

a contract was let some months ago, will shortly be placed in position. A contract has also been let for the large bridge over the Mangatainoko River, and the platelaying to the site of this bridge is about to be commenced. The expenditure on the line during last year amounted to £16,716, while liabilities existed at the close of the year to the amount of £7,887, and further liabilities to the amount of £22,160 have since been incurred. We ask this year for a vote of £40,000, which will cover the large liabilities existing, and provide for the completion of nearly all the formation-works on the line, as well as for the platelaying as far as the Mangatainoko Bridge.

BLENHEIM—AWATERE.

The small amount of work done on this line was merely for the purpose of putting the formation-works on the Utawai and Dashwood Sections into a state of repair, and for the purpose of preventing, as far as possible, damage to the works by flood-waters, &c. The amount expended was £1,224, and liabilities existed at the close of the year to the further amount of £772. We ask this year for a vote of £2,500 to cover these liabilities, and to provide for necessary expenditure in connection with the line.

WESTPORT—NGAKAWAU—MOKIHINUI.

The last section of this railway was completed and handed over to the Railway Commissioners in August, 1893. This section established through communication between the Mokihinui Coal Company's railway and Westport, and since it has been opened has had the effect of considerably increasing the output of coal from the mines in the Mokihinui basin. The increase would have been much larger, however, but for an unfortunate dispute as to the rates of haulage of coal over the company's line, which has had the effect of temporarily closing the mines of the Westport Cardiff Coal Company. As a means of effectually settling this dispute, and of preventing any others of a like character arising in the future, a Bill will be introduced empowering the Government, after a careful valuation has been made, to purchase the company's railway for a sum not exceeding £18,000. The Bill will provide for the payment of the purchase-money out of the funds of the Westport Harbour Board, and for endowing that Board with the profits on the working of the line.

GREYMOUTH—HOKITIKA.

The whole of this railway, 24 miles 37 chains in length, was handed over to the Railway Commissioners, and opened for regular public traffic, on the 20th December, 1893. A good deal of work remained to be done to the stations, however, and this has since been in hand, and is not yet quite completed. The expenditure on the line last year amounted to £10,394, while liabilities existed at the close of the year to the amount of £8,619, and further liabilities to the amount of £4,343 have since been incurred. The vote asked for this year—£15,000—will cover these liabilities, and the few remaining works required to complete the railway. The returns in connection with the working of this railway effectually disprove the statement made that when completed it would not pay working-expenses.

OTAGO CENTRAL.

The works on this railway have been very vigorously proceeded with throughout the year. Nearly three hundred men were employed upon the line at one time, and an average of about two hundred have been at work for the whole year. The section between Middlemarch and the Rock and Pillar Station, 8 miles in length, was opened for traffic on the 1st May last, and the section between Rock and Pillar and Hyde, 8 miles 20 chains in length, was also handed over and opened on the 24th of the same month. The formation-works on the Hyde-Kyeburn Section were commenced in June last year, and good progress has been made therewith for a distance of about 4½ miles. The next workable section of this railway will be the portion between Hyde and Ryan's Crossing, 10 miles 30 chains in length, and considerable further work is now being put in hand, including the construction of the tunnel, and the masonry culverts and abutments of bridges, with the view of completing the line to that point.

The expenditure on the line last year, exclusive of the value of the permanent-way materials supplied, was £33,061, and was by far the largest expenditure on any railway-works in the colony, with the single exception of the North Island Main Trunk Railway. If the value of the permanent-way material supplied is added, the total expenditure would