

In addition to roads specially designed for the purpose of opening up the Crown lands for settlement, a large mileage of main roads running through parts of the country where the population is sparse, and, consequently, where no rates can be levied for their repair, is under the control of the Government, and, besides these, the Government also subsidises the maintenance of some other main roads.

The main road which runs from Hunterville through the centre of the North Island *via* Lake Taupo was completed in May, so that coach connection can now be maintained in the summer between Hunterville and Taupo. It is expected that this new route will be a good deal used in the summer time, as it leads through a picturesque country, and affords the most direct communication between Wellington and the Thermal Springs District. A considerable length of this road is being metalled at the present time, and when the Awarua country is available for settlement it should be greatly used.

The proposed bridge over the Rangitikei River—which has become a matter of some notoriety, owing to my promise that the work should not be lost sight of—will probably be undertaken during the year. I am inclined to the opinion, however, that two bridges are necessary—namely, one at Otara, and one at Vinegar Hill. A vote for £2,500 (£1,250 each) as a pound for pound subsidy has been provided accordingly, the plans of the proposed bridges to be approved by the Engineer-in-Chief.

The road which is in course of construction by the Stratford route, and which is eventually to connect Auckland with Taranaki, has advanced at both ends. But at the southern end the contractors have had very great difficulties to contend with in the unusually bad weather experienced all through the season. On the 31st March a length of six miles was under formation by co-operative contracts at the south end, and a like amount at the north end. At the latter also six miles have been widened out into a cart road. The line has now been located within narrow limits for the whole distance from Ongarue, where it branches off from the Main Trunk Railway line, to Stratford, though all the detail surveys are not complete. The acquisition by the Crown of some large areas of land along this road points to the need for pushing on the works as quickly as possible, for much of the country is available for settlement, and will be taken up as soon as access is provided.

The Pipiriki-Karioi Road has also advanced towards completion during the year. As a large number of men are engaged on co-operative works upon it, the road will probably be finished by next summer, and thus open a large extent of country for settlement.

Progress has also been made on the Catlin's-Waikawa Road, in Otago, which forms another important main road leading through a great extent of Crown land. On its completion, a considerable extension of settlement should take place in the district. At the present time a number of co-operative contracts are in hand.

Of the various works to open up Crown lands it is needless for me to speak in detail, as full particulars will be found in the report of the Lands and Survey Department. The amount of this sort of work in hand at the present time is probably greater than has been the case for many years past, and it is scarcely likely to decrease at present. Taking into consideration the scattered localities in which most of the work lies, and the nature of a great deal of the country, it is to be expected that the cost per mile of roads of this class will gradually increase.

The assistance of the local bodies, has been largely availed of in connection with many of the roads constructed or repaired last year.

A large proportion of the works have also been executed by co-operative contracts, upon which a considerable number of men have been employed, as illustrated by the following table, the numbers given being the average number employed on road-works for each month:—

April, 1892	...	...	90 men.	October, 1892	...	349 men.
May	...	...	82 "	November	...	321 "
June	...	...	147 "	December	...	399 "
July	...	...	197 "	January, 1893	...	377 "
August	...	...	268 "	February	...	391 "
September	...	...	339 "	March	...	396 "