

RAILWAYS UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

The railways on which construction operations were in progress last year were largely the same as during the previous year, but with some additions. The Thames - Te Aroha and Forest Hill lines and Belgrove - Motupiko Section of the Midland Railway were finished, and the Seaward Bush line completed to Wainahaka, and further construction operations held in abeyance pending the completion of the survey to Tokonui, which is now in progress. On the other hand, new works have been started at Kawakawa, Paeroa, Gisborne, Waipara, Catlin's, and Orepuki, so that the expenditure—at any rate, during the latter portion of the year—was somewhat in excess of that of the previous year. The accelerated rate of progress has not only been continued, but has been further increased since the close of the year, so that for some works larger appropriations will be required this year than last year. I now propose to follow the usual course of briefly describing what has been done on each line, and at the same time give an outline of our proposals for the future.

KAWAKAWA—GRAHAMTOWN.

The southward extension of the northern portion of this railway, authorised by the Railways Authorisation Act of last session, was put in hand shortly after Parliament rose, and very fair progress has been made with it; nearly six miles of formation is in hand, and a part of it is nearing completion. Fencing has been started, and the first bridge erected. The rails have been ordered from England, and the Agent-General has been requested to endeavour to arrange for the importing steamer to call at Kawakawa, so as to land them directly on to the railway.

The northwards extension of the southern portion of the line has also progressed satisfactorily, the formation being nearly complete and rail-laying just about to be started.

The survey of the intervening length between the two sections in progress has also been in hand from both ends, but the work could only be carried on intermittently, when the services of the engineers were not required in connection with the construction-works. The survey should, however, be completed during the present year. The expenditure on the line, owing to the works at Kawakawa not having been started until late in the year, only amounted to £2,530, but a much larger expenditure may be looked for this year. A vote of £15,000 is provided on the estimates.

HELENSVILLE NORTHWARDS.

Formation-works on the Tahekeroa Section have proceeded throughout the year, and are now practically completed. Platelaying has also been taken in hand, and is likewise nearing completion. As quickly as possible after the passing of the Authorisation Act last session work was put in hand on the Komokoriki Section, and is making fair progress, all the work as far as the first tunnel being now in hand. It is proposed to lay the rails as far as the entrance to the tunnel as early as possible, so as to facilitate the transport of the lining materials. In the case of this line, like the last, the expenditure fell short of the appropriation, owing to its having been impossible to put in hand the works on the Komokoriki Section until the Authorisation Act was passed late last session. The vote proposed for the current year is £15,000.

PAEROA—WAIHI.

This was one of the new railways authorised last session. The works undertaken prior to the 31st March were in consequence mostly of a preliminary character. A good start was made shortly before the close of the financial year, and the work, as far as the long tunnel at Karangahake, is now proceeding actively. The approach cutting to the tunnel is being excavated, and the work on the tunnel itself will be commenced immediately the approach has been taken out. The temporary bridge over the Ohinemuri has been completed. This will admit of the spoil from the tunnel excavation being conveyed across