

that a total of £1,108,000 has been allocated for expenditure in this category during the current financial year. The urgent need of more rolling-stock and the putting in hand of deviation and duplication works on the more heavily trafficked lengths is covered by the programme for the current year amounting to £3,235,000.

Public buildings.

The erection of public buildings is a means whereby a substantial amount of expenditure can be made usefully and economically. The relative inactivity of recent years in the construction of public buildings has resulted in an acute shortage of necessary accommodation which will require a lengthy period to overtake. The expenditure on public buildings last year was £655,000, which was almost exactly twice the previous year's outlay. The allocation for the current year is £1,689,000. This includes £550,000 for school buildings, £459,000 for post and telegraph buildings, and a substantial provision for air-defence bases and for general buildings, such as courthouses, mental hospitals, departmental offices, and a special building for the Broadcasting Service.

Construction work on these buildings and on housing will be limited only by the number of skilled tradesmen available. Special measures are being adopted to increase the number of tradesmen, and building activities will be co-ordinated in order to keep the available tradesmen in constant employment.

Government Buildings centre.

On examination of the existing accommodation for Government administrative work it was found that the staffs and Departments were spread over a large area in Wellington City. This has resulted in costly means of intercommunication, and, following the procedure in other countries, the Government have had a comprehensive plan prepared for grouping Government Offices around Parliament Buildings on modern town-planning principles and suitable in every way for the accommodation of the nation's legislative and administrative services. A Bill dealing with the acquisition of the land necessary for this purpose will be introduced to Parliament during the present session.

Roads and highways.

The development and improvement of roading is an activity upon which it is admittedly possible to employ large numbers of men and at the same time it is difficult to analyse the results in terms of monetary loss or gain. Deviations or improvements of existing roads result in a saving in annual maintenance costs, the greater proportion of the expenditure goes in wages, and the improved roads meet a real need of a large and increasing section of the community. The removal of the barriers of distance between city and country must in general result in a lowering of costs, and thus facilitate the attainment of a higher living standard. It seems that the improvements in speed and reliability of transport are bringing home to more and more people the fact that there may be economic as well as æsthetic advantages in having one's home in the country, although one is employed in the city. Encouragement of this movement may result in much improvement in health and in other advantages to the community.

A programme of roading for backblock areas has been prepared, and, with the assistance of the county councils, it is proposed to commence extensive work immediately up to the limit of available competent labour.

Elimination of level crossings.

From the roads vote last year £914,000 was expended, and £1,030,000 has been allotted for the current year. From the Main Highways Account the expenditure last year under annual and permanent appropriations was £3,325,000, of which a substantial part was devoted to ordinary maintenance and to payment of interest and subsidies. The comparable total for highways expenditure for the current year is £4,678,000, which includes a full year's expenditure on maintenance and construction work on some 4,000 miles of State highway, towards which local authorities previously contributed, and also some £600,000 for the current year's heavy programme of level-crossing elimination. The cost of this latter programme is being apportioned between the Main Highways Account, the Employment Promotion Fund, and the vote for railway improvements.