

1905.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT.

BY THE HON. W. HALL-JONES, MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS,

29TH AUGUST, 1905.

MR. SPEAKER,—

It is my pleasing duty to place before honourable members my tenth consecutive Public Works Statement, and to report that good progress has been made with the various works undertaken. The gross expenditure upon the North Island Main Trunk Railway (including the value of permanent-way materials issued to the line) during the year amounted to £154,436. The sum voted for all classes of roads was £410,975, against which authorities were issued amounting to £469,444. The exceptionally wet weather experienced in the early summer considerably retarded the progress of some of the works, particularly road-construction works, and consequently the expenditure up to the end of the financial year was not so large as I had anticipated. Since the period referred to good progress has been maintained.

In view of the New Zealand International Exhibition which is to be held next year, I desire to say, so that the information may be circulated for the benefit of likely visitors during the Exhibition season, that the Government anticipates that either prior to the opening of the Exhibition or during the season it will be practicable to take the through journey from Auckland to Wellington by the route of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, and also to travel by road and rail in one day from Greymouth or Hokitika to Christchurch.

The programme at present in course of execution and in contemplation for the North Island Main Trunk line provides for the rails at the north end reaching the Waimarino Plain, and probably up to the site of the Makatote Viaduct, by the date referred to. By the same date the rail-head at the southern end should be at Waiouru. From Waiouru to Raetihi a mail-coach road already exists, and the railway service-road between Raetihi and Makatote will be completed, so that a coach could travel from rail-head to rail-head.

As regards the Midland Railway, honourable members are aware that the contract for the Staircase Viaduct and Broken River Bridge is now being carried out. The contract time for completion expires on the 12th of October, but the work is not likely to be finished for some little time. I am, however, urging the contractors to use every expedition in finishing. The instructions issued to the departmental officers are that the rails must be laid across Staircase and up to and across the Broken River Bridge by the commencement of the Exhibition season, and a good service-road is in course of construction from Broken River to the Cass. It will therefore be possible to rail passengers from Christchurch to the west side of Broken River, leaving a coach journey of only forty miles from there to Otira, which, as already stated, will enable the through journey to be accomplished in one day.

In addition to the above, the Otago Central Railway should be completed to Clyde by the date mentioned, thus placing further facilities in the way of tourists visiting the beautiful cold lake scenery of the Middle Island.