

the new country opened up. The Main South Road in Westland and the Haast Pass Road will give our own people and visitors from overseas the opportunity of travelling direct from the splendours of the West Coast across the divide into the Otago and Lakes Districts, and will also give a direct impetus to the agricultural and pastoral development of Westland as a whole, particularly those areas in South Westland where progress has been impossible owing to the absence of any form of road access.

As in previous years, local authorities have continued to approach the Department for assistance towards the cost of flood damage sustained in their respective districts. Fortunately there has been no widespread and substantial storm or flood damage such as resulted from the cyclonic storm of February, 1936, but there have been isolated instances throughout the Dominion where local authorities have found it necessary to approach the Government for financial aid towards the cost of restoration work. A careful investigation of the circumstances, including the capacity of the authorities to meet a reasonable share of the expenditure, has been made in each case, and where it was found that grants could be justified subsidies were given on the customary conditions.

The following is a brief general description of the progress made during the year on some of the major works referred to earlier, and which are at present in hand :—

The complete reconstruction, including the widening and metalling, of the Rotorua to Waikaremoana Road to a standard necessary to safely carry the greatly increased traffic which has resulted from the popularity of the modern motor-car. Work on the Waikaremoana end has been practically completed, and good progress has been made on the section being worked from Rotorua District.

Widening and extension of the Western Hutt Road has been continued as a standard work to provide an additional outlet from Wellington City and the Lower Hutt area generally to the Upper Hutt Valley and the Wairarapa. Not only will this route be of value as an alternative to the present road through the Taita Gorge, but it will also be greatly used by city motorists and transport interests as a by-pass to the congested traffic area of Lower Hutt Borough. The bridge which will connect the road with the present highway at Silverstream is now being erected under contract.

Good progress has been made with improvement work on the road between Haywards and Pahautanui. When completed this road will provide a very useful and quick route from the Hutt Valley to the West Coast both for commercial transport and the public generally. The reconstructed Western Hutt Road, together with the new bridge over the Hutt River at Silverstream, will bring this road within easy reach of either end of the Hutt Valley. An average of 200 men has been employed during the year.

Construction work on the Lewis Pass Road, which gives a direct connection between the Maruia district on the West Coast and North Canterbury, is now well advanced, and it will be only a few weeks before the route is opened to general traffic. Bridging of the smaller streams is receiving attention, but the temporary bridges over the larger rivers, the Hope and the Boyle, are capable of carrying all through traffic, and it is proposed to allow them to remain for some time before erecting permanent crossings.

Construction work on the Main South Road to South Westland has progressed vigorously during the year, both from Weheka southwards and from Bruce Bay northwards. The steel suspension bridge of 360 ft. span over the Fox River is nearing completion, while the erection of the Cook River Bridge, of 264 ft. span, is being advanced expeditiously. This road is to be extended to Jackson's Bay, and a wharf erected there. Two hundred and three men are employed on the road between Weheka and the Haast River, and an additional 150 can be placed on the section from Haast to Jackson's Bay as soon as the wharf is well in hand and supplies can be obtained regularly.

Despite extremely bad weather during the spring and early summer, good progress was made with the construction of the Haast Pass Road, where 141 men are employed. This road will connect with the Main South Road at the mouth of the Haast River in South Westland. During the period under review practically six miles of formation and three and a half miles of first gravelling were completed.