

the history of the Public Works policy. I will say no more than seems necessary to accompany the statement of what the Government intend now to propose. On the 28th June, 1870, the Policy was proposed in the Financial Statement I had the honor to make. Within three months it became law: but in the meanwhile it underwent, as might be expected, some modification. That modification naturally took the shape of a larger control by Parliament; in other words, a larger discretion was given as to whether the railways should be essentially parts of trunk lines or such fragments of lines as Parliament from time to time approved. It was a portion of the proposal that the railways should be constructed partly by cash, partly by guarantee, and partly by land payments; and whether or not there were land payments, it was proposed there should be extensive land reserves. It would have been deemed unwarrantable presumption at the time, to have trusted to the Colony being able to make cash payments for the extensive works proposed. Indeed, it was contended by some that the Colony would find it difficult to procure even the comparatively small amount in cash originally asked for. As during the next two years it became evident that the Colony could pay in money if it desired to do so, the conviction gained ground that the guarantee system and payment by land ought not to be employed; so that payment in money is the one system employed, and under it demands are springing up in every direction not only for railways but for all descriptions of Public Works. As so much has been said respecting the calculations which accompanied the first proposal, I will ask honorable members to recollect, first, that they were adduced as purely conjectural. I said "So long as we know that, if necessary, the Colony may take the whole thing into its hands, we are safe in adopting that eventuality—in considering what may be the possible consequences. We want to know what may be the worst, the most burdensome, effects of the adoption of a railway policy. I am going to put before you a conjectural sketch of what might be the position, supposing the Colony, sooner or later, took the whole matter into its charge, or that it remained partly a Colonial and partly a Provincial matter. It does not signify that, in the meanwhile, the whole large result is built up little by little, by the action of the General and Provincial governing bodies conjointly; nor does it signify whether the joint action continues, or, in course of time, becomes wholly or in part suspended. I want to trace aggregate results." The question, in considering results, depends upon the date taken as the commencement of the railways; and I am substantially correct when I say that the commencement was not really made until the first loan was raised in London, say a little before June, 1871. If that be looked on as the commencement, have we reason to be anything but satisfied with the results? The Stamp Duties have not, it is true, reached the expected amount; but those same Stamp Duties have puzzled and disappointed all Colonial Ministers, and they seem to be annoying and burdensome in proportion to their indisposition to expand into fairer results. I contend that we have not yet come to the third year, when I anticipated an aggregate return of £10,000, over and above working expenses, from the railways opened up to that time; by the expenditure of the two and a-half millions which my calculation supposed would be expended. We have not arrived at the time—we have not incurred the expenditure; but within the financial year we shall have opened, besides thirty-one miles of railway in Canterbury, and the Port Chalmers line, both now in full work, at least one hundred and twenty-five miles additional in various parts of the country.

It may be said, we have not the land returns that were anticipated. If this is alleged, may I not ask honorable Members to consider the unusual demand that has sprung up for land. True, the proceeds have not passed direct to Railway Account, but the Provinces that are to pay for the Railways have received the revenue. And this brings me to the point at which I commenced my historical digression,—our proposals for the future. We feel that the land question cannot remain as it is. We cannot tell the source, nor the duration, nor the result of this great demand for land. We know that the products of land—food, wool, timber, iron, and coal, in short almost everything on which depends the necessities and the comforts of life, and the realization of the wonderful advantages which science has

History of the Public Works Policy.

When a commencement was made.

Not yet reached the third year.

But within this financial year, 125 miles of railway will be opened, exclusive of 31 miles in Canterbury, and of Port Chalmers line.

The Land Question

cannot remain as at present.