

1895.
NEW ZEALAND

RAILWAYS STATEMENT.

(2nd August, 1895.)

BY THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, THE HON A. J. CADMAN

MR. SPEAKER,—

Parliament having decided, by the passing of “The Government Railways Act, 1894,” that the control of the railways should vest in the Government as from the 1st January last, I have now the pleasure, as Minister for Railways appointed under the Act referred to, to make my first Railways Statement.

For three-fourths of the financial year which ended on the 31st March last the late Railway Commissioners were in office, so that the railways were under the administration of the Government for only one-fourth of the year. Improvements in working and management have been effected which, whilst giving satisfaction to the people, have also proved profitable, and still further improvements are in contemplation. The full effect of the changes made will not, however, be seen until they have received a much longer trial.

The working results for the year, as compared with those of the previous year, are as follows. The gross receipts have declined by £21,941, and the net receipts by £18,743. The percentage of expenditure to receipts has advanced from 62·70 to 63·62 while the interest on the capital invested has declined from £2 17s. 9d. per cent. in 1893–94 and £3 1s. in 1892–93 to £2 14s. 6d. in 1894–95. The railways, however, earned about £40,000 for services rendered to the colony but not paid for. Had this amount been credited the earnings would have been £2 19s. 9d. per cent.

These unsatisfactory results are due principally to diminished business, the chief cause being the lessening of the spending-power of the people owing to the great fall in prices of our staple products, and the almost entire stoppage of the export of wheat. The export of this staple during the previous financial year was 2,619,398 bushels, whilst the export last year was only 228,904 bushels—a loss of considerably over 2,000,000 bushels. The number of passengers travelling declined to the extent of 67,123, and the goods traffic by 5,367 tons, and this notwithstanding that 45 additional miles of line were opened during the year, and that the total mileage travelled by our trains was greater by 108,389. Although there was an increased mileage worked for the year of 45 miles, there was a decrease of £3,199 in working-expenses.

The total length of Government railways open for traffic on the 31st March last was 1,993 miles, an increase for the year of 45 miles. The total capital invested in these lines was £15,352,613, an increase for the year of £215,577.