

RAILWAY-CONSTRUCTION.

Only one section of completed railway (Clyde to Cromwell, 12 miles 34 chains in length) was handed over to the New Zealand Railways Department during the year, although other sections were in a sufficiently advanced state to permit of a goods and passenger service being maintained by my Department.

The Mount-Matata Section, 40 miles in length, has been completed for several years, but owing to its isolation has not been taken over by the New Zealand Railways Department. A regular service under Working Railways conditions, however, is in operation.

The net expenditure on construction, maintenance, and supervision for the financial year was £3,265,440, as follows:—

Construction, improvement, and maintenance of new lines	£ 1,276,820
Additions to open new lines (rolling-stock, locomotives, &c.)	1,856,380
Railways Improvement Authorization Act 1914 Account	.. 132,240

Total	£3,265,440
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The following is a brief description of the work carried out during the year on the principal lines:—

KAIHU RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Formation, except a small portion of road approaches at Aranga and Donnelly's, is complete. Platelaying on the main line and at Aranga and Donnelly's station-yards has been finished. The final lifts of ballast have been completed except at the two station-yards. It is anticipated that this section will be handed over this year.

The concrete piers and abutments of the bridge at Donnelly's station-yard have been finished, and the steel girders erected. The bridges at 21 miles 24 chains and 22 miles 65 chains will be completed shortly. Passenger platforms and loading-banks have been constructed, cottage-sites cleared, and approaches made.

Tenders will shortly be invited for the erection of station buildings and cottages, the Department supplying the timber from its mill at Whatoro.

This section will be ready to transfer to the New Zealand Railways on completion of the bridges at 21 miles 24 chains and 22 miles 65 chains.

WHANGAREI BRANCH.

Oakleigh Section.—The deviation at 7 miles 15 chains has been completed and the rails on either side connected. Ballasting has been finished and efficiently maintained. A temporary connection from the main line to the Portland Cement Company's quarry line has been used to enable cement-supplies being loaded direct into the Department's wagons.

Tauraroa Section.—Work has been confined chiefly to removal of slips and maintenance. One large embankment at 9 miles 75 chains gave considerable trouble through subsidence, which necessitated drainage drives to reach the seat of trouble. The output of the Tauraroa crushing plant was over 21,000 yards.

To provide increased quantities of ballast for the Main Trunk connection an auxiliary crusher has been installed, and fresh tenders have been invited for the further supply of stone for crushing purposes.

Waiotira Section.—I referred in my last Statement to the treacherous nature of the country traversed by this line, and two deviations have been made to avoid dangerous ground. These deviations have proved satisfactory. A drainage drive was constructed in the bank at 17 miles 10 chains, which has prevented further subsidences.

Throughout the whole section large drains are being made in the cuttings, pipes laid in them and covered with boulders to facilitate drainage and prevent upheaval of the line. The toes of slopes that slip will be protected with stone walls. It is confidently expected the line will become stabilized by the end of the approaching summer.

Platelaying on the deviations above referred to completes the linking-in of the main line from Portland to Waiotira.