

HURUNUI-BLUFF AND BRANCHES.

The extension of this railway for 11 miles northward to Culverden was opened for traffic in December last, which was, unfortunately, too late to insure the carriage of all the wool this season. There has, however, been a good deal of passenger-traffic, and I have no doubt that this section will be much used by visitors and invalids during next summer. A road-bridge of considerable magnitude is in course of erection over the Waiau, and when complete will give a safe road to the Hanmer Plains Hot Springs. Further additions have been made to the Dunedin Station and a large increase in the rolling-stock.

Lincoln-Little River.—This line was completed to Little River and opened for traffic in March last.

Ashburton Branch.—The formation of this line was completed up to Mount Somers, including bridge over Ashburton River, in March last, and a further contract has been let for platelaying between the bridge and Mount Somers; length, about 1 mile. The amount which will be asked for in the Estimates provides for a further extension of 4 miles to Springburn.

Livingstone Branch.—On this railway, which is 12 miles in length, the first 4 miles is now practically completed, including platelaying, and the amount to be asked for in the Estimates provides for completion of the remaining 8 miles, including platelaying.

Catlin's River Branch.—The first division of this railway, length 8 miles, was completed and opened for traffic in December last, and the authority which I now propose to ask for will provide for the formation of a further length of 5 miles.

Toitois Branch.—As described in my Statement last year, the formation of this railway is already completed to a point about 4 miles beyond Wyndham, and the authority I now propose to ask for will provide for the formation of a further length of 2 miles, including a short tunnel.

Waimea-Switzer's Branch.—As mentioned in my Statement last year the formation of the first 7 miles of this railway was then completed, and the amounts which I now propose to ask for will cover cost of building bridge on that length, and also a further length of about 7 miles.

Seaward Bush Branch.—This railway is practically completed for a distance of $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles, including platelaying, and the authority which I will ask for this year will provide for the formation of a further length of 5 miles.

INVERCARGILL-KINGSTON AND BRANCHES.

Mararoa Branch.—The first section of this railway, $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, was completed and opened for traffic in March last, and the authority which I now propose to ask for will complete the line, including platelaying, to Mossburn, being a further length of about 4 miles, which is already under contract.

ADDITIONS TO OPENED RAILWAYS GENERALLY.

Work of this character (exclusive of permanent-way and rolling-stock) to the extent of about £91,000 was executed during last year, and we propose to expend £93,000 for similar work during the present year, to include liabilities already incurred. The principal items leading up to this amount are in round numbers as follows: Auckland Section, £20,000; Napier-Woodville, £7,000; Wellington-Woodville, £7,000; Foxton-New Plymouth, £5,000; and Hurunui-Bluff and branches, and Invercargill-Kingston and branches, £50,000.

MANUFACTURE OF PORTLAND CEMENT.

It will be interesting to honourable members to know that the manufacture of Portland cement in New Zealand has been commenced on a substantial scale, and considerable quantities are now being delivered to the Government for their various works, at a cost not exceeding that of imported cement, and at the same time being reported upon by the Engineer-in-Chief as of good quality and being capable of standing a very fair test. I take this opportunity of drawing the attention of the various local bodies throughout the country to this matter, in the hope