

This should not be a question that should rouse any party feeling. It is one with which the interests of the country are very closely bound up—so much so as to render it essential that we should combine to insure the best possible results for all classes of the community, so as to enable them to profitably carry on the operations vital to the well-being of the colony. I repeat my oft-expressed opinion that the rates for money both for public and private use in New Zealand, have been and are still too high, and still beyond the power of the general community to continue to pay.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The Honourable the Premier will, at an early date, submit, for the consideration of the House, important proposals for the improvement of local government in this colony. It will be more convenient for the financial portion of the proposals for such a change as is contemplated to be brought before this House simultaneously with the whole local government scheme, and I shall therefore only direct the attention of honourable members to the change contemplated. The money provided in the estimates under the head of "Permanent Charges" amounts to the same as was there last year. This, however, is only approximate, and, in addition, under the Public Works Fund, other moneys will be available for main roads which up to the present time have been maintained by the local authorities.

FINANCE OF 1895-96.

Having now recounted the past, I will turn to our proposals for the current year; and I may at once inform honourable members that I do not share in the gloomy forebodings of the prophets of evil who afflict our public life.

In view of the recognised fact that our Customs and railway revenues had fallen somewhat during last year, it has become more than ever necessary to exercise the most rigid scrutiny over our proposed expenditure of the current year; and I can assure you that the figures I am about to quote have been most carefully considered, so as to bring them down to the lowest possible amount consistent with the efficient administration of our public services.

The following table exhibits our financial position as estimated for the current year:—

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE.						£	£
Civil List	..	..	..	..	..	25,700	
Interest and Sinking Fund	..	..	..	..	..	1,694,605	
Under Special Acts	..	..	..	..	..	331,590	
Legislative Departments	..	..	..	..	..	17,385	
Colonial Secretary's Department	..	..	..	..	..	70,110	
Colonial Treasurer's Department	..	..	..	..	..	25,550	
Justice Department	..	..	..	..	..	124,186	
Postal and Telegraph Departments	..	..	..	..	..	335,017	
Customs and Marine Departments	..	..	..	..	..	64,186	
Stamps and Deeds Department	..	..	..	..	..	20,560	
Minister of Education,—							
Education Department	..	..	..	..	..	416,814	
Lunacy and Charitable Department	..	..	..	..	..	52,022	
Department of Labour	..	..	..	..	..	6,260	
Mines Department	..	..	..	..	..	18,289	
Department of Agriculture	..	..	..	..	..	44,735	
Working Railways Department	..	..	..	..	..	738,940	
Public Buildings, Domains, and Machinery Department	..	..	..	..	..	50,500	
Defence Department	..	..	..	..	..	64,419	
Police Department	..	..	..	..	..	100,441	
Lands and Survey Department	..	..	..	..	..	129,634	
Rates on Crown Lands	..	..	..	..	..	900	
							<u>£4,331,843</u>
ESTIMATED REVENUE.						£	£
Customs	..	..	..	..	..	1,560,000	
Stamps (including Postal Cash Receipts)	..	..	..	..	..	644,300	
Land and Income Tax	..	..	..	..	..	350,000	
Beer Duty	..	..	..	..	..	60,000	
Railways	..	..	..	..	..	1,155,000	
Registration and other Fees	..	..	..	..	..	50,000	
Marine	..	..	..	..	..	21,500	
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	..	..	65,000	
Territorial Revenue	..	..	..	..	..	290,000	
						4,195,800	
Debentures for Sinking Fund Increases	..	..	..	..	..	145,400	
							<u>£4,341,200</u>