

SESS. II.—1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. EDWARD RICHARDSON,
24TH OCTOBER, 1884.

MR. SPEAKER,—

The information usually contained in the Public Works Statement has been somewhat anticipated this year by the particulars laid upon the table of the House during the last short session.

The time that has elapsed since the Government took office has not been sufficient to enable me to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the proceedings of the various branches of the Public Works Department, and I have had to depend in a great measure upon the figures and reports submitted to me by the several official heads of the department.

I may state, however, that, so far as time has permitted, I have looked into the question of the staff of the department as provided for in the present Estimates. Reductions were supposed to be made in the year 1881–82, but I find that those reductions were more nominal than real, and that the bulk of the officers who at that time disappeared from the list of the permanent staff were placed on temporary charge, and provided for out of the votes for construction works. Although I am not as yet prepared to state to what extent reductions can be made, I am of opinion that the staff is much larger than is necessary for the due supervision of the works the colony now has in hand.

The railways being the most important works carried on by the department, I propose to allude to them first, under the several headings of “Railways in Course of Construction,” “Additions to opened Railways,” and “Working of Railways already opened for Traffic.” Before going into the details of the several lines, however, it may be well to state that, on the 31st March, 1884, the colony had 1,404 miles of railway open for traffic, on which there had been expended the sum of £11,251,633, and that there were 234 miles in course of construction.

It was to this 234 miles of unfinished railway that my honourable colleague the Colonial Treasurer principally alluded when he stated that it will be our endeavour to push on to a speedy completion the various unfinished portions of lines, so as to add this extra mileage to our revenue-producing railways.

RAILWAYS IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION.

I shall now shortly refer to those portions of our railways which were under construction during the past year.