

The amount spent during the year for coal exploration has been £1,609 18s. 4d., and there are liabilities on this head of £1,405 1s. 6s.

NATIVE LAND PURCHASES.

Negotiations have been carried on throughout the year for the purchase of Native lands, and a reference to Tables 11 and 12 will show that a great deal of land has been acquired.

The Government realize how necessary it is to obtain as much of this land as possible, and have already intimated their intention to ask for a further loan for the purpose.

They are now in treaty, through their agents, not only for buying several very large blocks, for which they propose paying the Natives fair value, but they have also succeeded in securing by lease several other large tracts of land for a long period of years.

Although paid for under the Public Works Department, the initiatory steps for the acquisition of these lands are undertaken by the Hon. Minister for Native Affairs. The amount expended during the past year was £36,655 0s. 11d., making, with sums previously spent, £86,319 5s. 5d.: for this 771,849 acres have been purchased outright, and 556,569 acres are under negotiation, the completion of the purchase of which it is estimated will absorb all that remains of the present appropriation for that purpose.

ADDITIONAL WORKS.

It has been already stated by the Honorable the Treasurer in his Financial Statement what further railways it is proposed to construct; and therefore I need only mention them here in passing.

First, there are the Mataura and Clutha, a length of 50 miles; the Dunedin and Moeraki, 55 miles; and the Timaru and Waitaki, 41 miles; in the South Island. A survey has been made of the first of these. The survey of the second will be completed during the present month of August; the preliminary survey of the Timaru and Waitaki was made some years since, and affords sufficient information to base an estimate upon.

In the North Island, the survey of the line has been completed from Mercer as far as Newcastle, and the site of the crossing place of the Waikato fixed. Beyond this the route has not been determined. A great deal of information has lately been procured as to the nature of the country, but till regular surveys have been made, it is not proposed to fix the direction the line shall take after crossing the Waikato River. The purpose of the Government, which will be steadily kept in view, is to ascertain what will be the best trunk line between Auckland and Wellington, and to undertake no works beyond Ngaruawahia excepting such as shall form a portion of that trunk line.

It may not be uninteresting here to mention that by the last mail orders were sent Home for the cylinders necessary for the bridge over the Waikato River at Newcastle, the drawings having been prepared by the Engineer-in-Chief immediately on his obtaining the necessary information; this bridge will be constructed so as to be utilized for both road and railway purposes.

In response to the wishes of large numbers of persons interested in the Thames District, a flying survey has been made, with a view of ascertaining whether it is practicable to connect the Thames District with the main trunk line from Auckland southwards.

The Report of the Surveyor is in print and on the Table of the House, but it is not intended to ask authority for any further expenditure in this direction at present.

In any case it would be unwise to do so till the route of the main line has been fixed: the report of Mr. Simpson shows that there is no engineering difficulty in the way of the construction of this line, whenever it may be deemed advisable to construct it.

The Greymouth protective works have been carried on so far with very good results. It is found that to accommodate anything like the amount of trade which, as is now estimated, will be done there, a considerable additional length of wharf will have to be constructed, and to enable the Government to meet this demand for increased accommodation we shall ask for an additional appropriation,