

suggested two alternative plans: either to alter the time of the commencement of the financial year, or for the Assembly to meet not later than the first week in June. Sir, I would venture to submit, for the approval of the Committee, another means by which the result desired may be attained. If the Estimates are passed at the beginning of the Session instead of towards the end, the Committee will regain the control which it partly waives by deferring the time of dealing with them, while it will be following the practice of the House of Commons. The Government will ask the Committee to give effect to this suggestion, and Supply will be moved for at the earliest possible moment.

#### ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE, 1878-79.

Having dealt with the past, I have now to state the expenditure which we estimate will have to be met during the current year. The expenditure seems to be naturally divisible under two heads—namely, the Permanent Appropriations Table P. and the Annual Charges. The former of these heads includes the Civil List, Interest and Sinking Fund, Subsidies to Local Bodies, Land Revenue payable to Counties—the expenditure being made under Acts of the Assembly. The second head is Annual Charges, embracing the Departments and Miscellaneous. Following this distinction, the Permanent Appropriations are estimated at £1,809,767 15s. 9d., and the Annual Charges at £2,183,741 12s. 9d., making, with the fees, &c., payable to local bodies £200,000, a total estimated expenditure for the year of £4,193,509 8s. 6d.

The Interest and Sinking Fund on the public debt, including provision for the last loan, is stated at £1,225,129. The subsidies to local bodies require this year £255,000, against £170,371 paid last year. The estimate of the amount payable to counties, under the 20 per cent. arrangement, is £220,000. This estimate contains all the elements of uncertainty, and will be modified according to the extent of the land sales. With this exception, all the items under the head of Permanent Appropriations are of that nature which cannot be subjected to reductions, unless the amount of the subsidies to local bodies should be brought under review.

The Agent-General's Department has hitherto been subjected to a process of analysis, and the cost distributed among a number of services, on the principle that it performed work for each, with the result that it was difficult to discover the total cost of the department. It has now found a local habitation, is seen under one head, and is met out of revenue. The cost of this department has been greatly reduced, the vote asked for this year being £4,000, against an expenditure last year of £5,972.

In only one administrative department is there an appreciable increase. The vote asked for Lunatic Asylums is £36,202, against £32,481 last year. The large influx of patients has made this increase a necessity.

Education requires a sum of £217,370 this year, against an actual expenditure last year, including liabilities, of £213,278 18s. 8d. This amount is not likely to be exceeded, the average daily attendance having been carefully estimated. We think, Sir, the great increase in the attendance, which the Education Report shows is taking place, is sufficient reason for giving the present system a fair trial, and paying liberally for the results. We propose asking for £100,000 this year out of loan for new school buildings, the demand for which has been expressed in nearly every Education district.

The important reforms which the Government are inaugurating in the Law and Justice Department, tending as they are in the direction of economy, have led to a considerable reduction in several branches.

The Native Department has also been subjected to the pruning knife, the estimate being less than that of the previous year. The amount estimated for salaries and contingencies is £16,887, against £20,322 last year. There has been an increase for Native schools, amounting to about £1,500; but the extension of the means of education to Native children, and the evident appreciation on their part of what is being done, is a most satisfactory feature of our educational system.