

REFUNDS OF DUTY ON MOTOR-SPIRIT.

Under the Motor-spirits Taxation Act, 1927, the work of arranging refunds of duty on motor-spirit used other than as fuel for motor-vehicles in respect of which an annual license fee is payable was deputed to the Registrar of Motor-vehicles. Preliminary work in connection with the carrying-out of the provisions of the Act has been undertaken, and it is hoped that after the experience gained during the first quarter there will be few difficulties which will give cause for concern.

MOTOR TRANSPORT.

The policy of Government in the matter of purchasing vehicles of English manufacture has been continued. When vehicles of a capacity of 1 ton or over have been required English chassis have been purchased. Further English 10 cwt. chassis have been obtained. Motor-cars purchased now are, without exception, of English manufacture. My Department still undertakes the purchasing of motor-vehicles in the behalf of other Departments.

A number of motor-vehicles in the four principal centres belonging to other Departments have been transferred to my Department in accordance with the Public Service garage system, under which Government motor transport, with certain exemptions, is controlled by the Post and Telegraph Department. In this connection it is gratifying to report that it was found possible to reduce the rates for the hire of motor-cars. Despite a slight increase in the charges for lorry transport, the departmental lorry-transport charges still compare very favourably with those of private owners.

Departmental motor-vehicles throughout the Dominion are now inspected at suitable intervals by an officer specially detailed for the work. It is anticipated that such inspection will result in reduced running-costs.

For telegraph-line work it is now the policy to provide 10 cwt. utility trucks instead of motor-cycles with side-cars. It is found that utility trucks are more suitable than combination motor-cycles.

STORES BRANCH.

The reorganization of the Stores Branch, to which reference was made in the report of last year, has now been almost completed. Considerable economy in the purchase and distribution of supplies has resulted, and greater efficiency has been obtained. Methods and staffing have been closely overhauled, and the saving effected amounts to approximately £10,200 per annum.

The annual examination of the stocks by Auditors shows that, compared with the figures for the previous year, excesses have been reduced by 62 per cent. and deficiencies by 44 per cent.

In a commercial concern of the size of my Department stores work constitutes no small part of the organization, and the sum expended annually in replacement of stocks is no mean figure. Inefficient administration and uneconomical methods are reflected in expenditure returns nowhere more readily than in stores work. That the administration is fully alive to the need for strict economy and efficient methods in stores work is evidenced by the results achieved during the year.

BUILDINGS.

The progress of the Dominion is indicated by the necessity for providing at many places additional accommodation for the conduct of post and telegraph business. During the year practically all of the Department's buildings were inspected, and arrangements were made for additions and alterations to be carried out to many of the structures. There is, however, a considerable number of places at which the need for additional accommodation is pressing; but, owing to the expenditure involved, these requirements can be dealt with only in their order of urgency.