

APPENDIX E.

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAIN HIGHWAYS BOARD.

The Hon. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

In accordance with the requirements of section 24 of the Main Highways Act, 1922, the Main Highways Board has the honour to submit its fifteenth annual report for presentation to Parliament.

The report covers the period from 1st April, 1938, to the 31st March, 1939, though a number of matters referred to are subsequent to the latter date and are included for convenience and completeness of record.

GENERAL.

The present length of main highways maintained or subsidized by the Board is 12,206 miles, and particulars of expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1939, as well as a detailed statement of the position of various works, are shown later in this report. Of the total length of main highways 3,976 miles have been classified as State highways, concerning which special reference is made in another part of the report.

The total expenditure from the Main Highways Account for the financial year ended 31st March, 1939, amounted to £5,185,803, compared with £4,113,046 for the year immediately preceding. The expenditure figures for the year 1937-38 constituted a record in the Board's history up to that period, and it will be seen from the expenditure figures for the year 1938-39 that this has now been exceeded by no less a sum than £1,072,757. Major improvement works have been responsible for a large proportion of this increase, but extensive flood-damage repairs on the East Coast of the North Island and on the West Coast of the South Island placed an added burden on the available funds, together with a large addition to the length of bridging completed.

An increase in the consumption of petrol by motor-vehicles and in the registration of motor-vehicles themselves indicated that the volume of traffic on main highways is still mounting up.

LEGISLATION.

Section 3 of the Finance Act, 1938, empowered the Minister of Finance to borrow up to an additional amount of £1,500,000 for the purposes of construction or reconstruction of main highways. The total loan authority for highways now amounts to £9,500,000.

FINANCE.

The actual income of the Main Highways Account from revenue sources for the financial year 1938-39 amounted to £2,814,939. The total below shows how this amount is made up, and also the corresponding figures over the previous nine years. In addition to this amount, £2,675,600 was borrowed for main highways. The annual loan charges against the Main Highways Account increased from £338,494 for the year 1937-38 to £439,541 for the year 1938-39:

	1929-30.	1930-31.	1931-32.	1932-33.	1933-34.	1934-35.	1935-36.	1936-37.	1937-38.	1938-39.
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Transfer from Consolidated Fund	35,000	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Proceeds of tax on tires and tubes collected through the Customs Department	155,722	129,188	84,649	63,253	62,979	91,693	93,308	138,894	158,526	149,017
Registration and license fees of motor-vehicles, &c.	378,135	397,139	372,224	354,216	354,444	355,990	397,606	545,763	523,853	575,170
Motor-spirits tax	873,369	1,219,209	1,231,202	644,126	669,868	970,506	1,449,125	1,697,942	1,918,486	2,083,278
Mileage-tax	..	..	..	..	1,133	1,284	1,616	3,290	6,162	7,474
Totals	1,442,226	1,745,536	1,688,075	1,061,595	1,088,424	1,419,473	1,941,655	2,385,889	2,607,027	2,814,939

* Further transfers abolished by amending legislation.