

progress. It is proposed this year to proceed with the section of the railway between Rangatira and Makohine, $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles. There is a considerable extent of good land and a valuable totara forest round Makohine; consequently it would, under any circumstances, be desirable to continue the railway to this point.

The surveys of the North Island Trunk Railway are in anything but a complete state; and, as it is desirable to have full information, particularly as regards the rougher parts of the line, it is proposed to continue the survey this year. It is also intended to run fresh lines, on gradients of 1 in 50 instead of 1 in 70, where the surveys have already been made, to see whether the heavy work can be materially reduced.

Under the proposals now submitted it is intended to carry out a complete system of roads in connection with the North Island Trunk Railway, particulars of which will be given further on.

Woodville-Palmerston.—The completion of the Woodville-Palmerston line has been delayed by the financial troubles of the contractors for the Ashurst Section. The original contractors having failed to carry out the work satisfactorily, the contract was assigned to a fresh contractor, and he also found himself unable to carry the work through. It was therefore necessary to call for fresh tenders and enter into an entirely new contract. The contract is now, however, progressing favourably, and it is confidently expected that the whole line will be finished about November next, the works on the Gorge and other sections being well advanced. The only works not in hand are the station buildings, which are now advertised. In anticipation of the opening of the through line from Napier to Palmerston, the Palmerston station is being rearranged and extended.

Owing to the treacherous nature of the ground in the Manawatu Gorge, which entailed extra work in tunnels and retaining-walls, and the heavy land compensation, the balance on the last allocation of funds for this railway is scarcely sufficient to complete the line. It is necessary to supplement the funds by about £7,000. The completion of the Woodville-Palmerston Section will establish through railway communication between Napier and the West Coast and Wellington.

Wellington-Woodville.—The Wellington-Woodville Railway was opened to Eketahuna at the beginning of the financial year, and since then the only works in progress have been the river-bank protective works at the Awapurua Bridge, which are now almost complete. The funds originally provided for this Railway are also insufficient to complete the works, a further sum of £3,000 being required.

It is also proposed to extend this line at the Wellington end, namely, from the present station at Thorndon—which is very inconveniently situated for the bulk of the population of the city—to Te Aro, and for this purpose a further sum of £13,000 will be needed.

Blenheim-Awatere.—A contract has been let on the Blenheim-Awatere Railway for $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles of heavy formation between the end of the Dashwood Section and the Dashwood Pass, and fresh surveys have been made for the completion of the works on the Vernon and Dashwood Sections, the earthwork of which has been finished for several years.

Under last year's proposals it was intended to complete this line to the Dashwood Pass, and construct a dray-road, about 3 miles long, from thence to the flat at the Awatere River. As, however, the formation to Dashwood Pass is costing less than was expected, there are more funds available than calculated on. It is therefore a question whether the railway itself should not be extended to the Awatere River, in preference to making a road which would afterwards be comparatively useless. Further surveys will be made to determine this point before the road is gone on with. In the meantime the estimates provide for the platelaying and other works required in completing the line to Dashwood Pass.

Westport-Ngakawau.—A Bill will be introduced during the present session to authorise the extension of the Westport-Ngakawau Railway to the Mokihinui River, a distance of 7 miles, its object being the opening-up of the Mokihinui Coalfield. It is proposed to construct the railway out of the funds for the