

they are approved under one of the agricultural-settlement schemes of the overseas Governments or are proceeding to assured employment, and are otherwise acceptable to the Government of the territory to which they desire to go. This privilege will also be extended to the widows and dependants of ex-service men who are entitled to a pension from Imperial funds under the terms of the pensions warrant. A number of immigrants under this heading have already arrived in the Dominion.

ROADS CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE.

The operations under this head have been carried out partly by the Department and partly by the various local bodies, under departmental supervision. My officers have attended primarily to the location and construction of roads and bridges, and the local bodies generally to metalling, although this rule has not been rigidly adhered to. The total sum voted last session for roads, &c., roads on goldfields, and maintenance of roads (this latter from the Consolidated Fund) was £707,085, and of this £447,931 was expended. In addition, funds have been provided by the Department of Lands and Survey for roading returned-soldier settlement and other blocks, which in most cases have been entrusted to my Department for expenditure. It is regretted, however, that very little labour was offering for road-construction generally, especially in remote localities, and even in the more settled districts men were hard to get. Furthermore, the construction of bridges has been materially hampered owing to the difficulty of obtaining steel and hardwood, consequent upon the state of the steel-market and the scarcity of shipping-space. It is hoped, however, with the co-operation and assistance of settlers, and the possibility of improved markets and shipping facilities, that better progress will be made this financial year. The increased use of machinery is contemplated. At the present time graders are used wherever possible, but steam-shovels are now being utilized, and, in addition, a considerably increased number of graders, to be drawn by mechanical traction, are on order. It is hoped in this way to make up for the shortage of efficient labour.

MAIN ROADS.

Legislation is in course of preparation, and will be brought before the House, making provision for the Government taking over the control and maintenance of main roads. With the aid of this legislation it is hoped to improve and maintain the main roads of the Dominion in accordance with the standard demanded by modern transport requirements. Should my proposals be carried out, I hope to be able to employ the most up-to-date methods in connection with roadmaking and maintenance. The work will be carried out on a large scale in accordance with a definite programme and under the control of a well-organized staff.

TELEGRAPH EXTENSION.

Among the principal land lines completed or under construction during the year 1919-20 were the following: Auckland-Papatoetoe, Taupaki metallic circuit, Auckland-Thames, Greymouth-Reefton, Fernside-Springbank, Oaro-Kaikoura, Dunedin-Pine Hill, Dunedin-Pelichet Bay, Mosgiel-Dunedin, Omimi-Seacliff, Wyllie's Crossing-Outram, North-east Harbour-Broad Bay, Moeraki extension, Hawera-Eltham-Stratford, Palmerston North-Feilding, and Blenheim-Seddon.

The work in connection with the Dunedin underground system proceeded steadily during the year, the Roslyn area and the Mornington section of the city area being completed. The South Dunedin area was put in hand, and work proceeded satisfactorily in spite of the difficult nature of the ground. A further section of the city area, extending from the Octagon to Pitt Street, was commenced; the work has continued without interruption.

The telephone-exchange system is steadily expanding. Five new exchanges were opened during the year and none were closed. It was found necessary to provide additional switchboard accommodation at sixty-eight others. The work of converting earth-working systems to metallic circuit is being systematically continued. The increase in the number of exchange connections for the year was 8,318.

The telephone-exchange plant has been extended by the erection of 322 miles of poles and 11,547 miles of wire; and the telegraph and inter-urban telephone system now consists of 50,751 miles of wire, making a total length of 228,284 miles of wire in the whole telegraph and telephone system of the Dominion.

Eighteen new coin-in-the-slot telephones were installed. The total in the Dominion now stands at 295.