

branch line to Westport, and which is referred to in greater detail in the paragraph relating to the Westport–Inangahua railway.

The expenditure on this portion of the line last year amounted to £20,434, and for the current year a vote of £20,000 is asked for.

Steady progress continues to be made with the Arthur's Pass Tunnel on the Canterbury–Westland section of the line. The bottom heading has now been excavated for a total distance of 1 m. 16 ch., enlarging to full size 64 ch., and the concrete lining 51 ch. The work that is being performed by the contractors is of a very satisfactory character, but I regret that the progress is not more rapid. The contract time expires in August, 1912, and it is becoming tolerably evident that there is very little prospect of the work being completed by that date. The contractors are being urged to accelerate the rate of progress to the utmost extent possible, in the hope that the completion may not be delayed very materially beyond the date fixed in the contract.

The expenditure last year amounted to £66,005, and for the current year a vote of £90,000 is proposed.

At the Canterbury end of the railway considerable progress has been made, with the result that the long section between Broken River and the Cass—15 m. 12 ch. in length—is now practically completed, and will be opened for regular traffic at the end of the present month. A large amount of work has been taken in hand on the section between the Cass and the Bealey, and the rails have been laid over a part of the distance. There will not be the least difficulty in completing this section up to the commencement of the Arthur's Pass Tunnel contract by the time the tunnel itself is completed.

Last year the expenditure on this end of the line amounted to £59,760, and an appropriation of £50,000 is provided for the current year.

WESTPORT–INANGAHUA.

I mentioned last year that the first section of this railway between Westport and Te Kuha—5 m. 60 ch.—was nearly finished. It has since been practically completed, but has not so far been opened for traffic.

In May last six contracts were let for constructing different sections of the extension beyond Te Kuha, and the work is making fair progress, and a further section will be put in hand shortly.

Beyond Berlin's a new route has been suggested—namely, to connect with the Midland Railway near the Inangahua Landing instead of at Inangahua Junction. The new route referred to would shorten the running-distance between Westport and Greymouth by about six miles and a half, and would also avoid carrying the railway round the well-known White Cliffs in the Buller Gorge, in which location railway-construction and its subsequent maintenance would be certain to prove very difficult and expensive undertakings. The survey to ascertain the merits of the proposed new route is now in hand, and will be pushed forward as rapidly as possible, so that an early decision on the matter may be arrived at.

Last year's expenditure amounted to £15,782, but a larger vote will be required this year, and £30,000 has accordingly been provided.

NGAHERE–BLACKBALL.

This railway has now been completed, the whole line having been handed over to the Railway Department for regular working on 16th July last.

The expenditure during the year amounted to £27,127, and a vote of £11,000 is provided in the current year's estimates.

GREYMOUTH – POINT ELIZABETH.

Very good progress has been made with the works on this railway, and there seems to be no doubt now that the line will easily be available for the transport of coal by the date the development-works at the new colliery are completed. A portion of the work is of an exceedingly heavy and difficult character.

The expenditure last year amounted to £53,603, and for the current year a vote of £50,000 is asked for.