

## SESSION II.

1912.

NEW ZEALAND.

## PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT.

BY THE HON. WILLIAM FRASER, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS.

18TH OCTOBER, 1912.

MR. SPEAKER,—

As I only assumed office as Minister of Public Works on 10th July, it is scarcely necessary to state that all references in this Statement to operations during the last financial year are strictly departmental. As regards the future, however, I desire to offer some remarks.

In my opinion, to give the settlers of the Dominion access to their holdings by means of roads should be the first consideration in any scheme of public works. I have no desire to minimize the value of railways to the Dominion, but these are of secondary importance if the settlers cannot reach them. Now, road-making in New Zealand is difficult and expensive, owing to the configuration of the country and to the absence in many localities of suitable metal. Hence considerable sums have to be provided each year for this class of work. In view of the fact that the unexpended balance of authorities for roads and bridges on 31st March, 1912, was £466,367, and that between 1st April last and 31st July further authorities amounting to £145,796 were issued, I found myself at the latter date faced with commitments totalling £612,163 for roads and bridges alone, without allowing for the provision requiring to be made for applications for new votes. These applications now amount to over a million and a half. The total provision for roads and bridges for the current year is very similar in amount to that of last year. The total provision for railway-construction for the year is £847,500, which is £83,789 more than was expended on new railways last year.

Full particulars in regard to each line of railway in hand are furnished under the heading of "Railway-construction"

It will doubtless be a source of disappointment to many resident in Central Otago that no provision is made in this Statement for continuing the Otago Central line towards Hawea, but in view of the present stringency of the London money-market this is quite impossible. Let me now say a few words regarding the so-called co-operative system. Most of the advocates of this system seem to be under the impression that the word "co-operative" is synonymous with small contracts. If the latter is what is desired, then I am in perfect accord with them. True co-operative work presupposes a certain number of workmen voluntarily joining together to execute certain undertakings and sharing the proceeds of their labour. As far as practicable I intend to give effect to this principle. I realize fully, however, that no one system will suffice for carrying on all our public works in a manner satisfactory to the workers and to the community as a whole. This subject will have my careful attention during the recess.