

small sums for mileages run for the convenience of the Department where the transfer or purchase of a departmental vehicle was not warranted and the arrangement of hire was inexpedient.

Year.						Total Allowances.		
						£	s.	d.
1934-35	..	..	..	..	..	1,571	10	2
1935-36	..	..	..	..	..	1,160	17	5
1936-37	..	..	..	..	..	2,497	8	5

Motor-lorry Hire.—This is the amount paid to private motor-truck owners for hire of their motor-vehicles on the Department's undertakings where it was not considered sound policy to utilize Departmental vehicles when reasonable competitive tenders from private enterprises were available, and where the transfer or purchase of a departmental vehicle was not considered to be warranted.

Year.						Amount paid.		
						£	s.	d.
1934-35	..	..	..	..	..	49,489		
1935-36	..	..	..	..	..	66,134		
1936-37	..	..	..	..	..	191,003		

This large increase is again due to the tremendous expansion of the Department's activities in the period under review.

Plant Depots.—In the Department's repair depots at Whangarei, Rotorua, and Wellington the volume of work carried out has increased considerably during the year. These depots provide necessary and adequate facilities for supervision and repairs of plant in the field whilst passing through the main centres under transfer. The plant depot at Whangarei, in addition, provides a repair and garage service for most of the Government vehicles in the district. This service is greatly appreciated by the Departments who are able to avail themselves of the facilities provided. On all railway works small repair shops, efficiently staffed, have been installed to provide facilities for dealing with the plant in operation, and on many other undertakings proper facilities have been provided for the care and maintenance of all plant engaged on the various works.

Services for other Departments.—Many other Government Departments during the year consulted the Public Works Department upon mechanical matters. This resulted in the Department being responsible for a considerable amount of mechanical work, including the preparation of specifications and contracts, figuring of proposals, inspections and consultations on various mechanical matters in connection with undertakings, including water-supply installations, pumping-schemes, heating-schemes, supply of machine tools and workshops equipment, installation of domestic mechanical services, electric-lift installations, supply of special motor-vehicles, equipment for aerodromes, equipment for Naval Base, Devonport; the Departments concerned including Defence, Naval, Mental Hospitals, Cook Islands, Transport, Lands, Forestry, Native, Mines, Marine, State Housing, Tourist and Publicity, Prisons, and Agriculture.

Inspection and Supervision.—Owing to the large amount of new plant that is now in operation considerable additional mechanical supervision and inspection has been carried out by field officers and the inspecting staff to ensure that the plant items are receiving proper mechanical attention and being operated economically and efficiently. Difficulty has been experienced in obtaining skilled operators, and to overcome this the Department had to train new operators for the various types of machines. This policy has resulted in the efficient operation of the machines, and in their careful handling and care.

High-speed Diesel power units comprise the bulk of the power plants in these modern machines, and in order that a reliable check can be kept on engine performance and engine maintenance the Department has purchased a full equipment of the latest precision testing-instruments and equipment for Diesel power units. This equipment has already been used extensively by the inspecting and field officers, with a resultant considerable saving of time and money to the Department in providing expert maintenance. This could not otherwise be carried out except by expensive transportation of the machines to the few places in New Zealand that are sufficiently equipped to deal with Diesel power unit maintenance.

General.—The Department has maintained approximately £1,000,000 worth of plant in operation throughout the year without any serious breakdown. It is realized that if any of these machines are idle for any length of time owing to mechanical defects, the cost of the works on which they are employed is increased. Every effort is directed to the efficient maintenance of the Government plant under the Department's control.

NAVAL AND DEFENCE DEPARTMENTAL WORKS.

During the whole of the year covered by this report a construction programme has been in hand on behalf of the Navy Office and the Defence Department. Works for the Navy Office have been continued at the Devonport Station, Auckland, and the Kauri Point Depot. Work in accordance with the Defence Department's programme has been carried out, and further development at Hobsonville and Wigram Air Bases has been in hand.

TRAMWAYS.

Auckland.—During the year the Auckland Transport Board recommissioned, after reconstruction on new lines, one of their cars previously accidentally damaged.

Three fatal accidents occurred, of which inquests have been held in two cases, absolving the Transport Board from blame. In the other case the inquest was adjourned.