

The vote of £18,000 for the current year is to a large extent a revote of the unexpended balances on last year's appropriations, but provides also for further additions at Hokitika and Reefton, and a further grant towards the new hospital being erected at Hamilton. It also provides for grants in aid of hospital buildings at Northern Wairoa and Mercury Bay, and for completing and equipping the Cottage Hospital at Taumarunui, and for the building of St. Helens Hospital, Wellington, and additions to the St. Helens Hospitals at Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin; also for accommodation for delirium tremens cases at the larger of the general hospitals.

Agriculture.—There was little expenditure under this heading last year.

A commencement was made with additions and alterations to the departmental offices at Auckland and Palmerston North, and residences were provided for the Inspectors-in-Charge, Gisborne, Waipukurau, and Seddon.

For the current year it is proposed to provide £3,000 for the accommodation at the Ruakura Experimental Farm of cadets seeking instruction in methods of agriculture, &c. Considerable additions to the buildings on the Experimental Farms at Ruakura, Waerenga, Tauranga, Arataki, Mounahaki, and Weraroa are proposed in order to increase the usefulness of these institutions. A vote is also provided for the purchase of an additional area of land for the Tauranga Fruit-testing Station, also for the proposed Dairy School, and for additional buildings and land at the Veterinary Laboratory, Wallaceville; and several amounts are provided for Inspectors' residences and office accommodation.

Public Health.—The principal works carried out during the year have been the commencement of the new wharf and approaches at Motuihi Quarantine-station, Auckland, and the erection of the wharf at Somes Island, Wellington. Payments were also made on account of subsidies on contributions and value of site given for a sanatorium for consumptives at Christchurch.

The vote for the current year provides for completing the wharves at the quarantine-stations above mentioned, for buildings and additions at the similar stations at Quail Island (Lyttelton) and the Bluff, and at Te Waikato Sanatorium, Cambridge. A considerable vote is also proposed under the head of subsidies on the cost of erecting infectious-diseases hospitals and sanatoria and annexes for consumptives.

ROADS, BRIDGES, ETC.

The administration of the Department of Roads is now in the hands of the Minister of Mines. During my recent absence from the Dominion my colleague very kindly undertook the performance of my duties as Minister of Public Works, and on my return offered to further assist me by continuing to carry out a portion of the duties. I very gladly accepted this generous offer, and the charge of the Roads Department has therefore remained in Hon. Mr. McGowan's hands.

The amount provided for the year 1907–8 for the construction of roads and their maintenance under all votes and accounts was £578,575; the amount authorised for expenditure was £619,727, and the net expenditure was £363,997. The principal cause for the small expenditure in proportion to the amount voted was the very great scarcity of labour of the kind required, the greater part of the men being otherwise occupied at what appeared to them to be more congenial employment.

The bulk of authorities for expenditure was issued somewhat earlier than usual, and abundance of work was ready for men, but they could not be got. The scarcity was throughout the Dominion. However, the work done was fairly considerable, being as follows:—

New dray-road construction	...	...	...	486 miles.
Dray-roads metalled	...	...	...	286 "
Dray-roads converted from bridle-roads	...	...	...	107 "
Dray-roads maintained	...	...	...	2,962 "
New bridle-roads made	...	...	...	345 "
Bridle-roads maintained	...	...	...	1,899 "
Engineering surveys made	...	...	...	640 "