

named is determined to a large extent by the present position of lines in the course of construction, and the necessity of either completing the branch lines, or of carrying them at all events to convenient termini. If the proposals of the Government are adopted by the House, the main lines will be so far advanced as to render their completion by the next Parliament a certainty; the New Plymouth-Foxton line will be completed; most of the branch lines will also be completed; and the remainder will be carried to convenient places for the local traffic, and placed in a position to yield a return upon their cost.

Large as is the share of the Three Million Loan dedicated to works other than railways, it is less than has been the rule since the commencement of our Public Works policy in 1870, even though for some years after its commencement the amount expended upon public buildings was very small. Since 1870 the increase of our public debt, and the contributions in aid of the Public Works Fund, amount to over £19,000,000, only £9,869,000 of which has been spent upon railways. The share of the proposed Three Million Loan to be allocated to each branch of expenditure other than railway construction has been carefully considered, and limited in each case to as small a sum as possible. My honorable colleague the Native Minister hopes that with £100,000, in addition to the £100,000 which the Treasurer informed the House would be wanted very shortly, he will be able to close his transactions in Native lands. For public buildings the amount set aside is very small in comparison with the recent rate of expenditure: for example, last session the House voted for public buildings £194,106, and the amount spent within the year was £128,356, with outstanding liabilities of £84,457. The Government has come to the conclusion that it will be unwise for us to continue to spend annually such a large portion of our borrowed money upon public buildings, and will therefore next year make other provision from the consolidated revenue for a considerable part of them. We may, consequently, reasonably expect that not more than the £300,000 asked for will be required from loan.

The immigration proposed is solely a nominated immigration, except for single women. It is believed the amount devoted to it is sufficient, although I am glad to say, as evidence that the colonists who have come to New Zealand have prospered here, that the Minister for Immigration has in hand at the present moment more than 5,000 nominations of persons whom their friends in the colony desire to bring out; and there is no doubt that, when the Government advertises throughout the colony that it is prepared to receive nominations, this number will be largely increased. I need not say that the expenditure upon immigration is exceedingly profitable. We have spent upon it altogether since 1870 rather less than £2,000,000, or incurred an annual charge of about £100,000, and have introduced in all 101,214 persons. Since 1870 our population has increased from 248,400 to 504,900, whilst, at the same time, our revenue, exclusive of the revenue derived from railways and from Crown lands, has increased from £935,000 to £2,414,000, a sure indication that the introduction of this large body of immigrants, besides being very advantageous to the colony and profitable to the Treasury, has enabled the immigrants themselves to attain to a condition of comparative comfort in their new home.

To the course which has been adopted during the past few years of opening up Crown lands before offering them for sale by a systematic plan of pioneer roads, bridges, and drainage works, the Government attaches very great importance. The effect of the work that has already been done in this direction under the supervision of the Survey Department is very apparent, not only in the increased price which is obtained for lands as they are put in the market—a result which might not, if taken by itself, be always desirable—but in the more rapid occupation and cultivation of the land by those who settle upon it.

The plan which is adopted comprises the laying-off lines of road which will ultimately become main lines of communication through the country, and in the subdivision, for purposes of sale, of blocks of land by the formation of cross roads. The Crown Lands Report which is now upon the table, will supply full information as to the work which has been put in hand during the past year; and the Estimates which will be placed before you will give the details of the works of this character which it is intended to prosecute in the future. The fact