

Some small parcels of debentures fell due during the year and were renewed by conversion or otherwise.

Much comment has been made from time to time about the increase to our public debt. Of course, I do not deny that the debt has increased, but what I particularly desire to impress upon honourable members is the fact that such increase has not imposed any appreciable amount of extra burden on the tax-payers. To substantiate my statement it will be advisable to place before you a short analysis of the building-up of our national debt; and the following table succinctly shows the remunerative character of the purposes of the loans obtained during the Ballance and Seddon administration as compared with those for which loans under former Governments were asked:—

	Reproductive.	Non-productive.
On the 30th June, 1870, the public debt was £7,490,516, chiefly for the following services (approximately):—	£	£
Maori war, exclusive of provincial charges and losses sustained ... ..	...	2,357,000
Land-purchases	306,000	...
Immigration ... ..	...	314,000
Railways	350,000	...
Lighthouses ... ..	...	47,000
Telegraphs	139,000	...
Public works, including surveys ... ..	...	1,487,000
Charges and expenses of raising loans ... ..	...	583,000
Miscellaneous ... ..	...	1,907,516
	795,000	6,695,516
Between the last date and the 31st March, 1891, the debt had been increased by £31,339,834, for the following services (approximately):—		
Defence ... ..	...	1,638,000
Land-purchases	1,240,000	...
Immigration ... ..	...	2,145,000
Railways	14,230,000	...
Lighthouses and harbours ... ..	...	437,000
Telegraphs	630,000	...
Roads and bridges ... ..	...	3,619,000
Provincial liabilities ... ..	...	786,000
Goldfields and coal-mines ... ..	...	571,000
Public buildings ... ..	...	1,800,000
Other public works ... ..	...	374,000
Deficiencies in revenue ... ..	...	1,982,000
Charges and expenses of raising loans ... ..	...	1,054,000
Loans to local bodies	325,000	...
Miscellaneous ... ..	...	508,834
	16,425,000	14,914,834
Between the 31st March, 1891, and the 31st March, 1897, the debt had been further increased by £5,536,268, for the following services (approximately):—		
Land-purchases	1,362,000	...
Railways	234,500	...
Lands improvement (roads and bridges) ... ..	...	437,500
Loans to local bodies	729,000	...
For advances to settlers	1,500,000	...
New Zealand Consols deposits	297,000	...
Bank of New Zealand preferred shares	500,000	...
Goldfields ... ..	...	150,000
Miscellaneous ... ..	...	326,268
	4,622,500	913,768

Honourable members must understand that I do not pretend that the above figures represent the actual expenditure which was incurred in the stated services, but they are sufficiently accurate to enable an estimate to be formed of the pur-