

New Zealand.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO CONSIDER THE STATE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC FINANCES.

The Committee appointed to consider the state and management of the Public Finances of the Colony, report as follows:—

The voluminous accounts laid before them, and the probable short duration of the Session, have compelled your Committee to limit their attention to the leading principles which should govern the Finance of the Colony, and to some of the more prominent facts brought before their notice. They have not ventured to test the accuracy of the accounts in detail. That examination and their final adjustment, must be left to a future Session and will probably form the first work of a Responsible Government. Many of the questions which have presented themselves so deeply concern the Colony and the Provinces, in their mutual relations, that it would be improper to decide them in a House so reduced in numbers, and so unequally representing Provincial interests.

But it may be useful to bring them under your notice; and our conclusions may serve as suggestions for the consideration of a future session.

The object of enquiry submitted to us, is to ascertain the financial position of the Colony, the knowledge of which is a necessary preliminary to any careful or prudent appropriation of the Public Revenue.

We are unable to present to the House any complete result, the accounts submitted to us are not in a shape which enables us to do so, they only extend to the 31st December, 1854. The Sub-Treasurer's accounts for the Southern Provinces since that date have not been received by the Government at Auckland, and we have been therefore compelled to proceed partially upon Estimates.

Our first object being (without pretending to minute exactness) to arrive at an approximate view of our assets and liabilities (exclusive of fixed charges, such as the Company's Debt and Debentures.) We commenced by ascertaining that the Cash Balance in the hands of the Colonial Treasurer on the 18th August instant, the day of our enquiry, was 20,717*l.* 5*s.* 9*d.*

The Auditor-General states that on the 30th June, 1853, the Cash Balance in the Treasury and Sub-treasurers was 37,608*l.*, but this was subject to current charges and payments to Provinces. The Auditor-General estimates the current charges at about 6000*l.* For practical purposes we may assume the above sum of 20,717*l.* 5*s.* 9*d.* as the amount available to meet our current liabilities accrued up to the 30th June last.

We next proceeded to ascertain the amount of such liabilities. In the course of that enquiry, involving as it did the amounts due to the Provinces, and the principles which ought to govern the accounts with the Provinces, we have been led incidentally to touch upon the main questions affecting the finance of the Colony.