

continuous supplies at reasonable cost, and to obviate the practice which had developed amongst local authorities of paying royalties, instead of exercising their statutory powers for acquiring deposits outright.

A number of areas have already been set aside, and negotiations are in progress for the acquisition of others.

ADVANCES TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

The Board, during the year under review, continued its usual policy of advancing money to those local authorities which were unable to raise from other sources, their share of the cost of particular works which the Board was desirous of undertaking. Once again a considerable increase in the amount so advanced is recorded, the total number of agreements entered into last year being twenty-one, and the amount advanced being £24,523 12s. 9d., as compared with fourteen, totalling £18,938 10s. 9d., for the preceding year.

The total principal outstanding at 31st March, 1936, in respect of all advances made prior to that date was £89,799 3s. 11d.

TRAFFIC-CONTROL.

Since last report the Board has continued to subsidize the cost of traffic-control carried out by approved groups on the lines which have been followed for some years. As the result of unsatisfactory conditions regarding enforcement of regulations governing traffic and transport services, the matter was discussed with the Transport Department, and the Board agreed to extend its activities in this connection by appointing additional Inspectors, and assuming, where possible, direct control in lieu of group control. Consequent upon this arrangement, new appointments were made and officers stationed at Okaihau and Stratford respectively. The subsidies previously paid to the Waikato, Waitomo, Rangiora, and South Canterbury groups were withdrawn and the group Inspectors taken over by the Board. The Waitomo Group Inspector had resigned through ill health, and the vacancy in this case was filled by the appointment of a new departmental Inspector.

Negotiations are in progress with other groups and the supervision of traffic enforcement by a centralized authority having Dominion-wide jurisdiction should produce a measure of uniformity not possible hitherto, and at the same time result in more efficient administration.

The testing of loadometers for any local authorities interested in traffic-control was continued, and, in addition, regular tests were made of the Board's own instruments.

The total number of Group Inspectors subsidized by the Board is now fourteen, while a similar number of traffic officers operate directly under the Board's control.

SIGNPOSTING, CENTRE-LINE MARKING, ETC.

The cost of signposting carried out on main highways during the year ended 31st March, 1936, was subsidized at the rate of £3 for £1, the cost to the Board being £1,851 12s. 2d. The total amount contributed by the Board towards this work up to the date mentioned was £11,549 9s. 3d.

The marking of centre-lines on paved surfaces and the lettering of standard warning-notices on pavements adjacent to railway crossings and other dangerous locations have been extended.

PLANT.

Local authorities have continued to make use of the facilities provided by the Board to enable them to obtain plant on the hire-purchase system, and an increase in these transactions has been recorded. The purchases for 1935-36 amounted to £18,090, as compared with £9,166 for 1934-35, £3,368 for 1933-34, and £1,117 for 1932-33.

Since the inception of this scheme plant to the value of £193,912 has been purchased, of which sum only £23,273 remained outstanding at the 31st March, 1936.

The items purchased during the year under this scheme were: Trucks, 6; power-graders, 10; planer and tractor, 1; crusher and elevator, 1; belt-conveyor and rotary screen, 1; portable screening and crushing plant, 1; tractor, 1.

The Board also purchased a quantity of new plant for its own use, as well as replacing some that had become obsolete. The following items were purchased: Tractors, 5; motor-cars, 5; road-planers, 3; trailer, 1; motor-lorries, 2; machine-saw, 1; machine-sharpener, 1; power-graders, 5; drilling-machine, 1; compressors, 2; crushers, 2.

CLASSIFICATION OF MAIN HIGHWAYS UNDER THE HEAVY MOTOR-VEHICLE REGULATIONS, 1932.

Provision exists in the Heavy Motor-vehicle Regulations, 1932, whereby road-controlling authorities are enabled to restrict the gross loading of heavy motor-vehicles according to the weight-carrying capacity of each road. This restriction is effected by means of classification which requires the prior approval of the Minister of Transport. It is essential that, having regard to the nature of its construction, a road should not be subjected to traffic loads of undue weight, otherwise considerable expenditure of public moneys is necessary for repair and maintenance. Although for some years many local authorities were reluctant to classify roads, the position now is that many miles of roads and highways are appropriately classified. There is no doubt that a system of classification for gross loads is of material assistance towards stabilizing maintenance-costs. The Board is making its best endeavours to co-operate with the Transport Department and local authorities, with a view to securing some measure of uniformity in the permissible loading on main highways, and progress in this direction