

During the past year the Public Works Department has proceeded vigorously with the multifarious activities within its sphere, and substantial progress has been made on railway, hydro-electric, irrigation, and road construction. Proportionately good progress has been made in the other directions, which, though less in volume, are equally indispensable.

As a result of improved working and living conditions and more efficient organization of work the world's prices for plant and material are tending to become stabilized, though they have not receded, except in a very few instances, to the pre-war level.

The average amount of work done by the men employed is steadily increasing, and this, added to the fact that the number employed throughout the year was considerably in advance of that for the previous year, has brought about the favourable results referred to.

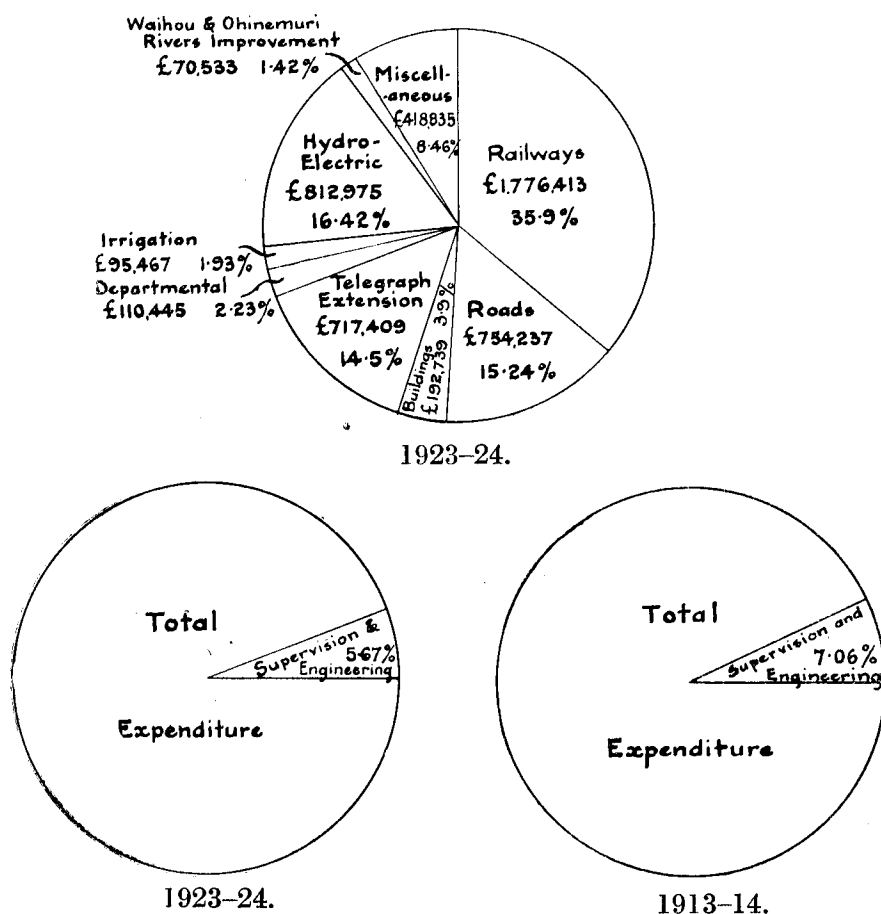
As a rule, the district officers are called upon to carry out expenditure in accordance with the amount of money placed at my disposal by the Government, but in detail have a considerable amount of independence of action, and the highly practical and energetic way in which the staff sets out its programme of work and co-ordinates the various items of each construction-work, large and small, shows that the organization functions well and gives excellent service.

PROGRAMME FOR THE FUTURE.

After having considered the matter from all points of view, I am of the opinion that it would be unwise to spend more this year than £1,200,000 on railway works, £832,000 on roads under my control, £500,000 on main highways, and £1,133,146 on hydro-electric development. In order, however, that works may be laid out in advance, and arrangements for money, men, and material may be systematically made, I have prepared a co-ordinated programme extending over a number of years, and in accordance with this programme I propose to proceed.

RATIO OF EXPENDITURE.

The diagrams below show the ratio in which the money was expended on the various main activities during the year 1923–1924, and also the ratio which the cost of engineering, accounting and supervision, &c., bore to the total expenditure controlled by the Public Works Department for the year 1923–1924, compared with for the year 1913–1914.



Supervision includes Engineering, Accountancy, Correspondence, Stores Control, and administration generally of works in progress, and also Engineering investigation of works proposed or contemplated, which may or may not result in expenditure.