

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

BY

THE HONORABLE

THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS.

2ND OCTOBER, 1872.

WELLINGTON.

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1872.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT.

By the Honorable D. REID, 2nd October, 1872.

SIR,—

My predecessor in office having on a very recent occasion made a statement to the House, explanatory of the action taken during the past year to give effect to the decision of the Legislature, in regard to Public Works and Immigration, it will be unnecessary for me to detain the House at any length on this occasion, and I believe I shall be best consulting the convenience of honorable Members if I at once proceed to explain (which I shall endeavour to do in as clear and concise terms as possible) the position of the Colony with respect to the Loans raised for Public Works, the Contracts and Engagements already existing, and the estimated cost to complete the same. I shall also state what additional works we propose to commence and carry on during the current year. Honorable Members have been already informed by the Colonial Treasurer that it is the intention of the Government during the recess to carefully consider the whole question, in order to submit to the Legislature at its next Session a scheme having for its object the completion, as rapidly as circumstances will admit, of the works already authorized by Parliament, and the construction of such other works as it may from time to time appear expedient to undertake.

The following are the Railway works already contracted for, the dates on which the contracts are to be completed, the estimated cost to complete the same, and the additional appropriation required in each case :—

ROADS, MIDDLE ISLAND.

Out of proportions of Middle Island Railway Fund there has been expended on—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Roads, Nelson South-West Gold Fields—						
Expenditure	25,967	15	10			
Existing Engagements	3,531	19	5			
Total				29,499	15	3
Expended in excess of appropriation, £8,962 18s. 4d.						
The Expenditure on Roads in this District has exceeded the Appropriation by a sum of £8,962 18s. 4d.; and we propose to ask the House to agree to a vote to make good the deficiency.						
Roads, Westland—						
Expenditure	31,126	5	5			
Existing Engagements	6,958	16	9			
Total				38,085	2	2
Leaving an Unexpended Balance of £3,608 7s. 4d.				67,584	17	5

There has been expended on Greymouth Protective Works a sum of £4,000, and an additional expenditure and engagements on sundry unauthorized Railway Surveys amounting to £600, for which it will be necessary to obtain the authority of Parliament.

The result then is a Total of Expenditure and Liabilities on account of Railway Works under contract amounting to £910,823 15s. 1d., and an Estimated Cost to complete the same amounting to £506,201 4s. 11d., making a Total of Expenditure, Liabilities, and Engagements, on account of Railways and Roads and Works in the Middle Island, amounting to £1,489,209 17s. 5d., leaving a balance available for future works of £547,992 12s. 9d. In the Statement of the Treasurer the balance available for future works was founded on actual contract liabilities, and is stated to be £740,489 2s. 10d.; but from this must be deducted, what I have only recently found was omitted from the Treasurer's Statement, viz, certain outstanding engagements on account of Roads, Railways, and Surveys; and also, for the completion of contracts for works which have been already partially contracted for, and which would be useless unless further contracts were entered into in respect of them. These engagements and estimates amount to £192,496 10s. 1d.

The estimated cost of completing the works already contracted for exceeds the appropriations authorized by Parliament by the sum of £380,328, and the Legislature will be requested to make provision in the Railways Act Amendment Act, now before the House, to enable the Government to meet this expenditure.

Under the head

ROADS, NORTH ISLAND,

the account stands thus:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Roads, North of Auckland—						
Expenditure	1,614	5	2			
Existing Engagements	2,845	6	0			
Total				4,459	11	2
On other Roads in the North Island—						
Expenditure	133,754	14	0			
Existing Engagements	34,701	14	1			
Total				168,455	8	1
Making a Total of Expenditure and Liabilities on account of Roads in the North Island amounting to				£172,915	19	3
Leaving an Unexpended Balance of				£227,084	0	9

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WATER SUPPLY, GOLD FIELDS.

Under this head contracts and engagements to the following amounts have been entered into, viz. :—

	£	s.	d.
Expenditure	3,415	10	6
Subsidies £12,534 (less £800 paid)	11,734	0	0
Water Race at Thames, including Land and Engineering ...	51,495	0	0
Total	£66,644	10	6
Leaving an Unappropriated Balance of	£233,355	9	6

We have therefore available

	£	s.	d.
For Roads in the North Island, a sum of	227,084	0	9
For Roads in Westland, a sum of	3,608	7	4
For Water Supply on Gold Fields, an unappropriated balance of ...	233,355	9	6
For Railways (including permanent way and rolling stock contracted for), an unexpended balance of	547,992	12	9

These sums are subject to reduction to the extent of the charges which may be incurred in departmental expenses, and in raising the Loans.

I shall now proceed to explain what we propose to do during the current year, and I shall first deal with the question of

ROADS IN THE NORTH ISLAND.

We intend, to the full extent of the appropriations at our disposal, to press forward the construction of those main lines of Road in Native districts which are necessary for promoting the settlement and prosperity of the North Island. It will be readily understood that it would be impossible to specifically appropriate the sums which may be required for these different works. To do so, would probably retard our operations; and where so much depends on advantage being taken of favourable circumstances, it is essential that a large discretionary power as to the works to be undertaken should be left to the Government.

We recognize to the fullest extent that it is essential, to secure the assistance and co-operation of the Natives in the construction of these works, and it will be our aim on all occasions, when forming Roads through Native districts, to avail ourselves of Native labour for that purpose, either by contract or otherwise.

ROADS, MIDDLE ISLAND.

We propose to ask the House to vote a sum of £3,000 out of the Railway Loan for the purpose of constructing a road from Westport to Nine Mile Creek; and also to vote a sum of £3,000 for the formation of a bridle track from Ahaura to Amuri, and thence to Kaikora. The expenditure of the latter vote to be conditional on a sum of £1,500 being contributed towards the work by the Provinces of Canterbury and Nelson respectively. These works are urgently required, and may to some extent be considered as of Colonial importance.

ROADS, WESTLAND.

A sum will be placed on the Estimates for the purpose of making a careful survey, in order to ascertain the probable cost of constructing a road from the Ahaura to the 32nd mile-post.

I may here state, that it is our intention at once to widen those portions of the road lately formed in Westland from Kanieri to South Creek, a distance of about eight miles, and in the neighbourhood of Ross about two miles. The available unexpended balance of the County of Westland Road Fund will probably be sufficient to carry out the work. It is very certain that unless these portions of the road are formed to the full width, the district will not derive that benefit from the large expenditure incurred, which will undoubtedly be secured when it is completed to the width originally proposed.

WATER SUPPLY ON GOLD FIELDS.

With respect to the Gold Fields Water Supply, but little has yet been done practically to carry out the object which the Legislature had in view when appropriating funds for that purpose. There are now several applications before the Government, some of these applications requesting that assistance should be granted by way of subsidy, in consideration of sums contributed by private individuals or companies, and others requesting that the Government should undertake the construction of works under the provisions of the Act of 1870. These applications will, at the earliest moment, receive the careful consideration of the Government with a view to the construction (either by assistance in the way of subsidy or otherwise) of such works as may reasonably be expected to be reproductive to the country. We are fully alive to the importance of this subject, and to the necessity which exists for providing an adequate water supply to the principal gold-bearing districts of the Colony at the earliest date. We are also aware that a great responsibility must be undertaken by any Government in dealing with this difficult question, because it is one in which, owing to the very nature of the case, the ultimate success or failure of the works to be undertaken must, to a large extent, depend on circumstances which cannot be accurately ascertained or determined beforehand.

RAILWAYS.

Under the head of Railways we have an unappropriated balance from Loan of £547,992 12s. 9d., together with contributions to be paid by the Province of Canterbury on account of its Branch Railways, amounting to £49,000, making in all a sum of £596,992 12s. 9d., out of which we propose to commence the construction during the current year of the following works, viz. :—

	Construction.	Formation.
	Miles.	Miles.
Lower Hutt to Upper Hutt	7½	4½
Nelson to Foxhill	...	20
Rakaia to Ashburton, including Bridge over River Ashburton	20	
Timaru to Temuka	12	
Moeraki to Waitaki	40	
Tokomairiro to Lawrence	...	20
Winton towards Kingston	12	
	91½	44½
Branch Lines—		
Rolleston towards Malvern	20	
Coal Field Railways—		
Brunner	7	
Kawa Kawa	5	

This makes a total of 136 miles of Main Lines which we propose to commence during the current year, 20 miles of Branch Lines, and 12 miles of Coal Field Lines; making in all 168 miles.

BRANCH RAILWAYS.

The construction of Branch Lines of Railway in different parts of the Colony as feeders to our Main Lines, is a subject which will require to be dealt with at an early date, if the country is to secure the full advantages which a well-arranged railway system is calculated to afford. The terms on which these Branch Lines ought to be undertaken will require careful consideration, with a view to a well considered and uniform system being adopted.

In connection with this, I may mention that a Bill has been prepared by our predecessors, and will be submitted to Parliament, having for its object the construction of a Branch Line of Railway from Oamaru to Marewhenua; it being a condition that the land required for the line will be made over to the Government free of cost, and that the owners and occupiers of land in the district through which the line is to pass will consent to their properties being rated to an extent sufficient to cover one half at least; or, should the Minister of Works think fit, to the

extent of five-sevenths of the annual charge incurred in respect of the cost of construction, maintenance, and working of such Railway.

Although the Government has taken charge of this Bill, it must be clearly understood that it is not our intention to proceed with this Railway during the current year.

Our object in asking the House to agree to the Bill is to empower us to make inquiries during the recess as to the merits of the proposed Railway, and to ascertain how far its provisions are likely to meet with the approval of the owners of property in the district.

In the event of the Bill being passed, and should these inquiries prove satisfactory, the Government would probably invite the House to take further action in the matter next Session.

COAL RAILWAYS.

We will make careful inquiry during the recess as to the best means to be adopted to develop the Coal Fields known to exist in different parts of the Colony. Probably the best assistance which the Government could give towards this desirable end would be that afforded by the construction of tramways or railways to the mines. There can be no doubt that if an efficient and economical means of transit were provided, the coal raised from our own mines could be supplied at a low rate, and would be very generally used, and the present large importation of foreign coal, which is a heavy drain on our resources, would, to a corresponding extent, be diminished.

The benefits which would accrue from the proper development of this industry cannot be over-estimated. It would open a permanent field of employment for a large population, retain capital in the country, and at the same time secure to those engaged in industrial pursuits the advantages of a regular and plentiful supply of coal at a cheap rate.

RAILWAY SURVEYS.

We propose to push on and complete the surveys and working plans of the following lines, in order that we may be in a position when the House again meets to make definite proposals in regard to their construction, viz. :—

SURVEYS TO BE MADE DURING RECESS.

Name of Railway.	Length Approximately.
	Miles.
Auckland to Riverhead	23
Paki Paki to Ruataniwha	40
Upper Hutt to Masterton	50
Picton to Blenheim Extension	2
Ashley River to North Bank of North Kawai	12
Ashburton to Temuka	26
Moeraki to Waikouaiti	25
Winton towards Kingston	54
The above will be prepared ready for contract.	232
Manawatu to Wanganui	58
Waitara to Wanganui	140
The preliminary surveys for the above will be as far as possible completed, and a portion of the working surveys will be made.	198
Mercer to Upper Waikato	60
Waikouaiti to Dunedin	25
Preliminary surveys will be made.	85
Canterbury Branch Railways	70
Working plans for these will be made.	
Coal Railways	12
Working plans for Mount Rochfort line will be made.	
Clutha Bridge, and Protection Works.	
Borings will be made and plans prepared.	
The cost of these surveys will be about £14,000; and a sum will be placed on the Estimates for the purpose.	

These proposals are submitted to the House after most careful consideration, as embracing the works which, keeping in view the amount of labour which may be expected to be available for their economical and profitable construction, and the desirability of their completion at an early date, ought to be undertaken during the current year. Impressed with the responsibility which rests upon us to proceed without undue precipitancy on the one hand, and with careful prudence on the other, we invite the House to sanction our proposals, bearing in mind that it is by the action which may now be taken that the future success or failure of the Railway Works scheme will to a large extent depend.

I have nothing further to add. I may be permitted to express a hope, however, that the statement I have made as to the works which we propose to undertake during the year has been clear and explicit, and I trust, upon due consideration, will be sufficient to disabuse the minds of honorable Members of any impressions which may have been made by rumours, which I am told have been circulated, to the effect that this Government is opposed to the prosecution of the colonizing functions which the country has undertaken. It may be that some districts have expected that the works in their own localities would be amongst those to be commenced during this year; but it is evident that they could not all be commenced at once with anything like a reasonable prospect of their early or economical completion—even if the necessary funds with which to do so were immediately available, which they are not.

Under these circumstances it is manifestly our duty to proceed first with those lines which may be considered likely at the earliest date to yield the largest results to the Colony as compared with the sums to be expended on their construction.

We are fully aware that to carry the scheme to a successful completion it must be administered with energy, prudence, and foresight, and with a painstaking attention to matters of detail which will undoubtedly render the task one which will be both onerous and responsible, and we are also aware that the evil results of any indecision or vacillation in our action, could only be exceeded by those which would follow from a careless or improvident administration, of the large resources placed under our control.
