

the structure will be undertaken at the Makohine Workshop directly the similar work for the Makohine Viaduct is finished, and as this viaduct is of a much simpler character than the one at Makohine, and as the department has now a workshop in good working-order and a staff of trained men, speedy progress is expected to be made with it.

Several of the tunnels on the Mangaweka Section are still incomplete, but all are well in hand, and those closest to the yard where the lining-blocks are being made, and which will consequently require to be lined first, are being proceeded with continuously throughout the whole twenty-four hours of the day with relays of workmen. Last year's vote for this railway was £70,000. This year we ask for £130,000, being an increase on last year's vote of £60,000. This sum will enable the work to be so extended that the connection between Wellington and Auckland can be completed within four years.

STRATFORD—KAWAKAWA.

I have referred to the desirability of constructing light railways where the cost of road-construction is heavy. The Ohura Road (better known in Taranaki as the East Road) comes within this category. For a distance of 47 miles, between Stratford and Wangamomona, the country is fairly settled, and for several miles a light railway could be constructed on the road-formation. It is therefore proposed to construct a line along or near to the Ohura Road from a point near Stratford in the direction of Kawakawa on the main trunk line. This line will afford great relief to the settlers in that district, in addition to forming part of the desired connection between Auckland and Taranaki, and will, I believe, return interest upon the cost of construction as soon as the first twenty miles are opened for traffic. A sum of £10,000 is asked for to enable this line to be commenced.

RIMUTAKA DEVIATION.

The detailed survey promised in my last Statement has since been put in hand, and is still in progress. As the work seems likely to occupy some time, I propose, when an officer of the department can be spared, to put on an additional survey party. The amount voted last session — £6,000 — proved to be much more than could be expended with profit. We ask for £2,000 this year, which is probably as much as will be required, as until construction-works are put in hand no considerable expenditure will be needed.

BLLENHEIM—WAIPARA.

The works at the northern end of this railway have proceeded very satisfactorily, last year's appropriation for the work having been slightly exceeded. The line between Blenheim and Dumgree is practically completed, and settlers' goods and produce are already being conveyed over it. There is no doubt that the railway will easily be completed to the Awatere River before the expiration of the contract time for the erection of the bridge. The progress hitherto made by the bridge contractors has not been very satisfactory, but, in reply to my remonstrances on the subject, they state that they hope to have the bridge completed within the contract time. If this expectation is realised nothing more, of course, can be expected, but I have already warned the contractors that if it is not realised the liquidated damages for delay provided for in the contract will be rigidly enforced. If the bridge is completed within the contract time the railway ought to be ready for traffic to Seddon before next session.

At the southern end of the line the work is also being energetically proceeded with, and has made good progress. A considerable length of formation will be ready for the rails early in the new year.

The survey of the hitherto unsurveyed portion of the intermediate distance has recently been completed, but the final reports and plans have not yet come to hand. The total vote for this railway last year amounted to £21,000. This year a vote of £50,000 is proposed.