

control of the railway works, and the latter that of the roads and bridges; but it must not be supposed that the work of these officers has been kept distinct, each of them at times having as much as it was possible to do of both descriptions.

It was my intention to visit every district where the Department had works in progress. I am of opinion that it is much to the interest of the Colony that whoever is at the head of this Department should have personal knowledge of what is going on, and be able to form his own judgment of the requirements of the several districts. I made my arrangements accordingly to travel from one end of the Colony to the other during the recess: but the changes which took place in the Ministry in the early part of this year kept me in Wellington and prevented me from visiting several important districts.

As will be seen from the Returns which have been laid upon the table of the House, a very large number of contracts have been let, involving a great amount of professional labour in preparation of plans and specifications.

In every case where practicable, public tenders have been called for the works of all descriptions, the exceptions being the contracts let to Messrs. Brogden and Sons, and some small road works in out-of-the-way places. In almost every case the lowest tenders have been accepted.

#### ROADS, NORTH ISLAND.

I shall now allude to the Road Works in the North Island.

I shall not trouble the House by going into any detailed description of all the roads which have been put in hand, but refer honourable Members to the very exhaustive report of the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Blackett.

It has been the object of the Government throughout the year to bridge, as far as practicable, all the larger and more dangerous rivers and creeks on the various lines of road determined upon. In view of the large loss of life which occurs annually at the crossing places on these rivers, the Government consider it is all important that they should be bridged as speedily as possible.

Wherever it has been found practicable, employment has been given to the Natives on these road works, and in the majority of instances by contract. Although the Maoris have not in some districts availed themselves of the opportunity as much as could be wished, still it is to be noted with satisfaction that they carried out their work very faithfully, and generally at very moderate rates, and that there is a growing inclination amongst them to enter into contracts for public works.

The expenditure in the upper portion of the district North of Auckland has been during the past few months more directly under the Honorable Mr. Katene, whose very large knowledge of the district has been of great assistance in pointing out where road works were most needed. In the district more immediately in the neighbourhood of Auckland, the Provincial Government have taken the superintendence of the expenditure of £10,000, and have assisted the Government in expeditiously carrying out the road works so much wanted.

A considerable amount of work has been done in several of the Road Districts by the Armed Constabulary, full details of which will be found in Table 2, attached to this Statement, the total value of such work during the past year being £2,620.

The amount expended in the districts of the various Provinces is as follows:—

PROVINCE OF AUCKLAND,—			£	s.	d.
Bay of Islands ...	...	...	6,503	0	11
North of Auckland ...	...	...	2,747	10	9
Mangere Bridge ...	...	...	227	17	8
Thames ...	...	...	75	2	9
Waikato ...	...	...	5,832	8	11
Bay of Plenty ...	...	...	37,454	1	2
Poverty Bay ...	...	...	6,197	17	2
Taupo ...	...	...	7,357	10	0
			£66,395 9 4		

With reference to the Mangere Bridge, I would observe, in passing, that its erection was promised by my predecessor in office, and that it was put in hand at the express request of the Superintendent and the Provincial Authorities of Auckland. It is a very large work, and will cost £15,224 7s. 8d.