

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

A MOTORING CAUSERIE

By SANCHO

*Car being assisted across the Waimakariri River
at Bealey on the road to the West Coast Road
from Christchurch*

J. Anderson, photo, Christchurch



THE Wellington Automobile Club is fortunate in having Sir Joseph Ward as its president, and at the half-yearly meeting of the club recently Sir Joseph touched on a matter of general interest to all motorists. It was his opinion, he said, that motorists should strive to have the speed law made uniform throughout the Dominion. Curiously enough this was a matter the Wellington delegates brought up at last year's meeting of the North Island Motor Union, but the other delegates unceremoniously threw it out instantaneously. Wairarapa declared it a retrograde proposal, that should never have been introduced, and Auckland was also against it. The Union, in short, held that motorists should fight against any speed limit at all. There is not the least sign of any such campaign by the Motor Union against speed limits, and the upshot seems to be that that body sits back and does nothing while Bumbledom from one end of the country to the other fixes any old speed limit it happens to feel like, with the result that the legal speed varies in every different town, village, and county, and none of us on tour have the least idea of where we are so far as legal speed is concerned.

THERE is not the least chance in the world of the Motor Union having speed limits abolished, but it might do excellent service by dropping this chimerical idea and taking up Sir Joseph Ward's suggestion. As it happens, no new legislation would be needed, for the Government has the power under the Motor Vehicles Act of last year to make regulations providing uniform speed limits throughout the country over-riding local by-laws. In America last year the National Motor Vehicle Conference recommended that a uniform speed limit should be fixed throughout the United States on the following basis: In open country, 30 miles per hour; in suburban streets, 20 miles per hour; in urban streets, 15 miles per hour; with the proviso that under no circumstances should the speed be greater than is reasonable and proper, having regard to the use and traffic of the highway, or such as to endanger life and limb or the safety of any property. Streets where the 15-mile limit prevails have to be specially marked in the numerous American States which have adopted these uniform rules, and many have

a further provision for 12 miles an hour past school grounds, hospitals, etc. Uniformity is certainly very badly needed in New Zealand, but, of course, if the Motor Union thinks 30 m.p.h. too low there is no reason against its trying for the Kansas speed limit of 40 m.p.h. in open country. Of the 47 American States only twelve have speed limits of under 30 m.p.h., while ten (in which are located a third of the motor vehicles in the country) have a limit of 35 m.p.h., and 21 have the 30 m.p.h. limit. The 400,000 motor vehicles of Kansas have the privilege of probably the slickest legal travel in the world.

INDUSTRIOUS addition of the official distances scattered over the Highways Board map has revealed the most direct route between Auckland and Wellington as that via Te Kuiti, Taumarunui, Raetihi, and the Parapara road to Wanganui, and thence via Foxton to Wellington. This is nearly forty miles shorter than the route via Mokau and Taranaki—on paper, that is, for it is not the shortest way home when it comes to putting a car across it as it is to-day. The next shortest route, in point of distance, is that via Taihape, Waiouru, Tokaanu, Taupo and Hamilton. This is but a brief five miles longer than the other, and if one went direct without calling at Tokaanu (really a

slight detour) it would be just about the shortest route of all. Now that the Mokau route is metalled right through it will be quite a good idea from every point of view to promote the idea of fixing up the Te Kuiti-Taumarunui-Parapara route so as to be passable in all weathers and to provide comfortable travel. If this is done it will give all motorists in both the northern and southern parts of the island decent access to the Tongariro National Park, which is undoubtedly one of the finest holiday assets this country possesses. At present it is a very bumpy business reaching the Park by road, but the amount of work to be done to provide a reasonably good ride to it is not so prodigious. The road will serve a lot of good farming country, the Parapara part, in fact, taps country with no other access, and this, combined with the fact that it will open the door to happy, healthy days in the park for all of us makes it quite a sound proposition for agitation.

I SEE the Wairarapa Automobile Association is initiating a campaign against the law that the drivers of motor vehicles must stop dead before passing over a railway crossing. This provision the Railway Department thoughtfully brought in for the protection of the public in 1913. Mr. Buddo moved in Parliament to have it struck out of the

Bill, but got no support. It applies only to motor vehicles, but under the older law there is also the provision making it an offence for anyone to be on a crossing when an approaching train or engine is within half-a-mile of the crossing. It would seem, therefore, that the onus is on the Railway Department to provide crossings with a clear view of the railway line for half-a-mile in either direction. Otherwise there is no means by which road traffic can use these crossings in a legal manner except by chance, and we are all made willy-nilly into a nation of law-breakers. People have been hit by trains at crossings where there is no such view of the line, and have (if lucky enough to survive) been prosecuted and fined for being on the line when a train was there. Perhaps if the matter were fought out in the courts it could be established that the Railway Department must either provide the half-mile clear view, or do away with the level crossings where it cannot be provided.

AMERICA is the land of motor-cars, *par excellence*, but it seems that the President of the United States is provided with his official cars in rather a curious manner. There are five cars maintained at the White House. They are all of the same make, but different models. There is a big limousine for the President, an exactly similar one for his Secretary, a laundlet for the President's lady, a special touring car for the Secret Service guard, and a second special touring car for the use of guests at the White House. Since 1909 these cars have come from the same factory. They are not owned by the President, nor by the Government, but are supplied on a rental basis, and are replaced by later models from the same factory as often as wear and tear renders this necessary. If a President takes a fancy to his car on leaving office he buys it, as the late President Wilson did. The extent to which the cars are used may be gauged from the statement by Mr. A. J. Montgomery in the *American Motorist* that the weekly petrol consumption averages forty-four gallons per car. It is said that there is no record of a President being discommoded by a breakdown of an official car on the road.



When the Waimakariri River is in flood cars have to be assisted through the River. Cars at Bealey waiting their turn for a tow.

J. Anderson, photo, Christchurch

Continued on page 60