

COMPARISON OF POST OFFICE INVESTMENTS IN NEW ZEALAND, ETC.—*continued.*

Fund or Account.	1911-12.	1912-13.	1913-14.
	£	£	£
Aid to Water-power Works Account	..	50,000	165,000
Irrigation and Water-supply Account	..	10,000	20,000
Railways Improvements Account	10,000	15,000	45,000
Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Account	..	..	2,000
Loans to Local Bodies Account	50,000	..	..
Land for Settlements Account	525,850	125,300	73,000
Native Land Settlement Account	254,500	80,000	158,500
Advances to Settlers	..	..	37,000
Advances to Workers	425,000	..	..
Advances to Local Authorities	222,000	261,000	57,000
Mining Advances	5,000	..	..
Hauraki Plains Settlement Account	..	..	5,000
Rangitaiki Land Drainage Account	..	..	5,000
	2,094,100	805,300*	896,500

* £340,300 borrowed prior to 10th July, 1912 (date present Government assumed office).

PUBLIC DEBT EXTINCTION.

The Public Debt Sinking Fund, held by the Superintendent of the State Advances Office, with interest accrued, now amounts to £464,258, and is invested in loans to settlers, workers, and local authorities, as provided by the Public Debt Extinction Act, 1910. The annual sums paid over to the Superintendent from the Consolidated Fund are as follow: 1911-12, £144,885; 1912-13, £149,343; 1913-14, £151,572. The amount required to be set aside out of revenue for this purpose during the current financial year is £169,404.

BANK OF NEW ZEALAND.

Negotiations were recently entered into with the Bank of New Zealand with the object of thoroughly revising the working agreement which has existed between the Treasury and the bank since 1893. The new agreement regarding the conduct of our banking transactions will be laid upon the table of the House, and I feel sure it will prove to be satisfactory to honourable members.

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM.

The Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioners appointed under the Public Service Act, 1912, have been actively engaged during the year, and the result of their operations to date proves in a practical way the advantages of central control of the Public Service.

The classification of officers was completed in August last, and the Board of Appeal constituted under the Act has been engaged for some months in hearing appeals.

In his latest report, which has already been laid before Parliament, the Commissioner records many improvements, and reports not only that the efficiency of the Service has greatly improved, but that economies have been effected, or are in process of being introduced, which will result in an estimated saving of £65,000 per annum. At the same time the salaries of officers, particularly in the lower classes, have been considerably improved. A minimum wage for married men in the Public Service has been established.

Honourable members will be gratified to learn that Cabinet has decided to permit officers of the Public Service and Railway Service to occupy positions upon local bodies, and this privilege in some instances has already been taken advantage of.

TREASURY REFORMS.

During the past year several important alterations have been effected in the Treasury, amongst which I may specially refer to the introduction of a system of paying claims by means of cheques drawn to the order of the payees.