

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS.

Gold-mining has now arrived at that stage, especially in regard to quartz and deep alluvial workings, where a much larger expenditure has to be incurred than previously. The shallow workings are in many places becoming more exhausted every year, and unless deeper workings are opened out many of the present mines will suspend operations. It is therefore necessary that assistance should be given to further develop these mines, and, as there is at the present time a good prospect of money being invested in mining properties, reasonable encouragement should be afforded towards mining at deeper levels.

Provision will also have to be made to give greater inducements to investors in mining properties to subscribe larger capital than heretofore, to carry on extensive operations in order to further develop our mineral wealth, and also by granting larger areas for prospecting purposes and giving a more secure tenure; a Bill to give effect to these objects is now before the Legislature.

Considering the large areas of auriferous alluvial gravels there are in many parts of the colony, which cannot be worked at a profit without a good supply of water for hydraulic sluicing and other mining operations, it is necessary to afford assistance by way of subsidies towards the construction of water-races and reservoirs on approved sites, whereby a large body of water can be conserved. These works should tend to greatly increase the number of people who will find profitable employment in this branch of mining, as the extent to which alluvial mining can be profitably carried on is entirely regulated by the quantity of water available.

The expenditure under the heading, "Development of Goldfields," last year amounted to £5,865, with liabilities amounting to £7,861. As last year was the first occasion on which a special vote was taken for this particular object a considerable time had necessarily to elapse before the preliminaries for expenditure on works of this character could be arranged. This accounts for the small expenditure.

Since the close of the financial year further authorities have been issued against the vote, totalling to £16,341, and it is proposed to ask the House this year for a grant of £20,350.

As the question of the mining industry is at present receiving great attention both within and beyond the colony, a series of resolutions bearing upon the subject has been submitted to the Goldfields and Mines Committee for consideration and report. These resolutions embrace a variety of subjects connected with mining, and it is hoped the consideration of them by the Committee will produce beneficial results.

PURCHASE OF NATIVE LANDS.

The following are the results of the operations of the Native Land Purchase Department for the year ended 31st March last:—

Area added to the public estate by purchases finally completed, 124,751 acres, portion of this area included in the work of the year, 78,640 acres, progress on purchases still uncompleted at the end of year, 307,031 acres. Total area acquired during year, 385,671 acres, as against 352,581 acres acquired during the previous year.

Full details of the various purchases will be found in Parliamentary Paper, G.—2, presented to both Houses on the 25th July last under the provisions of "The Native Land Purchases Act, 1892."

The uncompleted purchases include the Opuatia Block, in the Lower Wai-kato District, some sixty blocks in the King Country, adjacent to the North Island Main Trunk Railway line, the Rangiwaia and Tauakira Blocks in the Wanganui District, the Mangapapa Block, at Waitotara, and the balance of the Awarua Block, in the Rangitikei District. These purchases will be closed up as speedily as possible by the Native Land Court, where necessary, excising the interests of non-sellers and dissentients. It is hoped that the bulk of these lands will be ready for settlement within the ensuing three months.

TELEGRAPH EXTENSION

The sum voted under this head last year was £31,000, the expenditure for the year was £19,229 (including £3,010 on telephone exchanges), but the