

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

There was an increased expenditure upon public buildings during the late financial year, due principally to the completion of the new Parliament Buildings, and also to a large number of smaller buildings erected many years ago requiring renewal, or considerable additions.

The appropriations proposed for the current year amount to £197,745—namely, £155,170 under the Public Works Fund, and £42,575 under the Consolidated Fund. The principal works carried out last year or provided for this year are as follow :—

GENERAL.

First in order of magnitude under this head is the new wing at the Parliament Buildings, comprising a new Assembly Library, and new vestibule, offices, and Committee-rooms. The exterior walls of the addition were fairly complete before the session of 1898, and as soon as possible after the termination of that session tenders were invited for the completion of the building. The tender of Messrs. J. and A. Wilson was accepted, and the contractors have carried out their work very satisfactorily, the building being ready for occupation by the commencement of the present session. It was not considered advisable to move the library into the new wing before the sitting of Parliament, but its transfer will be arranged for during the recess; and I have no doubt that honourable members will appreciate the increased comfort which the new accommodation will afford them, and will be still more gratified to know that at last our valuable library is housed in what is practically a fire-proof building. The vote taken for the erection of this building last year was £25,000, and £20,564 was expended, with liabilities existing at the close of the year to the amount of £7,564. This year we ask for a vote of £8,500 to cover these liabilities, and to provide for other charges on construction account. We also ask for a vote of £3,000 for furniture and fittings, including shelving for books in new library. The other buildings included in this class are the Government Houses at Auckland and Wellington, and the general departmental offices throughout the colony. The total vote last year for all buildings under this class (including the Parliament Buildings) was £30,150, and £29,400 was expended. This year we ask for a vote of £17,480.

JUDICIAL.

A large number of buildings under this head have been dealt with during the year. The principal expenditure has taken place on the following :—

Courthouses.—The new Courthouse at Palmerston North has been finished and occupied; new buildings have also been erected at Leeston and Macrae's; strongrooms have been added at Coromandel, Naseby, and Cromwell, and important additions made at Paeroa and Clyde. The works provided for this year are: New law-courts, Dunedin; new Magistrate's Court, Wellington; new Courthouses at Waihi, Te Awamutu, Mangaweka, Eketahuna, Temuka, Hampden, and Bluff; also additions and alterations at Auckland, Thames, and Christchurch, extensive repairs at Wanganui and Greymouth, and some other minor works.

Gaols.—The expenditure under this head last year was unusually small, the principal item being the Gaoler's house at Clyde. For the current year a vote is proposed to proceed with the building of the Mount Eden Gaol, Auckland; sundry works at the Terrace Gaol, Wellington; and minor works at Gisborne and elsewhere.

Police-stations.—A contract was let last year for the erection of a new police-station at Auckland, and the work is now well in hand. Smaller stations have also been erected at Coromandel, Karangahake, Te Kuiti, Moawhango, Opunake, and Manaia. Properties have been purchased at Bingsland (Christchurch) and Denniston, and additions and alterations made at Te Aroha, Hastings, Wellington, Nelson (Port), Greymouth, Temuka, and Waimate, and extensive repairs have been done at Mercer, Ross, and Okarito, besides less expensive