

settlers better served. The trains running immediately alongside their holdings would insure the conveyance of produce and stores by the railway.

The expense of station-buildings would be almost eliminated except at important points, where they would be necessary for the convenient working of the line.

Subject to the conditions above mentioned, the cost of a 2 ft. gauge railway, exclusive of rolling-stock, should be—

(1.) In easy country	£2,000 per mile.
(2.) In medium country	£3,000 "
(3.) In difficult country	£4,500 "

Included in this estimate are the rails (estimated to cost £600 per mile for 30 lb. rails and £750 per mile for 40 lb. rails) and the sleepers—of proportionately reduced length (cost £300 per mile)—making a total for permanent-way of £900 per mile for 30 lb. rails and £1,050 for 40 lb. rails. The difference between this amount and the completed cost of the line being the cost of land, formation, bridges, culverts, fencing, platelaying, ballasting, stations, &c.

There are several districts in the colony where narrow-gauge lines could be fairly tested as to cost of construction and earning-power. One of these I shall refer to later on.

AVAILABLE WAYS AND MEANS FOR PUBLIC-WORKS PURPOSES.

At 31st March, 1899, the available balance of ways and means for public-works purposes was £380,856, and further funds were provided last session, as follows:—

Under the Aid to Public Works and Land Settlement Act...	£	1,000,000
Transferred from revenue	450,000	
Miscellaneous receipts	2,116	

thus making a gross total of £1,832,972. The expenditure last year amounted to £993,223, therefore at the end of the year the balance of ways and means amounted to £839,749. Against this, however, there were liabilities amounting to £494,895. It is now proposed to provide additional funds, as under:—

New loan	£	1,000,000
To be transferred from revenue	500,000	

making altogether (after deducting the liabilities) a total of available ways and means of £1,844,854.

The estimates of expenditure for the current year total to £1,938,369 (in addition to £49,000 under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Account), thus leaving an unallocated balance of ways and means for public-works purposes of £401,380.

TOTAL PUBLIC-WORKS EXPENDITURE.

The following table shows the total expenditure out of the Public Works Fund on all works and services throughout the colony up to the 31st December, 1890, and also up to the 31st March last:—

Class of Works.	Expenditure.		
	Total to 31st December, 1890.	1st January, 1891, to 31st March, 1900.	Total to 31st March, 1900.
Railways (including A.O.L.)	£ 14,067,100	£ 2,383,203	£ 16,450,303
Roads	3,575,804	1,672,354	5,248,158
Public buildings	1,776,003	612,283	2,388,286
Immigration	2,144,386	3,119	2,147,505
Purchase of Native lands	1,191,137	745,145	1,936,282
Lighthouses, harbour-works, and harbour-defences	880,095	79,001	959,096
Telegraph extension	600,849	255,208	856,057
Development of goldfields	561,101	109,345	670,446
Defence-works (general)	429,720	82,590	512,310
Departmental	349,789	96,595	446,384
Minor works and services	300,689	6,799	307,488
Cost and discount, raising loans, &c.	1,021,472	34,839	1,056,311
Totals	26,898,145	6,080,481	32,978,626