



Government Tourist Department, photo

Dart Valley, Head of Lake Wakatipu

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## The King's Highway

*A Motoring Gauserie—By Sancho*



"My engineers," said Napoleon, "built the roads over which others rode to glory." He was thinking in terms of war. But to us thinking in terms of peace, these words have a tremendous present-day significance. Our engineers are building the roads over which the nation is riding on to pleasure and happiness, and to new social and workaday opportunity. Unfortunately the engineers in New Zealand have no Napoleon behind them, and their task is slowed down and made a patchwork of loose ends by the timidity of politicians who much prefer doddering on in a rut to clearing the way for the road-makers.

There is a very striking illustration in the vicinity of Wellington of the way the making of good motor roads is delayed by the innumerable weak local bodies with which this country is afflicted. On the outskirts of the city is Makara County, a tiny area which some years back cut itself out of Hutt County in order to gain a bigger Government subsidy. The stupid legislation about subsidies which caused Makara to cut the painter also caused the needless and wasteful subdivision of scores of other counties all over the Dominion.

Well, there is Makara to-day with twelve miles of main highway which was, until a year or two ago, in a shocking state, and on which this tiny county had no money to spend. The motorists bumped and cursed their way over its main road, and the county council grumbled about "foreign" traffic that paid no rates knocking its roads about, and vowed that it was not going to waste its money on outsiders.

A year or two back the Main Highways Board came along and recognised the hopelessness of this pocket-handkerchief county's position—it is like those microscopic German principalities that are flooded every time a house-frau throws out a pail of water. The Highways Board, not having the power to do the necessary thing, and wipe out all the miniature counties without any financial legs to support their

self-importance, did the next best thing. It took over five out of the twelve miles of main highway in the county as a Government road. And what I really started out to write about was the condition of this five miles of road as compared with the other seven miles that the county maintains.

The Makara County's highway is that section of the Wellington-Palmerston road extending from Ngahauranga, four miles out of Wellington, to Paremata. The five miles portion taken over by the Highways Board runs from Paremata southward. Of it, three miles, winding around the shorts of Porirua Harbour, has been reconstructed, widened, and generally improved. But the remaining two miles, from Porirua southwards, has so far simply been maintained. The condition of this two miles is so

excellent and in such marked contrast to the adjoining portion of the highway maintained by the county council, that one naturally wants to know how much more costly it is to maintain. To this the surprising answer is that the good road is costing about half what the bad road costs!

It sounds incredible, especially to one who has ridden over the road. But there it is, the Government has had its two miles in hand for just a year now, and the cost is £343—or £171 10s per mile. Makara's seven miles is costing £2800, or about £370 per mile per annum. It is stated that the stone put on the Government road—it is stone, and not the "rotten rock" used by Makara—is brought from a private quarry, and freight, and every item that the county would have to bear, is included in the Government £171 10s. The only things that make the comparison unfair to the county are that the traffic is heavier on about half of its seven miles than it is on the Government two miles, and also that the Government two miles is in country more open to the sun, and thus not so liable to crack up under winter traffic. Neither of these things, however, suffice to account

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