

As already intimated in the Financial Statement, the desirability of expanding the mining industry generally by rendering assistance towards the construction of roads, prospecting-tracks, water-races, storage-reservoirs, and general prospecting throughout the colony, as well as at the deeper levels in known auriferous localities, necessitates provision being made by the House for works of this class.

For the current year we ask for a vote of £98,950.

DEVELOPMENT OF THERMAL SPRINGS AND NATURAL SCENERY.

An amount of £50,000 having now been specially provided for works coming under this head, the Government will be in a position to take more active steps to develop and turn to account our thermal and scenic resources than they have been able to do in the past. The most important work to be provided for is the drainage of the Township of Rotorua, with regard to which the Government is already arranging for suitable expert advice. Improvements and additions are also much required in the bathing establishments at both the Rotorua and Hanmer Springs. Improved means of access are needed to Mount Cook, Whitcombe Pass, and the Southern Alps, the Francis Josef Glacier, the Sutherland Falls, the South Island lakes, the West Coast Sounds, the Wairau Falls, the Tongariro National Park, the Ketatahi, Te-Mari, Tokaanu and Waiotapu Hot Springs, the summit of Mount Egmont, and other notable scenic features. Alterations and improvements are also needed at the Mount Cook Hermitage. It will be impossible to do all that is required in one year; but a vote for £41,715 is included in this year's estimates.

PURCHASE OF NATIVE LANDS.

The area of Native lands acquired during the year ended 31st March last was 516,000 acres, which is greatly in excess of the results of any one year for many years past. The lands acquired north of Auckland are reported upon by the Surveyor-General as being, on the whole, well suited for settlement, and their value will be considerably enhanced by the completion during the current year of the purchase of other lands already partially acquired. In the Thames and Coromandel districts the lands acquired are of a more or less auriferous character, and their value from both a mining and settlement point of view is considerable. The Wairere Waterfalls are within the portion of the Maurihero Block which has been finally acquired. The purchases in the Rotorua and Bay of Plenty districts include three-fourths of the thermal springs in the Whakarewarewa Block, the Hamarana Springs on the Rotorua Lake, and the Alum Caves at Orakeikoraka. Large areas have also been acquired, or partially acquired, in the King-country, adjacent to the North Island Main Trunk Railway-line, and also in the Hawke's Bay and Wellington Districts. Full details of the various purchases will be found in Parliamentary Paper G.—3, presented to both Houses on 14th July last, under the provisions of "The Native Land Purchases Act, 1892."

The amount voted under the Native Land Purchase Account last year was £148,991, and £163,411, including £56,947 for roads and surveys, was expended. This year we ask for a vote of £162,276.

TELEGRAPH EXTENSION.

The sum voted last year was £30,000. The expenditure for the year was £35,538 (including expenditure of £8,263 on new telephone exchanges and additions to existing exchanges); and the liabilities on the 31st March last amounted to £4,000.

The more important telegraph-lines constructed during the year were those from Hamilton to Morrinsville, Awanui to Cape Maria van Diemen (with branches), Dargaville to Kaihu, Whangarei to Kiripaka, Waitekauri line, Wellington to Oterangi Bay, Pahiatua to Eketahuna, Feilding to Waituna West, Alton to Hurleyville, Ashurst to Pohangina, Palmer's to Apiti, White's Bay to Ocean Bay, and Lumsden to Balfour; and additional wire-accommodation, which included new wires from Auckland to Paeroa and Wellington to Auckland.