

accident is accompanied by at least twenty non-fatal accidents, these statistics are hardly representative. Arrangements regarding a comprehensive system of statistics covering all except minor motor accidents have been in train for some time now, but the introduction of the scheme is in abeyance at the present time owing to financial stringency.

The results of the analyses of the data relating to fatal motor accidents are given in Table No. 15 of the Appendix. The outstanding points emerging from a comparison of the statistics with those for the previous year are as follows :—

- That there were twenty-five less pedestrian accidents, the detailed figures indicating that both motorist and pedestrians have contributed to this reduction ;
- That collisions of motor-vehicles with motor-vehicles were reduced by forty-six ;
- That accidents due to vehicle being on wrong side of the road are reduced by twenty-nine ;
- That the main reduction in the deaths is in the adult population ;
- That the accidents to private motor-cars are reduced by fifty-seven from last year's figures ;
- That the chief scene of the reductions is indicated to be in the country districts of the North Island.

Outside the administration of the traffic laws, the main factor in the reduction of motor accidents is considered to be the exercise of care by the motorist, pedestrian, and other road-users. To stimulate this aspect of prevention, there has been adopted in other countries, notably Great Britain and the United States of America, systems of accident-prevention propaganda in various forms. In this country good work is being done through various disconnected channels, the Motor Unions in particular being responsible for much fine effort in the schools, and by wireless addresses. There is, however, undoubtedly room for an organization similar to the Safety Leagues of other countries, which would correlate all the activities and attack the accident problem with the concentrated effort which is possible only through special organization.

In view of the interest attaching to motor accidents the following brief resumé is given under the headings of the three main factors in accidents—viz., the driver, the vehicle, and the road.

(1) *The Driver.*

Undoubtedly the most important factor in the cause of traffic accidents is the driver.

The first matter to be considered under this heading is the competence of the driver, and the regulations as to the issue of drivers' licenses were designed to deal with this phase. Provided the testing officers appointed for the purpose of these regulations carry out their duties in a conscientious manner, the tests required should be adequate to ensure that all licensed drivers are reasonably competent. However, there are various other causes of accident incidental to the driver outside competence, such as intoxication, overwork, excessive speed, general disregard for traffic rules, drowsiness, &c.

The present powers under the regulations to deal with driving to the public danger are quite adequate, and, as the above mentioned are generally the most important contributory factors in dangerous driving, it appears that rigid enforcement of traffic regulations and severe penalties for breaches of these regulations should materially assist in ensuring that the driver is not only competent, but also in a fit and proper condition to be in charge of a motor-vehicle.

It is suggested that the motorists themselves might materially assist in this direction by reporting to the proper authority any cases of dangerous driving that come under their notice, as it must be realized that the relatively small staff of traffic officers is quite inadequate to enforce all regulations throughout the forty to fifty thousand miles of roads in New Zealand. It should be realized that dangerous driving means danger to all users of the road, and not only to the person or persons in the vehicle which is being driven dangerously.

(2) *The Vehicle.*

Probably the second most important factor in motor accidents is the defects in the motor-vehicle itself, such as imperfect brakes, obscured vision (due to lack of wind-screen wipers, &c.), faulty headlights, defective steering-gear, badly worn tires, and various other mechanical defects.

Under the Motor-vehicle Regulations definite standards for all the equipment of motor-vehicles are laid down, and ample powers are placed in the hands of the road-controlling authorities for the enforcement of these requirements. It must be admitted, however, that many local bodies fail to see that such enforcement is carried out. One of the most important provisions in the regulations relates to the efficiency of brakes, and it would probably be quite a difficult matter to find the owner of a private car whose vehicle had been subjected to a brake-test by a traffic officer.

In general, therefore, it may be said that while the powers under the regulations are reasonably adequate to ensure that motor-vehicles using the road are reasonably safe, yet the enforcement of these powers is at present quite inadequate.

To illustrate this, tests conducted on 590 cars in Australia gave the following results : Brakes, 57 per cent. defective ; lights, 66.5 per cent. defective ; steering gear, 22 per cent. defective ; wheel-alignment, 22 per cent. defective.

(3) *The Road.*

In dealing with the road in relation to motor accidents it is necessary to give a very brief resumé of the existing roading conditions in the Dominion.

Excluding urban roads, where, in general, there are speed restrictions and the enforcement of these restrictions is more or less general, it is proposed to deal with the rural roads alone.

In the whole Dominion there are just over 46,000 miles of formed rural roads, of which 31,000 are surfaced, and of this total approximately 11,000 are main highways.