

It must be remembered that any reduction in the time of the completion of a work by the use of better appliances results in a shorter period in which capital lies idle, and therefore in a reduction of interest and overhead charges. Very often I know it can be shown that machinery has not actually reduced, and has even sometimes increased, the construction-costs of a work, but investigation would show that the saving in interest and overhead charges on idle capital has compensated many times over for the use of the plant.

I am pleased to say that none of the larger works in this country have as yet shown an increase in construction-costs by the use of larger plant, but even had it been so I would consider myself quite justified in its use if I were satisfied I could save eventually by a reduction of interest and overhead charges.

RAILWAYS IMPROVEMENT AUTHORIZATION ACT, 1914.

The expenditure under this Act amounted to £132,241, for grade easements, formation of new line signalling interlocking and safety appliances, new station and station-yards, goods-sheds, and terminal facilities at Auckland, Wellington, and Addington.

ADDITIONS TO OPEN LINES.

The expenditure out of the Public Works Fund under the head "Additions to open lines" amounted to £1,856,380. Of this sum £1,121,132 was expended in the provision of additional rolling-stock, tarpaulins, Westinghouse brakes, workshops machinery, and steam heating. The balance covered expenditure upon improvements to engine-depots, workshops, station facilities, water-services, additional dwelling for the staff, signal, tablet, telegraph and telephone installation, bridge-work, subways, and purchase of land.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

GENERAL.

Parliament Buildings, Wellington.—A large amount of work was carried out in this building during the year, and was finally completed in time for the opening of Parliament. The most important portion was the working and setting of the ornamental marble for the interior finish of the main lobbies, together with the marble tiling and the general finishing-work. A particular feature of the finishing-work was the Cabinet-room. This has been panelled in Canadian walnut and birdseye maple, the timber being supplied by the Canadian Government as a gift to the New Zealand Government, the working-up and finishing being carried out in the Department's local workshops.

DEPARTMENTAL BUILDINGS.

Auckland (Stamp Office).—An additional story in brick was erected, and alterations carried out to provide additional accommodation for both the Deeds and Stamp Departments.

Wanganui.—The Wanganui Native Land Court building, which was commenced last year, has been completed. It is of brick with plaster finish inside and out, and comprises Court-room, offices, strong-rooms, and outbuildings.

COURTHOUSES.

New Courthouses were erected at Waipukurau and Pukekohe.

With these exceptions, only essential repairs and maintenance were carried out.

PRISONS.

Prison-building operations were limited to the completion of partially constructed buildings, and the provision of purely essential accommodation. Three cottages for married officers were completed on the Auckland Prison Reserve, and also a shelter-shed for the prisoners in the quarry. At Waikeria Reformatory, quarters for the single officers have been completed and are now in occupation.