

the Public Works Fund, will have to be deferred, in all but urgent cases. With the exception, therefore, of additional school-buildings, for which a less sum is asked than last year, and of increased accommodation in some of the Lunatic Asylums, votes will only be asked to meet a few pressing cases where, for some time past, the public service has seriously suffered for want of proper office accommodation.

IMMIGRATION.

Operations under this head have been almost suspended during the past year. The state of the labour market is still such that we should not be justified in attempting to renew a large assisted immigration. Believing, however, as we do, that a considerable addition to the population of New Zealand is as necessary for the development of its resources as for the prosperity of those who are now settled within its borders, we look forward to being able at no distant date to again afford facilities for the introduction of suitable immigrants. But, at present, circumstances do not permit us to do more than to assist a number of persons who have been to some degree surprised by the suspension of subsidized immigration, and to extend this assistance to a very limited number of single women, and of nominated immigrants who are anxious to join their relations in the colony. The Government look on State immigration operations as involving a higher degree of moral responsibility than, perhaps, any other with which they are charged. The vote asked for, including a minimum staff in the colony and in England, and the maintenance of buildings, is £24,973.

Before concluding, Sir, it will probably be expected, in a statement coming after the budget of my honorable colleague the Colonial Treasurer, that I should, to some extent, develop the idea under which he asked the House to model the finance of the colony. I refer, of course, to the suggestion for continuing the construction of the public works which have occupied our attention during the last ten years. The Government are quite agreed in the view taken by my honorable colleague of the immediate financial prospects of the colony, and they are not disposed to leave it a mere declaration of opinion. Watching the financial progress of the country with constant attention, and noting every political indication in the North that may have a bearing on the subject, they will occupy themselves early and seriously with the study of plans for completing the great works in which the colony is so deeply interested. The character of the proposals to be made on the meeting of the next Parliament must depend to a great degree on the financial experiences of the current year. But I wish now to affirm a few principles which will be observed in our propositions, should we be honored with the continued confidence of the country, and should our finance, as we anticipate, justify our immediate forward movement. Firstly, we shall make our proposals as Ministers of the whole colony, although not neglecting the claims, needs, and prospects of any one of its varied districts. Secondly, we shall ask the Legislature to define its future undertakings with all possible precision, and to give the fullest guarantee in its power that the undertakings so defined shall be faithfully carried out. Thirdly, we shall ask that future borrowing operations be limited strictly in amount by the calculable prospects of the country, and that borrowed money be employed only for works which give reasonable promise of being remunerative within such a period as is consistent with sound finance.

There are indications of a great and early change in the prospects of New Zealand, and especially of the northern districts—signs that one long-standing obstacle to their progress is about to disappear. There are few parts of this favoured land of which we may not rationally hope, not to say calculate, that their special advantages of climate or soil, accessibility, mineral or other wealth, will in due time make them populous and prosperous. It is the interest of all to open every part of the land to enterprise and industry; and, in asking authority to make the expenditure out of the Public Works Fund necessary for the study of the works to be undertaken, we hope in the early future, we are asking the Legislature to act in a hearty national spirit—to resolve that the waste spaces shall be developed—that a yet wider field shall be opened for our children, as well as for a multitude of our countrymen and race in this land, unsurpassed for its climate, its soil, and the variety of its resources.