

The total expenditure on the Midland Railway last year amounted to £41,328. This year it will doubtless be heavier, owing to work being in hand at the Nelson end, and the probability of work being started between Reefton and Inangahua, and possibly between Otira and the Bealey. The proposed authorisation is therefore £100,000.

GREYMOUTH-HOKITIKA : EXTENSION TO ROSS.

This extension originally formed part of the Grey-Hokitika and Midland scheme, and a trial-survey was made of it. It is about fifteen miles in length, running through level country, and taps over half a million acres of the finest forest in the colony. Four sawmills are now in operation, and there is a vast quantity of silver-pine timber suitable for railway sleepers available. The estimated output of sawn timber is 6,000,000 ft. per annum. The main road from Ross to the Waiho and the Francis Joseph Glacier is completed, and a great tourist traffic would eventuate if the line were made, for the mountain, lake, and forest scenery of south Westland is unsurpassed. The present population—consisting of settlers, miners, sawmillers, and bushmen—which would be served by the railway numbers 1,000, and there is a vast area of good land suitable which would be settled if this line were constructed, and the mineral deposits well known to exist were developed. The amount asked for the current year is £2,000.

NGAHERE-BLACKBALL.

The selection of a suitable site for the proposed bridge over the Grey River has proved to be a work of much difficulty, as great changes in the river-bed in the neighbourhood of the proposed bridge have taken place in recent years, and similar changes may take place in the future. A good site has now been selected, however, but it is evident that the cost of a substantial structure will amount to a large sum, and the question seems to require further consideration before any definite undertaking is entered into.

TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR RAILWAYS.

In addition to the sums already mentioned, smaller authorisations, totalling to £7,500, are proposed under various heads, and £76,000 for permanent-way and other materials, thus making the total authorisations for railway-construction purposes £601,500, on account of which a vote for the current year of £561,000 is proposed.

ROADS, ETC.

ROADS AND OTHER WORKS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE MINISTER OF LANDS.

The amount authorised last year for roads and other works was £651,717, and the amount voted for expenditure £433,997. Of this sum there was actually expended during the year £310,660, for which amount 621 miles of dray-roads and 328 miles of bridle-roads were constructed, 737 miles of dray-roads and 175 miles of bridle-roads were widened and improved; and 2,272 miles of dray-roads and 1,032 miles of bridle-roads were maintained during the year. The bridges constructed were 324, of a total length of 12,448 ft.; and the culverts 3,497, of a total length of 70,632 ft. Out of the sum of £310,660 expended, £85,244 was disbursed through local bodies, and £225,416 by the staff of the department. At the end of the year authorities remained with local bodies to the extent of £143,860, and with the staff to the extent of £292,386—a total liability of £436,246.

The largest amount of work last year was done in the Auckland District, the expenditure there amounting to £92,255. In the other districts it was as follows: Hawke's Bay, £31,336; Taranaki, £33,088; Wellington, £72,039; Nelson, £9,278; Marlborough, £13,933; Canterbury, £8,015; Westland, £11,450; Otago, £15,902; and Southland, £20,299; with a general expenditure of £3,065. The total last year was £29,536 more than in the previous year, being greater in the Districts of Auckland, Taranaki, Wellington, Nelson, Westland, Canterbury, and Otago, and a little less in the other districts.