

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

At the northern end of this railway the Mokau Section, 11 miles 9 chains in length, which carries the line up to the Poro-o-tarao Tunnel, has been under construction throughout the year, and is now nearly completed. For the current year we ask for a vote of £25,000 for this end of the line.

This amount will provide for the completion of the formation-works on the Mokau Section, and for commencing the platelaying thereon. It is very desirable that the northern end of this railway should be completed to the junction with the Stratford—Ongaruhe Road at Kawakawa, so that when this road is finished there may be a direct connection by road and rail between Auckland and Taranaki.

At the south end the Mangaonoho Station has been completed, and a considerable amount of work done on the Makohine Section; the ordinary earthworks on this section being practically finished, and the culverts are now being built and three tunnels excavated. The rails have also been laid as far as the site of the viaduct over the Makohine Ravine, so that the materials for the structure can be transported to the site without difficulty. The plans of the viaduct are nearly ready, and tenders for its construction will be invited shortly.

For this end of the line we also propose an appropriation of £25,000 this year. This will provide for proceeding with the formation works now in hand, and for making a beginning with the Makohine Viaduct.

The expenditure on the North Island Main Trunk Railway last year, including the cost of surveys, amounted to £39,220, while liabilities existed at the close of the year to the amount of £14,676. The total vote proposed for the current year is £52,778, which, in addition to the works already mentioned, includes an amount of £2,500 for carrying on the surveys.

The surveys which were put in hand on the recommendation of the Select Committee of the House, appointed during the session of 1892, have been proceeded with, but I am sorry to say the result has not justified the expenditure. The Urenui route, projected by Mr. Ralph Donkin, has been partially surveyed by that gentleman. Mr. Donkin, with a party of from five to nine men to assist him, was engaged on this work for ten months, and during that period he only succeeded in making a trial survey of eight miles of the line, and a rough traverse of five miles more. The small amount of work accomplished in the time is in itself an evidence of the difficulties met with, and the memorandum on the subject by the Engineer-in-Chief, which has already been laid before Parliament, shows that the line surveyed cannot be regarded as superior in any respect to the Waitara—Mimi line, previously surveyed by Mr. James Blackett, and it is also longer than that line. The results of this survey being so unsatisfactory, instructions were issued in May last for further work thereon to be discontinued.

Mr. R. W. Holmes has made two exploratory surveys with the view of effecting improvements in the central route, but these surveys also have been barren of beneficial results. Mr. Holmes's carefully-prepared and detailed report has already been laid before Parliament, together with the minute of the Engineer-in-Chief thereon, and it is unnecessary for me to say anything further on the subject here. Mr. Holmes is now engaged in permanently locating the line along the central route, on which he finds he is able to effect a number of minor improvements.

Mr. Leslie H. Reynolds has also made careful surveys for the purpose of eliminating the very steep grades at present existing on some parts of the opened line between Marton and Eltham, so as to ascertain the cost of effecting the necessary improvements in that portion of the line in the event of the main line to Auckland being constructed by that route. Mr. Reynolds's report has been laid before Parliament, and shows that some rather extensive deviations from the existing line would be necessary—one of them being 11 miles 68 chains in length, and estimated to cost £128,150. The total length of the deviations required between Marton and Eltham would be about $27\frac{3}{4}$ miles, the total estimated cost of the same being £271,130.

EKETAHUNA—WOODVILLE.

The early completion of this railway is very desirable, as when completed it promises to be one of the best-paying lines in the colony. During the year the works have made considerable progress, the bulk of the earthwork being now completed. The concrete piers of the Makakahi Bridge have also been built, and the iron girders, for which