

the various provinces; but even with this addition to the staff a further number are required, to insure the proper supervision of the works which have to be executed during the next two years. The House will, of course, bear in mind that a larger proportionate staff is required in this colony than elsewhere, owing to the necessity for carrying out so many comparatively small lengths of road or railway in every province at the same moment.

I took occasion last year to state that the officers of the department, from the Engineer-in-Chief downwards, had been called upon to use extraordinary exertions to get through the work necessary for the preparation of the many contracts which were let during the previous twelve months; and it now gives me great pleasure to state that they have shown equal energy during the past financial year.

The system adopted of employing a large number of Engineering Cadets in the department has been found to work well; and we have now growing up a set of officers who, in the course of a few years, will be of incalculable value to the Colony.

As I am not aware that the House has been informed of the plan on which Cadets are employed, I think it only fair to these gentlemen that it should be widely known.

The Cadets are not, as a rule, taken into the department under the age of eighteen, nor until they have passed the Junior Civil Service Examination. They receive a salary of £80 for the first year, and according to merit are promoted from one grade to another, with small increase of salary, to the end of the fourth year of their service, when, if found to have gained sufficient experience, they will be promoted to the class of Assistant Engineers. Several of the Cadets are proving themselves very valuable officers, and are earning their promotion year by year.

I take this opportunity of expressing my deep regret at the loss of two very promising Engineers of this department, Mr. R. Millett and Mr. R. Johnstone, who both died very suddenly. They had each been a considerable time in the employ of the General and Provincial Governments, and their valuable services could ill be spared.

Before dealing with the practical working of the department, I wish to inform honorable members that this year I propose to distribute, as appendices to the Statement I am about to make, the Annual Reports of the Engineer-in-Chief on Railways, the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief on Roads, the Colonial Architect on Public Buildings, and of Dr. Hector on Coal Fields Exploration, and other subsidiary papers. I do this for the convenience of having all the information honorable members may wish to refer to in one paper, and not, as heretofore, in numerous separate papers.

The Tables which are attached to this Statement will be in much the same form as last year, with additions necessary to meet the requests from several honorable members for further information; more particularly those referring to the traffic receipts on the various lines. Some of the traffic returns have been compiled from information kindly furnished by the Provincial Governments of Canterbury and Otago, and, although far from being as complete as I hope they will be in future, will doubtless be of much general interest.

There are also attached explanatory maps of the two islands. When compared with those issued by the department last Session, they will show at a glance the progress made in opening up the country during the past year.

RAILWAYS—NORTH ISLAND.

I shall now describe the position of the several lines of railway authorized by Parliament, taking them in the same order as I did last year.

And first I come to the railway between Kaipara and Riverhead. It will be in the recollection of honorable members that last year I referred to the difficulty that had occurred with the contractor, owing to the delay in the supply of the permanent way material. After considerable correspondence with the contractor, Mr. Edgar, an amicable arrangement was entered into to relieve him from the completion of the line, and pay him the value of the work done according to