

The policy of providing for telephone-exchange subscribers' circuits by means of underground cable is being continued. During the year 8,045 miles of underground cable wires were run out.

The party-line system was extended by the addition of 577 lines and 1,906 subscribers.

Toll lines throughout the Dominion are congested, and additional circuits are required in every district. The provision of additional lines will involve heavy expenditure for copper wire and other material.

Extensions to the manual and automatic exchanges are required in the centres as well as in many smaller towns. The construction of underground cable systems at Christchurch and Dunedin in preparation for automatic exchanges will be proceeded with.

Scarcity of material still hampers the constructional operations of the Department.

CONTINGENT DEFENCE.

The construction of the Invercargill rifle range necessitates the reclamation of about 270 acres. The material for filling is being obtained and conveyed to the site by tram, and latterly a dredge has also been employed to assist in this work. An additional 140 acres have been purchased as a danger-zone. It is anticipated that the whole undertaking will be completed during the present financial year, and a sum is being provided on the estimates for this purpose. Prison labour is being used on the work.

Various rifle ranges throughout the Dominion were repaired and improved.

A mobilization store is required at Auckland, garages at Wellington and Trentham for mechanical-transport vehicles, and a shed at Trentham for mobilization equipment.

LANDS IMPROVEMENT.

Improved Farm Settlements.—The roading of improved-farm settlements has now been completed. A small sum, however, is being provided on the estimates this year to meet special cases as they arise, such as formation of deviations, &c.

Miscellaneous.—The only item calling for special mention under this head is that of £5,000 for the construction of roads in the Hauraki pastoral areas. This is a repetition of a similar item provided last year, against which £2,388 was spent in legalizing and forming road access to settlers. An engineering survey of roads which are required is being made.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACCOUNT.

Roads to open up Crown Lands.—A sum of £250,000 was appropriated last year for this purpose, but labour difficulties and shortage of material retarded progress.

IRRIGATION AND WATER-SUPPLY.

Ida Valley Scheme.—About half a mile of race-renovation and an extension of a length of 15 chains and a distributory have been completed and extended as a tail-race to Poolburn Creek. Extensive drainage-works were commenced. During the non-irrigation season the races were maintained and cleaned. This work was somewhat heavy, owing to a thunderstorm in January last. The drainage-scheme survey was completed, and the resurvey of Moa Creek to German Hill race was commenced and is now well in hand.

Galloway Flat Scheme.—Excavation for the diverting weir at Dip Creek is being carried out by means of a hydraulic elevator, and is in an advanced state of completion. 3 miles 16 chains of the Galloway main race was completed except for trimming and the necessary fluming. Two miles of drains to deal with surplus water were cut. The survey and plans of the amended main race were made during the year.

Manuherikia Scheme.—Only 1.22 chains of the tunnel to divert the waters of the Manuherikia River into the main drain remain to be driven, 3.31 chains having been completed during the year. Only a limited number of men were available for this class of work, and many of those employed (even though they earned over £1 per day) left to engage in the more lucrative and less strenuous occupation of rabbiting. The main race was extended towards Clyde and was practically completed as far as 21 miles.

Chatto Creek Siphon.—Cleaning and repairing the second-hand pipes purchased for the siphon across Chatto Creek is in hand.