

lutely impossible to prospect, even in a primitive manner, any such land. If the route of a proposed track is first carefully selected and laid off, then the track can in most instances be formed so as to admit of its being easily and inexpensively widened into a dray-road hereafter. I may say that this system has obtained with the Mines Department since it has had the control of any such work.

The cost of roads and tracks undertaken and constructed by counties on the goldfields since the votes pertaining to such came under the control of my office amounts to £54,137, out of which subsidies have been paid to the extent of £35,630; and the cost of similar works undertaken and wholly paid for by the department is £16,275. The estimated cost of roads and tracks under construction by the aid of subsidies, but which are not yet completed, is £27,045, of which sum £5,552 have been paid, and the existing liabilities on subsidies authorized for the work are £12,477. As for roads now undertaken by the department to be wholly paid for, these will cost, when complete, £46,374, of which £18,806 have been expended, and the liabilities stand at £27,568. Roads in course of construction to open up mines other than gold have been authorized to cost £6,333, of which £4,439 have been paid on account thereof, and the liabilities remaining on same are £491.

So far as the Mines Department is responsible, the total cost of such works constructed and those in progress will be, when complete, £150,164. Of this sum £80,702 have been spent by the department, while the liabilities stand at £40,536. The estimated cost of such works in progress and completed during last year is £44,056.

AID TO PROSPECTING.

From time to time aid has been given to prospecting, with the object of developing the mineral wealth of the colony. The assistance has been extended to prospecting-associations, companies working at deep levels, and, latterly, under regulations made by the Governor-in-Council, based on recommendations to me by the Gold-fields Committee, to the local bodies, and, under special circumstances, to individual parties engaged prospecting in outlying districts. The sum authorized for this purpose since such votes have been under the control of the Minister of Mines is £11,847, of which £5,547 have been expended by way of subsidies; and, as subsidies were only sanctioned conditionally that works costing not less than £25,928 were carried out, a portion only of such works having been done, hence the small amount of money it has been found necessary to pay. I believe that well-organized prospecting-parties will yet do great good by new discoveries of our mineral wealth, and it is by aiding the *bonâ fide* prospector that we may expect to secure advantageous results.

DIAMOND- AND OTHER DRILLS.

Subsidies in aid of the purchase of diamond- and other drills have been given by the State to the extent of £1,858; but no expenditure under this head has been incurred during last year. The diamond-drill, in my opinion, is not altogether the machine likely to prove of general use to the miner; for it has been found that, unless in boring for coal, or for other minerals, through rock of an uniform hardness it cannot be worked economically. Neither is the drill well suited for prospecting through lodes where Silurian rocks have to be bored—and many valuable metals are found frequently in such rocks. What is required to be practically useful to the miner for prospecting purposes is a strong and light portable machine that could be carried by pack-horses from place to place, and which would be capable of sending a bore-hole to a perpendicular depth of 500ft. Such a class of drill, I believe, can be found in America at a moderate cost, and I am now in communication with manufacturers in that country on the subject.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE ON WORKS.

I will now briefly summarize my remarks by stating that during the last four years the total amount authorized for the construction of water-races, drainage- and sludge-channels, roads and tracks, diamond and other drills, and aid to prospecting on the gold-fields is £244,477, and otherwise paid by way of subsidies, the sum of £131,044; while the sum authorized for similar works last year appears £76,804, of which £41,789 have been paid, and there are remaining liabilities amounting to £60,885 to be provided for. Full details of first