

WATERWORKS ON GOLD FIELDS.

For waterworks on gold fields the sum of £22,000 was voted. Of this amount, £13,272 has been expended, and there were liabilities at the end of March last to the extent of £6,666: total, £19,938. The whole of this expenditure, including liabilities, was in the Middle Island, the principal item having been the Waimea-Kumara Race, £12,086. Of the other expenditures, the only important ones were on the Mikonui Race, £4,388, and on the Charleston Race, £3,223. On the Waimea-Kumara Race the chief work executed during the year has been the completion of the Kumara Sludge-channel, which is now available for sluicing purposes, and is generally considered to be a very useful work. On the Mikonui Race the work has been in continuation of tunnels between Ross and Donnelly's Creek, the amount of tunnelling done between those points to end of year being 121 chains out of a total of 154 chains required. The work on the Charleston Race has consisted chiefly in improvements in head-works, extra catchwater-races to increase the water-supply, and tunnel deviations from original line of race to reduce the cost of future maintenance.

PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE.

I now come to the proposals for the current year, which comprise the scheme of distribution of the loan, so far as it is available for railway construction, over such of the works authorized as the Government consider should be pushed on as rapidly as possible. The Treasurer has told the House that the amount of the Public Works Fund which on the 31st March last remained in the hands of the Government free of all liabilities was £384,000, of which £100,000 was required by the Native Minister to conclude the purchase of some Native lands. We have therefore a clear balance, after providing for all money liabilities actually incurred, of £284,000. But I have already indicated to the House that to complete and properly equip our open lines will require a large sum, which is estimated at £376,000 during the next three years, exclusive of fencing and other contingencies; and this expenditure is not only necessary, as I have shown, on account of the unexpected and large increase of traffic, but will also materially facilitate the working of the lines, and it is expected will consequently add to the net revenue. So that even without making provision for land purchases, and without commencing any further construction-works, the required additions and improvements to open lines will practically exhaust the whole sum of £384,000 in hand on the 31st March. The greater part of this expenditure is for works at Auckland, Timaru, and Dunedin, and the remainder—being required for additions to the workshops at Hillside and Addington; for such share of the cost of heavier rails as is usually debited to loan; for minor works upon over 1,300 miles of railway; and for additional rolling-stock—is a necessary expenditure, for a considerable portion of which the House will be asked to make provision this session.

It will, I think, be convenient if we assume, for the purpose of simplifying the Statement, that the £100,000 needed during the current year by the Native Minister will be found out of the new loan, thus enabling the balance in hand to provide for the proposed expenditure upon open lines, and leaving the consideration of the question how best to apply the three million loan to further construction uncomplicated by the necessity for an allocation for improvements or for further rolling-stock.

In considering what shall be the works to be recommended for prosecution, let us look, in the first place, at the probable cost of completing the connection between Auckland and Wellington, and between Picton and Invercargill, and of other trunk lines. This cost is estimated to be as follows:—

From Te Awamutu southwards	...	...	...	...	£1,100,000
To complete Napier to Wellington, and to connect with New Plymouth-Foxton Line	...	...	...	...	670,000
To complete New Plymouth-Foxton Line	...	...	...	...	75,000
To complete Picton and Invercargill	...	...	...	...	1,200,000
To complete Nelson and Greymouth	...	...	...	...	1,200,000
To connect Helensville and Kawakawa	...	...	...	...	880,000
To construct the Otago Central	...	...	...	...	1,000,000
					<u>£6,125,000</u>