

The total sum provided last year to enable the work of road-construction to be continued under all votes and accounts (exclusive of road-construction under the Wellington-Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Account) was £599,093. Notwithstanding the late period at which this money was made available, £121,015 was expended by various local bodies throughout the Dominion, while the Public Works Department expended £301,719. In addition to this expenditure, plans and specifications submitted by local bodies for further works estimated to cost £101,718 were approved, and Cabinet authority given for the expenditure of that sum; while work valued at £128,564 was being carried out by the Department at the close of the financial year, making a total for the year of works already completed or in progress of £653,016, or £53,923 in excess of the amount provided; thus demonstrating the practical sympathy of the Government with settlers by endeavouring to improve the facilities for better internal communication.

With reference to the item for the "New Hutt Road and purchase of land," provided for under the Wellington-Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Account, there was a net expenditure of £28,469 during the year, making a grand total under all votes and accounts for 1919-10 of £681,485.

MINING.

The mining industry is being energetically developed, as is shown by the substantial increase in the value of the mineral production of the Dominion for the year 1909. The exports of gold, silver, manganese, and kauri-gum all show increases for the year over those of the previous year, details of which will appear in the Mines Statement.

The advance in gold-production is fairly general, as increased outputs are recorded from the quartz-mining fields of Ohinemuri, Karangahake, and Reefton, though the returns from the Thames, Coromandel, and Otago fields are not quite so good. It is hoped, however, that when the deep-level prospecting operations at the Thames now being subsidized are under way, fresh vigour will be instilled into that field.

The Waihi Company's mine continues to hold its premier position in the ranks of the gold-producing mines, the value of the gold and silver won being £924,146; it is confidently expected that the returns for this year will exceed £1,000,000. This company has been granted a license to utilize the latent powers of the Horahora Falls for the production of electrical energy. With the cheap power that will be available, payable returns are expected from low-grade ores which at present cannot be profitably treated.

A Commission was set up during the recess to inquire into the complaints made in connection with the damage stated to be caused by the mining companies of the Ohinemuri district by the deposit of mining debris in the river, and the report will be duly laid on the table.

The export of silver is again a record one, the value of the output exceeding that of last year by £5,535.

The coal-mining industry also continues to expand in proportion to local and foreign demands. Several new collieries have recently passed the development stage, and are now producing regular supplies. The value of the exports for last year exceeded that of the previous year by over £100,000.

The search for petroleum is being actively carried on, and in several localities extensive operations are being initiated. Should any considerable deposits be met with the benefit to the Dominion would be almost impossible to estimate.

WATER-POWER.

New Zealand is exceptionally fortunate in possessing a number of lakes and of rivers of large volume flowing rapidly to the ocean. The application of electric power to so many uses in modern civilization will more and more enhance the value of such sources of energy. With our varied minerals, forests, and water-power we should make rapid progress industrially, and it is desirable to prevent the exploitation by individuals of the wealth that it will be possible to create by the control of our waterfalls. Long after the last pound of coal in the Dominion is used up—in fact, as long as the human race exists in New Zealand—these rivers will continue to flow, giving to future generations riches in abundance.