

The matter has been taken up so enthusiastically by the people generally that at the end of the financial year there were thirty-six Power Boards in existence. These Boards cover an area of 57,876 square miles, or 56 per cent. of the total area of the Dominion; the total population concerned is 679,748, or 53 per cent. of the total population of the Dominion; and the unimproved land-value included in the Power Board districts is £180,707,472, or 54·5 per cent. of the total unimproved land-value of the Dominion.

Of the thirty-six Boards, thirteen are already operating and supplying power, eleven have embarked on an active scheme of construction, whilst the remaining twelve have done only preliminary work.

At the end of the year the Boards had a capital investment of £3,212,296, and the ratepayers in their districts by a vote of 28,975 to 2,589 had authorized the raising of loans totalling £7,941,000.

General.—The enormous increase that is taking place in electrical development in New Zealand has necessitated a vast amount of work on the inspection of electric lines and plants of various local authorities. The question of adequate regulations to govern electrical work has received much consideration, and, following the publication of new regulations issued by the Institution of Electrical Engineers in London, it is proposed to issue a new set of regulations covering erection of electric lines in this country.

During the year a most important conference on power matters was held in London at which representatives from most of the power-using countries of the world were present.

New Zealand was represented at this conference by Sir James Allen and Mr. Evan Parry. A paper descriptive of the electrical development of the country was prepared by the late Chief Electrical Engineer, Mr. Lawrence Birks, B.Sc., M.I.E.E., M.Inst.C.E., &c., and presented at the conference. The late Mr. Birks also was to have represented New Zealand at this conference. With that object in view, and to study modern developments in Europe and America, he left this country in April last. Unfortunately his health broke down, and, on the advice of medical men in Australia, he returned to New Zealand. Though confined to his bed after a serious operation he continued to take a keen interest in the work of the Department until he died on the 25th July. Through his death the Government has lost a keen, able, and energetic officer, who put the utmost enthusiasm into all he undertook. He will long be remembered for the work he did in connection with the development of the initial hydro-electric schemes in this country. The works that have been carried out under his supervision will be a monument to his ability, his energy, and his enthusiasm.

To fill the position made vacant by his death, Mr. F. T. M. Kissel, B.Sc., A.M.Inst.C.E., A.M.I.E.E., has been appointed Chief Electrical Engineer. Mr. Kissel had acted for some years as principal assistant to Mr. Evan Parry and to the late Mr. Lawrence Birks, and has been intimately associated with all of the Government hydro-electric schemes. He recently spent a year abroad studying the latest developments in other countries, and as he is young and has shown undoubted ability he should be well able to carry on the important work now entrusted to him.

RAILWAYS.

RAILWAYS IMPROVEMENT AUTHORIZATION ACT, 1914.

The expenditure under the Railways Improvement Authorization Act, 1914, amounted to £20,520 for new stations and station-yards, and terminal goods-sheds facilities at Wellington, Christchurch, and Lyttelton; grade-easements, Penrose-Mercer; new line, Auckland-Westfield; and signalling, interlocking, and safety appliances. The proportionate cost of raising the loan was £1,466.

ADDITIONS TO OPEN LINES.

The expenditure out of the Public Works Fund amounted to £643,648 for the provision of additional rolling-stock; tarpaulins; Westinghouse brakes; steam-heating; electric headlights for locomotives; workshop machinery; improvements