

## SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE ON WORKS.

The total expenditure on works authorised by the Department for the development of the mining industry for the year ending the 31st March last amounts to £84,467. These works consist of roads and tracks constructed by direct grants, £37,411; roads and tracks constructed by subsidies to local bodies, £12,158; water-races, £2,272; drainage-channels, £1,212; prospecting-works, £2,358; schools of mines, exclusive of salaries of teachers, £1,780 17s. 3d.; water conservation, £507; telephone lines, £50; compensation on proclamation of rivers, £5,197; and prospecting deep levels, £21,520 15s. The liabilities on the works in progress at the end of March last amounted to £50,721. A detailed statement of the expenditure on these works will be found in the tables annexed to the Inspecting Engineer's report.

## MINING LEGISLATION.

The Mining Bill, to consolidate the existing Act and its several amendments, which was introduced last session, will be again brought forward. The Bill having been widely circulated throughout the colony, amongst all classes of persons interested in the mining industry, has generally met with approval. A very large number of suggested amendments have been received, some of which are forwarded by those who, from experience, are qualified to judge of the varied requirements of the mining community. These suggestions will be submitted for the consideration of the Goldfields and Mines Committee when the measure is before it. The special conditions under which the dredging industry, a form of mining of recent introduction, is now carried on have rendered it necessary that power should be taken to frame regulations to provide for the more efficient management of dredges, and the safety of the workmen employed.

The Sunday Labour in Mines Prevention Act, brought into force last year, has enabled the Inspectors of Mines to enforce compliance with its provisions, and all Sunday labour in mines and batteries, except in those cases in which permission has been granted, has now ceased. Permits have only been granted in cases in which the special conditions under which operations were being carried on demanded their use.

The provisions of the Mining Companies Act Amendment Act of last year, making the directors of no-liability companies by whose authority debts are incurred responsible for the payment thereof, has given a feeling of security to those who work for or supply goods to such companies.

The purchase under the Cyanide Process Gold-extraction Act of the patent rights in New Zealand of the processes known as "the MacArthur-Forrest Processes" has proved of undoubted benefit to the mining industry.

Licenses to use the process to the number of twelve have been issued, and royalty to the amount of £676 17s. 1d. has been collected for the period from the 20th August, 1897, to the 31st March last.

It has become apparent that the liability of mine-owners under the provisions of section 383 of "The Mining Act, 1891," and section 52 of "The Coal-mines Act, 1891," in cases where serious accidents occur to any of their employés, is proving a grave obstruction to the development of the mining industry. The Government intend to frame measures defining the mutual liabilities of employers and those who are employed both in coal- and gold-mining.

Representatives of English capital invested in the Auckland goldfields have drawn attention to the taxes and disabilities under which it is alleged they suffer, and which grievances they state call for redress. Amongst their grounds for complaint are the tax of 1 per cent. per annum on the amount of the nominal capital of the companies, the tenure of mining properties, excessive ground-rent, export duty on gold, and import duty on machinery. It is proposed by legislation to exempt mining companies from the tax of 1 per cent., and to provide for a term of license for mining properties of forty-two years with right of renewal; but the import and export duties in force will not at present be altered. The question of reducing rents on claims held for gold-mining is one which requires very careful consideration, as the rents form part of the revenue of local govern-