

1883.

NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. WALTER WOODS JOHNSTON,
3RD JULY, 1883.

MR. SPEAKER,—

When in the last session I had the honour of submitting a statement to this House my brief experience as Minister for Public Works led me to consider favourably the suggestion of the Railway Commissioners of 1880 that the administration of constructed railways should be handed over to a Board of Management. But the considerable outlay which it has been requisite to make in further improving the opened lines, and the large orders which I have found it necessary to give for additional rolling-stock, necessitated by the growth of traffic, in short, the large expenditure out of loan (in addition to the expenditure for maintenance, which is defrayed by revenue) which must be continued for some time before the railways can be said to be really completed and equipped, inclines me to the belief that only a Minister directly responsible to this House should be intrusted with the power of making this expenditure. The power to make alterations in fares and freights, which I have used to some extent during the recess, should also, I think, remain in the hands of a Minister directly responsible to this House. The Government purpose during this session to ask the Legislature to sanction the appointment of another Minister, and this will enable such an arrangement to be made as will permit of a Minister of Railways to devote his whole attention to this branch of the administration. The business of the railways has become quite large enough to necessitate its severance from Public Works. Parliamentary control will be much more perfect when a Minister of Railways brings down separate estimates of what moneys are required from loan for further improvements to and the further equipment of the opened lines, and when the estimates submitted by the Minister for Public Works will be estimates for construction solely. I trust this proposal will commend itself to the approval of the House.

In his Financial Statement the Treasurer informed honourable members that, to the balance of the Public Works Fund in hand on the 31st March, 1882, viz., £924,865, there has been added the sum of £989,897, being the proceeds of the debentures for £1,000,000 which we sold in January last, thus making a total of £1,914,762; that out of this Fund there had been spent during the year the sum of £897,037; and that, consequently, the Public Works Fund amounted, at the close of the last financial year, to £1,017,725. It is, I think, convenient and desirable to remind honourable members that, of the total annual expenditure from this Fund, the Minister for Public Works has no control over the expenditure upon immigration, purchase of Native lands, the expenditure by the Minister of Lands in making roads to open up Crown lands, the expenditure by the Minister of Mines upon roads and water-races, that of the Minister for Education upon school-buildings, and the expenditure upon telegraph extension, public buildings, and lighthouses. For the railways, roads, and harbour works, under the control of the Minister for Public Works, there was voted £1,251,830, of which £574,935 has