

1882.  
NEW ZEALAND.

---

# PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. WALTER WOODS JOHNSTON,  
11TH JULY, 1882.

---

MR. SPEAKER,—

I feel very strongly that the House suffers a disadvantage in receiving a statement of the public works of the colony, dealing not only with the progress made in construction during the past year, but also with the administration of what has now become a very large business, from the hands of a Minister who takes charge only just before the meeting of Parliament. So far as construction is concerned, it is easy to narrate the progress that has been made with the works during the period under review,—easy also to declare the intentions of the Government in respect both of the works it is desirable to complete or extend, and of the amount it is thought prudent to expend in each year. But with regard to the administration of railways open for traffic the case is different. There arise questions affecting the management, demands for altering the present classification of goods, suggestions for a modification of the tariff, for a decrease in passenger fares, inquiries as to the sufficiency and condition of our rolling-stock, and as to whether any share of maintenance charges is not borne upon loan,—upon all of which I believe it would be exceedingly satisfactory to the House were the Minister able to make an authoritative statement based on his knowledge of the facts. But by the time he is familiar with the working of the administration, and is able to leave the impress of his touch visible upon the management, the period usually arrives for his successor in office to begin to make himself acquainted with the facts. In 1880 the Railway Commissioners strongly recommended that the administration of constructed railways should be transferred to a Board of Management, having the same powers and functions as a Board of Directors of an English railway company. So far as my short term of office enables me to form an opinion, I incline to the belief that it might be advantageous to have some such a Board, not only because of the knowledge and experience with which it could deal with the questions that engaged its attention, but also because it would be removed from political pressure. But the House will recognize that it is impossible to hurriedly arrive at any conclusion upon such a large subject, with which, therefore, the Government does not intend to deal during this session.

Honorable members will find attached to this Statement the ordinary tables and statements of expenditure and liabilities, and the annual reports from the General Manager of Railways, from the Engineers-in-Chief of the North and Middle Islands, with explanatory maps, and from the Marine Engineer and the Colonial Architect.

Before proceeding to details of the expenditure during the past year, I may remind the House that although an appropriation was taken last year for a very large sum, £1,892,554, or rather more than the unexpended balance of the Public Works Fund in hand on the 31st March, 1881, yet, owing to the inability of the