

To cover so much of this liability as will fall due during the current year, after allowing for credits which will come in during same period, the vote now proposed to be asked for is £2,000.

Subsidies to Local Bodies.—As regards subsidies to local bodies under the Local Bodies Finance and Powers Act, it has now been decided that if these subsidies are to be continued they must be charged on Consolidated Fund, and no provision has therefore been made for them in the Public Works Estimates of this session.

Work for Unemployed.—Under the heading of Work for Unemployed the sum of £10,000 was voted for last financial year, and we propose to ask for the same amount for the current year. Of the £10,000 voted last year, £5,361 was expended, and we had liabilities existing at end of March amounting to £1,863. The £10,000 proposed for this year may possibly be more than will be required, but it is thought better to provide sufficiently for any emergencies which may arise. No money, however, will be expended which is not absolutely required.

We have latterly been getting very fair value for the money expended on this class of work, as the men employed have been fairly good labourers, and have been engaged, wherever practicable, on roads in the country districts, and on railways and other works of a reproductive character. The work is generally let in piecework contracts.

ROADS TO OPEN UP CROWN LANDS BEFORE SALE, ALSO VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS.

Roads to open up Crown Lands.—On the very important work of clearing and forming pioneer roads through Crown lands, preparatory to settlement, the expenditure last year was £61,488, and the vote proposed for this year is £50,000, leaving £33,512 for appropriation in succeeding years.

Village Settlements.—For village homestead settlements last year, the sum of £72,200 was allocated under loan funds to meet the then existing engagements, and of this sum £12,053 was expended during the year. There remained, therefore, on 31st March last, an unexpended balance of £60,147. Of this sum, however, only about £45,000 will be required to meet the engagements now found to be due. This will leave £15,000 clear, which we propose to ask Parliament to authorise the Government to expend on new settlements.

The vote proposed for this year is £20,000, of which £12,000 is required for expenses incurred in locating and for continuing the stipulated advances to the present settlers, and £8,000 for further extension of the system, if authorised to be extended as I have suggested.

In addition to expenditure out of funds specially allocated for village settlements, the settlers have also had the advantage of an expenditure on roads in their districts, out of votes for roads to open up Crown lands before sale, amounting to £10,148. It will be necessary to continue to find similar work in the vicinity of many of the settlements, in order to give the settlers a chance of permanently establishing themselves. Most of the settlements have, however, been now rendered fairly accessible by roads and tracks, and the expenditure from the vote for roads to open up Crown lands for sale cannot therefore continue to be reasonably applied to this purpose.

It is proposed, therefore, that a vote should be asked for in Supplementary Estimates to enable assistance to be continued; and in asking for this vote the Minister of Lands will make a statement to the House of the condition of the several settlements, and the amount of help that they severally require.

ROADS ON GOLDFIELDS.

On account of roads constructed for the development of the mining industry, the expenditure during the five years ending the 31st March last has been, in round numbers, £131,000, and of this amount about £25,000 was expended during last year. The amounts required for the present and following year are