

substantially reduced the continuance of the present policy is certain to be followed by serious results, particularly if the seasons are adverse. The average cost of maintenance per mile per annum since 1924 on the primary and secondary highways and on the whole highway system is shown in the following table :—

Year.				Primary Highways.	Secondary Highways.	Complete System.
				£	£	£
1924-25	..	..	..	51·7	..	51·7
1925-26	..	..	..	73·2	..	73·2
1926-27	..	..	..	111·9	..	111·9
1927-28	..	..	..	119·9	..	119·9
1928-29	..	..	..	125·2	55·5	100·1
1929-30	..	..	..	151·2	88·5	128·6
1930-31	..	..	..	121·4	71·0	103·1
1931-32	..	..	..	115·6	55·3	92·5
1932-33 (estimated)	..	..	..	92·0	50·0	75·0

CONSTRUCTION.

The expenditure on construction for the year 1931-32 dropped by 46 per cent. as compared with the expenditure for the previous year, consequently the results of the Board's operations have been less noteworthy than usual. The town of Ohura was connected up with the rest of the North Island by an all-weather road for the first time in its history. A number of sealing contracts were in hand at the beginning of the financial year, and most of these have been carried to completion.

It is desirable to mention that it has been the aim of the Main Highways Board to carry out as much of its work by the contract system as possible, and that as a result of this consistent policy over a period of eight years a corps of efficient modern road-contracting organizations has become established. These organizations have invested a considerable amount of money in up-to-date plant, and have trained a large body of men as experts in paving-work. As a result, the roading authorities of the country have greatly benefited in reduced prices for work when let by public tender, and in much-improved workmanship. It is to be deplored that the drastic curtailment in the Board's operations has already resulted in the partial breaking-up of these efficient organizations, and there is every reason to believe that in a short time they will completely disappear.

Bridge-construction has also suffered drastic curtailment. Last year the total length of bridges erected was 11,175 lineal feet, while during the year under review only 4,062 lineal feet of bridging was completed. As a result of the last eight years' experience, and also as a result of the information gathered by detailed inspections of over three thousand bridges of the highways, it is considered that the necessary bridge replacements over the next ten years will have to be at the rate of 9,000 lineal feet per annum. This means that the replacements during the past year were 5,000 lineal feet behind requirements. During 1932-33 it is probable that the replacements will be 6,000 ft., or 7,000 ft. behind requirements, so that by the 31st March, 1933, the necessary reconstruction programme will be behind, as already mentioned, by about £250,000.

REVIEW OF PAST OPERATIONS.

The Main Highways Board has now been operating for a period of approximately eight years. A tabulation indicating the extent of the achievements in the way of construction on the highway system is therefore presented :—

Year.		Formation and Widening.	Gravelling and Metalling.	Tar and Bituminous Sealing.	Bituminous Macadam (Penetration).	Bituminous Concrete.	Portland-cement Concrete.	Totals.	Bridges.
		Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Miles.	Ft.
1924-25	..	19	63	6	6	..	..	94	2,434
1925-26	..	45	88	16	45	4	6	204	5,168
1926-27	..	174	151	35	38	12	16	426	6,408
1927-28	..	173	133	83	34	..	6	429	7,760
1928-29	..	224	185	122	51	14	11	607	9,482
1929-30	..	173	179	133	39	31	12	567	7,547
1930-31	..	130	128	95	41	14	9	417	11,175
1931-32	..	139	69	129	32	9	3	382	4,062
Totals	..	1,077	996	619	286	84	63	3,126	54,036