

which have to be continually raised in order to keep a track fit to run construction trains. It would be no exaggeration to say that the actual quantity of earthwork to be done on these railways is 50 per cent. in excess of the originally estimated quantity. The fact of its having to be removed after slipping, and its reduction to slurry by rain, also adds considerably to the cost of the work.

WAIPU BRANCH.

Ruakaka Section (0 miles to 9 miles 20 chains = 9 miles 20 chains).—The greater part of this section will be easily constructed. The first two miles will consist of banks across mud-flats, which will be commenced when a steam-shovel and locomotive are available. Formation over the balance is proceeding, and with the exception of the culverts nearly 5 miles have been completed. About twenty-five men are employed. This cannot be considered a satisfactory state of affairs, and until cement for culverts is available, and sufficient men also, I propose to discontinue work on this line.

NORTH ISLAND MAIN TRUNK.

Waiuku Branch.

Patumahoe-Waiuku (4 miles 20 chains to 12 miles 15 chains = 7 miles 75 chains).—A goods service from Patumahoe to Mauku has been maintained. Platelaying beyond Mauku has reached the 7-miles peg, and beyond this point banks and culverts at various points have been completed. Contracts have been let for the erection of the Pukeowhare and Fernleigh station buildings, and orders have been placed for the timber for the Waiuku station buildings. Fifty-three men are engaged. The completion of the line will depend largely on the ability of the Railway Department to convey the ballast from near Auckland. At present the shortage of trucks is acute. Provided materials arrive, rails will be to Waiuku at the end of November, and fit for goods traffic at the end of March.

Huntly Branch.

Bridge Section (7 miles 20 chains onwards).—Work on this section was closed during the war period, but was recommenced last December. Formation is proceeding; stream-diversion at 7 miles 50 chains has been completed; fencing is in progress, and culvert-sites are being excavated. Permanent pegging has been finished to 8 miles 70 chains and trial survey extended to 10 miles. Want of supplies (cement and timber) has somewhat delayed operations. About thirty employees are engaged.

Waikokowai Branch.

This line has been located to 8 miles 73 chains, and permanent pegging has been commenced. The Mines Department being extremely anxious that this line should be completed as early as possible a commencement has been made with the formation, although insufficient men are available to carry on the work satisfactorily. I may have to transfer the greater number of the men at the Huntly Bridge mentioned above to expedite the line.

EAST COAST MAIN TRUNK.

Waihi Eastwards.

Athenree Section (0 miles to 8 miles 68 chains = 8 miles 68 chains).—Formation has been continued, the Athenree station-yard formed, as well as the approach road to the passenger-platform, and a deviation of the main road completed. The concrete piers for Waimata Stream bridges have been erected.

Katikati Section (8 miles 68 chains onwards).—A commencement with formation was made in September last, and three parties have since been continually employed. Sixty-three men are at present engaged on this work.

Tauranga Westwards.

Tauranga Section (36 miles to 41 miles 5 chains = 5 miles 5 chains).—Some formation is being proceeded with to the extent of the man-power available.