

The majority of these readjustments are unimportant, as they consist merely in taking sums from classes of works from which they can be spared, and adding them to other classes where they are more required; but with regard to the item of £70,000, which was originally intended for immigration, but which was "unallotted" in the loan Act of this session, it may be necessary to give some explanation.

As honourable members are aware, a considerable amount of expenditure and liabilities had already been incurred in respect of immigration before the House decided last session that immigration was to cease. A sum of £25,000 out of the £70,000 unallotted has therefore had to be allocated to immigration, to cover the expenditure and liabilities thus incurred; and a further sum of £10,000 has had to be allocated towards covering the costs and charges of raising a portion of the recent loan, the amount previously allocated to this purpose having been found to be insufficient. Only one half, however, of this £10,000 is due to the £500,000 of loan belonging to Part I. of the fund, the remainder being due to the £500,000 belonging to Part III., but, as the funds under Part III. are absolutely tied up by the Loan Act to certain fixed items, nothing more could be got out of them for this purpose, and the whole of the additional amount required had consequently to be provided for out of Part I.

The amount under the heading of "unallotted" has therefore been reduced to £35,000.

In the case of Part II. of the fund, the details of which are shown on Table C, a small re-adjustment has been made in respect of road works. Also a re-adjustment to extent of £10,000 on account of charges and expenses of raising loan, for the same reason as has been already explained in the cases of Parts I. and III., namely, that the amount previously allocated was insufficient.

Table D shows the details of the allocations under Part III. of the fund, in which no alterations have been made; and table E shows, same as last year, the total expenditure under all classes of works for several years back, in comparison with the total expenditure proposed for the current year, and the amount which will then be left available for future appropriation.

PROPOSAL TO DO AWAY WITH THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

As indicated in the Financial Statement of my colleague the Colonial Treasurer, the Government proposes during the recess to take steps towards the early abolition of the Public Works Department.

RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS.

On the subject of the Chief Commissioner for Railways, communications with the Agent-General have not yet been brought to a close, but we hope to hear finally from him very shortly, and will then set up the Commission without delay.

CONCLUSION.

I have now, Sir, come to the end of my Statement; and I would wish to thank the House for the patient hearing which it has vouchsafed to me.

Whilst my task has not been the pleasant one of proposing an active prosecution of public undertakings, such as a condition of general prosperity would demand and justify, I have at least the satisfaction of feeling that our proposals are founded on a careful and well-considered view of the necessity of the undertakings proposed, and I am at the same time confident that one means of securing a sound condition of affairs will be found in bringing the Public Works expenditure within reasonable compass, and conducting it on a scale in proportion to the means of the colony.

The usual reports by the several permanent officers of the department will be attached to this Statement, and also the usual tables showing cost of works and result of working railways.