

## RAILWAY-CONSTRUCTION.

The late financial year was the most active, as regards railway-works, of any year during the last quarter of a century. On new construction alone £919,730 was expended, and in addition to this the Railway Department's outlay on improvement-works amounted to £426,065, thus :—

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Additions to open lines ... ..	308,150
Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Account ... ..	35,958
Railways Improvements Authorisation Act Account ... ..	81,957

Thus bringing up the gross total expenditure on railway-works for the year to the very large sum of £1,345,795. Numerous requests have been made during the present session for new works to be started, or for works already in hand to be proceeded with at an accelerated speed, but in view of our present large disbursements the Government has been compelled to adopt a cautious policy. The expenditure on the North Island Main Trunk Railway alone during last year (including the value of the permanent-way materials issued to the line) amounted to over £400,000, and for the current year a vote of £330,000 is proposed. Next year will see the completion of this great work, and this very large expenditure will then cease, and the money be available for other purposes.

Since the last Public Works Statement was brought down fifty miles of railway have been completed and opened for traffic, and the rails are laid and ballast-trains running on an additional eighty miles.

I will now refer more in detail to the several lines that have been in hand, and the proposals of the Government with regard to each for the current year.

## KAWAKAWA—GRAHAMTOWN.

Work on this railway has been in progress at three places—viz., extensions from Kawakawa southwards and from Hukerenui northwards, and also from Whangarei to Grahamtown. The early closing-up of the gap between Kawakawa and Hukerenui is very desirable not only in the interests of the settlers and to secure the thorough opening-up of the district, but also from a railway-working point of view, as it will be more satisfactory and also more economical to work the line as one undivided section than it is at present with different sections several miles apart. The number of men employed on the section northwards of Hukerenui has accordingly lately been increased.

The expenditure on the line last year amounted to £10,624, and the vote proposed for the current year is £15,000.

## HELENSVILLE NORTHWARDS.

The work done on this line last year constituted quite a record, the expenditure (including permanent-way materials) having amounted to £46,004. The section between Kaipara Flats and Tauhoa was completed and handed over to the Railway Department for regular working on the 11th June last; the next section to Waby is already in use for both passenger and goods traffic, in connection with the ballasting; the formation-work on the further section to Wellsford is well in hand and progressing satisfactorily, and a new section, extending to Te Hana, is just being started.

Beyond Te Hana a survey party is at work locating the railway towards Maungaturoto, and already has the line pegged for over ten miles. The location of this section has given rise to a good deal of local controversy, a considerable section of the settlers desiring a westerly diversion of the route, so as to carry it across the Otamatea River, near Young's Point, and through the Bickerstaffe Estate. The officers of the Department in the Auckland District advised a more central route, but in deference to the strongly expressed wishes of the settlers the then Engineer-in-Chief—Mr. W. H. Hales—made a special visit to the locality in December, 1905, and went personally over both routes, and reported, after due inquiry and full consideration, that the central route *via* Te Hana, Topuni Bridge, Kaiwaka, and Mount Pukekaroro was the best. Such a route