

Rotorua, the Wellington and Manawatu, the Rakaia and Ashburton Forks, the Waimate, the Duntroon and Hakateramea, and the Waimea Plains Railway. The correspondence between these railway companies and the Government is all printed and in the hands of honourable members. It will be seen that agreements have been come to for the purchase of the Cambridge and Rotorua, the Rakaia and Ashburton Forks, the Duntroon and Hakateramea, and the Waimate Railways, subject, of course, to ratification by Parliament.

The long correspondence which has taken place between the Waimea Plains Railway Company and the Government has led to no agreement being come to; and the directors of the Wellington and Manawatu Company have recently declined to proceed with the proposed sale to the Government.

I shall not now refer to the details of the agreements entered into with the other companies, as there will be a better opportunity of doing so when the Bill to authorize the purchase of these lines is being considered. If the lines become the property of the Government there will be a great saving in working them, and in abolishing the troublesome accounting system, akin to the clearing-house system in England, which is at present necessitated by the lines belonging to private companies.

Under the East and West Coast (Middle Island) and Nelson Railway Act of last session, the Government was authorized to enter into a contract for the construction of railways from Springfield to Brunnerton and from Brunnerton to Belgrove, and, after a lengthened negotiation, the terms of an agreement were settled between the promoters of these railways and the Government for their construction. It is unnecessary for me to refer in detail to this contract, as it is printed and has been on the table of the House for some weeks, but I shall refer more fully to the subject of these railways presently.

RAILWAYS IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION, AND PROPOSED, INCLUDING ADDITIONS TO OPENED RAILWAYS.

I now propose to refer briefly to the railway works which were under construction during the past year.

Kawakawa.—On this railway several buildings have been erected, and other extra accommodation has also been provided.

Whangarei-Kamo.—A branch line, about 1 mile in length, has recently been constructed from this railway to the Whauwhau coal mine at the cost of a private company, and is now ready for working.

With regard to the main line itself a survey is being made with the view of ascertaining the cost of extending it at the Whangarei end to deep water, to enable the largely-increasing coal output to be economically shipped. Till that survey is completed, and we have a full report on the cost, I cannot state what course I may have to recommend the House to take. There is no doubt, however, that the accommodation at present provided will not be sufficient when the Whauwhau and Kamo mines get into full work, and steps must be taken to have the necessary additional works put in hand without delay.

Railway to the Northward of Helensville.—Honourable members will recollect that last year I promised to procure such information as was necessary to allow of a decision being come to as to the best way of providing additional railway accommodation for the district to the north of Auckland, and I would now call special attention to some reports on this subject which are attached to this statement.