

The total cost of the railway, including extensive road construction and improvement works undertaken to facilitate the progress of the line, has exceeded two millions and a half, and the average annual expenditure thereon has approximated £110,000. As an average annual rate, extending over so long a period, this sum cannot be regarded as unsatisfactory, though doubtless the much larger expenditure that has taken place during the last few years has been amply justified. So much money having been expended on the work, it was highly desirable to make a special effort to complete the line at the earliest practicable moment, and I feel that I can heartily congratulate the House and the country on this having now been practically accomplished.

GENERAL REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE PAST YEAR.

I will now proceed to generally review the public-works operations during the past year.

The total expenditure on all the works and services borne upon the public-works estimates amounted to £2,106,362, which is £99,243 less than the previous year's total. If, however, we exclude special accounts having their own ways and means, and take only the actual charges against the Public Works Fund, the disbursements total to £1,881,564, or £158,755 less than during the previous year.

Steady progress has been made with the various works in hand, however, and I will endeavour to give as clear an account of what has been done regarding the principal items as the ordinary limits of a departmental statement will allow.

TOTAL EXPENDITURE.

The following table shows, as regards each class of work, (a) the total expenditure from the inauguration of the public-works policy to the 31st December, 1890; (b) the similar expenditure between the 1st January, 1891, and the 31st March, 1908; (c) the gross total expenditure to the 31st March, 1908; and (d) the expenditure for the late financial year:—

Class of Work.	Expenditure.			
	A Total to 31st December, 1890.	B 1st January, 1891, to 31st March, 1908.	C Total to 31st March, 1908.	D Year ended 31st March, 1908.
Railways—	£	£	£	£
New construction	11,975,098	6,216,761	18,191,859	692,858
Additions to open lines	2,092,002	3,892,523	5,984,525	364,068
Utilisation of water-power	...	8,348	8,348	315
Roads	3,575,804	4,285,664	7,861,468	323,742
Public buildings	1,776,003	2,028,594	3,804,597	226,035
Immigration	2,144,386	42,326	2,186,712	9,131
Purchase of Native lands	1,191,137	844,611	2,035,748	2,190
Lighthouses, harbour-works, and harbour defences	880,095	144,425	1,024,520	6,863
Tourist and health resorts	...	158,568	158,568	45,048
Telegraph-extension	600,849	878,887	1,479,736	155,492
Development of goldfields	561,101	225,555	786,656	8,631
Defence-works (general)	429,720	458,448	888,168	18,574
Departmental	349,789	218,596	568,385	18,219
Payment to Midland Railway bondholders	...	150,000	150,000	...
Lands improvement	...	24,575	24,575	9,561
Minor works and services	300,689	11,891	312,580	837
Cost and discount, raising loans, &c. ...	1,021,472	214,170	1,235,642	Cr. 8,487
Totals	26,898,145	19,803,942	46,702,087	1,873,077

The last total in the above statement is less by £8,487 than the total expenditure for the year previously mentioned. This is accounted for by a recovery of that amount having been brought to book, as shown in the table, under the heading of "Cost and discount, raising loans."