

Province of Canterbury. It will also be determined whether the Marlborough railway can be brought into connection with the Trunk system.

I have throughout these observations spoken of main lines and branch lines. I wish honorable Members to understand that, although I have not mentioned coal lines, the Government have not departed from the opinion, expressed long since, that coal railways ought not to be included in the category of local or branch lines. They are lines which, in the interests of the Colony as a whole, ought to be constructed; and, therefore, the Government do not modify the policy as to such railways which has already been approved by the Legislature. A vote will be asked in aid of the construction of the Mount Rochfort coal field line and harbour works, the sum already voted not being sufficient. An additional sum will also be required in order to complete the harbour works connected with the Brunner and Greymouth Railway.

Coal Railways should be constructed by Colony.

Votes in aid, to be asked for.

Let me epitomise what I have said upon the subject of public works. The proposal we intend to make is, that the Government shall in future confine their attention to works connected with main lines of railway and railways having especially for their object the opening up of coal fields. We shall ask for authority to fill up the three gaps not yet provided for in the main line between North Canterbury and the Bluff; and to make a survey with the view of deciding upon a main line which will bring Nelson and the West Coast into communication with Canterbury, and also, if it should be found expedient, into communication with Marlborough. A sum in addition to that already voted, will be asked for the line from Waitara to Wanganui, its construction to be proceeded with concurrently with the progress of settlement in the district. We shall seek authority to make a railway from Mercer to the frontier, and thence south to a junction with the trunk system of the North Island. It must not, however, be supposed that it is intended to hurry these works. Except as to the construction of the line south from Mercer, I may express the opinion of the Government that it is undesirable the works should be rapidly pushed forward. The works now in hand not only involve a large expenditure, but they also involve the employment of a very large number of men in proportion to the population available for general industrial pursuits in the Colony; and there is no object to be gained by unduly pressing on the works I have mentioned. It is to be remembered also, that, in addition to the works in which the General Government are engaged, it is certain that the Governments of different Provinces will be large employers of labour upon important, though subsidiary, public works.

Recapitulation of Public Works Proposals.

It is not necessary for me to refer now to Immigration, beyond saying that Ministers recognize, as they have always recognized, that a large increase of the permanent population of the Colony is an absolutely necessary accompaniment of the Public Works Policy. The anxiety of the Government to promote Immigration has never abated, and it will be observed that the proposals now made are consistent with the carrying out of plans which they regard as of the utmost importance—plans which will enable immigrants to settle upon the lands of the Colony. It may be that whilst the Public Works offer such rewards to labour, many of the men who come amongst us will not care or will be unable to adopt at once the life of the small settler. But as such men save money out of the high wages they receive, and as the demand for labour in connection with Public Works becomes less, it is to be hoped, and to be believed, that very many of them will naturally turn their attention to settlement, and gladly devote their energies to the cultivation of the soil. It will be the object of the Government to promote this as much as possible; and I have already mentioned incidentally that they intend to submit a measure authorizing free grants of land to those immigrants who pay their own passages to the Colony.

Immigration.

Proposals made, directly favour settlement on the land.

Employment on Public Works should aid very many so to settle.

It will naturally be asked by honorable Members, Whether the Government propose to include in the sum to be borrowed under the new Loan Bill amounts for purposes other than Immigration and Public Works,—such, for example, as the repayment to the authorized Loan of the sums taken from it for grants to Road Boards, and for any contemplated similar aid; and for repayment to the authorized Loan of the amounts taken from it for payment of interest on the cost of works during their construction. The Government have fully considered these

Second Loan Bill.