

ILLUMINATION OF NUMBER-PLATES.

The Committee has examined several designs for an improved form of number-plate for visibility at night. The best one of these consisted of a special plate in which the shape of the figures is cut out, enabling them to stand out as luminous numbers by means of a light-source placed behind the actual plate. Certain of the designs gave excellent visibility under both daylight and dark conditions. The designs, however, all require a special fitting to replace the present white light illuminating the rear number-plate, the cost of the fitting, installed on the vehicle, being estimated at 15s. 6d. In addition, the manufacturers of the present registration plates estimate that the new form of plate would cost 1s. 6d. more per plate than the existing plates.

The Committee will therefore make no recommendation in respect of these.

INDEPENDENT TAIL-LIGHT.

A device was demonstrated to the Committee by means of which it is impossible to switch out the light illuminating the rear number-plate without stopping and going to the rear of the vehicle to do so. This is claimed to be an advantage in the case of the "hit-and-run" driver who may switch off his lights to avoid identification. The Committee, while approving the actual device, is of the opinion that in view of the cost to the motorist particulars regarding the efficacy of its use should first be obtained before the question is considered of making such compulsory. The Transport Department is making the necessary inquiries from Great Britain in this connection.

"PASS LIGHTS."

The British regulations require that headlamps shall be—

- (i) Permanently pointed downwards; or
- (ii) Capable of being deflected downwards; or
- (iii) Capable of being deflected both downwards and to the left; or
- (iv) Of the double-filament type in which the main driving filament goes out, and another, pointing downwards, comes on; or
- (v) Of the dip and switch type, by which one lamp goes out, and the beam of the other is deflected downwards, or both downwards and to the left.

A demonstration was recently given in Wellington illustrating the effect of the application of these methods in passing other vehicles. In addition, a vehicle equipped with a centrally placed lamp set low in the front of the vehicle was demonstrated. When passing another vehicle the headlights were switched off and replaced by sidelights and the centrally placed "pass light." The effect of these methods in eliminating glare was good, and the Committee recommends that the Council might consider, in conjunction with the question of deflection of the off light to the left, a provision in clause (2), Regulation 7, of the Traffic Regulations permitting driving with sidelights only when an approved central "pass light" or "pass lights" are operative.

G. L. LAURENSEN, Chairman.

[Adopted by the Council.]

LIGHTING OF HIGHWAYS.

I have to report as follows regarding the question of the artificial lighting of highways at night.

The Committee is agreed that adequate lighting of the heavily trafficked routes outside municipalities is eminently desirable for purposes of safety.

The annual report of the Transport Department presents figures regarding fatal accidents which show that during the past seven years 567 accidents, or 48.5 per cent. of the total of 1,171, occurred during hours of dusk or darkness. During these hours, however, it is found that the volume of traffic using the highways is only one-fifth of the volume during the daylight hours. It is thus seen that the accident hazard at night is almost five times as great as the daylight hazard.

This conclusion compares very closely with that reached in America, where it has been found that although the night traffic was only one-fourth of the traffic during the daylight hours, over half of the number of accidents occurred at night.

In cities and on highways in the United States of America and in Great Britain, where adequate illumination has been provided, the accident rate at night has immediately dropped to an amazing extent. Instances where highway lighting accomplished this reduction in the accident rate are too numerous to quote. One striking example, however, is on the Mount Vernon Highway, Washington, D.C., where the number of accidents during hours of darkness was 2.5 times as great without highway lighting as with it.

With a lighting system which provides conditions of visibility comparable to daylight, there appears no reason why the night hazard should exceed that during daylight—i.e., the accidents throughout the whole twenty-four hours either day or night would be approximately in proportion to the volume of traffic. In New Zealand this would represent a reduction of 32 per cent. in the total accidents. In other words, an annual saving of over fifty lives and 1,600 other accidents causing personal injury might be expected if all roads and streets were adequately lighted.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH HIGHWAY LIGHTING SHOULD BE ADOPTED.

For financial reasons it is manifestly impossible to provide suitable lighting on all roads. The Committee considers that the highways outside the cities and larger municipalities should be illuminated where the motor-traffic exceeds a certain daily volume. It is suggested that under