

Whilst making provision for the urgent requirements of the colony, the Government are of opinion that it would be extremely inadvisable to enter upon a large borrowing policy for public works, and that we should adhere to the course followed in recent years, and make provision for a fair rate of progress being maintained both in railway- and road-construction, and provide accommodation and conveniences necessitated by the development of the colony, including the renewal with more permanent material of the old wooden buildings, many of which are past repairing.

The sums provided in the Estimates will admit of the several works being continued at a reasonable speed, and it is hoped that the following sections of railway will be opened for traffic before the end of the current financial year:—

Line.		Section.	Length.	
			Miles.	Chains.
Helensville Northwards...	...	Tahakeroa-Ahuroa	4	69
Gisborne-Karaka ... ..	...	Gisborne Wharf-Ormond ...	10	43
Stratford-Whangamomona ...	...	Stratford-Toko	6	40
North Island Main Trunk ...	...	Poro-o-tarao-Ongarue ...	14	21
" " " "	...	Mangaonoho-Mangaweka ...	9	24
Blenheim-Waipara " ... ..	...	Omakā-Seddon	12	76
" " " " ... ..	...	Waipara-Skargill	14	40
Otago Central " " ... ..	...	Wedderburn-Blackstone Hill ...	12	23
Total ... ..	...	... ..	85	16

Considerable progress was made with the more important of the works under construction, the principal details of which I will give later on.

Before outlining my proposals for expenditure I will briefly state the

WAYS AND MEANS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC-WORKS PURPOSES.

At 31st March, 1900, the balance of the ways and means of the Public Works Fund amounted to £839,749, and further sums were provided last session, as under:—

New loan	...	...	...	...	...	£1,000,000
Transferred from revenue	...	...	...	...	...	500,000

There were also miscellaneous receipts to the amount of £1,787, thus making a gross total of £2,341,536. The expenditure last year amounted to £1,309,021, so that at the close of the year the balance of our ways and means was £1,032,515; and it is now proposed to provide the following additional funds:—

New loan	...	...	...	£1,000,000
Further transfer from revenue	...	...	...	500,000

making altogether a gross total of available ways and means of £2,532,515.

The estimates of expenditure for the current year total to £2,197,334 (in addition to £46,577 under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Account), thus leaving an unallocated balance of £335,181.

TOTAL PUBLIC-WORKS EXPENDITURE.

The following table shows the total expenditure out of the Public Works Fund on all works and services throughout the colony up to the 31st December, 1890, and also up to the 31st March last, and in a separate column the expenditure during the late financial year :—