

In the matter of toll and telegraph extensions, one of the most important works in view is the erection of a metallic circuit between Blenheim and Christchurch, and the installation at Seddon of repeating-apparatus, so that the fullest use may be made of the new Cook Strait telephone-cable. Other works in view are a rearrangement of the toll circuits in the west coast of the South Island with a view to improving their efficiency, the completion of the reconstruction of the arterial line of communication between Dunedin and Invercargill, the installation of machine-printing telegraph apparatus at Napier and New Plymouth, and the conversion to metallic of a number of earthworking lines in districts where power lines are being reticulated.

#### WORKS FOR DEFENCE DEPARTMENT.

During the past year considerable progress has been made with the development of the mobilization base and training-camp at Waikato Camp, Ngaruawahia. Four magazines for big explosives and the earthworks for others have been completed. Three married quarters and one single men's quarters (ten men) have been erected. A kitchen and two mess-rooms, capable of accommodating a thousand men, have been provided, and were in full use in February. The water-supply system, consisting of a pumping plant on the banks of the Waikato River, which pumps from a large filtration-chamber to an 80,000-gallon reservoir, with reticulation therefrom to the training-camp area, is now complete, and is giving every satisfaction. Surface drainage and roading has effected considerable improvement to the camping-area. Large areas badly infested with noxious weeds have received thorough attention. The construction of the large Ordnance Depot buildings for reception of stores is now being undertaken.

In view of the development of Waikato Camp, little money was available for works elsewhere, although many of these are of considerable importance. Several new drill-halls are urgently required, while mess-room accommodation, married quarters, and store-rooms at Burnham Camp are very necessary.

It is hoped to complete the more urgent of these works this year, but the majority must be delayed pending the completion of Waikato Camp. Another urgent work similarly affected is the development of the important, recently acquired aerodrome-site at Hobsonville, Auckland.

#### MECHANICAL APPARATUS.

The economical prosecution and early completion of construction-works depends firstly upon the early provision of suitable labour-aiding machinery, and secondly upon the efficient maintenance of such plant. This side of the Department's activity is always looked at from the viewpoint of the field officer, hence a sincere endeavour is made to deal promptly with requisitions for plant and for renewable parts.

Two years ago a plant-register system was adopted, whereby each Engineer in charge of a district obtains regularly an up-to-date record of the "days worked" by each plant article. As was anticipated, one direct result has been the more frequent transfer within the respective districts of idle plant, which in turn has, on occasions, avoided a request for the supply of a similar new article.

The transfer of expensive and efficient plant from one district to another—even to a greater extent than would at first appear advisable—can be justified, and is constantly taking place. Apart from this factor, there is, of course, a demand for up-to-date machinery, and a need for the replacement of worn-out plant, which during this year has occasioned the purchase by competitive selection of the following items: Seven air-compressors, one bitumen-boiler, one bitumen-sprayer, ten concrete-mixers, one conveyor, three electric motors, four excavators, eight light locomotives, four machine tools, eleven motor-trucks, one motor-velocipede, two oil-engines, two oil-winches, ten pumps, three road-graders, fourteen rollers, one steam piling-hammer, three stone-crushers, one sweeper, five tractors, two trailers, and one welding-plant; while fifty-eight ballast-wagons, also thirty-eight other vehicles for train-running, were purchased from the Railway Department.