

curvature, and tunnel length. On the route decided upon, the main tunnel will be 5.45 miles long, with up-gradients 1 in 300 from the west portal in the Mangaroa Valley and 1 in 211 from the east portal. The ruling gradient outside the tunnel will be 1 in 70. The distance between Upper Hutt and Featherston by this route will be 15 miles 32 chains, as against 24 miles 65 chains by the present route. Because of the topography it was necessary to examine several possible routes, each having some merit not possessed by the other. As a result, a decision has been more difficult to reach than for any other railway of comparable length in New Zealand.

The Government has authorized an expenditure of £272,900 sterling on the purchase of plant for the Rimutaka Deviation; and orders have already been placed in Great Britain and New Zealand. It is likely that only a small proportion of the expenditure on plant will be in dollar areas. My Engineers are now considering methods whereby the tunnel can be constructed rapidly and economically.

Work on the South Island Main Trunk Railway is practically finished: only a few cleaning-up jobs remain.

AERODROMES

An Aerodrome Committee, comprising representatives of the Air Department, National Airways Corporation, Ministry of Works, and Public Works Department, has been appointed by the Government to decide on policy matters affecting civil aerodromes. One function of the Committee is to decide priorities for the various works being planned.

Consequent upon the decision to close Rongotai Aerodrome to commercial traffic, it was essential to improve the Paraparaumu landing-ground and facilities and to provide amenities for passengers at very short notice. As a result of excellent planning, co-ordination, and expeditious construction work, Paraparaumu Aerodrome was ready to handle all air traffic on the closing of Rongotai. In co-operation with representatives of the Wellington City Council, my officers are now giving much attention to the proposed plans for the new airport at Rongotai.

Site investigations for a new Auckland City Airport were recommenced during the year, and two proposals are under review: enlargement of the existing Mangere Aerodrome, and a completely new site at East Tamaki.

Good progress has been made with construction of the main landing-strip on the new Hokitika Aerodrome at Seaview.

In accordance with an agreement with the Air Department, the Public Works Department is now maintaining in New Zealand 65 civil aerodromes and landing-grounds, 5 seaplane-alighting areas, and 10 R.N.Z.A.F. stations, and in the Pacific 4 civil aerodromes, 2 alighting-areas, and 3 R.N.Z.A.F. stations.

The New Zealand Government, with the British and Australian Commonwealth Governments, is vitally interested in the site of the international airport in Fiji. Nandi, constructed during the recent war as a military aerodrome, has been used since as a civil airport for the trans-Pacific services; while Nausori, also constructed during the war period, has continued to be used by the R.N.Z.A.F. During last February and March a Commission representing the three Governments named inspected these two aerodromes in an endeavour to determine which should become the permanent international airport. Their recommendation has been forwarded to the South Pacific Air Transport Council, which, I understand, will be meeting at an early date. The New Zealand representative on the Commission was Mr. R. H. Packwood, District Commissioner of Works, Auckland. Much of the data required for consideration by the Commission was assembled by my Department.