

The main outlets from nearly all of the boroughs and town districts throughout the Dominion have been inspected in this connection, and of a total of 187 boroughs and town districts in New Zealand it has been found necessary to de-restrict certain lengths in no less than 102 instances, while similar steps are still under consideration in certain of the other localities. On the other hand, the restriction has been extended beyond the boundary limits in seventeen instances where the limits of population extend beyond the borough boundaries. In addition, some thirty-seven small townships have been declared closely populated localities and thus made subject to the same speed-limit. However, in the case of the smaller or more scattered country settlements the speed restriction is not usually considered warranted, and the general policy followed here is to erect traffic signs of a cautionary nature and to apply the general laws prohibiting dangerous or negligent driving.

I. ENFORCEMENT OF TRAFFIC LAWS.

GENERAL.

Owing to their universal application, the enforcement of the traffic laws is a task which spreads over the whole Dominion and affects every citizen practically every day of his life. Partly because of the multitude of possible offences, the fact that they are of comparatively recent origin, and because the present generation has not fully appreciated their significance, and does not therefore give them the universal respect which all good laws should command, the Courts have been literally flooded during recent years with traffic cases. In 1926 approximately one out of every three cases for offences against all the laws were traffic cases. In the same year offences against good order, which deal mainly with public behaviour and include traffic offences, amounted to 26,700 cases, of which 17,300 were traffic cases.

The same problem has arisen in all motorized countries throughout the world. In some countries special Traffic Courts have been created, and in others the principle of giving police officers the power to inflict fines on traffic offenders on the spot has been tried out.

Broadly speaking, it may be said that the traffic laws provide a minimum basis of good conduct on the roads in the interests of public safety and the free flow of traffic on the roads. If, therefore, the laws are not being observed it means plainly that the public safety is being endangered and the movement of traffic impeded. The protection of human life and limb is a well-recognized function of the modern state, while the smooth flow of road traffic is now an economic and social necessity, hence the widespread efforts that are made to secure observance of the traffic laws.

There are two main aspects relating to the enforcement of traffic laws—viz., the education of road-users in their legal requirements, and the detection and certain punishment of wilful offenders. Both these factors have received attention in the present road-safety policy. Steps have been taken to acquaint every adult person in the Dominion with his legal responsibilities, while the machinery for the detection of offences has been improved.

Experience indicates that wilful offenders comprise a very small percentage of the public.

ENFORCEMENT MACHINERY.

The machinery for securing the enforcement of the traffic laws in the Dominion consists of the following :—

- (a) The Traffic Inspectors, under the control of the Transport Department. In general, these officers have control of the main highways and the rural roads :
- (b) The Traffic Inspectors under the control of local authorities. These officers have control of the roads and streets in the larger boroughs : and
- (c) The police officers, who assist generally in the enforcement of the laws in such cases as come under their notice.

CONVICTIONS FOR TRAFFIC OFFENCES.

Table No. 10 in the Appendix sets forth a classification of the convictions for the principal traffic offences recorded in the Magistrates' and Supreme Courts during the last ten calendar years.

ENFORCEMENT OF TRAFFIC LAWS BY TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT.

Number of Traffic Inspectors.

As from 1st April, 1937, the traffic-control staff, which up to that time had been attached to the Main Highways Board, was transferred to the Transport Department. When the transfer was made there were 41 Traffic Inspectors, and during the year there were 16 new appointments and 4 resignations, the number of Inspectors at 31st March, 1938, being 53.

The new appointments were made in order to cope with the increased volume of motor traffic on the roads and also as part of the general policy for maintaining road safety.