

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
Pieton 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.	