

The balance of loan allocation on 31st March last was £15,393, and of that amount £9,000 will be required to complete the works which I have indicated, leaving a balance of £6,393, which is not at present required.

The vote required for actual expenditure within the current year is £8,000.

#### SEAWARD BUSH.

On the Seaward Bush branch railway, which has been finished and opened for traffic for some considerable time from Appleby to Oteramika, a distance of 11½ miles, there is a balance of loan allocation amounting to £3,961; but, as no extension which would be of any use can be made with this, it is not proposed to ask for any appropriation on account of it during the current year.

#### EXPENDITURE ON RAILWAYS LAST YEAR, AND VOTES PROPOSED FOR CURRENT YEAR.

On account of railways in course of construction as a whole, with liabilities at the end of March, 1888, amounting to £261,577, the amount voted for expenditure during the year ending March last was £406,900, and of this amount £272,077 was expended within the year.

As against this, with liabilities at the end of March last amounting to £207,483, we propose to ask for votes for the current year amounting to £316,745, leaving £669,557 available for expenditure in succeeding years. Of these amounts £31,000 is for expenditure on the North Island Trunk Railway, leaving £352,810 still available for same, and £285,745 is for expenditure on all the other railways, provided for under Parts I. and III. of the fund, leaving £316,747 still available for same.

#### TOTAL LENGTH OF RAILWAYS CONSTRUCTED AND IN PROGRESS.

The total length of railways open for traffic on the 31st March last was: In the North Island, 662 miles; and in the South Island, 1,108 miles: total, 1,770 miles. There were also at that date 164 miles of railway in course of construction, of which 72 were in the North Island and 92 in the South Island. The total expenditure on railways, including cost of provincial lines, and purchase of district railways, up to the 31st March last, was £14,738,782; and the liabilities on the 31st March were £207,484, making in all £14,946,266.

#### ADDITIONS TO OPEN LINES.

For additions to opened railways the amount voted for expenditure during last year was £65,000, and of this amount £48,440 was expended. Of these sums, however, £25,000 in each case was for purchase of a stock of permanent-way for working-railway requirements, so that the vote for actual works in the shape of additions to open lines was only £40,000, and of this sum £23,440 was expended. The diminution of this class of expenditure alluded to in former Public Works Statements, and which cannot be otherwise than satisfactory to the House and the country, is therefore still going on, the several expenditures for the last five years having been in round numbers £140,000, £91,000, £80,000, £38,000, and £24,000. For the present year, with liabilities at end of March last amounting to £26,027, we ask for a vote of £30,000.

#### THE WORKING RAILWAYS.

On the subject of the working railways it is not necessary that I should make any remarks, as a full report on the year's workings, with the usual statistical returns, has already been laid on the table of the House by the Railway Commissioners, in accordance with section 61 of "The Government Railways Act, 1887."

#### PUHIPUHI TRAMWAY.

Before finally leaving the subject of the railways, I wish to take this opportunity of bringing before the House a matter which is of great importance to the Auckland district especially, but also more or less to the whole of New Zealand, namely, the saving and utilising of so much as can now be saved of the Puhipuhi Kauri Forest.