

and additions to station-buildings ; extension of sidings ; bridge-works ; subways ; cranes ; weighbridges ; additions to workshops ; tablet, telegraph, and telephone facilities ; additional dwellings ; signals and interlocking ; and purchase of land.

WAIHOU AND OHINEMURI RIVERS IMPROVEMENT.

In continuation of the substantial progress made on the Waihou and Ohinemuri Rivers improvement scheme during last year, the new suction dredge, to be electrically operated, is under construction, and it is hoped to commission it by March next. It will commence operations at Ngahina Bridge, and, working downstream, will, on three shifts, build the heavy stop-banks there at the rate of one mile per two months.

On the Upper Waihou section, Waihou dredge No. 1 will, within twelve months, nearly complete the remaining work on the section of the stop-banks between Mangaiti and Ngararahi.

On the Ohinemuri River the stop-bank system will be completed, and it is anticipated that the reconstruction of the Criterion Traffic-bridge over the Ohinemuri River, and also the reconstruction of the Ohinemuri River Railway-bridge, will be put in hand.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

In connection with the building activities of the Department, a rather damaging statement, prepared, I believe, by a member of the executive of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, was given a good deal of prominence in a periodical which published a special number in connection with the Wembley Exhibition, the inference in the article being that New Zealand did not obtain good results by the practice of preparing the plans and carrying out its buildings with its own staff.

Statements were made about monotonous uniformity and stereotyped methods of design. It is only necessary to mention such widely dissimilar designs as the Public Trust Building, the General Post Office, the Governor-General's residence, and the building in which we now sit, to negative any suggestion of uniformity. The photographs reproduced herewith, all of a number of post-offices completed during the year, will indicate to honourable members that our designs are not made by the mile and sawn off as required, but that each site and building is studied so that it may fulfil its requirements, and suitably harmonize with its surroundings in accordance with the best principles of architecture. I am by no means one of those who think that because a man works for the Government he must therefore be lacking in individuality and initiative.

Parliament Buildings, Wellington.—Furnishings and fittings required for the new buildings were purchased, and cellarage accommodation for use of Government Departments under the new buildings was provided. The completion of the new building cannot be deferred much longer, and is now under consideration.

Departmental Buildings.—Properties at Alexandra and Greymouth were purchased as residences for departmental officers. Provision was also made for a seismograph at the Hector Observatory, Wellington, and additions were made to the Lands and Survey Departments offices at Christchurch. Alterations were carried out at the Departmental Building, High Street, Auckland.

Owing to the expansion of business, and the need for additional accommodation for officers employed, temporary additions are to be made to the Departmental Buildings, Wellington, and the necessary provision has been made on the estimates. The erection of new permanent Departmental Buildings can be deferred for some time as a result of arrangements made for renting offices for the staff of some Departments, but the erection of a permanent building will require consideration at no very distant date. The existing wooden structure has been satisfactorily maintained in the past, but will have to be replaced before many years have passed.