

The very large number of roads which had to be dealt with—namely, 2,067—involved great labour in administration and arranging for the prosecution of the necessary works. The appropriations were not printed until the 15th November. After that the new items had to be considered, authorised, and the carrying-out of the works prepared for. The first part of the season, up to the New Year, was a wet one nearly all over New Zealand, and in consequence it was found impracticable to begin several very necessary works—road-metalling especially. Indeed, the summer season this year has been a short one for the execution of works which had to be done while roads were dry; but, notwithstanding this, it will be seen from what has been stated that the work executed was about equal to what was done during the previous year. The expenditure was somewhat larger, which was partly due to the greater number of roads which had to be maintained. Dray-roads totalling to 2,273 miles and 1,033 miles of bridle-road were kept in repair, as against 1,896 miles of dray-road and 937 miles of bridle-road in the year 1899–1900.

Out of the 2,067 works for which money was voted, 1,189 were begun or finished during the year. The others could not be prepared in time for any work being done before the 31st March, although instructions had been given for the whole of the works on the appropriations to be proceeded with. Out of these 1,189 works, 405 have been done by the local bodies and 784 by the department.

The improvement of the navigation of the Wanganui River, and its great tributary the Tangarakau, has been continued under the Wanganui River Trust, the expenditure having amounted to £1,250. This has enabled a light-draught steamer to reach Putikituna, on the Tangarakau, and goods can in this way be conveyed to the Whangamomona Settlement by water, within six miles of the middle of the valley. Two lines of steamers now navigate the river as far as Pipiriki, fifty-six miles from Wanganui, greatly to the advantage of settlers on its banks and inland.

Out of the Land for Settlements Account there was expended £5,946 in the construction of 13 miles of dray-roads, two bridges, and seventy-three culverts. In addition, 10½ miles of dray-roads were improved and 28 miles maintained.

Owing to the extension of land settlement, and the consequent increase in the departmental business, it was decided to sever from the Lands and Survey Department at the end of last financial year the work of construction and the administration of roads and similar works. In accordance with this decision most of the officers of the Lands and Survey Department previously engaged on roads, and office work appertaining thereto, were transferred to a new department, called the "Department of Roads." Under this department is now placed the responsibility of carrying out all the works for roads and kindred purposes formerly supervised by the Lands and Survey Department, as well as the general administration of the laws relating to roads. It is yet too early to speak definitely, but so far the change has worked satisfactorily, and every confidence is felt for the future success of the arrangement.

It is proposed to carry on the roadworks with judicious expedition, and to endeavour to complete as soon as possible works already begun, and those for which money has been voted in previous years, without neglecting the equally important duty of keeping up with the ever-advancing border of settlement, with bridle-tracks at least, if with nothing better.

ROADS ON GOLDFIELDS, MINES DEPARTMENT.

The vote last year under this head amounted to £83,650, the expenditure being £48,417, with liabilities at the end of the year amounting to £49,221.

The sum proposed to be authorised for the current year is £115,989, on account of which a vote of £84,000 is asked for.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS AND MINING.

The value of gold entered for export during 1900 was £1,439,602, being somewhat less than during the previous year; but, as stated by my colleague in his Mines Statement, notwithstanding this decrease there was an