

to be asked for amounts to a large sum, but the House may depend upon their being carefully husbanded, with due regard to the period over which their expenditure should be spread.

I have already said that negotiations have been opened with the promoters of companies for carrying out lines from Wellington to Foxton, and from Canterbury to Westland, and that one part of the proposals is a grant of Crown lands by way of subsidy. The Government are assured that subsidies in the form of land-grants would induce capitalists to undertake useful works of this character, which the condition of the Public Works Fund and of the revenue, and the pledges of the colony, preclude the Legislature from proceeding with at present. Although, with regard to the Otago Central line, no definite proposals have yet reached the Government, I do not doubt that so favourable an opportunity for the employment of private enterprise will be taken advantage of. It appears, also, far from improbable that the continuation of the line north of Auckland, which has already been partly surveyed, may, at no distant date, be undertaken on similar conditions. With this view, I shall bring down a Bill authorizing such grants, within limits to be laid down, and under arrangements to be subject to the approval of Parliament. This mode of engaging private capital in the development and colonisation of the country, is, as the House will be well aware, no novelty. It has been adopted on the largest scale in the United States, in Canada, and also in Queensland, and with good results. The method of dividing the territory abutting on the proposed lines in alternate blocks, of moderate area, for grants to the railway company and for retention by the State, removes all possibility of the lands being acquired, or advantageously occupied, in very large areas—a danger which in any case would not be serious, since the peopling of the adjoining lands is the most obvious mode of making such railway enterprises profitable.

ROADS.

I continue to bring all our proposals under this head within one view, whatever department may be charged with their execution. But there is a distinction between our other suggestions and those for roads to open Crown lands. The full amount required for the roads of this class, viz., £150,000, will be shown in the Estimates, but it is proposed to extend the construction over three years, and not to expend more than some £50,000 during the current year.

The total vote asked for roads and bridges, including expenditure in the March-June quarter, and all liabilities to the 30th June, amounts to about £260,000. As in the case of the railway proposals, the Estimates will show the sums proposed to be spent in each provincial district. To enumerate at length the several works proposed to be undertaken and gone on with under this head, would, I fear, weary the Committee. A statement like the present, however, when in print, finds its way more readily to the public than estimates and returns, and may be the means of communicating to a large number of persons, interested in one or other of the projects, information more important to them than that which refers to more costly enterprises. I have therefore given, in a Schedule to be attached to this Statement, a full account of the road-works which we propose, and will now confine myself to a general reference to their character and distribution.

Beginning with the most northerly, and taking them in geographical order, it is proposed to run a road through the fertile region extending from Kawakawa to Okaihau and Victoria Valley; also, to continue the line recently opened between Victoria Valley and Herd's Point on to Kaihu, Wairoa, both by the coastal line *via* Maunganui Bluff and the inland line over the Waioku Plateau. In the Counties of Mangonui, Whangarei, Rodney, and Waitemata, there are blocks at present inaccessible which will be opened by cross roads from the main line. In this manner, more than a hundred miles of new road will penetrate the Crown lands lying north of Auckland, which comprise an area of 1,200,000 acres.

Passing south of Auckland to the Waikato basin, we have two roads penetrating the Awaroa Survey District, from points on the railway system, and a line to open the Huihuitaha Block.

In the Thames District, a very necessary road has at length been obtained