

EAST COAST MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

Taneatua-Opotiki.—The permanent survey has been extended to 114 m., and permanent-line plans are complete to 113 m. Trial line has been extended up to 124 m., and explored up to 126 m. 40 ch. In all 13 miles 62 chains of trial work was completed.

Gisborne-Napier.—Permanent survey has been completed from the Napier end as far as Wairoa, and plans of this are nearing completion. Exploration surveys are in hand for alternative routes between Gisborne and Wairoa.

Waimana-Wairoa.—An exploration survey of this line has been made from Waimana to Wairoa via the Waimana Tauranga and Ruakitauri Valley.

GLENHOPE-MURCHISON.

The permanent survey was completed to the 67 m. peg, and several deviations were investigated.

WELLINGTON-TAWA FLAT.

Surveys have been carried out for the proposed Wellington-Tawa Flat deviation of the Wellington Railway. Alternative routes have been surveyed, and plans and estimates are being prepared.

A number of lines are provided for in the Railways Authorization Bill which require a little explanation. The Lawrence-Roxburgh line is at present only authorized to Miller's Flat. This railway has been known as the Lawrence-Roxburgh line for the last twenty or thirty years, and I propose this year to authorize the final section of it, but this does not indicate that construction will be immediately proceeded with. Further investigation must be made into the economical aspect before a decision to proceed is arrived at.

With regard to the Rotorua-Taupo Railway, the Royal Commission which took evidence and inquired into the matter in 1922 reported that there was no possibility of the railway to Taupo being a payable proposition under present conditions, but with regard to the portion to Waiotapu they stated:—

“We respectively beg to endorse the opinion that in order to realize the value, both present and prospective, of these plantations, means of transit by railway must be provided, and we may add that a railway from Rotorua, terminating at a suitable point in the vicinity of the Waiotapu plantations, would reasonably serve the present settlement in the Waiotapu Valley, and would open up a further large area of land for development. There is also a possibility that the indigenous forests to the west of the Waikato River can be tapped by such a line.”

It is proposed therefore only to authorize the first portion to Reparoa, which is on the flat country just beyond Waiotapu. A terminus at this point will serve all the agricultural interests for some years to come, and will provide the necessary means of access, without which the extremely valuable forests which have been constituted by the Government's planting operations cannot be brought into a profit-producing stage.

With regard to the Dargaville-Kirikopuni Section, this was also inquired into by the Railway Commission in 1922; and, although this is being authorized this year, it will not be possible to carry on with any construction until some of the extensive operations now in hand in the North are drawing to a close.

With regard to the Whakatane Branch, the Government appears to some extent to be committed to the providing of railway connection, but although being authorized this year it is not proposed to go on with the actual construction until it can be shown that the same is justified.

As a sub-appendix to this report there will be found at the conclusion copies of the reports made by Railway, Agriculture, and Public Works Departments concerning the Balclutha-Tuapeka Mouth Railway, reports by the Public Works and Railways Departments concerning the Waihao Downs Railway, reports by Public Works Department concerning Waipu Branch Railway, and, in addition, a number of reports bearing on the question of the route of the railway between Wairoa and Gisborne. These reports are submitted in order to show the manner in which such subjects are approached.

CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS AND BRIDGES.

The following are some of the principal works which have been completed during the year, or are still in hand:—

Kirikopuni-Parakao (Hobson County).—Two miles of dray-road completed and 8 miles in hand. Limiting grade 1 in 25, and curvature $2\frac{1}{2}$ chains.

Wairoa River Bridge, Dargaville (Hobson and Otamatea Counties).—It is expected that this bridge, consisting of thirty 40 ft. and eight 20 ft. spans and one 60 ft. lifting span, will be completed early next year. The substructure is ferro-concrete throughout, with a superstructure of steel joists and hardwood decking.

Mangamuka-Victoria Valley (Mongonui and Hokianga Counties).—Six miles of dray-road formation have been completed, and 3 miles metalled. The damage caused by floods has seriously delayed the completion.

Coromandel-Colville Coast Road (Coromandel County).—Two miles 35 chains bridle-track in difficult country widened to dray-road.

Putaruru-Arapuni Road (Matamata County).—To provide access from the Rotorua Railway to the proposed Arapuni hydro-electric works a large amount of work has been done, including 7 miles of dray-road formation, 6 miles metalled, and 4 miles of metalling in hand.