

ESTIMATED RESULTS OF THE YEAR 1890-91.

I have said that the estimated total ordinary expenditure for the current year amounts to £4,127,417; the estimated revenue to £4,159,000, to which I add the surplus of £36,569 with which I have shown we began the year after paying off the balance of the deficit of £128,605. We shall therefore, if our estimates are realised, have a surplus of £68,152, subject however to a deduction of £20,000 to which I shall refer presently, leaving an estimated surplus of £48,152, which, honourable members will agree, is not too large a margin to work upon, especially when it is remembered that supplementary estimates have yet to be provided for.

Estimated Result, 1889-90.
Table No 9.

Surplus of
£68,152.

SETTLEMENT OF THE CROWN LANDS.

The question as to how the Crown lands of the colony are to be successfully settled is one of the greatest importance, but, as honourable members will see from what I have already said, the present financial provision made for this important object is not satisfactory. I have shown that, from the amount of cash received for land, without forcing cash sales, both the late and present Government have found it quite impossible to do the necessary roading to render such land possible for settlement. We have therefore to consider how sufficient funds are to be obtained—leaving on one side, for the present, the question of the cost of buying the lands from the Native owners—(1) for providing the necessary amount for carrying on the Survey and Crown Lands Department; (2) for making the necessary roads to render the lands fit for the occupation of small settlers.

Settlement of the Crown Lands.

Question of how funds to be obtained.

It is estimated that, even with only the present amount spent upon roads, in the next two years a million acres will be taken up on settlement conditions, and that probably considerably more would be occupied if greater facilities in the way of roads were given.

How, then, is sufficient money to be obtained for surveys and administration without unduly forcing the sale of Crown lands for cash, finding, as we do, that the people prefer the perpetual-leasehold tenure? It seems to me that, for a time at least, it must be borne by the consolidated revenue, and I shall therefore ask authority for £20,000 as a grant-in-aid for this year, that being the estimated amount required. I think it best to take the required assistance in this way as a distinct vote, because it is most desirable not to run the risk of bringing the proceeds of land sales into the ordinary revenue; and it will naturally be inclined to drift there if we once charge the cost of surveys as ordinary departmental expenditure.

Grant-in-aid £20,000 from ordinary revenue proposed for surveys and administration.

This brings me to the second question, How are we to get the funds to make the necessary roads to render our Crown lands acceptable for settlement? Now, it is clear that money for this purpose can only be obtained in one of three ways—from loan, from the Consolidated Fund, or from the land itself. The Government are not prepared to recommend a resumption of ordinary borrowing for this or any other purpose. It is clear from what I have already said that we cannot spare the necessary amount from the Consolidated Fund. We must therefore fall back upon the land itself, if this can be done without a deterrent effect upon settlement in consequence of the apparently enhanced price which our proposals involve.

Parliament has already determined that intending settlers shall have the choice of one of three titles under which to hold their land—namely, by cash purchase, deferred payment, or perpetual lease with right of purchasing in fee. The perpetual leasehold seems to be the title which the public prefer. It is growing in public favour, and will, I have no doubt, practically supersede the other two titles. All the costs, therefore, of placing a settler upon the land—namely, the purchase of the land from the Natives, the survey charges, the cost of making the necessary roads—have to be provided in cash before any return even in the shape of rent comes back to the Crown. Since, therefore, the perpetual lease is the form of tenure for which we have mainly to provide, it is clear that provision must be made for the purchase of land, for the surveys, and for the roading; and the sooner we determine how this is to be done the