

will amount to about £250,000, and for this year one-half of that will be £125,000. We submit that for this year the consolidated revenue shall contribute £75,000 of that amount, and that £50,000 shall be contributed from the Public Works Fund. The subsidies will include small contributions to towns and larger ones to road districts and counties. This is irrespective of the treatment which we propose to adopt with charitable institutions and hospitals. I will ask honourable members to suspend their judgment on the subject until all the measures are before them. We will, if acceptable to the House, at once bring down the local government and charitable aid measures. They are three in number. We will move the second reading, and explain the nature of each, and then adjourn the debates until all of them are before the House. Honourable members will then be able to amply consider them as a whole, and take such course concerning them as commends itself to their judgment. I am aware that by this mode of proceeding we shall not be pursuing what are considered good party tactics; but a consideration of the kind is insignificant compared with the great advantage members will enjoy in having before them the measures in their entirety with their nature fully explained.

We consider that, besides the assistance which, through local bodies, we render to the cultivators of the soil by opening-up the country with roads and bridges, special aid is necessary to the goldfields districts. We also are of opinion that particular encouragement should be given to the establishment of fisheries all round the coast. The advantages of a hardy maritime population are too patent to need comment. It only need be said that New Zealand seems eminently destined for such a population, and that the fisheries in its vicinity are believed to offer abundant inducements for the encouragement proposed. I come now to the consideration of the great body of persons engaged in manufactures of all descriptions.

We cannot have this colony as wealthy and prosperous as it should be if manufactures do not hold an important position amongst its industries. With a good climate, abundant water and coal, an immense range of natural productions, and separated by a wide belt of ocean from other countries, it possesses the natural conditions which should make manufacturing a success. But the earlier stages of all industries are beset with more or less difficulty, and there is no proof whatever that any particular manufacture may not be suited to the colony because in its initial stages it cannot compete with goods of the same kind imported. Thus, we are brought face to face with the theories which are ranged under the heads of free-trade and protection. Although, as I have previously said, the old-world doctrines which are comprised under these banners are quite different in their nature to those which we have to consider, it seems impossible to prevent people dealing with the question as if we really had to fight out the question on the ancient field of battle.

In any case you have the right to ask the Government to frankly disclose their views. We are, then, neither Freetraders nor Protectionists in the sense in which those terms are commonly used. We do not believe the circumstances of the colony are such as to make it politic to adopt simple free-trade principles, which resolve themselves into giving no advantage whatever to local producers, and to applying excise, to countervail import duties. On the contrary, we think it is so important that all sections of the population should be profitably employed, that it is impossible to apply any theory that depends for its basis on the supposition that the population, if it cannot find one occupation, must look to another, and be content to contend with the populations of other countries on equal terms, no matter what may be the condition of labour in those countries.

On the other hand we distinctly abjure a policy of protection, which would give to the followers of protected pursuits a State-aided guarantee of success, no matter how unsuitable those pursuits might be. Any policy of the kind which would carry with it a guarantee of the State, direct or implied, through the thousand ramifications of manufacturing operations, would be a system of unhealthy forcing, fraught with possible ultimate disaster. We are far from saying there are not some industries which the State should foster, but these should be commanding, conspicuous industries like that of the fisheries, and the