

fully considered expenditure at least for three months longer, or up to the 30th June next. It is plain, under these circumstances, that we shall require more money, and to fix upon the smallest amount of further assistance to enable us to economically provide for the necessary expenditure on our public works has given my colleagues and myself the gravest consideration. Last year authority was asked for to raise one million in aid of public works. This year we desire to raise £750,000, which will enable the construction of public works to proceed at the existing rate of expenditure up to the end of September, 1905, by which time further provision can, if required, be made by Parliament.

#### CONCLUSION.

The keynote of this Budget, given with no uncertain sound, is prudence and economy in administration, reduced public-works expenditure and decreased borrowing, the aim ultimately being not to go outside the colony for moneys at all.

The Budget shows clearly that there is a decrease of debt per head of population in respect to loans that are not directly reproductive, although there is an increase per head in respect to moneys raised for reproductive purposes which are directly remunerative and interest-paying. This is satisfactory, for the general taxpayer is not called upon to contribute any more to the Consolidated Fund.

From what I have placed before members it has been incontestably proved that, strong as our financial position was last year, it is much stronger to-day. Our assets over liabilities are as over £6 to £1 of our indebtedness.

The population of the colony has during the past year increased by 24,576, and the increase of arrivals over departures amounts to 11,275. Thus the increase of debt per head of population has decreased, while the power to pay has been increased.

The settlement of the people on the Crown lands, and upon lands acquired under the Land for Settlement Act, is proceeding rapidly, and as satisfactorily as the existing laws and conditions will permit. The revenues from Customs and Railways are increasing, thus denoting continued prosperity and an increased spending-power of the people.

In the year 1879, when I first entered Parliament, the exports were £5,743,126, and the total trade was £14,117,711. In the year 1891, when I first took ministerial office, the exports were £9,566,397, and the total trade £16,070,246. Last year, 1903, the exports were £15,010,378, and the total trade £27,799,053. What the spread of settlement, the development of our resources, increased population, improved opportunities given to the people, prudent and enlightened administration have done are evidenced by the increased exports in trade, our flourishing industries, increased population, and the general happiness, contentment, and prosperity of the people.

Honourable members will notice a largely increased Education vote. This, I hope, may be cheerfully accepted and provided for. It means the complete education of our youth, and his equipment for the battle of life. Primary, secondary, technical, and university education are imperative if our children are to compete and fight the battle on level terms with others.

Last financial year gave the colony its record surplus, and to be able to transfer this year £650,000 from the Consolidated Fund, and to have sufficient wherewithal in the supplementary estimates, is an achievement that should gladden the heart of any Colonial Treasurer. At the same time it is essential that the strictest economy should follow. This done, the time is not far distant when remission of indirect taxation, railway, and other charges might be considered.

Finally, our unique and lovely islands abound in varied and beautiful scenery—tropical and alpine intermixed; colonists and visitors may be in the tropical north one day and the next be amongst the snow, or witnessing the appalling grandeur of the finest geyser in the world. They may shoot the stag on our mountains, or enjoy fishing unsurpassed in the world. They may pass their time on our beautiful lakes, or go into the agricultural districts amongst the waving golden corn. They may see in our cities prosperous industries, and no unemployed. Want and poverty do not exist, and beggars are unknown in our fair colony.

I again repeat, we are a buttress of and the paradise of the great British Empire. In the words of our poet Bracken, "New Zealand is God's own country."