

The lengths of the railways authorized, open for traffic, and in progress, exclusive of the lines constructed out of provincial appropriations, are—

	Authorized.		Open for Traffic.		In Progress.
In the North Island ...	391.48 miles	...	145.2 miles	...	183.6 miles
In the Middle Island ...	638.40 „	...	404.71 „	...	199.39 „
Total ...	1030.08 „	...	549.73 „	...	382.45 „

Honorable members probably noticed last year that there was a difference between the amount stated by me as expended to the end of the financial year and that stated in the Third Schedule of the Immigration and Public Works Appropriation Act. The difference is explained by the fact that by the Act last mentioned the expenditure in the General Railway Account was not allocated to the several railways, and also that a separate appropriation was provided for the expense of raising the loans including discount, whereas in my Statement this expense and discount were included. I accept the statement contained in the Act, and therefore the distributed expenditure on railways up to June, 1875, exclusive of loan charges, amounted to £3,576,003 12s. 7d.

The amount appropriated by the Immigration and Public Works Appropriation Act of last year for railways, was £2,342,398 10s. 6d.; the expenditure against this vote has been £1,639,014 7s. 9d., including the greater portion of the distribution of the General Railway Account to which I have just alluded. There are liabilities for works in the colony and advances to the Agent-General for purchase of material, amounting to £983,253 19s. 7d., including the undistributed balance of the General Railway Account.

The total expenditure up to 30th June, 1876, was therefore £5,215,018 0s. 4d., and the outstanding liabilities, including the undistributed balance of the General Railway Account, £983,253 19s. 7d. This amount includes the liabilities for all existing contracts, some of which extend into the year 1878, and for plant and materials ordered from home.

I have in detail referred to the great additional cost of land, and that the House may judge to what extent the increase is on that item since our estimates were made up last year I should mention that the compensation already paid, and liabilities which will come in for payment over the next eighteen months, will amount to over £90,000.

It becomes a question whether, when further extensions of railways are contemplated, the district through which it is proposed to carry the railway should not provide the land free of charge to the State, before any expenditure is incurred towards construction.

Further exploration surveys have been made during the past year, northwards, from Canterbury towards Blenheim, but it is still doubtful whether the best route has been discovered. It is proposed to continue the exploration during the present year. A full report is attached, showing what has already been done in this direction.

The surveys and working drawings of the proposed railway from Hokitika to Greymouth have been completed. The estimates, which have been carefully prepared, show that the line will cost upwards of £222,000, as against the original amount stated some years since at £85,000. Some deviations are now being surveyed which will probably reduce the cost.

During the year a good line has been found for the railway between the present terminus of the Napier line and Manawatu. This has been a very difficult part of the country to survey, and at one time it was feared that it would scarcely be possible to get through, except at an enormous cost. By the line now surveyed, the cost will not be excessive.

I wish to draw the attention of honorable members to the great saving to the Government which has accrued from the Photo-Lithographic establishment. In railway plans alone it has saved at least £2,000 per annum.

ROADS.

In comparison with previous years a very small amount has been spent on new road works. The Tables attached to this Statement show the various localities in which the money has been spent.