

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