

## APPENDIX E

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### NINETEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAIN HIGHWAYS BOARD

The Hon. the Minister of 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 nineteenth annual report for presentation to Parliament.

The report covers the period 1st April, 1942, to 31st March, 1943.

*General.*—The restriction of construction and improvement works has been even more in evidence this year than last. The shortage of man-power has resulted in the virtual stoppage of urgent bridge renewals which had been intended for completion, though a few were disposed of early in the year.

The length of bridging completed amounts to 972 ft., compared with 3,513 ft. last year. There is a considerable leeway to make up in respect of bridge renewals, including many large structures which have been given extended life at the expense of high maintenance costs. The reconstruction of these bridges will have to be undertaken just as soon as man-power and materials can be made available.

With regard to surfacing, very little except maintenance sealing has been carried out, the increase in dustless highways being 24 miles, which is approximately one-third of last year's figure, and one-tenth of that of the previous year. The total mileage is now 3,564, or 28·8 per cent. of the highway system.

Eighty-three miles of sealed surfaces were renewed, compared with 103 last year, both of which must be regarded as inadequate in relation to the total mileage of dustless highways, which under normal conditions would now require about 400 miles of resealing annually to maintain them in proper order. The deterioration of surfaces now proceeding is evidenced by the amount of patching required in various districts, and this cannot be considered a satisfactory form of maintenance. A large part of this work is undoubtedly due to military traffic, but with a return to anything approaching normal conditions the usual traffic would have much the same effect, and, of course, a greater mileage would be involved.

A considerable proportion of the recent sealing has been done with tar, owing to shortage of bitumen, and this may be expected to have an appreciably shorter life than the latter material.

The cost of bituminous road-binders has more than doubled during the past three years, nevertheless their adhesive and lasting qualities make them preferable to tar where important highways and heavy traffic are concerned. Other costs have also advanced considerably, the net result of which is that sealing-work can only be done to about half the former extent on a fixed appropriation.

It is acknowledged that during the past year assistance from the War Expenses Account has enabled some additional work to be done in the form of surface repairs necessitated by military traffic, but it is, of course, preferable, owing to seasonal and other conditions, that the amount of finance available for expenditure by the Board should be made known well in advance, so that suitable preparations for the various works can be made.

As anticipated in last year's report, the Board's revenue for the year was not sufficient to cover the cost of maintenance and fixed charges, and a further decrease in revenue is expected during the current year. This position should not be allowed to continue, and some provision should be made whereby it will not be necessary to borrow capital funds for expenditure on maintenance works.

*Personal.*—In consequence of the death of Mr. C. J. Talbot, Fairlie, who had been a member of the Board for sixteen years, Mr. F. R. Flatman, Woodbury, Geraldine, was appointed to be a member of the Board on the 28th July, 1942. Mr. Flatman is one of the members representing the New Zealand Counties Association, and has been a member of the Association for over twenty years.

It is with deep regret that the Board records the death during the year of two former members of the Board, in the persons of Mr. C. J. McKenzie and Mr. A. J. Baker, the former on the 5th October, 1942, and the latter on the 16th February, 1943. Both of these gentlemen gave valuable service to the Board over a number of years, Mr. Baker having been a member for seven years and Mr. McKenzie twelve years, during four of which he occupied the office of Chairman.

*Works.*—The principal works carried out in the various districts during the year are briefly as follows:—

In the Whangarei district the Waiaruhe (Black) Bridge, near Pakaraka, and two large culverts have been completed, and work is about to recommence on two other bridges in this area.

The 630 ft. Titoki Bridge, in Whangarei County, a contract for which was let early last year, has made slow progress, but work on the piles and cylinders is now nearing completion.