

Department since the inauguration of the Immigration and Public Works policy of 1870 to the 31st March last as follows 5,355,457 acres finally acquired at a total cost of £1,172,434, or about 4s. 5d. per acre all round, and 1,400,777 acres still under negotiation, on which the sum of £76,441 had been expended up to the above date.

The work of the past financial year as to finally-completed transactions, included in the first total above, is 179,618 acres. Since the 31st March the purchase of a further area of 10,000 acres has been finally completed. As regards finally-completed transactions, the total area purchased during the two previous years was under 50,000 acres.

The Government Native Land-purchases Bill now before Parliament provides for the future operations of the Land-purchase Department, and, if it becomes law, will, it is hoped, enable the Government to acquire a sufficient area of land, on reasonable terms, to meet the growing requirements of settlement. In anticipation of this Bill becoming law, no vote for the purchase of Native lands has been provided under Part I. of the fund this year, as if the proposals of the Government under the Bill referred to are approved by Parliament, sufficient provision for the purchase of lands hitherto paid for out of this part of the fund will be made by the issue of the debentures provided for

WATERWORKS ON GOLDFIELDS.

The expenditure on waterworks within mining districts last year was only £2,257, the liabilities on the 31st March last being £2,500. It is proposed to ask the House for a vote of £5,000 this year to cover liabilities, and also to enable assistance to be granted towards the further extension of works of this character

TELEGRAPH EXTENSION

The expenditure out of loan on account of telegraph construction and for the extension of the telephone-exchange system throughout the colony amounted during the financial year to £27,772, and of this sum an amount of £3,687 was expended on the telephone-exchanges, making their capital cost at the close of the year £76,052.

Of the new lines erected during the year for the extension of telegraphic communication the most important are those to Waihi, Kaponga, Hunterville, and Maraekakaho, in the North Island, and Stanley Brook, Burke's Pass, Little Akaloa-O'Kain's, and Le Bon's Bay, Tuapeka-Lawrence, Gimmerburn, and Hawea Flat, in the South Island.

In the estimates for the present year's expenditure provision has been made for extensions of lines to Blackburn, Bealey to Jackson's, and Taipo, Little Akaloa line, and for the establishment of telephone-exchanges at the Thames and at Palmerston North.

CONCLUSION

For the purpose of showing how the "tapering-off" policy, succeeded by the self-reliant non-borrowing policy, has affected our Public Works expenditure during the last few years, I give the following figures, which represent the total expenditure under the Public Works Fund during each of the years mentioned, and which bear eloquent testimony to the self-sacrificing spirit exhibited by our colonists in accepting with thorough goodwill the decreased expenditure which that policy has entailed, and which also afford the fullest evidence of the resources and capabilities of the colony, seeing that, notwithstanding this enormous diminution in our loan expenditure, the country is becoming year by year more prosperous, and its financial position steadily improving. The figures showing the loan expenditure during the several years are as follows—namely 1885-86, £1,475,386, 1886-87, £1,333,484, 1887-88, £966,159, 1888-89, £613,939, 1889-90, £482,464, 1890-91, £334,756; 1891-92, £391,501

The abolition of the system of sub-contracting in connection with our public works, announced in last year's Statement, and resolutely adhered to since,