

amount per head with the Intermediate class for stamps and Customs; they, however, paid, with the Property-tax at a penny in the pound, which it was at the time to which my calculations relate, £3 15s. 3d. per head for that tax, making a total per head of £6 8s. 6d., or a total for the class of £439,819. With the Property-tax, however, at one halfpenny in the pound, the amount paid per head by the Property class would only be £4 10s. 10½d., or a total for the class of £310,719.

To summarize, then, we find that the Industrial class, consisting of 312,436 souls, exclusive of 11,903 domestic female servants, pays £269,751, being at the rate of 17s. 3d. per head, or including the drapery duties paid by these domestic servants, £280,062. The Intermediate class, consisting of 96,260 souls, pays £256,272, or £2 13s. 3d. per head; and the Property class, consisting of 68,445 souls, pays £439,819, being at the rate of £6 8s. 6d. per head—that is with the Property-tax at one penny; but if we take that tax at one halfpenny, they pay £310,719, or at the rate of £4 10s. 10½d. per head. These amounts are, as I have already said, exclusive of the duties paid upon spirits, wine, tobacco, and colonial beer, and do not include, for obvious reasons, that part of our so-called taxation which is paid for by each class in proportion to use for services rendered by the State, such as post office, telegraph, court fees, &c. Honorable members will, I hope, understand that, in speaking of the expenditure at per head, I only use a form of expression so far as the Intermediate and Property classes are concerned, individual expenditure being widely different according to means and habits. But with the Industrial class the difference is not so wide. With taxation it is of course impossible to meet individual cases. In apportioning the taxation of the community we must take a wider view, and deal with classes, considering their circumstances and numbers. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this subject, for badly-adjusted taxation means undue exaction from some class or classes, which cannot fail to be detrimental to the community as a whole; while, on the other hand, fairly-adjusted taxation means that the public burdens are borne with as much ease as their extent will permit. And I would express the hope that this question will receive the careful attention of honorable members, and of all interested in the public welfare throughout the colony, so that, when our financial position permits, we may deal with the subject on broad and intelligible principles.

PROPOSED LOAN.

I have now, Mr. Hamlin, only one more subject to deal with, but, although last, it is by no means least in importance: I refer, of course, to the question of a new loan. We have first to consider whether a new loan is advisable this year, and secondly, if the first question is answered in the affirmative, how much will it be desirable to borrow? Now, with regard to the first question, we must, in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion, consider the state of the Public Works Fund, and the amount we can prudently expend per annum. I have already said the balance in the Public Works Fund on the 31st March last was £924,865, with outstanding liabilities at that date of £541,400, exclusive of the liabilities on the Land Purchase Account, for which we must add at least £100,000. So that, in addition to the £541,400 which is in course of expenditure under existing contracts and authorities, there only remained in hand at the beginning of the financial year about £283,465 for continuation of the works already begun and for new works, for which liabilities have not been incurred or appropriations made. We thus see that, if no authority for a further loan is granted this year, our spending power on public works for one year and three-quarters, after paying for the outstanding contracts and engagements to which I have referred, will only amount to £283,465, because, if a loan Bill were passed, next session, the money could not be raised before about December, 1883; and the Government are quite determined not to enter into engagements in anticipation of raising money at a particular date. The question then narrows itself to this: is it prudent at the present time and under the present circumstances of the colony to borrow again; or ought we to be satisfied with a total expenditure of £924,865 in the twenty-one months, commencing with the current financial year? Sir, the Government are fully aware of the responsibility