

The Board's endowment of the Tauwhareparae Block, containing 44,150 acres, can be made no use of until properly opened up by roads, so that no revenue can be counted upon from this property at present. On the contrary, the Board has to pay rates upon it amounting to £50 per annum.

It is useless attempting to estimate the probable position of the Board beyond the end of 1889, as it is patent that, unless there is a very considerable increase in the trade of the port, or assistance rendered either by a further land-endowment, or annual grant of money by Parliament, the position must go from bad to worse, owing to the fact that the amount received from interest on the balance of the loan unexpended decreases yearly.

The present assessment of property appears to be very high, so that I do not think the rateable values will show any considerable increase for some years. The present rating-powers of the Board only extend to lands situated within five miles of a county road, so that a large portion of the county escapes.

I have stated that no large increase of revenue can be looked for for some time from port and wharf dues. I arrived at this decision after studying the returns of the chief exports for the years 1884 and 1885, as published, and for the year ending 31st March, 1888, obtained from the Customs Department and Wharfinger.

Articles.		1884.		1885.		1887-88.
Wool ...	... bales	6,818	...	6,020	...	6,458
Grass seed ...	... sacks	4,294	...	5,233	...	6,934
Sheep ...	... No.	9,838	...	11,525	...	10,311
Cattle ...	... "	114	...	304	...	76
Hides ...	... "	1,583	...	1,331	...	1,600
Skins ...	... bales	101	...	158	...	99
Tallow ...	... tons	76	...	49	...	89

The above only includes the exports from Gisborne, a large portion of the produce of Cook County being shipped elsewhere. It however would denote that the district surrounding the port, embracing most of the richest land, has made but little progress during the four years, grass seed being the only article showing a marked increase. In explanation, I should infer that the extension of settlement has been arrested, and further improvements to property stopped. There is a want of capital and population, and, in order to attract these, it is suicidal to impose a steadily-increasing rate.

The number of sheep in Cook County from 1884 to 1887 is returned as follows: 1884, 307,973; 1885, 324,399; 1886, 386,387; 1887, 452,394—indicating a steady increase in the stock-carrying capacity, amounting to 46 per cent. in the three years included in this return. At the same time the export of wool from Gisborne has been stationary. It is evident, therefore, that the increase has taken place in districts remote from Gisborne, and where the wool has been probably shipped through the surf, or at the roadsteads and bays along the extensive coast-line. Owing to the configuration of the country, this will probably continue, even were the interior better provided with roads, as all produce will take the shortest route to the coast where shipment may be possible. Projected future improvements to the port of Gisborne, if on a large scale, may revolutionise this, as produce shipped on the coast may be collected and transferred to ocean steamers there.

The population of Cook County is given thus:—

	1881.	1886.
Borough of Gisborne, including North Gisborne, and on shipboard ...	1,737	2,565
In ridings ...	1,740	2,603
Totals, excluding Maoris ...	3,477	5,168

—being an increase of 49 per cent. in five years.

Another possible source of revenue is from the endowments of the Tauwhareparae Block and the foreshores of the river at Gisborne. The Board obtained a special report upon the former in 1887, a perusal of which leads one to the conclusion that no return can be looked for until a considerable sum is spent in opening it up by roads. It is stated to be only fit for pastoral purposes, and if opened by good roads, costing £2,000, its value is put at £30,591 15s. Unless facilities of access could be offered to settlers, it would be useless to offer the block for lease. The shortest road which could be constructed would be to Tologa Bay, which is twenty miles from the centre of the block. Only ten miles of new track would be required, the estimated cost of which, 5ft. in width, was £700. The endowment of the foreshores of the Turanganui and Taruheru Rivers, between high and low water, is about two hundred acres in extent. Nothing is at present obtained from this, though in course of time, as the trade increases, it will become of value. No revenue can be looked for for some years from this endowment.

In attempting to estimate the probable position of the Board upon the completion of the works, I find that it will be almost impossible to arrive at anything like a correct conclusion, as it depends altogether upon the progress of the district for the next five or six years. Should the Crown and Native lands be thrown open for settlement, and population encouraged to proceed there, considerable expansion of trade might result; also, should the petroleum industry prove remunerative, it would alter the whole aspect of affairs.

Allowing for an increase in trade in anticipation that the land will be open for settlement, but not for the possible establishment of the oil industry, I estimate that the position will be as follows in 1893:—