

RAILWAYS.

When last year's Statement was presented to the House a commencement had been made with the Government's programme of railway-construction, but preliminary work only had been done on the Napier-Gisborne line, the South Island Main Trunk, and the Westport-Inangahua connection in preparation of a vigorous programme. During the year excellent progress has been made on all these works.

Napier-Gisborne Railway.—On the Napier-Gisborne line a total of 1,300 men was employed. The damage done to the previously completed section of the line between Napier and Putorino by the Napier earthquake was restored. The Mohaka Viaduct was completed, thus enabling a rail connection to be made to Wairoa. The Railway Department now operates a service from Napier to Putorino, while the Public Works Department controls a train service from Putorino to Wairoa. Although the sections are separately controlled, goods are railed at through rates. This service is already providing a much-needed facility, and the extent to which it is being availed of indicates the need that existed for rail connection in that locality. North of Waikokopu, which is already linked with Wairoa by an existing line, work is proceeding expeditiously at all points on to Gisborne.

An excellent showing has been made on this work since construction was resumed last year, and operations have advanced to an interesting stage. The length to be constructed is 34 miles.

The general plan of construction aims at the earliest possible completion of the major tunnels and those bridges which would hold up progress if left until reached by the permanent rails. The large tunnels occur in the middle section of the route, while the bridges are mainly on the end sections.

Earthwork is not a deciding factor in the date of completion. Although uncommonly heavy in the middle section, and for a length of one mile along the Waikokopu Bluffs, work was opened up on a great number of faces when the tunnel service roads were completed in the early stages of construction. At only a few points are the individual cuttings and fillings of such dimensions as to need special methods to expedite progress, and in each case the job is being well handled by up-to-date Diesel-powered machinery, which reduces years to months in the construction schedule.

The construction of service roads under the general plan mentioned above made possible the prosecution of work along the whole length between Gisborne and Waikokopu. Shortly after resumption of activities 1,000 men were systematically placed throughout the whole length of the line. Owing to difficulty in obtaining delivery of tunnelling plant ordered from Britain there was some delay in getting the larger tunnels into full swing, but this is now mainly overcome, and the underground work is moving ahead in a convincing manner, with eight separate tunnelling parties working at different points.

The erection of camps has been completed for the whole line. They are situated so that very little moving will need to be done until construction enters its final stages of platelaying and ballasting. The great majority of the men are housed in eleven more or less concentrated camps. At nine of these camps well-equipped cookhouses have been provided. At the other two the work is reserved for married men provided with living-quarters for their wives and families. Three schools and eight Y.M.C.A. buildings have been provided. At each of the latter there is a resident Y.M.C.A. secretary, who, in addition to the usual Association activities, conducts a post-office and savings-bank if the locality has no such facilities. The latter is a particularly useful side of the Association's work. The names of the Y.M.C.A.-operated post-offices, commencing from the Gisborne end, are—Bartletts, Torries Road, Wharekakaho, Tikiwhata, Paritu, Kaingapipi, and Kopuawhara.

The electric-power line brought in to serve the tunnels was availed of to provide light and power to all the main camps. Electric energy is supplied to occupants of living-quarters at Power Board rates.