

The works still required are the construction of the river-walls and the dredging of the river, and increased accommodation for loading coal. The latter has become an urgent want, so arrangements are being made for the immediate extension of the staiths and wharf, tenders for which will be called for in the course of a week or two.

The harbour-works at Westport promise to be a complete success. In 1886, the year that the western breakwater was commenced, there was never more than 14ft. of water on the Buller Bar, and for three years previously there was on the average only eleven days a year on which the depth exceeded 14ft. During the last two financial years the depth was never *less* than 14ft., and last year there were 357 days on which it exceeded 16ft., the maximum depth being about 26ft. The large steam-collier "Cairntoul" now trades regularly to Westport, taking away from 2,200 to 2,400 tons of coal each trip, and arrangements are being made under which the China steamers will go there also.

Although only in its infancy, the coal-trade of Westport is fast assuming large proportions. For the last three years the annual output of the mines has averaged 137,920 tons. Most of the progress is due to the success of the harbour-works; and if the success continues, of which I have no doubt, Westport will eventually become a large and prosperous seaport, doing an extensive business not only with the other colonies, but with foreign countries. It will also, in all probability, become one of the principal coaling-stations in the southern seas for Her Majesty's ships of war.

ROADS.

Special Works.—The principal road-bridge works in progress during the year have been the Lyell, Mokihinui, and Tiraumea Bridges, and alterations and repairs to the Rakaia Gorge Bridge, all of which are either completed or well advanced.

Exploration surveys have been made for a road to Milford Sound. They show that an easy horse-track, and probably a coach-road, can be got at a moderate cost—much less than might be expected from the ruggedness of the country.

Roads North of Auckland.—A small vote was taken last year, amounting to £468, out of which certain repairs have been executed, at a cost of £267, and a liability of £201 still exists. This it is proposed to provide for under the vote for miscellaneous roads, so that the special vote for roads North of Auckland will not, therefore, be renewed.

Main Roads.—The amount voted last year was £14,000. Of this amount £12,799 was expended, and liabilities incurred to the amount of £2,858 in addition. It is proposed to ask for a vote of £12,630 for this year, to cover these liabilities and the current year's expenditure on a reduced scale. The works for the past year have been principally in connection with the maintenance of the following roads, viz., Warkworth–Kawakawa, Oxford–Rotorua, Tauranga–Napier, Nelson–Tophouse, Nelson–Westport–Greymouth and Hokitika, Hokitika–Christchurch, and in keeping open the Haast Pass Track.

As the loan funds for main roads will be exhausted at the end of March next, the maintenance of these roads must thereafter be otherwise provided for.

Miscellaneous Roads and Bridges.—Under this heading a sum of £28,912 was voted last session, of which £19,998 has been expended, and liabilities incurred to the further amount of £10,015. For the current year we shall ask for a vote of £17,091, to cover liabilities and to aid in continuing some of the works. There are only two new items proposed this year, amounting together to £650. Should the whole of the expenditure proposed come to account during the current year, the loan allocation for this class of works will also be exhausted.

Grants-in-aid.—The transactions under the Roads and Bridges Construction Act during the past year were limited to the payment of a sum of £227 in respect of outstanding grants. The liabilities under the Act on the 31st March last amounted to £273.

During the year a sum of £1,871 was spent out of the £8,000 voted for work for the "unemployed." It is proposed to ask for £2,000 this year to provide for