

for that office, to cover the expense of an Accountant and assistants. I have adopted this course in preference to taking the salaries of such officers out of Contingency Votes.

The extraordinary rise which took place towards the end of last year, both in skilled labour and in building materials, induced me to avoid pressing on some of the larger buildings which were authorized by this House last Session, and foremost among them was the block of buildings for new Government offices in Wellington.

Alternative designs for this block have been prepared, and before the Session is over the Government will bring down estimates for this and the other public buildings they consider necessary throughout the colony.

With regard to other buildings in various parts of the colony, wherever we have not had fair-priced tenders sent in, we have either re-advertised them or postponed their erection.

#### ADDITIONAL WORKS.

Now, Sir, with regard to the appropriation for Railways which it is proposed to ask the House to sanction this Session :—

1st. We require about £14,000 more for the Kaipara and Riverhead Railway.

2nd. We ask the House to vote £112,000, being the difference in the cost of the completion of the line from Wanganui to Manawatu as a railway instead of the tramway, now on the Railway Schedule.

The original vote was taken at a round sum of £2,000 per mile, without anything approaching to a reliable survey. The bridges over the Rangitikei and the Oroua are of a very extensive character, and I am advised that the above sum will not be more than sufficient; and that even if the line were kept as a tramway, which would, in face of the settlement now going on there, be a most wasteful course, a large sum would have to be asked for the purpose. The Government have no hesitation in requesting this amount.

3rd. We propose to convert the Foxton and Manawatu Tramway into a railway, owing to its being found that the tramway is not capable of doing more than accommodate the present traffic; the charges being in consequence kept very high to pay the working expenses and repairs. If the tramway is kept as it is, it will prevent the expansion of the large timber trade which is now taking place, not only in the Feilding Block but in the surrounding districts. The tramway is 25 miles long, and it will cost about £60,000 in all to complete it as a railway.

4th. A further sum of £30,000, to extend the railway southward from Waipukurau towards Manawatu; the object being to form the railway and lay down the permanent sleepers with a wooden rail to the heavy bush land which the main line traverses, and thus get at the timber, so much of which is wanted for the railway now in course of construction. The cost of laying these wooden rails will be very small in comparison with the advantage to be gained in getting at the timber, and the rails can be replaced in a year or two with iron ones with very little trouble.

5th. We ask for £15,000 to complete the Waitaki Bridge; and

6th. For £10,000 for the extension of the protective works at Greymouth.

The vote of £10,000 for preliminary surveys being nearly exhausted, we shall ask for a sufficient sum to enable us to have full and complete surveys made of the line through from Foxhill to Brunnerton, and thence to Canterbury, and from Greymouth to Hokitika, as well as for such other portions of the connecting links of the trunk lines as the staff at our command will enable us to do.

There will be no necessity to do more than this before the next Session.