

at an early day submit to the House is within the bounds of practical politics for us in this colony. Should, however, the proposal only lead to a dispassionate discussion of this important matter, we shall have advanced one step towards a solution of what, I venture to think, is one of the great problems of the age—a problem which, though happily not so urgently pressing upon us as upon older communities, where the distribution of wealth is at present much more unequal, is still one it behoves us as the founders of a nation to grapple with, and to the best of our ability solve without delay. I have said that it is very probable that we cannot deal with this question during this session; but, whether we do so or not, sufficient provision will have to be made for the expenditure of the year. The Government propose, pending further consideration of this subject, to take the whole cost of hospitals upon the Consolidated Fund, and for this purpose I shall have to ask for a vote of £50,000 for their maintenance. Should this be granted, we shall ask the continued assistance of the local boards or the local committees, as the case may be, in their management; for, without careful local supervision, abuses of a serious nature are sure to creep in. With regard to charitable aid, now costing about £40,000 a year, I shall ask for a vote of £20,000, and propose that this relief should be given, as far as practicable, through local institutions, the Government granting pound for pound. If this proposal should meet with the approval of the Committee, I shall have to increase the £40,000 for hospitals and charitable aid, which I mentioned as included in my estimated expenditure, to £70,000, thus disposing of £30,000 of the surplus. The balance, then, of £118,544, which I said would probably be to our credit on the 31st March, 1883, will be reduced by this means to £88,544.

I will now turn, Mr. Hamlin, to the consideration of the question, What relief, if any, can be given to the taxpayers of the colony? We have now only a surplus of £88,544 as a margin, after making the temporary provision I have just proposed for the services of the year which are not of a permanent character, amounting to about £100,000. With such a surplus we might, if we did not intend, as we do, to go upon the London money market early next year for a further loan to continue our public-works scheme, safely reduce taxation by at least £50,000; but, taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration, I do not think it would be prudent to reduce taxation at present. If it be determined to borrow more money to enable us to complete our main lines of railway, it will obviously be necessary to continue taxation at such a rate as will insure an ample margin of revenue to pay interest on money borrowed. Taxation must, as a matter of course, remain at a high rate until the works now being constructed out of loan are completed and have had time to become reproductive. Sir, we feel assured that what the House desires and what the country demands is steady progress with our public works,—that we should pay our way from year to year, and not again fall into debt for current expenditure.

And although we are apparently raising less revenue this year than will cover our expenditure, it must be borne in mind that the temporary and extraordinary services which are this year being charged against revenue amount to more than the difference between expenditure and revenue, and that the use of a surplus for such a purpose is quite legitimate finance, when there is no reasonable doubt that next year's revenue will be ample to provide for the service of the year.

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE AND REVENUE FROM LAND SALES FOR 1882-83.

Table No. 8.

The estimated expenditure chargeable against the Land Sales Fund is as follows: For charges fixed by Acts of the General Assembly, £41,500; for the Crown Land, Survey, and Mines Departments, £153,810. The receipts from land sales are estimated to reach £354,000 for the current year. Adding to this sum the balance at the beginning of the year, £11,360, and deducting the estimated expenditure, £195,310, we have a balance remaining of £170,050. The question of the disposal of this balance must be postponed for the present, until the Legislature has determined what form of aid shall be given to local governing bodies. The proposals of the Government in reference thereto will be submitted when I introduce the Bills which have been prepared for dealing with this subject.