

Since my last Statement exhaustive surveys have been made to determine the best route for the Wharanui to Parnassus connection of the South Island Main Trunk Railway. In brief, the result of these surveys and the investigation of estimates have been to show that the original inland route must be abandoned on the ground of excessive cost, which would greatly exceed earlier estimates. The coastal route offers the best possibilities, but cost of construction by this route would still be very heavy, and would certainly not be less than estimates previously adopted for the inland route.

The construction of the Roxburgh Section of the Lawrence-Roxburgh Railway, which has been in hand for the past two years, is approaching completion. The main line is now fully ballasted into Roxburgh Station; station-yard formation and ballasting have to be completed, station-building contracts are in hand, and bridge-girder spans are now being fabricated at the Tauranga workshops.

It is anticipated that the Roxburgh Section will be ready for handing over to the Railway Department early in the new year. This will then complete the railway to its logical terminus, which has been the objective for many years.

IRRIGATION AND WATER-SUPPLY.

No new scheme has been commenced during the past year, but work has been continued on the Arrow and Hawkdun schemes, on which construction had been begun the previous year. The Arrow scheme, which is designed to irrigate close on 6,000 acres, has progressed to the extent that the earthwork involved in the system of main and distributary races is practically complete.

The ordering of material for building the siphons and pipe-lines is deferred till further funds are available. On the Hawkdun scheme, which will irrigate 10,000 acres, substantial progress was made during the year with the reconditioning and enlargement of the old Mount Ida system of mining siphons and races, by which the water will be collected and delivered to the irrigation-races.

During the year the existing schemes were maintained in good condition, certain minor extensions were made, and a supply of water was given to all lands requiring it. The total area irrigated under all Government schemes was 31,102 acres, the number of irrigators being 288. The graph appearing below shows the growth of irrigation under the Government schemes during the past eight years.

