

(c) TRAFFIC OFFENCES.

It is not generally realized that convictions for traffic offences now represent approximately 30 per cent. of the total convictions in the Magistrates' Courts. For the calendar year 1930 the number of convictions for traffic offences numbered 18,145, but this number steadily declined for various reasons to 14,136 in 1933. The following summary shows the comparisons of the principal offences for which convictions were recorded during the last five years for which figures are available.

Class of Offence.	Calendar Year.				
	1929.	1930.	1931.	1932.	1933.
Registration, &c., of vehicles	3,232	3,678	4,184	4,521	4,337
Lighting of vehicles	4,164	3,965	2,557	3,406	3,661
Negligent or dangerous driving	3,291	3,923	3,109	2,693	2,314
Excessive speed	1,609	2,120	2,084	2,052	1,428
Parking regulations	1,734	1,836	1,049	949	694
Other	2,737	2,623	2,152	1,983	1,702
Totals	16,767	18,145	15,135	15,604	14,136

These figures give some idea of the magnitude of the problem of traffic enforcement in the Dominion. They also indicate that the number of registration, &c., offences shows an increasing tendency, while most of the other main classes shown separately show decreases over the period covered.

(d) NEED FOR UNIFORMITY IN TRAFFIC CONTROL.

The development of motor traffic during recent years in the Dominion, and in every other country where the motor-vehicle has developed, has directed attention to the fact that local-body boundaries have lost their significance in so far as this traffic is concerned. The general improvements in both roads and vehicles have widened the scope of motor traffic so much that it may now be described as being national rather than local in its main characteristics. This change in character from local to national has brought with it several changes in the relationship between the General Government and local government and motor traffic. For example, the old system of registration and licensing by local authorities has been replaced by a central system operated by the General Government, and the old system whereby taxing-powers were vested in local authorities has been replaced by a uniform national system.

In the direction of by-laws dealing with the control of motor traffic and the control exercised over motor traffic, however, the Dominion still has what may be described as an essentially local system. That is to say, local authorities have independent powers to make by-laws dealing with traffic and have their own traffic officials. The chief disadvantages which this system causes are disturbances to the free flow of traffic, the confusion which arises when each motorist is required to become acquainted with hundreds of different rules and regulations, and the varying degrees of efficiency and severity or otherwise with which the laws are enforced.

All these disadvantages point to the one central fact that motor traffic has long since outgrown a local system of traffic control.

At the Seventh Congress of the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses held in 1934, at which countries throughout the world were represented, the question of traffic control occupied an important part. After full consideration the Conference adopted the following resolution:—

“The most important condition precedent for the safety of traffic is the codification, on as definite lines as possible, of the traffic regulations, which must be clear and simple. These regulations must be uniform throughout the whole country, and local deviations should only be allowed on a very restricted scale and only with the permission of the central authorities; even then attention must be drawn to them by means of special signs.”

This resolution not only shows that the local system of traffic control is inadequate for modern motor traffic, but also suggests that adequate standards of safety can only be secured through a unified national system of all traffic regulations and traffic control.

(e) DRIVERS' HOURS.

This has been the subject of much comment from time to time, and there has been agitation on the part of various bodies for regulation and control of drivers' hours. There is no doubt that in many cases road accidents have been caused by truck-drivers falling asleep or becoming less alert as a result of excessive periods of hours at the wheel. Some form of control is desirable from the point of view of—

- (a) The establishment of some form of competitive parity which will make it impossible for “owner-driven” motor transport subject to long hours and low wages to undermine the higher standards of employment enjoyed by employees in other forms of transport; and
- (b) The prevention of accidents.