

GENERAL REMARKS.

Departmental.—Although the expenditure on works during the past year has been below the average, the departmental work has not decreased. About seventy ordinary and one hundred petty contracts have been let, and some fifteen more of the former have been prepared. The surveys and plan work have been considerable, and, as already stated, the administration of the Roads and Bridges Act takes up a great deal of time.

Prices and Labour.—The price of materials and work is much the same as last year. In the northern and western districts labour is, if anything, scarce, but in Canterbury and Otago there is a surplus, particularly of the artisan classes. The county works have absorbed a considerable amount of the unskilled labour, but they are now getting well through, so there will possibly be a number of men out of employment before the winter is over.

Number of Men on Works.—The following table gives the average number of men directly employed on public works in the various districts of the Middle Island during the past year, contractors' men being shown separately from those employed directly by Government:—

District.				Employed by Contract.	Government Labour, including Surveys.	Total Number employed, 1883-84.
Nelson and Marlborough	..	..	..	91	7	98
Westland	..	..	..	106	93	199
Canterbury	..	..	..	169	84	253
Otago	..	..	..	157	132	289
Southland	..	..	..	140	27	167
Totals	..	..	..	663	343	1,006

In addition to the above, 137 men were employed on public buildings, and the numbers do not include contractors' men employed off the works, in shops or otherwise, or men employed by the Working Railway Department on construction-works.

Map.—The usual railway map of the Middle Island is hereto appended (Enclosure No. 3). It shows in distinctive lines the authorized railways made, in progress, and not commenced.

Enclosures.—This report is accompanied by the following enclosures:—

No. 1.—Statement of Depth of Water on Buller and Grey Bars.

„ 2.—Lengths of Railways authorized, constructed, surveyed, &c., Middle Island.

„ 3.—Map of Middle Island.

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