

The expenditure on harbour-works amounted to £1,777. The amount asked for this year is £1,975, which provides for continuing the reclamation-works at Sticking Point, Lyttelton; completion of work at Hokitika; and new wharves at Mokau, Karamea, Little Wanganui, and Bruce Bay.

The appropriation for harbour-defences last year was £10,000, and £10,158 was expended, the amounts at the several ports being as follows: Auckland, £6,165; Wellington, £2,447; Lyttelton, £461; Dunedin, £1,085. The liabilities at the end of the year were £3,514, and we ask for a vote of £10,000 to cover these, and also to provide for important works now in hand or contemplated. The principal of these are the new battery at Mount Victoria, Auckland, and electric-light emplacements at Auckland and Wellington, and other minor works.

Last year's vote for contingent defence was £35,000, but, owing to English orders not being executed as rapidly as expected, only £13,867 was actually expended within the year; but liabilities existed at the close of the year to the additional sum of £18,450. We ask for a vote of £40,000 to cover these liabilities and further purchases of warlike stores, full details of which appear in the estimates. The vote also provides for the purchase of additional land at the rifle-ranges at Polhill Gully (Wellington) and Pelichet Bay (Dunedin), also for rifle-ranges in the Auckland District.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

The gross total votes now submitted to the House for public-works purposes amount to £1,355,098, as compared with £1,237,536 last year. The actual expenditure last year amounted to £933,298—viz., £916,327 under the Public Works Fund, and £16,971 out of the Loans to Local Bodies Account.

In conclusion I may remind honourable members of the words used by the late Hon. John Ballance in 1892 when he said,—“If my interpretation of colonial patriotism and aspirations is correct, we must continue to open up land for settlement by means of money spent on roads and bridges; we must still continue, slowly it may be, to take our railways forward to those points where they will serve the purpose of tapping districts of high producing capacity.” The Government believe this, with slight modification, to be the mind of the country at the present time.

The altered condition of the colony has, we believe, demanded more expedition in providing means of communication, and, while the amount expended last year and the amount proposed for expenditure this year, compared with the expenditure of a few years ago may seem large, yet the spread of settlement causing the large increase in the productive power of the colony demands a commensurate increase in the expenditure upon reproductive public works, and the allocation of the funds has been carefully considered with the view of meeting the urgent needs of the colony.