

WESTPORT—INANGAHUA.

The section of this railway between Westport and Kuha, 5 miles 60 chains in length, is nearly finished. It would have been completed earlier but for the delay which took place in the completion of the contract for the erection of the bridges. The felling of the bush on the second section, which is almost entirely in the Buller Gorge, is nearly finished, and formation work commenced. The work is of such a character, however, that it can be carried out more advantageously in small contracts than under the co-operative system, and it is consequently proposed to shortly invite tenders for its construction in short sections.

Last year's expenditure totalled £8,567, but a vote of £20,000 is proposed for the current year.

NGAHERE—BLACKBALL.

A considerable amount of work has been done on this railway during the year, and the line is now approaching completion. An extensive coal traffic is already being carried by the Public Works Department for the convenience of the Blackball and Paparoa Coal Companies. This traffic considerably impedes the completion of the line, but the work is expected to be finished and handed over to the Railway Department early in the new year.

The expenditure during last year amounted to £33,804. For the current year a vote of £30,000 is proposed, which will provide for the completion of all remaining work.

GREYMOUTH—POINT ELIZABETH.

Formation work on the extension of this railway to the proposed No. 2 State Colliery has been actively in hand during the year. The line is a comparatively short one—three miles and a half—but the works upon it are of a heavy character. Moreover, as a large coal traffic is anticipated, it is necessary to provide extensive terminal facilities at the collieries, including a site for a very large bin and large sorting and standing sidings.

The expenditure on this railway last year (£24,984) was charged to the State Coal-mines Account, but it is considered inadvisable to allow the amount to remain at the debit of that account, and it is therefore proposed to provide in this year's Appropriation Bill for the transfer of last year's expenditure from the State Coal-mines Account to the Public Works Fund, and also to make special provision for the estimated expenditure of the current year, which will probably amount to nearly £50,000.

HOKITIKA—ROSS.

The final section of this railway was opened for traffic on the 1st April last.

The expenditure during the year amounted to £14,298. Sundry minor finishing works remained to be executed after the line was handed over, however, and a vote of £4,000 appears on the estimates to cover these.

LAWRENCE—ROXBURGH.

The construction of this line between Lawrence and the Big Hill Tunnel has been proceeded with during the year. The formation is practically finished, and the rails are laid for the greater part of the distance, and ballasting is in progress. It is proposed to complete the section to Big Hill, and to open it for traffic as soon as it is ready. The question of carrying the work on beyond that point, however, is one that requires careful consideration. The Government is at present unable to see its way to take any further steps in the matter unless an adequate guarantee is forthcoming that reasonable interest on the capital invested will be returned.

Last year's expenditure on the railway amounted to £14,076, and for the current year a vote of £12,500 is provided.