

Lyttelton Railway was submitted to Parliament (D.-4, 1908). This report made it appear that the proposal was likely to be unremunerative, inasmuch as the interest and depreciation on capital cost of the electrical installation, plus the cost of working the railway electrically, would amount to a larger sum than the present expense of working the line by steam locomotives. This, however, was on the assumption that the Railway Department would have to provide its own power-house and equipment. If, however, a development scheme is inaugurated at Lake Coleridge, this expense would, of course, be unnecessary; and if electric current is available in Christchurch at a much lower rate than was reckoned upon in 1908, without any interest and depreciation charges on account of a costly power-house, the circumstances would be totally different. Under our present proposals there is very little doubt that the line between Lyttelton and Christchurch, and probably suburban lines adjacent to other cities, could be electrified with great advantage to the public in the matter of the speed and frequency of the services, and also with advantage to the Railway Department from a working point of view. This matter will therefore be gone into again with a view to proposals for the electrification of suburban railways being submitted next session.

IRRIGATION AND WATER-SUPPLY.

A very considerable amount of survey and exploration work in this connection was carried out in Central Otago during last year, full details of which will be found in the annual report of the Engineer-in-Chief (Appendix E to this Statement). Plans and sections for some of the works proposed have already been prepared, so that a commencement with same can be made at an early date. It is proposed to begin with the Ida Valley block, containing 65,200 acres, which is shown as Block 4 on the map accompanying the report of Messrs. Bruce and Dobson (C.-17 of 1909). The gentlemen referred to describe this country as admirably adapted for irrigation, a very large portion being first-class agricultural land, which would undoubtedly become highly reproductive on the application of water. The irrigible area in this block is 52,500 acres, the southern portion of which will be best for cultivation, and can be the more easily irrigated. There are several sources of water-supply—namely, the Greenland Dam on the Manorburn River, the Poolburn River, and the Dovedale and other creeks. Power can also be generated from the Poolburn and Manorburn Rivers to pump water from the Manuherikia River, and from the lower reaches of the Poolburn.

Last year's vote amounted to £5,000, of which £2,435 was expended, mostly on surveys. The vote provided on the estimates for the current year is £10,000, and it is proposed to commence construction-works during the coming summer. Other proposed irrigation schemes are being investigated, and proposals in reference to some of them will be submitted next session.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The total expenditure on public buildings last year amounted to £335,114—namely, £58,165 under the Consolidated Fund and £276,949 under the Public Works Fund. For the current year votes totalling to £413,190 are proposed—namely, £53,190 out of the Consolidated Fund and £360,000 under the Public Works Fund.

GENERAL.

On the current year's vote provision is made for the completion of the new Government House, and a substantial item on account of the erection of the proposed new Parliament Buildings; also for Departmental Buildings at Hamilton, Gisborne, New Plymouth, Stratford, Wanganui, Masterton, Christchurch, and Invercargill, and sundry buildings in Wellington, and other minor works and charges, the total vote proposed being £70,000.

JUDICIAL.

Courthouses.—The expenditure on Courthouses for the year amounted to £11,119.

The principal works undertaken were new buildings at Cambridge, Waipiro Bay, Feilding, Ross, and Fairlie; additions at Palmerston North, Wellington, and Christchurch; and the purchase of additional land at Auckland.