

1902.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

BY THE HON. W. HALL-JONES, MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS,
16TH SEPTEMBER, 1902.

MR. SPEAKER,—

I have much pleasure in laying before honourable members my seventh annual Public Works Statement.

The work of railway-construction has been carried on with considerable vigour. My colleague the Acting-Premier has already drawn attention in his Financial Statement to the fact of last year having been a record one as regards the proportion of the vote expended within the year. Only £813 remained unexpended at the close of the year, and I am not aware of any previous instance of the unexpended balance of the vote having been so small.

The railway-construction work in hand since my last Statement was delivered has amounted to over 200 miles, and during the same period 29½ miles have been completed and handed over to the Railway Department for ordinary traffic. In addition to this, 36½ miles is now being used for conveying settlers' produce and merchandise; and rails are also laid upon a further 26 miles, still leaving a considerable length of formation in hand.

In the early part of the year the number of men employed was greater than in any previous period since the inauguration of the co-operative system of working. The reason for this will be readily understood when it is borne in mind that for the year 1900-1 the total vote for railway-construction exceeded the amount for the previous year by £224,500. To enable full advantage to be taken of this increased authority from Parliament during the remaining months of 1900-1 and the early part of 1901-2, the number of men was largely increased. The number employed in July, 1901, was 3,337, as compared with 1,742 in July of the previous year. As the summer of 1901 advanced it became necessary to make considerable reductions in order to keep within the vote authorised for the year 1901-2.

For the purpose of enabling a comparison to be made between our rate of expenditure last year and that prevailing previously I have prepared the following table, which shows, as regards each several class of work, (a) the total expenditure to 31st December, 1890, (b) the similar expenditure between

i .D. 1.