

to lay before Parliament next Session full information as to the direction of the Main Trunk lines in both islands, together with definite proposals for their completion.

A report has been recently received from Mr. Blair, District Engineer, of the result of reconnaissance surveys made by him of the different lines that have been advocated for opening the Central Otago District. His report will be appended to this statement.

ROADS.

The report of the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief contains detailed information as to the road works carried out under the Public Works Department. The sums appropriated last year for road works have been, where practicable, expended through the County Councils or Road Boards of the different districts, and where this could not be arranged, the works have been carried out by the Public Works Department. The votes have not in all cases been expended within the year, but engagements have been entered into which will necessitate re-voting the unexpended balances in each case.

The House will remember that special provision was made last session for roads in certain districts in the North Island, and for similar purposes in Westland and the Nelson South-West Gold Fields, on the grounds that these districts had urgent wants which could not be provided for by the local bodies, and that they had special claims to consideration from being so situated as not to derive the same immediate and direct advantages from the Public Works policy as other parts of the colony.

The Government intend to ask the House to make provision this session for similar works in the same districts, and I shall submit the following votes for these purposes:—

	£	£
Roads North of Auckland	10,000	
Balance of last year's vote, being liabilities	15,206	
		25,206
Roads in Native Districts		12,000
Roads, Westland	10,000	
Balance last year's vote	9,164	
		19,164
Roads, Nelson South-West Gold Fields	10,000	
Balance last year's vote	7,802	
		17,802
Hokitika-Christchurch Road		5,000

—being a total of £79,172 for road works.

There is another class of works to which I have to refer—viz., the provincial roads and undertakings which were under construction or authorized when the Abolition of the Provinces Act came into force. The reports of both the Engineer-in-Chief and Assistant Engineer-in-Chief contain information respecting many important works of this character which were taken over and have been carried on by the Public Works Department. Some works of the same class have been carried out by the local authorities at the request of the Government.

The expenditure under this head has been considerable, and I regret I am unable at present to furnish an accurate statement of the condition of these works. The requisite information has been called for from the different provincial districts, and when this is obtained we shall ask the House to make provision for the liabilities incurred. We shall also determine the particular works we shall ask the House to provide means to complete. The Government recognize that the distribution of the expenditure on these provincial works has been unequal in the different parts of the colony. We are also aware that there are some works in sparsely settled out-districts, such as bridges over difficult rivers, which are urgently required to connect important divisions of the country, and that in some cases these works are beyond the present means of the County Councils. We do not wish it to be inferred that we think the colony can provide for all the works of this kind that are desirable, but we propose, at the same time that we submit votes to cover the liabilities on the provincial works in progress, to ask provision for the more important and pressing of the works I have just described, and in so doing we shall take into consideration the claims of those districts which have not shared equally in the Public Works expenditure already incurred.