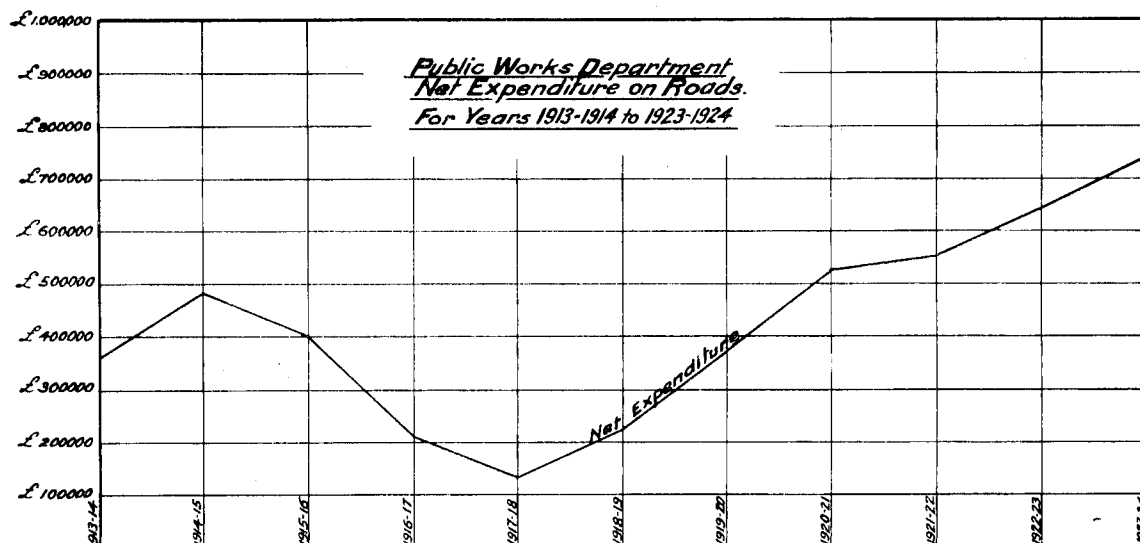


probably Canada, early next year. The subject will be studied from engineering, administrative, financial, agricultural, and marketing points of view. Not only the actual irrigation, but the preparation and levelling of the farms and drainage problems will be studied. The levelling of some of the farms belonging to Crown tenants in the Otago Central District is already under consideration, and it is proposed to make experiments to ascertain the cost which will be added to the valuations, and the rentals increased proportionately.

ROAD-CONSTRUCTION.

During the financial year ended 31st March, 1924, the expenditure on roads and bridges by the Department has constituted another record. Naturally, on account of the claims of settlement and the undeveloped state of the North Island as compared with the South Island, the expenditure has been much larger in the former. Even if present expenditure continued in the same proportions it will still be many years before the conditions as regards facilities for transport in the North Island can compare with those already prevailing in the South Island. The diagram below shows the trend of the Department's roading programme for the past ten years.



The progress made has, on the whole, been satisfactory. Many of the most important gaps in the arterial roads have been linked up, or improved to such an extent that early linking up is probable. Given similar progress for another year or two there is every prospect of there being roads passable all the year round to practically every settlement of importance in the Dominion.

In connection with access to the Waipu district, which originally was to have been by means of a railway, investigations showed that the amount of business to be done was inadequate to provide working-expenses and interest on the cost of a railway. Protracted negotiations with the local people took place, and finally it was decided to discontinue the construction of the railway and to utilize the railway formation so far as constructed, and, for the rest of the distance, to improve the road to good grades and alignment, and to surface the whole with bitumen-sealed macadam. This work is in hand.

Special attention has again been given, particularly on those roads which are directly under the supervision of the Department, to the obtaining of grading, alignment, and curvature suitable to modern conditions. Every precaution has also been taken to secure the thorough drainage of the foundations of all roads on which surfacing is proposed, and also, after surfacing, the systematic rolling of the material. Adequate provision is also being made for maintenance, an essential feature, and without which the results of capital expenditure soon disappear.

In the past there has been some complaint by local authorities that the appropriations do not become available sufficiently early to take full advantage of the most suitable season for carrying out works. I am endeavouring to improve