

MECHANICAL TRANSPORT.

During the past year the work and responsibilities of the Mechanical Transport branch have been increased enormously, consequent upon the very large additions to the M.T. fleet of vehicles.

Orders for the whole of Army's requirements of vehicles were placed overseas late in 1941, but when mobilization was ordered it became necessary to provide immediately vehicles from local sources. Consequently impressment was again resorted to.

New vehicles in stock with distributors were also taken over.

During the year a considerable number of armoured carriers and armoured cars have been produced in New Zealand. Many of these have now been distributed to units and are operating satisfactorily. Minor faults have been observed and have been overcome. Instruction in the operation and maintenance of these vehicles is proceeding, and satisfactory performance is being experienced.

A large number of tanks has been received during the year, together with a proportion of spare parts and equipment, and this has necessitated the setting-up of special store accommodation for the handling of tank equipment.

Army maintenance organizations have been mobilized and equipped as far as possible with tools and equipment for the purpose of maintaining vehicles.

Arrangements have been made with the New Zealand Retail Motor Trade Association to carry out the heavy repair work required on Army vehicles, thus freeing Army repair organizations to cope with lighter jobs and ensure that the maximum number of vehicles are in a roadworthy condition at all times. This arrangement has been found to work satisfactorily to the mutual benefit of the members of the association and the Army Department, and has obviated the necessity of establishing large Army workshops for major repair work, together with the expense of providing these. Heavy work is undertaken in the four main workshops only if other work is up-to-date, but as a general rule this heavy work, including major overhauls, is undertaken by commercial garages.

Originally many vehicles of older types which had already run extremely large mileages were passed over to Army Department from other Government Departments. Some of these vehicles have now reached the end of their useful life and it has been found necessary to set up a Board of Survey in order to determine their disposal. The serviceable parts have been recovered from such vehicles as have been condemned, and these have been taken into use for replacement on other vehicles and for instructional purposes at Schools of Instruction.

A system of traffic control in districts has been instituted, and this has eliminated much unnecessary running of heavy vehicles and results in a considerable saving of petrol. The mobilizing of Provost Companies has enabled this system to work effectively.

As evidence of the efficiency of the Army method of operating vehicles it is pleasing to report that, notwithstanding the increase in the number of vehicles being operated, the number of accidents is rather less in proportion than that previously experienced.

BUILDINGS, WORKS, AND CAMPS.

(a) *Coast Defences.*—A heavy programme was forecast last year, and this has proved to be even more extensive than was then envisaged.

(b) *Brigade Group Camps.*—Consequent upon the recent extensive mobilization of troops it has been necessary practically to double existing accommodation, and several new camps are now under construction.

(c) *Territorial Camps, &c.*—As distinct from the major camps there are many smaller establishments accommodated on racecourses, showgrounds, public reserves, and private properties. Thanks are due to the various clubs, local bodies, &c., for the ready way in which they have co-operated in making their facilities available at short notice, resulting frequently in complete dislocation of their own activities.

(d) *Ranges.*—With the co-operation of rifle clubs throughout the Dominion, a large number of ranges has been taken over by Army and improvements and extensions carried out where necessary. Several new rifle ranges are in the course of construction.

(e) *Magazines.*—The great increase in the stocks of ammunition and explosives now held or coming to hand has called for a very extensive programme of new buildings.

(f) *Portable Huts.*—The great expansion in the mobilized forces during the year, coupled with a growing scarcity of tentage on the one hand and an increasing difficulty in securing adequate labour and materials for permanent construction on the other, made it necessary to explore other avenues for alternative means of housing troops. A light type of hut so designed that it could be fabricated in factories under mass-production methods and erected by inexperienced labour was finally decided upon. Two types of huts are in production—one accommodating four men and the other two.

They thus satisfy the need for conserving many important lines of building material and at the same time provide a rapid and efficient means of accommodating the large numbers of troops now being called up.

(g) *Defence Construction Council.*—In order to correlate the needs of the three fighting services and to ensure that the best possible use was made of available material and man-power resources, a Council of Defence Construction was appointed at the latter end of the period under review, with a Commissioner of Defence Construction as its executive head. Although the Council has not been in operation for very long the results are already apparent in the speeding-up of many works that were previously lagging for want of adequate labour or through difficulties in obtaining certain materials.