

Tenders have already been called for a portion of the overhead gear, and specifications for the balance of the requirements are in hand and are expected to be finalized at an early date.

AUCKLAND NEW STATION.

The new station at Auckland was officially opened on the 24th November, 1930, and, notwithstanding the complicated nature of the working of this station, the staff are to be complimented for the manner in which they so readily and efficiently adapted themselves to the new conditions.

The original estimate, including the station-yard, as set forth in D.-2A, 1924, was £550,000, exclusive of £325,459 cost of the reclamation of the site for the yard and buildings, and work performed in connection with the erection of and alterations at the locomotive depot prior to 1924. The actual cost of the work at 31st March, 1931, was £1,230,645, which includes the station-buildings, construction of yard, goods-sheds, interlocking, and signalling, &c. The estimate in 1924 was based on old designs that had been in existence for many years. After the estimate had been framed the whole design of the yard was investigated and recast. The original plans provided for two stations, one on a high level and one on a low level. In order to effect economies in operating-expenses and provide more suitable facilities, it was decided to provide only one station, at an intermediate level, this necessitating a complete recast of the design to meet the altered conditions. At the time the estimate was made no design for the station had been finalized, but £100,000 had been allowed for this. The contract price for the station building as erected, which was enlarged to provide district offices, dining-rooms, &c., was £328,000. The fact that the station had to be erected on reclaimed ground caused the cost of foundations to be extremely heavy, and materially added to the cost of the building. The original estimate did not provide for power-locking and signalling to meet modern requirements, costing approximately £84,000. Additional car-repair facilities were found to be required, which had not been included in the original estimate.

AUCKLAND-WESTFIELD DEVIATION.

The completion of this work synchronized with the completion of the Auckland Station. The estimated cost of this work in the 1924 D.-2A was £450,000. The final cost to complete amounts to £770,000.

Since the preparation of the original estimate the following alterations to the scheme had to be made :—

- (1) It was found that the original level of formation across Judge's Bay and Hobson Bay was not sufficiently high to escape damage by storms, and consequently the banks had to be raised, involving heavy increase in earthwork and stone protection-works.
- (2) Owing to the settlement of the embankment on the unstable mud-flats of the Orakei Basin, heavy additional expense was incurred in making up continual subsidences.
- (3) Owing to faulty ground being met with in the Purewa double-line tunnel, considerable additional expense was incurred in the false-work in the tunnel and in providing a concrete invert.
- (4) The work was carried out by the Public Works Department. According to the Government policy at the time, hutments and other amenities had to be provided for the workmen free of all charges, which involved heavy expense.
- (5) Automatic signalling was installed, which was not included in the original estimate.

The unit costs adopted in the original estimate were too low in many cases to meet the conditions that were found to exist when the work was carried out.

ROYAL COMMISSION.

The Royal Commission referred to in my last Statement duly completed its investigation into the possibilities of increasing the revenue and decreasing the