

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. EDWIN MITCHELSON,
18TH AUGUST, 1888.

MR. SPEAKER,—

As the question of the Public Works of the colony is becoming, in comparison with other questions, of less and less importance as time goes on, and as I think that this is as it should be, I propose to confine my remarks on the subject this morning within much narrower limits than has usually been the case hitherto.

RAILWAYS IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION AND PROPOSED, INCLUDING ADDITIONS TO OPENED LINES.

On the subject of the railways in course of construction and proposed it will only be necessary to say a very few words. The Government is distinctly of opinion that the present financial position of the colony does not warrant the undertaking of any railway works other than such as will be of an immediately reproductive character, and we have therefore decided to recommend to Parliament that, with two exceptions, only such amounts should be voted this year as will enable us to meet the liabilities already incurred, with a small sum over for supervision and contingencies. The two exceptions are the Woodville to Palmerston Railway and the Otago Central Railway. On the Woodville to Palmerston Railway, in addition to amount required for existing liabilities, authority will be asked for £18,000 to enable a contract to be let for the Pohangina Bridge; and, for the Otago Central Railway, in addition to existing liabilities, an authority for £35,000 will be asked for, of which £30,000 is for the completion of the requisite bridges and other works up to and across the Sutton Stream, and the balance—£5,000—for the formation of a portion of the Middlemarch section.

The completion of the Woodville to Palmerston Railway is considered by the Government to be a work of the utmost importance, and a larger appropriation would now be asked for it were it not that nothing would be gained by undertaking any further works until the Pohangina Bridge has been put in hand. It is proposed, however, to ask for a vote next session for the whole balance of the loan allocation, and to then put all the works in hand which are required for the completion of this railway at such times as will insure their completion contemporaneously with the Pohangina Bridge and the Tunnel contracts.

It is also intended next year to ask for a vote for the whole balance of the loan allocation for the Otago Central Railway, so as to enable the line up to Middlemarch to be completed within about two years from now.

The total length of railways opened on the 31st March last was: In the North Island, 643 miles; and in the South Island, 1,108 miles: total, 1,751