

CONCLUSION.

Much as the Public Works and Immigration Policy has conduced to the prosperity of New Zealand, there can be no question that if it is followed up as is now proposed, the future results will very largely exceed those of the past. We know the extent to which railways have helped us to increase our settled population, our agriculture, and our trade; and we know that for some of those railways we have paid very dearly, not alone in money. But our experience, whatever it has cost us, should at least have taught us in what directions, and in what manner, we can best spend the money hereafter available for such undertakings. Not only ought we resolutely to resolve that we will never again sanction the commencement of a railway as to which we have not at least reasonable evidence that it will pay; but we should equally resolve that, as one point of our experience, 10s. shall be made to represent as much work as 20s. have—unfortunately in too many cases—represented heretofore. We now see clearly many things after which we could only blindly grope when we began to construct our railways; we have many appliances that were then wholly wanting; and we have in our midst responsible and capable contractors, for whom, at the outset, we had to go far afield. In addition, the prices of materials are greatly reduced—indeed upon rails alone, the reduction is so great that, could we afford at once to purchase all we shall want for our contemplated lines, we should save probably £600,000, as compared with prices we have as a rule had to pay. Advantage has been, to a limited extent, taken of the low state of the market by ordering 10,000 tons of steel rails at £5 14s., delivered at Cardiff. In expressing these opinions I desire to disclaim casting any reflection upon those who have hitherto had the professional overcharge of our public works; if there have been blunders they have been chiefly incidental to circumstances, and to the nature of things—in my belief they have been more political than professional.

I do not think that I need occupy the time of the House further.

Appended to the Statement are tables showing:—

- 1.—Summary of Liabilities and Expenditure to 30th June, 1878.
- 2.—Statement showing the Total Liabilities and Expenditure on Railways out of Immigration and Public Works Loan to 30th June, 1878.
- 3.—Statement showing the Expenditure on Railways to 30th June, 1878—Classified.
- 4.—Statement showing the Liabilities on Railways to 30th June, 1878—Classified.
- 5.—Statement showing the Liabilities on Roads and Water-races to 30th June, 1878.
- 6.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure on Roads, North Island, to 30th June, 1878.
- 7.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure on Roads, Middle Island, to 30th June, 1878.
- 8.—Statement showing Liabilities, and Expenditure out of Consolidated Fund, for Repairs and Maintenance of Roads in Native Districts to 30th June, 1878.
- 9.—Summary of Liabilities and Expenditure on Roads in Colony to 30th June, 1878.
- 10.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure for Prospecting and Developing Coal Mines.
- 11.—Statement showing Amount of Subsidies Authorized, Paid, and Refunded, and Payments of Interest on Sums Advanced for Water-races.
- 12.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure for Waterworks on Gold Fields to June, 1878.
- 13.—Return showing Amount Expended for Telegraph Purposes for Year ended 30th June, 1878.
- 14.—Return showing Liabilities and Expenditure for Telegraph Purposes to 30th June, 1878.
- 15.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure on Public Buildings to 30th June, 1878.
- 16.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure on Lighthouses to 30th June, 1878.
- 17.—Statement showing Liabilities and Expenditure on Miscellaneous Public Works to 30th June, 1878.
- 18.—Statement of Rolling-stock and Plant.

There are likewise reports from the Engineers in charge of Public Works, and the Commissioners of Railways, in both Islands; annual report on public buildings; report of Chief Inspector of Machinery; report on lighthouse works; report on coal exploration and inspection of mines; reports on trial of native coal on locomotives—all of which embody much valuable information, and will no doubt be found both useful and instructive.

I conclude, Sir, by once more commending to the approval of honorable members the proposals I have had the honor to submit. I have had pleasure, too, in submitting them, for in my belief they are calculated to meet the requirements of settlement over a great portion of each Island. To give effect to them, will, I am convinced, be to increase enormously the productive power of the colony, and