

but not detailed under the votes. The receipts and payments on account of the past year are set out first, distinct from those of the current year. An account follows under the head of "Assets and Liabilities of the Consolidated Fund," a title which is not unlikely to mislead, as the account is only a detail of the receipts and payments on account of the past year, described under that title in the account of receipts and expenditure.

After several accounts, showing different branches of the revenue and expenditure in detail, the Appropriation Account follows, setting out the excesses and savings on the votes.

The Public Works Fund accounts are in a similar form to those of the Consolidated Fund, but are in less detail than is the case in the other colonies, giving only the totals on the votes, not the payments under the several items of each vote.

The last account is that of the Public Debt and Sinking Funds.

The latter are managed by a Board of Commissioners, who account separately to Parliament; but the accounts are also included in those of the Treasurer, and are given with a detail which does not appear in any other public account.

Of Imprests.

Perhaps the most striking feature in which the accounts of New Zealand differ from most others, is in the item of "Outstanding Imprests," which are shown as a part of the balance in hand.

In New South Wales the imprests are very limited with the exception of the Treasurer's advance of £100,000, and are all said to be accounted for before the end of each year. The moneys in the hands of the Treasurer do not appear as a part of the balance.

In Victoria the balance in the Advances Account is stated to be £278,811 18s.

The accounts of Queensland do not show any advances in the hands of public officers except the Agent-General to a small amount.

In South Australia, the advances were £9,280 1s. 4d.; but £260,017 0s. 9d. in the hands of the Agent-General and £1,695 14s. 7d. in the hands of the Resident in the Northern Territory would be considered "imprests" in the sense in which the word is used in New Zealand. If so, the total would amount to nearly £280,000. The word "imprests" in these accounts is not to be taken to mean advances of money, as has been explained above; it means cash credits.

In Tasmania, the advances appear to be under £3,000.

In New Zealand, the imprests unaccounted for were, in the colony £122,343 16s. 4d., and in London £433,230 13s. 2d.

There is not sufficient information in the accounts to determine whether the advances and imprests spoken of mean exactly the same kind of transactions in all, but it is certain that under the New Zealand system of accounts, the imprests are very much larger than in any other colony.

Although the imprests are, in New Zealand, charged against the votes in the course of the year, for the purpose of preventing an over-expenditure on a vote through the agency of imprests, which could not take place as a direct payment, yet the imprests outstanding are properly carried into the balance in hand at the end of the year. This is provided by the Audit Act.

Of Unauthorized Expenditure.

It will be as well to notice from these accounts the operation of the laws in force to prevent the over-expenditure of the appropriation of Parliament.