

F. PETROL-CONSUMPTION.

The following table shows a classification of the manner in which petrol was consumed in the Dominion during the last ten calendar years :—

Calendar Year.					Estimated Consumption of Petrol.		
					By Motor-vehicles (<i>i.e.</i> , Petrol on which all Duty was paid).	Other— <i>i.e.</i> , Engines, Aeroplanes, &c. (Petrol on which Refunds of Duty were made).	Total
					Gallons.	Gallons.	Gallons.
1928	..	..	..	..	41,457,150	2,057,940*	43,515,090*
1929	..	..	..	..	56,575,840	3,650,040	60,225,880
1930	..	..	..	..	62,821,479	3,907,900	66,729,379
1931	..	..	..	..	55,202,983	5,286,000	60,488,983
1932	..	..	..	..	49,861,976	5,495,479	55,357,455
1933	..	..	..	..	51,293,572	5,400,000	56,693,572
1934	..	..	..	..	55,991,831	6,100,000	62,091,831
1935	..	..	..	..	62,807,535	6,483,600	69,291,135
1936	..	..	..	..	72,107,051	6,685,600	78,792,651
1937	..	..	..	..	82,110,905	7,339,000	89,449,905

* Excludes an unknown amount of petrol on which duty was not paid.

The total gallons are calculated from the quantity of motor-spirits on which petrol-tax was paid. A further tremendous increase in motor-vehicle petrol-consumption took place in 1937 as compared with 1936, the previous peak year, the figures showing an increase of 10,000,000 gallons.

3. ROADS.

A. ALTERATIONS IN RESTRICTIONS AS TO LOADING AND SPEED OF HEAVY MOTOR-VEHICLES.

For some time past the Department has been engaged on an investigation into the effects of wheel-loads on road surfaces. Due primarily to improved tire equipment of heavy vehicles, including a considerable reduction in tire-pressures, it has been found that roads will now carry greater loads without necessitating any increase in the strength of the surface. It will be appreciated that it is desirable to permit as great a load as possible, consistent with adequate protection of the road surface.

A conference of representatives of road-controlling authorities and the various organizations of the users of heavy motor-vehicles was held during the year to discuss the position in regard to the restrictions placed upon heavy motor-vehicles under the Heavy Motor-vehicle Regulations, 1932.

Following upon the discussions at this conference of interested parties, and upon the investigations carried out by the Department, the following amendments to the regulations were effected :—

- (i) The Class Two classification, prescribing maximum gross loads of 8 tons in the case of two-axled heavy motor-vehicles and 12 tons in the case of multi-axled vehicles, was removed, and the roads formerly classified in Class Two are now deemed to be unclassified. Little advantage has in the past been taken of this class, only some seven hundred miles of road being so classified.

- (ii) The gross load-limits for two-axled heavy motor-vehicles have been increased as follows :—

Class Three : From $6\frac{1}{2}$ tons to 7 tons.

Class Four : From $4\frac{1}{2}$ tons to 5 tons.

Class Five : From 3 tons to $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons.

(Corresponding increases have been made in respect of the permissible axle loads.)