

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. EDWARD RICHARDSON,
25TH JUNE, 1886.

Mr. SPEAKER,—

Although I am making the annual Statement of the proceedings of the Public Works Department at a period much earlier in the year than has been the custom in previous sessions, I have no doubt that a good deal of the interest which is usually felt on such an occasion as the present has been allayed, owing to my colleague the Colonial Treasurer having already given in his Financial Statement an outline of the proposals of the Government regarding public works generally for the year we have just entered upon. It will not, therefore, be necessary for me to extend my remarks to such a length as I did last year.

DISTRICT RAILWAYS.

Honourable members may remember that I announced last session that arrangements had been come to for the purchase of all the district railways authorized to be purchased, except the Waimea Plains line, but that we had failed to arrange for that line. During the recess, however, negotiations were again opened with the Waimea Company, and, after a considerable amount of correspondence, an arrangement has been come to for the purchase of the railway, subject of course to the ratification of Parliament. The correspondence on this subject will be laid upon the table in a few days.

I also think it right to mention that, when I brought this matter before the Cabinet, three of my colleagues—the Premier, the Colonial Treasurer, and the Minister for Mines—requested that they should in no way be consulted, and the negotiations between the company and the Government have been carried on by the other members of the Cabinet and myself. Should Parliament see fit to ratify the agreement now entered into, a very great source of trouble and expense will be got rid of in the working of the Government railways in that district, and at the same time the public will be better served and the ratepayers greatly relieved.

Although steps were taken immediately after the end of last session to complete the purchases, and make payments for the railways then arranged for, it is only quite recently that we have been enabled to complete these purchases, the necessary conveyances having been delayed from a variety of causes, chiefly difficulties as regards titles to land, and, consequently, the lines have had to be worked all through last year under the same arrangements as existed previously.