

1879.

NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. JAMES MACANDREW,
THURSDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1879.

SIR,—

Under existing circumstances I do not propose to occupy the time of the House with any lengthened or elaborate Public Works Statement; nor is this necessary, inasmuch as the various departmental reports which are now in the printer's hands, and which I hope will be laid upon the table before the session closes, contain very clear and full details.

It seems to me that an authoritative summarized account of the progress which has been made during the past financial year ought to accompany the Loan Act, otherwise I should have deemed it unnecessary to make any Statement at present.

With regard to railway construction, I would say generally that the progress which has been made during the past year has been as great as could have been reasonably expected. It has been fully as much as could possibly have been attained without enlarging the Public Works staff to an extent which to my mind was not expedient.

In addition to the large works authorized in previous sessions, out of the list of new railways placed on the Schedule last year, eighteen have been commenced, and the works are progressing.

Among the authorized lines which have not been commenced are included Waimea to Switzer's, Amberley to Cook Strait, Wellington to Foxton, Kawakawa Extension, and Te Awamutu to New Plymouth.

As regards Waimea to Switzer's, it was not deemed advisable to proceed with this work until the line from Gore to Lumsden, of which it will form a branch, is further advanced towards completion.

Amberley to Cook Strait.—It will be recollected that it was no part of the original proposals of the Government last year to have undertaken this work—in the meantime at least—and that it was out of deference to the strong feeling of alleged injustice manifested by the whole of the Nelson members, and to the desire of members of the House generally, that this line was placed upon the Schedule, and £60,000 appropriated towards its commencement.

I confess that, amid the many conflicting opinions which were expressed with regard to this line, and in the absence of any reliable data upon which to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion on the subject, it was with considerable reluctance that I consented to the proposal to place it on the Schedule. Having done so, however, I felt bound to see that the necessary steps should be taken to enable the work to be proceeded with, and, accordingly, for several months past, a survey has been going on, with a view of deciding upon the proper course for the line to be taken.

It appears that the country beyond Foxhill is exceedingly difficult, and much more time and labour than was anticipated have been found necessary in order to ascertain the most practical and economical route. Hence the delay which has occurred.

A very carefully-considered and exhaustive report upon the proposed lines in the northern part of the Middle Island has been laid upon the table, from which