

Owing to the shallowness of the water at the present terminus at the Whangarei end of this railway, only vessels of small tonnage can gain access to the line at present. An extension to Grahamstown, a distance of two miles and a half, would enable large vessels to enter and leave at any time of the tide. The construction of this extension will insure the carriage over the line of a large quantity of timber, the freight upon which might otherwise be lost, and would also enable the local coal to be exported. It is therefore proposed to include this extension also in the Railways Authorisation Bill.

The survey of the line from Hukerenui to a junction with the Kawakawa Railway is now in hand, but will not be finished for some months. The vote proposed for the current year is £10,000.

HELENSVILLE NORTHWARDS.

The formation of the Tahekeroa Section of this railway is proceeding as vigorously as the appropriation for the service will admit of. Indeed, the vote obtained last session was exceeded on the 31st March last by £1,092. The work is still proceeding and making satisfactory progress, two miles of the line being almost ready for platelaying. It is proposed to lay the rails on this length shortly, to facilitate the transport of material for the operations beyond. It is desirable to do this, as the only other access to the works is by a rough bush-road. I propose to ask the House in the Railways Authorisation Bill to sanction the construction of the line to the Kaipara Flats. The vote for last year was £9,000, while the expenditure amounted to £10,092. This year a vote of £12,000 is proposed, which will admit of construction operations being proceeded with expeditiously.

THAMES-TE AROHA.

The last section of this railway, from Paeroa to the Thames, was opened for traffic shortly before Christmas, as promised in last year's Statement. The line was not complete at the date of opening, however, and a great deal of work has been done on it since, the construction-men having only recently been withdrawn. The vote for this railway last year was £25,000, and the expenditure amounted to £24,391. A vote of £7,000 is now proposed to clear off all liabilities on Construction Account.

PAEROA-WAIHI.

I mentioned in my Statement last year that a detailed survey had been made for a branch railway between Paeroa and Waihi. The great development of mining in this district, and the large increase of population resulting therefrom, have induced private persons to offer to undertake this work. As there is every indication of a further development of the district, and that the mining-works will be of a permanent character, or will, at any rate, last for many years to come, the Government considers it would be inadvisable to allow a private company to make this railway, especially as it promises to give a handsome return upon the cost of construction. In view of this the House will be asked to make provision for a commencement being made with the work. A vote of £6,000 has accordingly been placed on the estimates, and the line will be included in the schedule of the Railways Authorisation Bill.

GISBORNE-KARAKA.

The isolated position of Gisborne, and the difficulties the settlers in this part of the colony have had to contend with, owing to want of proper communication with the Port and the outer world, make it a matter of simple justice to establish railway communication between Gisborne, Ormond, and Karaka. The meat and dairy industries have assumed large proportions, and close settlement is going on apace. The roads in winter-time are unable to bear the traffic, and the construction of a line of railway, first to Ormond and thence to Karaka, would provide a long-felt want. With the increase of settlement and the remarkable development of the almost unlimited resources of the district which is taking place, there is little doubt that the earnings of the line would be more than sufficient to meet the interest on the cost of construction. A vote of £6,000 has been placed on the estimates to make a commencement, and Parliament will be asked to authorise the construction of the line.