motor accidents, which in turn points to the fact that there is no single simple remedy to eliminate them. Such causes as excessive speed, glaring headlights, and intoxication suggest more strict enforcement of the existing laws and salutary punishment for breaches; the number of small children and pedestrians involved in accidents where the motorist was not at fault can only be reduced by proper education of both young and old regarding their conduct on roads used by motor-traffic; the number of collisions between motor-vehicle and motor-vehicle and other vehicles calls for the exercise of judgment and care on behalf of those in control of the vehicles.

In brief, the rising tide of motor accidents may be countered by—

- (a) Improvement of the machinery dealing with the enforcement of the traffic laws; and
- (b) Provision of facilities for educating the pedestrians, the motorists, and the whole public in the practice of "safety first."

The Ministry of Transport in Britain is now pursuing an active policy under both those headings, and it would appear that the time has arrived when further efforts along those lines should be made in the Dominion.

The Department is investigating the position with this object in view.

12. TRAFFIC CONTROL.

(a) TRANSPORT LICENSING ACT, 1931.

No alteration was made during the year in the machinery provided to ensure reasonable observance of the Transport Licensing Act, 1931, and the Department still has the co-operation and assistance of local-body traffic officers in this respect.

These officers, however, carry out numerous and varied duties on behalf of their respective controlling authorities, and this Department can only rely on their assistance where it does not interfere with their other duties.

However, in view of the fact that this legislation is comparatively recent, particularly as regards goods-services, the policy has been largely educational, and special care has been exercised to prevent anything in the nature of unnecessary prosecutions.

Both passenger- and goods-service licensees have in general shown their appreciation of this policy by co-operating with the Department, and confirmation of this is found in the fact that only 53 prosecutions were taken throughout the Dominion, resulting in 49 convictions, with fines totalling £232 5s.

(b) MOTOR-VEHICLES ACT, 1924, AND AMENDMENTS.

Arising out of the meeting of traffic officers, mentioned in last year's report, a Dominion-wide check-up was made on all motor-vehicles for defective brakes and glaring headlights.

Every facility was given drivers to have these two items of equipment adjusted to comply with the regulations before any attempt was made to stop vehicles on the road. The response from local authorities, the automobile associations, and the motorists themselves was remarkable, and the press provided wide-spread publicity to the proposed check. In fact, as soon as they were aware of their responsibilities many thousands of motorists (wholly on their own initiative) had the brakes and lights on their vehicles overhauled and adjusted at garages.

The final figures, however, revealed that 70 per cent. of the vehicles on the road could not comply with the very reasonable standard of efficiency required by the regulations, indicating clearly the necessity for the action taken; the roads should now be definitely safer as a result from the check-up, which incidentally afforded an invaluable means of impressing upon each motorist his individual responsibility in respect of his own vehicle.

Similar checks are to be made at regular intervals, and, by utilizing the experience already gained, these checks will be carried out with a minimum of inconvenience to drivers.