

It is recognized that there are many localities, the traffic from which would not provide an adequate return on the cost of constructing a standard railway, but in which lines of a lighter type would pay. It is therefore proposed to bring down legislation authorizing the construction of railways of a lighter nature than has been adopted hitherto in railway-construction in New Zealand.

The Department has been devoting a considerable amount of attention to the question of construction and maintenance of main roads, and has collected valuable data, from which a progressive policy will be evolved and placed before the country. As the basis of any such policy is naturally finance, it is proposed to provide a substantial portion of the funds which will be necessary by the imposition of a tire-tax, the money derived from such being definitely allocated for the construction and upkeep of main roads.

In the development of hydro-electric power the Department has adopted a comprehensive scheme, and is now proceeding to carry out the same. The world-wide shortage of material, machinery, and men is handicapping the Department, but as the increase of production relieves this position a greater effort will be made in the prosecution of the works decided upon, and it is expected that when the scheme is properly working increased national efficiency and production will be the result.

A matter of no less importance is the reorganization of the Public Works Department. To cope with the work lying ahead it is felt that the system under which the staff worked before the war will require to be remodelled in many ways to place the Department in a position to enable it to expeditiously and economically meet present-day demands. These matters and others will be elaborated in the Public Works Statement, which my colleague the Hon. the Minister of Public Works will place before honourable members later in this session.

#### IMMIGRATION.

Substantial assistance is being afforded citizens of the United Kingdom who desire to emigrate to New Zealand and make their home here.

The Government has decided to extend the nominated-passages system to allow any permanent resident of the Dominion the right to nominate any persons residing in the United Kingdom, irrespective of relationship or occupation. A guarantee is, however, required that employment will be awaiting the nominees and that provision will be made for their maintenance after arrival. It is confidently expected that no difficulty will be experienced in obtaining all the immigrants desired under the nominated system. At the present time a considerable number of emigrants are awaiting an opportunity of securing passages to the Dominion.

In future, approved domestic servants will be granted free third-class passages together with an allowance of £2 for expenses. It is hoped by this means to secure a number of suitable girls for the Dominion.

The Imperial Government has commenced a free emigration scheme for officers and men of the Imperial Forces who served in the late war and who wish to settle within the Empire overseas, such persons being granted free third-class passages for themselves and their dependants, provided that they are approved under one of the agricultural-settlement schemes of the overseas Governments, or are going to assured employment, and are otherwise acceptable to the Government of the territory to which they desire to go. This privilege is to be extended to the widows and dependants of ex-service men, if they are entitled to draw pensions from Imperial funds under the terms of the pensions warrant.

An amendment of the Apprentices Act will be introduced for the purpose of encouraging the immigration of boys as farm apprentices.

It is proposed to reorganize the Department with a view to meeting the increased work that it will have to cope with in the future.

#### INSURANCE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The balance at credit of the special sinking fund established in 1913 for the purpose of covering losses on public buildings destroyed by fire was, at the 31st March, 1920, £62,418.