

IMMIGRATION.

During the past year assisted immigration, under the nominated policy, has progressed satisfactorily. A total of 6,737 migrants have arrived at a cost to the Dominion of £12 per head. Special facilities have been offered to farmers, farm labourers, and all skilled artisans required for secondary industries. Under the authority of the Empire Settlement Act, 1922, the Imperial Government may co-operate with the Government of any of His Majesty's Dominions in—(1) Development or land-settlement scheme, or (2) assistance with passages, initial allowances, special training or otherwise. Although it has been deemed advisable that applications for land from our own soldiers and settlers should be dealt with first, a satisfactory agreement has been made with the British Government under which passage rates for intending emigrants have been reduced from £26 per adult to £18 per adult, and all children under the age of twelve years free. This agreement more than favourably compares with Great Britain's agreements with other parts of the Empire, and it is anticipated that upon its renewal at the 1st July, 1923, further substantial reductions will be made to—(1) Married men with families, and (2) children and juveniles under the age of nineteen years. This should be the means of attracting increased numbers of immigrants to our shores, and of making our total per annum not less than ten thousand.

The two main objects of the Government in the scheme which has been adopted are—(1) That only the very best type of immigrant shall be assisted to the Dominion, and (2) that on arrival they are assured of work and accommodation.

DEFENCE.

The expenditure out of the Consolidated Fund for defence, including ordnance services and the maintenance and training of the Territorial Forces, during the financial year ending 31st March, 1923, amounted to £285,113, or £43,517 less than the amount appropriated. This result has been obtained by the exercise of the strictest economy and by dispensing with the training-camps for the year.

WAR EXPENDITURE.

The gross expenditure from the vote "War expenses" for the past year was £642,968. This included £179,434 for the medical treatment of returned soldiers for war disabilities; £41,711 for transport adjustments; £35,387 for war graves in New Zealand and abroad, and battlefield memorials in France; £7,392, war gratuities; £20,000, refund to War Office for flour and bread subsidy paid on behalf of New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom; £190,729 for repatriation assistance and expenses; and £168,315 for other miscellaneous war expenditure. After allowing for recoveries for sale of surplus stores, £49,204; sale of medical stores, £33,812; repayments of repatriation loans and expenses, £308,608; and other miscellaneous credits, £84,545, there remained a net expenditure of £166,799.

The estimated net expenditure for the current year is £534,863, in which provision is made to meet New Zealand's liability to the Imperial shipping liquidation for transport charges totalling approximately £500,000. The delay in settling this item is due principally to the huge amount of work handled by the Imperial Shipping Liquidation Department, which in the latter stages of the war controlled practically the whole of the Empire's shipping. Every effort is being made to expedite settlement, which it is anticipated will be effected during the current year.

Of the £3,000,000 earmarked for war-loan-redemption purposes, £1,046,740 has already been transferred and expended in the purchase and cancellation of securities, and this process continues. A balance of £1,750,000 at present forms part of £2,000,000 made available for State Advances, including housing purposes, and can be issued when required. When the relative transactions are completed the war debt will be reduced to that extent.

The time has almost arrived when the War Expenses Account can be closed. It is my intention that any unexpended balances, and capital repayments, should be devoted to the reduction of the war debt, and, if necessary, legislation will be introduced to give effect to this intention.