

6. WAR MEASURES, ROAD TRANSPORT.

The action taken in connection with road transport falls under two main headings—firstly, the organization and control of the national transport system in order to meet any necessity arising out of direct enemy action ; and, secondly, the organization of the road-transport industry for the purpose of eliminating waste, promoting efficiency, and conserving petrol.

A. MEETING DIRECT ENEMY ACTION.

(1) NATIONAL.

The organization of the national transport system under this heading was under consideration for many months before the outbreak of war. Machinery exists to enable immediate consideration to be given to the whole transport system in the event of any emergency arising.

As regards road transport, there is a complete and up-to-date register relating to the ownership and location of every motor-vehicle in the country. In addition to a central national register, there is a local register in each town.

(2) LOCAL.

Under the Emergency Precautions Scheme, which comes under the jurisdiction of the Internal Affairs Department, a network working through local authorities now covers the Dominion. This machinery deals with the local problems only, and in the case of wide-scale enemy action would be utilized in conjunction with the national machinery.

New Zealand is in a fortunate position as regards motor transport and roads. Our present fleet of motor-vehicles in the Dominion could carry just under two million people at the one time. Also, the main roads have recently been improved, and particularly those running out from the four main cities are now in a position to cope with any emergency.

B. ORGANIZATION OF THE ROAD-TRANSPORT INDUSTRY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ELIMINATING WASTE, PROMOTING EFFICIENCY, AND CONSERVING PETROL.

(1) MACHINERY TO SECURE CO-ORDINATION AND REDUCE WASTE.

Immediately on the outbreak of war, expert committees comprising representatives of the road-transport industry, the Railways Department, and the Transport Department were set up for the purpose of reporting to the Minister of Transport on proposals for promoting the co-ordination of road and rail transport and eliminating all forms of waste. There is one national and twenty-one district committees. Up to the present their activities have been confined, in general, to reporting on co-ordination schemes and proposals submitted to them by the road-transport industry.

(2) EXTENSION OF TRANSPORT ACT TO TOWN CARRIERS AND TAXIS.

The Transport Act was amended to bring town carriers, taxi-services, and certain classes of privately-owned trucks under the Act as from 22nd September, 1940. This means that all forms of public motor transport and, with the exception of farmers' trucks, those ancillary trucks which run for more than thirty miles alongside the railway are now subject to control by Transport Licensing Authorities.

(3) AMALGAMATIONS, MERGERS, ETC., TO IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATION OF ROAD TRANSPORT.

Twelve organizations of this nature have been formed during recent months and are actually operating. The number of goods-service operators concerned totalled 126 and involved nearly 360 vehicle authorities.

One merger in Marlborough has over the first period of six months saved 80,000 miles and 7,900 gallons of petrol compared with the figures of each shareholder when operating individually.

A feature of the amalgamations in Canterbury is that all the recent increases in transport costs have been absorbed by the mergers in increased efficiency. In no case have any increases been made in the charges to the public.

(4) REVIEW OF ROAD SERVICES PARALLELING RAILWAYS FOR THIRTY MILES OR MORE.

Some twenty-two services, involving 60 trucks, are being negotiated with under this heading. Up to the present, the purchase of four of these services has been completed, while two others—Napier-Wairoa-Gisborne Transport and New Plymouth Daily Transport, Ltd.—are on the point of completion.

(5) REVIEW OF FREIGHT CHARGES.

A comprehensive review is being made of all freight charges fixed under the Transport Act, the object being to encourage and assist all forms of national production, particularly the production of primary products.

(6) COMPULSORY MEMBERSHIP OF ASSOCIATION.

Regulations were gazetted on 14th February, 1940, making it compulsory for all licensees under the Transport Act to become members of the appropriate association of transport operators in their districts. This step represents an important phase in the Government's plan for the organization of all public motor transport. Its aim is to bring about unity in the industry for the purpose, firstly, of effecting co-ordination by the elimination of wasteful overlapping and the reduction of empty running, and, secondly, of assisting in securing observance of the provisions of licenses issued under the Transport Act.