

end. Already the formation has been completed some ten or fifteen miles beyond the viaduct. The viaduct itself is being as expeditiously proceeded with as is possible with due regard to the lives of the workmen. There are several other bridges beyond the viaduct, which we hope to complete simultaneously with it. This done, the permanent-way will be laid with all expedition.

At the northern end the line will be energetically pushed on. There are some very heavy cuttings to be made. These are in hand, and where men can be put to work to advantage that will be done.

Rails will be laid through to Kawakawa within a year. From there towards Taumaranui there are no great engineering difficulties to contend with, and by the time the House meets again the most exacting will have no reason to complain of the progress that has been made.

Further details will be given by my colleague when he brings down the Public Works Statement. Suffice it for me to say that, from a financial standpoint, no one will have reasonable grounds for complaint in respect to the allocation for this line. We must not forget that the speedy completion of the Otago Central, the Midland, the Waipara-Awatere, and other important lines within a reasonable time is necessary.

To starve the construction of these lines so that an abnormal amount of money might be spent on the North Island Trunk Railway would be resented in a way that would cause those members who forced the situation to come to the conclusion that it is wise to be reasonable in all things.

Last year for railways £300,000 was allocated out of the million loan. This year we propose to allocate £500,000; and, taking into consideration the expenditure up to the 31st March last, this allocation practically means more than doubling the expenditure for the current year.

STRATFORD-KAWAKAWA JUNCTION (AUCKLAND RAILWAY).

In finally deciding that the central route shall be the route in so far as the North Island Trunk Railway is concerned, the necessity for connecting Taranaki with the Auckland railway service has not been overlooked. The settlement along this route, the coal-deposits, and the timber available render it imperative that the necessary surveys should be authorised, and provision made for the requisite funds.

Along the East Road there are forty miles almost without metal. This is one of the best dairying districts in the colony, but the condition of the roads renders it almost hopeless for settlers, most of whom are Crown tenants, to carry on successful operations. A narrow-gauge railway should be constructed to remove these disabilities. It could be constructed expeditiously and cheaply, and as a means of carrying gravel for the roads, returning with produce, coal, and timber, it would pay, and fully justify the experiment. The surveys should be at once undertaken, and an engineer with experience in this class of railways should be given charge thereof.

There are other parts of the colony where narrow-gauge railways would prove a success. The Minister for Public Works will give the details.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS.

The sum expended in the purchase of private lands last year (including expenses) was £374,148, a sum far too small as compared with the demand there is for land for close settlement.

To recount the delays, difficulties, and obstacles put in the way of the Government acquiring estates would be out of place in this Statement. The Hatuma Estate, in Hawke's Bay, will be in our possession next year. There were three Arbitration Courts set up. Two dissolved without making an award; the third, I am pleased to say, were unanimous in coming to a conclusion, and one which in no way can be found fault with, the evidence justifying the increased amount beyond the offer made.

What I do complain of is the vexatious delay and expense, and this fully justifies the amendment of the law proposed in the Bill now before the House.