

The system whereby the Board has purchased plant on behalf of local authorities, thereby obtaining the best terms, and allowing the local authorities to pay for the same under the hire-purchase system, has given great satisfaction.

In addition to assisting rural local authorities in accordance with the spirit of the first Act, assistance has been extended first to small boroughs, and later to all boroughs, and even the large cities obtain a considerable amount of assistance from the funds derived from the petrol-tax.

The attached sheet gives an indication of the work accomplished by the Board since it commenced actual operations.

The Board now has in course of construction a large mileage of high-class pavements, including many miles of concrete pavement on roads radiating from Christchurch, as well as up-to-date pavements extending radially from most of the large centres of population.

#### RETURN SHOWING MAIN-HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION WORK COMPLETED 1924 TO 1928.

			Formation and Widening.	Gravelling and Metalling.	Tar and Bitumen Sealing.	Bitumen Macadam (Penetration).	Bitumen Concrete.	Portland Cement Concrete.	Bridges.
			M. ch.	M. ch.	M. ch.	M. ch.	M. ch.	M. ch.	Feet.
1924-25	..	..	18 60	62 76	6 19	2 72	1 55	..	2,434
1925-26	..	..	45 10	88 12	16 00	45 26	3 50	6 24	5,168
1926-27	..	..	173 59	150 65	35 80	38 30	11 63	15 70	6,408
1927-28	..	..	173 20	133 22	83 16	33 52	0 14	6 16	7,760
1924-28	..	..	410 69	435 15	140 43	120 20	17 22	28 30	21,770

#### IRRIGATION.

The policy was continued of providing water for irrigation to all lands the owners of which were prepared to enter into binding agreements to pay to the Government the cost of storing, transporting, and distributing irrigation-water, and which were, in the opinion of the Government's agricultural advisers, sufficiently promising to justify the expectation of ultimate success.

The lands of the arid area in Central Otago were examined, the soil survey in great detail being a most valuable portion of the investigation.

Considerable assistance to settlers in the dry belt was also rendered by the establishment of a demonstration irrigation farm on which the suitability of various crops, kinds and methods of farming, are being tried out under the direction of the Department of Agriculture, assisted by local committees of practical farmers, together with engineers of the Public Works Department.

The benefits derived from irrigation are manifested in the new era of prosperity which has commenced in Central Otago—the increased business on the railways, larger carrying-capacity of the land, and incidentally increased revenue to the Government in the sale of water. The effects of the water on the land, the suitability of various crops, the amount of water necessary for economic farming on land of varying quality, the marketing of produce from irrigated areas, and all the other complicated questions connected with the development of a new system of farming have been the subject of continual study by the Government and its officers. The material progress attained has been as follows:—

Length of main canals in 1921	..	..	..	M.	ch.
Length of main canals in 1928	..	..	..	299	29
Increase	..	..	..	213	54
Length of distributaries in 1921	..	..	..	91	78
Length of distributaries in 1928	..	..	..	245	67
Increase	..	..	..	153	69

Number of schemes completed and under construction in 1921, seven—viz., Steward Settlement, Otekaike, Ida Valley, Galloway, Manuherikia—Alexandra—Clyde (No. 1), Ardour, and Earnsclough (Fraser River).