

During the year the existing schemes were maintained in good order. All lands requiring water were well served.

The total area irrigated under all Government schemes was 38,255 acres, the number of irrigators being 335.

Investigations on several small proposed schemes have been made, and surveys and foundation tests have been made at three possible dam-sites on the Upper Poolburn Stream, where a reservoir is required to supplement the Ida Valley scheme. The best site has now been selected and a start with the preliminary work authorized.

The graph appearing on the previous page shows the growth of irrigation under Government schemes for the past ten years.

ROAD-CONSTRUCTION.

During the last financial year the construction and improvement of roads throughout the Dominion were actively prosecuted, with the result that many settlers who have been handicapped in the past for want of reasonable road access have now had that handicap removed, and vast improvement has also been effected to the already partially completed roads by way of widening and surfacing.

The expenditure on the construction of roads and main highways reached the very large sum of £1,770,073, which is considerably in excess of any previous record. This figure appears very high, but I think that when consideration is given to the absolute necessity for good roads in the proper development of the country the expenditure will be found to be justified. A large portion of the expenditure mentioned was incurred on roads which were put in hand during the year for the purpose of easing the unemployment situation, a very large number of relief workers having been engaged on roadworks. Although in ordinary circumstances some of the roads so treated would not have been constructed for several years, care has been exercised in selecting only those roads which will be of benefit to existing settlement, or those likely to promote new settlement at an early date. In short, every effort has been made to utilize the services of relief workers as much as possible on reproductive works.

Good use was also made of the funds set aside in the "Access to outlying districts" vote, considerable assistance having been given during the year to many of the far-back settlers who have suffered from access difficulties for some time. The constitution of the special vote for "Backblock districts" has been so successful that I feel justified in asking Parliament to increase it for the present year.

With regard to the automatic allocation of funds under the Roads vote, the factors upon which the allocation has been based were: Area, 5 per cent.; population, 5 per cent.; amount of general and special rates, 5 per cent.; total mileage of roads in use apart from metalled or surfaced roads, 5 per cent.; loans for roads, 5 per cent.; estimated amount to complete all as metalled roads, 37½ per cent.; and value of undeveloped Crown and Native lands, 37½ per cent. The system in accordance with these factors has been in operation for several years, but as it was felt that it was not meeting requirements satisfactorily, in that it was definitely known that some districts were receiving a larger quota of the funds than their requirements over a period of years indicated as necessary, and as a result others were receiving less than they otherwise would, the question was thoroughly gone into with a view to ascertaining whether an alteration in the factors would result in a fairer distribution of the vote.

After careful investigation it was decided to amend the system by deleting "area" and "population," and adding the percentages from these factors to those for "total mileage of roads in use apart from metalled or surfaced roads" and "loans for roads," thereby increasing the allowance for those two factors to 10 per cent. in each case. In addition, the third factor was altered to allow for general rates only, in lieu of general and special, and unformed legal roads (*i.e.*, paper roads) were deleted from the computation in the sixth factor, allowance being made only for those roads upon which some formation work had been carried out, or which will soon be brought into use.

The factors in the new scheme are, therefore—Amount of general rates, 5 per cent.; total mileage of roads in use apart from metalled or surfaced roads, 10 per cent.;