

As already announced in the Financial Statement, it is proposed to transfer to the Consolidated Fund the charge for the maintenance of main roads, so that no vote under that head appears on the public-works estimates this year, but the allocation of the amount voted is attached to the estimates.

ROADS ON GOLDFIELDS (MINES DEPARTMENT).

The vote last year under this head amounted to £57,250, and the expenditure to £45,138.

The sum proposed to be authorised for the current year is £75,731, on account of which a vote of £50,000 is proposed.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDFIELDS AND MINING.

A substantial increase in the production of precious metals and minerals is to be noted this year, the export of gold being the highest for thirty-five years. The output of coal also continues to increase, and new leases are still being applied for on the west coast of the Middle Island.

For the year 1905 there was exported from the colony 520,485 oz. gold, of a value of £2,093,936, as against an export for 1904 of 520,320 oz., of a value of £1,987,501.

It is confidently anticipated that the export for this year will exceed that of last year, as the mines all over the colony appear to be in a flourishing condition.

The purchase of the Alexandra-Bonanza Race was completed last year, and the surveys of the proposed extension are now sufficiently advanced to allow of the improvement-works being let by contract. When the extension is completed a large area of land will be available for mining by reason of the additional supply of water available.

The amount expended last financial year on works for the development of the goldfields was £18,533, while the liabilities at the close of the year amounted to £2,886. It is proposed to take a vote of £40,000 for the current year.

TOURIST AND HEALTH RESORTS.

The expenditure under this head during the past year amounted to £15,438, the drainage-works at Rotorua taking £4,009 of the total. For the current year, in order to meet the liabilities in connection with the Rotorua new bath buildings and waterworks, the amounts required under those heads are increased to £14,000 and £15,000 respectively. The completion of the new water system is an important matter, as the present supply is inadequate for the requirements of the new drainage system. It is proposed to erect a suitable bath at Whakarewarewa, for which a vote of £500 is proposed.

The Department's premises, baths, and the domain at Te Aroha have been lighted by electricity, and the cost of the work is duly provided for under the vote.

The new water-supply for Hanmer is provided for by an increased vote; and an amount of £800 is taken for the purchase of launches for Lakes Tarawera and Okatina.

The necessity for better accommodation at the Hermitage, Mount Cook, has been an urgent matter for some time, and an amount of £500 is asked for on account. For the coming season temporary arrangements are being made to provide additional sleeping-room.

The gross authorisation asked for is £51,840, on account of which a vote of £40,000 is proposed.

TELEGRAPH-EXTENSION.

The expenditure on telegraph and telephone services out of this vote during the year amounted to £77,186.

No less than 158 lines were erected or were in hand during the year, in addition to the usual activity in the telephone-exchange extension. New offices were opened in 115 townships, special attention having been paid to offering better facilities to isolated settlements known under the general term "the backblocks."