

The installation of automatic printing-telegraphs has been delayed by the non-arrival of the greater part of the apparatus ; but this is now coming to hand, and it is expected that an installation of this up-to-date system will be made at an early date.

The Chief Telegraph Engineer has returned from a visit abroad ; and, as a result of his investigations into the telegraph and telephone systems, also methods and rates of operation, in other parts of the world, increased efficiency combined with economies in both telephone and telegraph services may be expected.

CONTINGENT DEFENCE.

Owing to the exercise of the strictest economy in the Defence Department, only £8,700 of the £15,000 appropriated last year was expended on urgent and necessary works.

The formation of a rifle range at Invercargill has been accomplished by the reclamation of an area of 270 acres. This land will be brought under cultivation by the Prisons Department, in connection with the Borstal Institution, in addition to providing a rifle range for defence purposes.

The reduction in administrative groups from twenty-one to twelve, contingent upon the reorganization of the New Zealand Military Forces, will have the effect of reducing the number of full-sized ranges to be maintained. As a consequence of this policy no further expenditure in the direction of acquisition of land for rifle ranges will be necessary.

The accommodation for military equipment and stores, and magazines for ammunition, is inadequate, while the present system of housing all reserve military stores at Wellington and Trentham is unsatisfactory and unsuited for rapid mobilization. Consideration is therefore being given to the acquisition of mobilization stores and magazines in each of the three military commands (Northern, Central, and Southern), in order that the troops in each command will be self-contained in regard to provision of their requirements on mobilization.

It is proposed to dismantle huts at Featherston and to re-erect them at various small drill centres for use as drill-halls, stores, and miniature ranges. It is also intended to convert a few of these hutments into quarters for the married permanent personnel in localities where ordinary housing facilities are not available.

LANDS IMPROVEMENT.

The roading of improved-farm settlements has been completed. A small sum is, however, being provided in the estimates this year to meet special cases as they may arise, such as the formation of deviations of roads, &c.

LANDS, MISCELLANEOUS.

The sum of £2,537 was expended on the construction of roads in the Hauraki pastoral area. The work was somewhat delayed owing to the difficulty of obtaining supplies.

The principal works of formation, widening, and reconditioning of roads in hand are the Tapu-Gumtown Road, Kaueranga-Tairua Road, Mill Creek Road, and the widening of the Port Charles to Jackson Track.

In consequence of the roadworks an early settlement of discharged soldiers is expected along the Tairua Road, and the Tapu-Gumtown works will afford access to a large area of reasonably good country in the Tapu district.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACCOUNT.

Roads to open up Crown Lands.—A sum of £252,800 was appropriated for this purpose, but labour difficulties and shortage of material retarded progress, and a comparatively small expenditure of £28,920 was incurred. A more vigorous policy of settlement is being pursued, and the construction of roads opening up the various blocks of land for settlement is being carried out as expeditiously as possible, and works involving an expenditure of £154,692 are at present in hand.