

CULVERDEN—WAIKIU.

Final ballasting was completed during the early part of the year; and a passenger and goods service was maintained by the Public Works Department until December last, when the line was formally handed over to the Railway Department for permanent traffic.

WAIMATE BRANCH.

Serpentine Section.—Progress on this section has been generally slow, owing to the difficulty of procuring men. A commencement was made early in the year with preparatory work. Formation in the Serpentine station-yard has been completed, 8 chains of Serpentine Creek diversion finished, and general formation work proceeded with. The survey of a ballast-pit line at Waihao Forks River has been finished. The formation will shortly be in such a forward state that the erection of bridges will become necessary to enable the platelaying to be commenced. Twenty-three men are now at work. The number of men available for the three last-mentioned railways suggests that work on them should be stopped until labour conditions are more favourable. In the case of the Greymouth—Point Elizabeth Railway the extension will open up a new coal area, which it is desirable to tap before the existing State mines on the line are worked out.

OTAGO CENTRAL.

Cromwell Section (44 miles 52 chains to 57 miles 6 chains = 12 miles 34 chains).—This section is practically completed, and a regular passenger and goods railway service is being maintained, connecting with the Railway Department's trains at Clyde. Only one interruption of the service occurred. This was at the beginning of February, and it was caused by a severe thunderstorm, which brought down numerous slips. Ninety-five men are employed.

LAWRENCE—ROXBURGH.

Work on this line extending the formation beyond Beaumont will be resumed as the men become available from the Otago Central Railway. Meanwhile the work is being pegged out.

OREPUKI—WAIKIU EXTENSION.

Orawia Section (48 miles 23 chains onwards).—Construction, which was suspended in 1915 owing to war conditions, was resumed in October, 1919. Owing to the scarcity of labour, work was concentrated mostly on the completion of culverts to enable formation to be pushed on vigorously when additional labour becomes available. Fifteen men are engaged.

ADDITIONS TO OPEN LINES.

The expenditure under this heading amounted to £160,324. Of this sum £80,662 was expended in the provision of additional rolling-stock, tarpaulins, Westinghouse brake, and workshop machinery. The balance covered expenditure on improvements to workshops and engine-depots, station facilities, water-services, additional dwellings, waterproofing the lining in the Spiral Tunnel, tablet-installations, and purchase of land.

RAILWAYS IMPROVEMENT AUTHORIZATION ACT, 1914.

Expenditure under this Act amounted to £92,994 for grade easements, duplications, new stations, station-yards, goods-sheds, and terminal facilities at Auckland; additions to workshops; signalling, interlocking, and safety appliances.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

GENERAL.

Parliamentary Buildings.—During the year the contractor has pushed on with the Legislative Council chamber and the rooms and corridors of the principal and first floors of the Museum Street frontage. The Council Chamber requires only four columns in the gallery, and the balustrading of the gallery-front, to complete it. The chamber was used for the opening of the last session of Parliament. The panelling of the walls and ceilings of the Legislative Council chamber has been completed, and a considerable amount of carpenter's and joiner's work in connection with flooring, screen partition, mantelpieces, &c., has been carried out. About 500 yards of second-coat asphaltting has been laid on roof around Legislative Council chamber.