

RAILWAY-CONSTRUCTION.

As I have already mentioned, the length of new railway opened for traffic during the year was greater than during any similar period for thirty years past. This was principally due to the completion of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, which was handed over to the Railway Department for regular working on 15th February last.

The total expenditure on railway-works last year amounted to £1,349,110, which was £69,301 in excess of the previous year's total. The particulars are as under:—

Construction of new lines—	£
Public Works Fund	713,121
Waikaka Branch Railway Account	13,391
State Coal-mines Account	24,984
Additions to open lines	389,672
Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Account	66,408
Railways Improvements Authorisation Act Account	141,534
Total	£1,349,110

I will now refer more in detail to the several railways that have been in hand, and the proposals of the Government in regard to each for the current year.

KAWAKAWA—GRAHAMTOWN.

The work of closing up the gap between Kawakawa at the north and Hukerenui at the south end has been vigorously proceeded with throughout the year. The whole of the formation that is not already finished is well in hand and nearing completion. The laying of the rails at the south end has been extended to about a mile beyond Towai, and rail-laying has now been resumed at the north end, and is steadily working southwards. A connection between the north and south ends of the line should be effected before next winter.

Some further work has also been done on the extension from Whangarei to Grahamtown, and a contract has been entered into for the construction of the deep-water wharf at the latter place. The date fixed for the completion of this contract is 25th February, 1911.

The expenditure last year amounted to £32,616, and for the current year a vote of £40,000 is proposed.

KAWAKAWA—KAIKOHE.

A short branch line has already been constructed from the Kawakawa-Grahamtown Railway at Scoria Flat to a good scoria deposit in the vicinity, which has been, and still is, used as a ballast-pit. Owing to a strong demand for an extension of the railway towards Hokianga, a flying survey has been undertaken from the end of this ballast-pit line to Kaikohe and Hokianga Harbour. A railway along this route, in addition to opening up much fertile country in the Hokianga district, would also afford a valuable connection between the Kawakawa-Grahamtown Railway and the North Auckland trunk line when the latter is extended as far as this. The immediate construction of the line between Scoria Flat and Kaikohe is fully justified, as not only would the railway itself be a profitable undertaking, but it would also cheapen and expedite the construction of the North Auckland Railway. It is therefore proposed to provide for the construction of this railway in the Railways Authorisation Bill of the present session, and a vote of £2,500 to make a commencement with the work is provided on the estimates.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

This railway has in previous years been referred to as the Helensville Northwards line. While that title was quite suitable when an extension of only a few miles northwards of Helensville was contemplated, it is scarcely the most appropriate designation to apply to the line, which is now intended to traverse the whole of the North Auckland Peninsula—hence the new title.