to their suitability for use by different classes of motor-lorries. The regulations made in pursuance of this provision give the appropriate road-controlling authorities power to classify roads into the following classes:—

Class.	Gross Weights (Vehicle and Load) allowed.	
	Two-axle Vehicles.	Multi-axle Vehicles.
	Tons.	Tons.
First	10	15
Second	8	10
Third	6½	8
Fourth	4½	6½
Fifth	2½	4½

Prior to the 31st May, 1930, the multi-axled vehicles received preference on first-class roads only, but amending regulations on that day conferred the increased weight allowed on these vehicles as shown in the second column above.

In order to meet exceptional cases and to ensure that the classification may not, by undue inflexibility, inhibit the flow of heavy traffic that is economically necessary, road-controlling authorities may issue permits allowing heavier weights to be carried over any classified road than those provided for in each class above.

Although restrictions of this kind have existed from the earliest times, the necessity for a national scheme was not so acute in the pre-motor days, mainly owing to the relatively slower speeds and lighter weights of horse-drawn traffic and the consequently lower cost of maintenance and construction of roads. The rapid growth of motor transport in New Zealand has been accompanied on the one hand by higher speeds and heavier weights of the traffic units, and on the other by a greater density of traffic on our roads. The combined effect of these developments has been an enormous increase in the expenditure on roads and bridges, which, including maintenance and construction costs as well as interest and sinking-fund charges, now exceeds £8,500,000 per annum.

Great strides have been made in providing road-surfaces to carry motor traffic, but owing to the relatively small population and the comparative youth of the Dominion it would be an economic impossibility to provide the 40,000-odd miles with surfaces capable of carrying the maximum gross loads allowed by the law—viz., 10 tons on two-axled and 15 tons on multi-axled vehicles. As a result New Zealand has had to choose between two courses—(*a*) allowing unrestricted use of all roads by motor-vehicles, subject, of course, to restrictions as to speed, weight, lighting, &c.; or (*b*) restricting the gross loads that might be carried over any given road. The damage to the roads that followed their unrestricted use by motor traffic, and the inordinately high road expenditure resulting therefrom to keep them in reasonably good order, compelled recourse to the second action—viz., the restriction under a scheme of road-classification.

Experience has shown that, where the necessary volume of freights exists, traffic up to the maximum weights allowed by the law develops. In New Zealand it is estimated that this volume is found on approximately 15,000 miles of the total length of the rural roads. When it is considered that there are under 100 miles of rural roads capable of carrying regular 10-ton traffic, it is seen that road-classification is necessary to prevent the destruction of the bulk of the rural roads by a relatively few heavy vehicles.

Road-classification means Lower Real Costs of Transport.

It is true that roads yield certain advantages beyond those attached to the transportation of commodities over them. It is for this reason mainly that the real cost of each transportation service is not paid directly in respect of each such service. Apart from the vehicle costs, which, in the long-run, are met by the recipient of the service, and which in so far as they represent special motor-taxation constitute a proportion of the road costs, the remaining road expenditure is drawn from the general taxpayer and the local ratepayer. During the year ended 31st March, 1930, £8,670,000 was expended in connection with roads, streets, and bridges, the source of the moneys being as follows:—

	Amount.	Percentage of Total.
	£	
General taxpayer	1,146,618	13·18
Local ratepayer	3,130,172	35·96
Special motor-taxation	1,866,647	21·47
Loan	2,557,638	29·39
Total	£8,701,075	100·00

As indicated by the foregoing figures, approximately only 20 per cent. of the annual expenditure on roads is met from special motor-taxation, and therefore incorporated in the direct costs of road transport. The remaining portion of the total bill—excluding, of course, loan-moneys—amounting to just over £4,000,000, is found out of either general or local taxation.