

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

A considerable amount of work has been done at both ends of this line during the past year. At the northern end, the Mokau Section, 11 miles 9 chains in length, is in hand right up to the Poro-o-tarao Tunnel, but as the work is of a difficult nature, it will still take nearly another year to complete it.

At the southern end of the line, the Mangaonoho contract, 3 miles 70 chains in length, has been completed and opened for traffic, and a good deal of work has been done on the formation-works on the Makohine Section.

The expenditure on the line during last year was £43,188, while liabilities to the amount of £27,116 existed at the close of the year. For the current year it is proposed to vote £55,000 for construction works, and £4,000 for surveys.

In accordance with the advice of the Select Committee of the House appointed last session to inquire into the best method of connecting Auckland and Wellington by railway, the Government has had further surveys and explorations of the country undertaken by experienced engineers.

Mr. Ralph Donkin, the original projector of the Urenui-Waitara route, has been engaged to thoroughly explore and make a careful trial-survey of that route. Mr. R. W. Holmes, of the Public Works Department, has been despatched with a party to endeavour to effect improvements in the Central route; and Mr. Leslie H. Reynolds has been temporarily engaged to survey the necessary deviations on the opened line between Marton and Eltham, in order to reduce the gradients. Owing to the excessively wet weather that has prevailed for some time past, the progress made with these surveys has not been so great as the Government could have wished, and the information so far available is meagre. With the finer weather that has now set in the work will doubtless proceed apace, and thus enable the surveyors to shortly report the result of their explorations.

EKETAHUNA—WOODVILLE.

Much more work was done on this railway last year than in the previous year, the work now in hand extending over a distance of twenty-three miles, namely, from Eketahuna to the bridge over the Manawatu River at Awapurua. The expenditure on the line during last year was £8,497, and, in addition, liabilities existed at the end of the year to the amount of £9,756. We ask for a vote of £30,000 for this line this year, as it is intended to proceed with it vigorously, to keep a large staff of men on the formation-works at both the Woodville and Eketahuna ends of the line, and also to put in hand the Makakahi and the Mangatainoko Bridges.

Immediately upon the completion of the Makakahi Bridge the work of laying the rails between Eketahuna and Newman will be put in hand, so as to open the line to that point as early as possible. The speedy completion of the whole line right through to Woodville is, the Government feels, an all important work, as, owing to frequent stoppage of traffic on the Manawatu Gorge line by heavy slips, it is absolutely needful to have an alternative line to maintain the connection between Wellington and the Hawke's Bay and Seventy-mile Bush districts.

WELLINGTON—EKETAHUNA (TE ARO EXTENSION.)

This railway, so far as the running of passenger trains is concerned, was completed and handed over to the Railway Commissioners in March last. The expenditure on this line last year amounted to £9,531, and a vote of £4,500 is asked for this year to cover all expenses up to completion. The work of constructing the goods-station at Te Aro has not been yet entered upon, but surveys and plans for the necessary reclamation have been completed, and tenders for the work will be invited shortly. On the completion of the reclamation, the rail-laying and the erection of the necessary buildings will be proceeded with, and a vote of £8,000 for the work is included in the estimates.

BLENHEIM—AWATERE.

The Omaka Section of this railway was completed and handed over to the Railway Commissioners on the 18th April last. The expenditure on the line last year was £4,666, with liabilities at the end of the year of £689. A vote of