

Waipahi—Heriot Extension.—Two petitions have been presented praying for the extension of this railway to Roxburgh. The Government has no information in its possession as to the probable cost of the line, as no survey has yet been made. A survey will be undertaken during the recess, however, so that full information may be available by the next meeting of Parliament.

Gore—Kelso.—The desirableness of constructing this railway has been strongly urged upon the Government recently. The line was projected several years ago, and partly surveyed. It would be about 24 miles in length, and would probably cost about £85,000. The country which it would traverse is of the very best quality, and would doubtless yield a considerable traffic, so that the line would probably pay. The question of undertaking the construction of this railway will be considered during the recess.

Kingston—Frankton.—A petition was presented to Parliament last session urging the construction of the extension of the Invercargill—Kingston Railway to Frankton, and further representations on the subject have since been made to the Government by the local authorities of the district. This extension would, however, be a very expensive one to construct, as for many miles it would traverse the eastern shore of Lake Wakatipu. The line would, moreover, have to compete with water-carriage on the lake; and the country between Kingston and Queenstown, being very mountainous, would yield little or no traffic. I am therefore unable to hold out any hopes of the Government being able to take the construction of this work in hand at present.

SUMMARY.

The total appropriations proposed for railway-works this year, including additions to open lines, surveys, and permanent-way, sleepers and rolling-stock, amount to £313,028, as against £316,628 voted last year. The amount proposed to be voted this year is the smallest appropriation asked for for railway purposes since the public works scheme was initiated.

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

The section of this railway between Lake Brunner and Jackson's, which was in progress when my last Public Works Statement was delivered, has since been completed and opened for traffic. This brings this company's total length of completed railway up to 75 miles 50 chains.

The acceptance by the company of the recommendations contained in the report of the Select Committee appointed during the present session to inquire into matters affecting this railway will, it is hoped, lead to a speedy and vigorous resumption of work on the line. The intervening section between Jackson's and Paterson's Creek, which still remains to be constructed, is 57 miles 44 chains long, and the company hopes to be able to complete it within four years from the date of signing the new contract. The completion of this section will establish through railway communication between the east and west coasts of the Middle Island, a boon long looked for, which, when realised, will to some extent compensate for the way in which settlement has been retarded, owing to the locking-up of the lands on the West Coast, for the last ten years. By the proposed new contract the company is to complete the line from Belgrove to Norris's Gully. This will tap the Motueka Valley, and shorten somewhat the journey to Reefton. The abandonment, however, of the construction of the Reefton—Belgrove Section for a time is a matter for deep regret, and that this should be resented by the people of Nelson is only natural, seeing that for ten years settlement has been retarded, and the expectant hopes of an early connection by railway with Reefton have now been somewhat suddenly shattered. The Government strongly sympathizes with the Nelson people in their disappointment, and, but for the impossibility of arranging with the company on any other terms, would not have agreed to the abandonment of this portion of the company's original contract.

ROADS.

ROADS CONTROLLED BY THE MINISTER OF LANDS.

Under the head of Main Roads £23,039 was voted last year, and £22,235 spent with liabilities at the end of the year of £9,242. For Miscellaneous Roads and Roads to open up Crown Lands £148,287 was authorised, including £30,000 from the Government Loans to Local Bodies Account, and £88,042 spent, while liabilities amounting to £87,381 were outstanding at the end of the year. For Grants-in-aid £11,663 was voted and £8,951