

I have already mentioned that during the past year rail connection was made between Gisborne and the remainder of the North Island railway system. A restricted goods-service on this length was inaugurated by the Railways Department in August, 1942, and although minor works are still receiving attention, this line was taken over for the operation of both passenger and freight services on 1st February, 1943.

The Wharanui-Clarence section of the South Island Main Trunk Railway was taken over by the Railways Department on 19th October, 1942. Construction work has recently been speeded up in order to expedite the completion of the remaining length between the railhead at Okarahia and Clarence Bridge.

ROAD-CONSTRUCTION

Owing to the more urgent demands upon available man-power and materials, only a small amount of road-construction work and bridging was carried out during the past year. Until more favourable conditions prevail there is little prospect of formation, metalling, or bridging works being undertaken on a major scale either by the Government itself or by local authorities operating under the assistance of State subsidies.

IRRIGATION AND WATER-SUPPLY

Notwithstanding that a very mild winter was followed by a wet spring and unusual summer, the demand for irrigation water in Central Otago has been maintained at close to last year's figure, a total of 52,377 acres being irrigated, from which approximately £27,000 of revenue was derived.

In Canterbury the area irrigated was 3,500 acres, producing a revenue of £572, being slightly less than last year. Lack of labour is the principal retarding factor, but though development is slow, it is proceeding on sound lines. Sixty per cent. of the irrigators have established lucerne stands with the object of increasing their stock-carrying capacity.

The Mayfield Hinds and Ashburton-Lyndhurst Schemes have remained static on account of the transfer of labour and plant to defence works. Construction work on the Rangitata diversion race has for the same reason been reduced to a very slow pace, but now that some of the more-important defence works are nearing completion, it is hoped to revive this important work so as to complete it if possible in time for the Highbank Hydro-electric Station to assume its share of the winter load of 1944.

The Downlands Water-supply Scheme continues to give excellent service to more than 140,000 acres, but an area of 10,453 acres in Waimate County remains unreticulated on account of the shortage of galvanized pipes.

I look forward to the resumption of irrigation activities at the earliest possible date.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Agriculture.—Some progress has been made in the construction of a new block at Te Kauwhata Horticultural Station. There was some unavoidable delay owing to the contractors having to concentrate upon urgent defence work, but the building is now almost complete and will be of material assistance in catering for the increased demand for New-Zealand-made wines.

Health and Hospital Institutions.—Work completed during the year at Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer, included an occupational therapy block, whilst a new hydro-extractor plant was installed in the laundry. Additional cooking facilities were provided in the nurses' home and soldiers' pavilion. The domestic and male staff quarters were also completed.

In Wellington the buildings of the Registered Nurses' Association Club in Kensington Street were purchased for use as a post-graduate centre and hostel. Additional accommodation has also been purchased and erected in Hobson Street for dental nurses. Substantial alterations and renovations were made to the existing buildings at Hobson Street.

Mental Hospitals.—Only minor works were carried out at a few institutions, and these comprised principally laundry, water-supply, and heating services.

Police-stations.—Expenditure during the year was confined to the provision of a very limited amount of residential and office accommodation.

Postal and Telegraph.—During the year the following departmental buildings were completed: Post-office buildings at Brighton, Clydevale, and Ōwaka; a residence at Johnsonville; a residence and staff quarters at Musick Point Radio; staff quarters at Awarua Radio; an automatic-telephone-exchange building at St. Heliers; a line-store-garage building at Helensville; and emergency radio-station buildings at Blenheim, Gisborne, Greymouth, Johnsonville, Nelson, Napier, Opotiki, Palmerston North, Timaru, Westport, and Whangarei.

Additions were made to the post-office building at Dargaville, to the departmental building at Herd Street, Wellington, and to the automatic-telephone-exchange building at Ponsonby.

Improved accommodation was provided at Auckland (chief Post-office), Waihi (post-office), Awarua Radio (staff quarters), and Newmarket (store and workshops building).