

Last year's expenditure amounted to £40,601, which is the largest sum spent on the line in any one year since its construction was commenced. Having in view the importance and urgency of the railway, and the proposal to commence the new section between Tauranga and Te Puke, it will be necessary to expend a still larger sum during the current year, and a vote of £80,000 is therefore asked for.

STRATFORD—MAIN TRUNK.

Work has been vigorously proceeded with throughout the year at the Stratford end of this railway, and the section between Huiroa and Te Wera is now approaching completion. The construction of the Pohokura section is also well in hand, the first four miles being almost finished, and the whole section will probably be completed in eight or nine months. Work on the Whangamona section has also been commenced. This railway now taps the main arterial road of the district, and will consequently be of very great benefit to the settlers.

The expenditure last year amounted to no less than £43,071, which is the largest amount spent on the line in any year since the work was started. A much larger expenditure is anticipated during the present year, however, and a vote of £60,000 is proposed for the work.

MOUNT EGMONT BRANCH.

Mention was made in last year's Statement of the first section of this railway, including the crushing-station at Manganui, having been completed and handed over to the Railway Department. It was also stated that it was proposed to extend the railway to the site of a permanent quarry on the slopes of Mount Egmont, at the head of the Waingongoro River. Further exploration and survey has, however, shown that this quarry would probably not turn out so satisfactorily as one to be obtained at the head of the Manganui River, although to approach the latter an incline-tramway will be needed. The necessary surveys are in hand, and as soon as they are completed the work of construction will be proceeded with, as the stone-crushing plant cannot be worked to the best advantage until a permanent supply of solid stone has been opened up.

Only a comparatively small expenditure was incurred last year—viz., £2,738. A vote of £5,000 is provided for the current year.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

When my predecessor delivered his Statement last year, a train had been run between Wellington and Auckland and back—namely, on the occasion of the visit of the American Fleet. This was quite a "special" train, however, and special arrangements had to be made in order to get it through, as a portion of the line had only very recently been laid and many miles of it were entirely unballasted. Since that date the line has been completed and handed over to the Working Railways Department, and regular through trains have been run since the 15th February last.

The vote of £225,000 taken on last year's Appropriations proved to be in excess of requirements. Only £140,833 came to charge during the year, but as a number of liabilities remained on 31st March last, a vote of £20,000 is provided on the present estimates to cover same.

BLenheim—WAI PARA.

At the northern end, the section between Seddon and Blind River has been completed, and goods traffic is being carried over it by the Public Works Department for the convenience of settlers. The further section to Ward, which is as far as the railway is authorised at present, is also approaching completion. To enable the construction of this line to be continued it will be necessary to obtain authority to take another section in hand, and provision will accordingly be made in the Railways Authorisation Bill for a further length of three miles and a quarter.