

BLENHEIM—WAIPARA.

Steady progress has been made at the northern end of this railway, and the section to Blind River will be available for traffic shortly, and the further section to Kaparu early in the new year. The formation-works are in hand as far as Ward, and progressing satisfactorily.

As considerable difference of opinion existed as to the route to be followed at the southern end—namely, from Domett northwards—it was considered inadvisable to proceed with further work until more complete surveys had been undertaken. This having now been done, it has been decided to adhere to the route originally surveyed, and construction-work on this route will accordingly be resumed shortly. Plans and specifications are also being prepared for the combined road and railway bridge over the Waiau River, and tenders will be invited in the course of a few weeks.

The expenditure on the line last year amounted to £29,561; but, in view of the proposal to resume work at the southern end, a larger vote will be necessary this year, and an appropriation of £50,000 is proposed.

MIDLAND.

At the Nelson end of this railway the section between Tadmor and Kiwi is nearly finished, and will probably be ready to hand over to the Railway Department next month. The section between Kiwi and Manu is in hand, and the formation-work is proceeding satisfactorily.

A start has also been made with the bushfelling on the section of the line between Manu and Hope Junction. This section completes the deviation from the Midland Railway Company's original surveyed route up the Motupiko and Clarke Valleys, which was authorised by Parliament in 1900. The present statutory authorisation, however, extends only to Manu, but the necessary Railways Authorisation Bill to provide for this completing link will be introduced.

At the Reefton end of the line the section between Reefton and Cronadun has been completed, and was handed over to the Railway Department last month. Beyond Cronadun further formation-works are in hand, and also the bridges over Boatman's and Larry's Creeks.

On the Otira Section the work to be carried out by the Department's own workmen is nearly completed, and the tunnel contract, which was let to Messrs. John McLean and Sons in August, 1907, is making fair progress. The first shot in the actual tunnel was fired by the Right Hon. the Prime Minister on 5th May last, since which date the contractors have put down a boring plant and a high-pressure water-power installation, which should enable good progress to be made.

At the Broken River end of the line the Sloven's Creek Bridge contract, let to Mr. G. M. Fraser in July, 1907, is in progress, also the tunnels and formation-work between Broken River and the Cass. It is intended to push on with the line at the Canterbury end, so as to insure its completion as far as the Arthur's Pass Tunnel by the time the tunnel itself is finished. The expenditure on the railway last year totalled to £65,433, but a much larger vote will be necessary this year, and an appropriation of £150,000 is therefore provided.

WESTPORT—INANGAHUA.

The formation on the first section of this railway, between Westport and Kuha, 5 miles 60 chains in length, is nearly finished, but there is still a good deal of bridging to be erected. Considerable delay has, unfortunately, occurred in connection with this latter work. In the first place, the timber was a long time in coming to hand; then, owing to the illness of the contractor for the erection of the bridges, further delay took place, and finally the contractor asked to be relieved of his contract, and arrangements have now been made to transfer the same to another contractor. The rails are already on the ground, and as soon as the bridges are ready platelaying will be started.

The expenditure last year amounted to £8,505, and for the current year a vote of £15,000 is proposed.