

Very few individual works of large magnitude were undertaken, but the following are worthy of mention:—

Traffic-bridge over the Wairoa River at Frasertown, Hawke's Bay.

Deepening the piers and otherwise securing the foundations of the town road-bridge at Wanganui.

Traffic-bridge over the Motueka River at Alexander's Bluff.

Bridge over the Buller River at O'Sullivan's on the Nelson-Greymouth Road.

Bridge over the Wataroa River on the main south road in South Westland.

The expenditure on road works during the quarter ending 30th June last amounted to £186,128, or at the rate of nearly three-quarters of a million per annum. As it was impossible to continue at this rate steps were taken to lessen the outlay, and the disbursements have now been brought down to a more reasonable limit, although they are still large.

While the work of opening up new country and the location of settlers thereon is proceeding energetically, we must, of course, be prepared for a considerable expenditure on road-construction works, and in the compilation of the estimates for the current year liberal provision has been made in this direction. The construction of new roads to open up backblocks is a duty that may be properly regarded as devolving upon the general Government, and the improvement and metalling of roads that were originally constructed as bridle-tracks, or were left unmetalled, is also a work in which the general Government may reasonably be asked to assist; but the mere maintenance of roads and bridges, except in special cases, is a work that should devolve upon the local authority of the district.

From the above table honourable members will perceive that the General Government of the Dominion maintained during last year no less than 3,352 miles of dray-road, and 2,017 miles of bridle-road, or a gross total of 5,369 miles of road.

ROADS ON GOLDFIELDS.

One of the chief requirements of the mining industry is the construction of roads and tracks to open up the back country. The miner is frequently the pioneer for the settler, and without him large areas now settled would still be unoccupied. The future of our mineral wealth lies in the mountains, and, as the richer alluvial deposits in the lower lying country are exhausted, it is to the higher country that the miner must look for the future welfare of the industry; and in order to enable operations to be carried on it is necessary that suitable roads and tracks should be provided.

The expenditure last year under this heading was £47,374, and the amount proposed to be authorised for the current year is £85,036, on account of which a vote of £50,000 is asked for.

TOTAL VOTES FOR ROADS.

The appropriations proposed for road works in the estimates now submitted are as under:—

Roads, &c.	200,000
Backblock roads, &c. ...	210,000
Roads under Loans to Local Bodies Account	50,000
Roads under National Endowment Account	17,151
Roads on Goldfields	50,000
Maintenance of Roads (Consolidated Fund)	25,000

Total £552,151

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS.

The mineral industry of this Dominion is almost entirely confined to gold, silver, and coal; other minerals exist, but they have not at present attracted the efforts required for their extraction.

The export of coal and silver is again considerably in excess of any annual output previously recorded. The export of gold is slightly less than last year. The decline in the output of gold has, however, been general throughout all the gold-producing States of Australasia.