

£2,500 is asked for this year to cover the liabilities just mentioned, and also to put the formation-works to the southward of the Omaka Section in an efficient state of repair, so as to avoid undue damage by storms, stock, &c. while the line remains in an incomplete condition.

As announced in my Public Works Statement of 1891, the Government do not propose to construct the bridge across the Awatere River or to undertake the platelaying on the unfinished portion of this railway until some arrangements have been made in respect of the large estates in the Awatere District.

WESTPORT-NGAKAWAU-MOKIHINUI.

The extension of the Westport-Ngakawau Railway to Mokihinui was completed and handed over to the Railway Commissioners for traffic on the 7th August last. The line is 7 miles 12 chains in length, and has cost £33,419 up to the 31st August last, including £6,731 for rails and fastenings. A few small accounts are still outstanding, but these will not increase the total cost to any material extent. The whole of the funds have been found by the Westport Harbour Board, as provided by "The Westport-Ngakawau Railway Extension Act, 1890."

GREYMOUTH-HOKITIKA.

The works on this line are now all but completed. It was discovered that, owing to the length of time that had elapsed since the bridges were erected on the portion of this line first taken in hand, the majority of them were quite decayed, and had to be rebuilt. This was done, the formation-works completed, the rail-laying and ballasting undertaken, and the station-buildings designed and arranged for. The platelaying and ballasting were so far completed on 24th May last that a very profitable and successful excursion was enabled to be run from both ends of the line, conveying between three and four thousand passengers. The final ballasting is still in hand, and will probably be completed next month, when the line will be handed over to the Railway Commissioners for regular working.

The expenditure on the line last year amounted to £18,221, and liabilities existed at the end of the year to the amount of £6,754. The vote now asked for, £12,000, is estimated to cover all charges up to completion of the line.

OTAGO CENTRAL.

The works on this line have been energetically proceeded with, the formation between Middlemarch and Hyde may be regarded as practically finished, and the masonry abutments for most of the bridges have also been erected. The contract for the manufacture of the iron superstructures of the bridges was let to Messrs. J. and A. Anderson, of Christchurch, in December last. To expedite the work a bonus was offered to the contractors for the completion of their contract before the specified time, and the girders are now being delivered. As soon as possible after their erection the platelaying will be proceeded with, for which work ample preparations have already been made. The bulk of the sleepers are already in hand, contracts for the supply of the balance have been let, and all the rails and fastenings required are in store at Dunedin. The Government hopes to be able to open the line for traffic to Hyde in the early part of the new year.

As the Government attaches very great importance to this railway, it is proposed to at once proceed with the construction of the section between Hyde and Eweburn, a distance of 21 miles 67 chains. The formation-works on a portion of this section have already been begun, and will be extended and pressed on as soon as the appropriation asked for has been passed. The extension of this line to the Eweburn will promote settlement, and materially assist in opening up Central Otago, the resources of which have remained almost entirely undeveloped up to the present.

The expenditure on the Otago Central Railway last year amounted to £20,516, while liabilities existed at the close of the year to the further amount of £8,259. The appropriation proposed for the current year is £45,000, which will provide for the completion of the Middlemarch-Hyde Section, and for a substantial expenditure on the Hyde-Eweburn Section.